

ELECTRONIC BOOK

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Every Day, Just Write

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The Best *Gosthyanandi*

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Also by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

Srila Prabhupada Lilamrita

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February 2, 1998, Midnight

I'm thinking of my spiritual life: should I renounce my poetry and art in favour of stark *sadhana*? I am about to move to Wicklow. When I move to that "cave," should I not live in seclusion only for the sake of improving my chanting and hearing? Death is coming. Have I gathered extracurricular activities which will prevent me from pure *smaranam* at the time of death? Face the austerity: hear and chant, hear and chant "only hear and chant. I should increase my *japa* quota, and thus explore more my capacity to practice pure Krishna consciousness during my remaining days. The results I will attain are not as important as the fact that I am trying.

In the little amount of time I have left at my disposal, consider whether I have done enough "art." Maybe better to now stay with things I know are absolute *bhakti* practices, even if it means living somewhat on the surface of my life.

But the pain. How can I chant more rounds when it creates such a strain on my head? Is it that I am willing to strain for writing poetry but not for chanting extra rounds?

Yes, I could even give up writing, but it serves me so well. I *am* a conditioned preacher. I work out so much through my writing. Still, it seems that I might try to develop the same dependence (addiction) to chanting the holy names. I could find a way to turn to it more as my only shelter. Simply and starkly.

Immediately, however, I hear my mind turning over the idea of writing a new *japa* diary while trying for an increased quota.

And although I'm saying I have little time left, I have to face my obligation to preach. It is my responsibility to Srila Prabhupada. I have been using my writing and other expressions as my preaching "publishing them and sharing them with devotees. But is it enough? Do people need what I write? I want to know the truth of that.

I have also read the Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura said that the best *gosthyanandi* is a *bhajanandi* who preaches. If I chant more and actually taste the name (or even if I can't taste it), if I could only become free of offenses . . . I should be prepared to work for that, even at the expense of my writing.

* * *

5:45 a.m.

It is important that I live honorably for my disciples. I don't want to turn that into a cliché, but it's true that I spend time alone in order to keep myself fit as a devotee. That's my reality. Krishna consciousness takes a lot of time. With this in mind, chanting more rounds may be one of the greatest things I can do with my solitude. Then when I get letters from devotees worrying about their material security, or whether they will have to perform extra austerities in anticipation of difficult times ahead, I can encourage them from experience that it is better to concentrate on chanting the holy name. We have no other shelter. How could I write that if I don't have the realization of it myself?

* * *

8:28 a.m.

I answered letters this morning that reverberated with my personal concerns. One devotee asked if it was all right to sometimes act beyond his realization. He gave the example of his acting more humbly than usual during a confrontation he had with another devotee. He thought perhaps it was good to break through to new ground; such humility in the face of conflict, he said, is not his usual behaviour. I replied that we should especially emphasize steadiness in spiritual life. We'll always know when we have acted beyond our present understanding because we will not be able to uphold the attitude and will later resent our own behaviour.

Another devotee wrote that he takes very cold showers and tries to practice other harsher austerities. This devotee struggles, however, simply to follow the four regulative principles. Again I emphasized that steadiness was more important than performing extraordinary austerities. Better to learn to look for shelter in the Lord's names. I can already say that because I know it is true.

My midnight idea of renouncing my present writing activities and using my time to increase my *japa* "is that beyond my realization? Is it something I can actually do? Will I later resent it, then slip down from that platform anyway? One thing I know is that we should be careful not to be cynical about our abilities to reform. Even if all we end up doing is making a bold announcement of what we should do to make advancement, although we can't actually follow it up, it may give us the opportunity to try something more than we have been doing so far. It may also give us a renewal of hope to advance. If every time we come up with a wonderful idea we laugh it down, life will seem hopeless.

February 3, 3:10 a.m.

Yesterday I had a sharp headache behind the right eye and had to suspend all my regular activities. I took rest at 4:30 p.m. The pain persisted throughout the night, and I was visited by various dreams in which pain was either the theme or part of the background. I couldn't sleep well, so around 9 p.m. I made some notes to help myself focus on what seemed like a new crossroads that had occurred to me yesterday morning:

"The reason for my daring to think that all writing, outside book reading, painting and even EJW compilation can be put aside is that the world doesn't need them. I personally don't need them as much as I need the holy name. Even reading, I don't at this particular time want to emphasize as much as I want to emphasize chanting, although I'll continue to find time slots to study Prabhupada's books. By dropping those other services, I will be able to find the time to increase my chanting."

* * *

4:35 a.m.

While I was in the bathroom, I heard Prabhupada lecturing from 1970 in Los Angeles. He was criticizing *yogis* who stay in one place and think that by remaining silent they can become God. Prabhupada said that a devotee doesn't sit and meditate. He said there is no example of Krishna doing that; Krishna was always active. There was "no chance" for Him to meditate. This reminded me once again of Prabhupada's emphasis on active

preaching. I also thought of Lord Nityananda, whose appearance day is next Sunday. I'll have to prepare a talk. It's inevitable that I will have to mention that we receive Lord Nityananda's mercy when we preach Lord Caitanya's message.

Hearing Prabhupada makes me reconsider my plan to diminish my writing, because writing is my preaching. Still, the urge to chant more never goes in vain. I don't want to become a "*babaji*" in the derogatory sense. I want to keep preaching actively.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

Unusual day "recovering, and managed to remain pain-free. Oh, I don't want to see a headache specialist.

So, the conversion to all-day *hari-nama* proves to be a passing fancy, a groundhog-day illusion. I can't keep it up. Couldn't even start it. Back to bop and prose, all supported by Srila Prabhupada's statements that we should be active and preach.

But what about preparing my consciousness for the time of death? Death doesn't seem so immediately imminent (although I know that's not really true), but it's the best I can do right now. We can't do everything "intense *bhajana* or intense preaching "all at once.

So off I go the shed, muttering my last two rounds "I mean, rounds fifteen and sixteen.

British helicopter overhead. Vital action? I was thinking "when I was in that "conversion" attitude "that I would lecture about the holy name on Lord Nityananda's appearance day. I would be fired up by my own austerities. Maybe instead I can dare to speak of Nityananda Prabhu as a preacher.

* * *

Bluing
& Sad old man bopping priest I say
you is in a forbidden corner
most laughable
but no subdued bluing
for me
my dream
will come true
and it won't be the kind
that makes me forget my Lord.

* * *

Okay, Grem, *you* want to solo. But you've
got no sweet
music no
improvise
only
venom.

* * *

Bluing and the grem's dissonance
but I intend to integrate
in the middle of all this noise.

* * *

O Krishna, I hear You
in the music of the spheres "
Your message
for those of us who are lonely
without You.
You never leave us alone
but become the One
before all our zeroes. "

* * *

3 p.m.

Everybody likes the mild autumn nights of Vrndavana. They are neither hot nor cold. The wind through the gardens of fruits and flowers pleases all ""All but the *gopis* who are always overtaken by heartfelt sorrow in the absence of Krishna." (*Light Of The Bhagavata*, #42)

Srila Prabhupada says we can practice *viraha* worship. "In the present state of affairs we cannot make any direct touch with the Personality of Godhead. But if we practice the *viraha* mode of worship, we can transcendently realize the presence of the Lord more lovingly than in His presence." That's encouraging. Srila Prabhupada was such a master, and he was so able to encourage his neophyte disciples. No wonder we loved him. We can please Krishna, and we can come close to Him even though we are so far away. Srila Prabhupada gave us practical engagements in *bhakti-yoga* to achieve this *viraha* state.

Of course, Srila Prabhupada knew that true love is required if we want to really experience Sri Krishna's separation, but still we can use the encouragement. O Prabhupada, please accept me. May I please do my duties in a Krishna conscious way, as your servant.

* * *

The Pain And The Joy
& I am on Geaglum
looking toward Inis rath
and hoping to go to my room and thank
Prabhupada for allowing me to
worship him "to bring *that* out
the good in me "

and to ask God to speak love to
spread peace
and to help me do what I can
even a simple offering
but made from the
heart "my heart.
And Krishna, when pain comes my way
on the ordained days
then let me accept
it, that pain, with a philosophical
attitude. I'm no Therese of Lisieux
but still want to calm my restless
mind at
night in my bed
even if I can't chant clear.
I'm aware it's my karma.
Remember the old woman who
told her doctor to stop the morphine?
"I've caused others suffering," she said,
"so now let me suffer."
To the end.
It's true I love the freedom
the song returned love
to work free of pain
but there is woundedness,
yin and yang, both ways,
the crucified, the risen
the joyful, the heartache
and we must go to Krishna as we are. "

* * *

4 p.m.

On my way back from the shed, I saw a bird with a speckled breast on a swaying branch. It had several nice tunes. "Songbird," I thought, "have you returned from the Canary Islands or from Spain?" It's only February, but still I hear all the new singers. Doesn't seem like winter has much of a grip anymore "it's so sunny today. I feel like I'm still coming out of that pain. Well, just don't forget Krishna.

February 4, 12:15 a.m.

Every morning at this time I come begging for the ability to understand the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* verses. I come grateful to Krishna for the things I can do each day, the things I try to offer as devotional service, and I want to always honor devotees who

preach to save the people of this world who are unknowingly on a path leading to extreme sufferings. I saw that suffering in my dream last night.

May I please approach that Lord who has no material names, forms, and pastimes, and who is especially merciful to the devotees who worship His lotus feet. *Athapi te deva padambuja-devaya*: "My Lord, if one is favored by even a slight trace of the mercy of Your lotus feet, he can understand the greatness of Your personality. But those who speculate to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead are unable to know You, even though they continue to study the *Vedas* for many years." (*Bhag.* 10.14.29)

Being pleased by Daksa's prayers, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, appeared before him.

Oh, those stories tell of different times in India "something about Vedic culture. And they happened to a powerful ascetic and devotee.

Yes. Lord Caitanya came to save me.

* * *

Suddenly remembered how last night I was struggling to put Krishna's nightshirt on so it would look nice. Then I thought that it was He who was giving me such a hard time. I didn't want to disturb Him by tugging at His clothes, but then thought He should cooperate so that it would come out nice for Him. He can be such a naughty boy.

* * *

5:05 a.m.

So many things I could do now, but I'm too tired. Dreamt of a long-distance bus ride. A woman was writing on blue stationery. All I could remember about her writing was her dedication. People later read what a writer had written in earnest. In my dream, I thought of writing a fictional diary, but as usual, I passed beyond it.

Lord Nityananda. My fluttering left eyelid, out of my control. Head "vise sensation. It's preventing me from cutting loose, but rest probably won't help either.

* * *

11:25 a.m.

Foggy Joe didn't write this morning. Laid back on double pillows instead. Precious time can't always be "seized," not even to vigorously finger beads or recite mantras. Does Krishna accept as devotion our fallow times ""They also serve who only wait"?

Rowers cross with a slow, methodical dip of oars "pull, pull, no engine but human heart and arms and hands and a wooden boat on a lake.

* * *

12:58 p.m.

Gopi-manjari dasi has been here a few days. She made me some *halava* and a pie served with hot milk for breakfast, but it gave me indigestion. I spoke with her briefly, and felt sorry I couldn't do more than that. I'm afraid she may feel it was better she had

not come. Like everyone, she is looking for attention and affection, and I seem so incapable of giving either. I have to hope people can find what they are looking for in my books. Yes, some respond to that. Madhava dasa quoted a song he heard while driving home late from work. It was about Vincent van Gogh, called, "Starry, Starry Night": "Now I understand/ when you tried to say to me/ how you suffered for your sanity/ how you tried to set them free . . ." Madhava said, "It was about this artist whom no one could understand his expression or his persona, but that didn't stop him. He went on with it." The last lines of the song: "they would not listen/ they did not know how/ perhaps they'll listen now . . ."

* * *

2:10 p.m.

Despite the head vise I'm out here in the shed. What can I do? Try to operate as usual. It's an open mike "anyone can talk.

Don't worry, I won't allow any low-class curs to speak at length. I want to hear Krishna consciousness. Still, I'll let the voices come, to say what they feel they need to say.

One wants to tell of a dream: Dr. Alexander appeared in a library setting. I didn't see her at first but was busy writing, on the trail of some idea. She asked, "Am I disturbing you?" I looked up. "No," I said, "you aren't disturbing me." Then I simply went back to my writing, although I had lost my train of thought.

Now, that sort of memory-dream fragment is allowed at the open mike because it came from the flow of consciousness "the flow I'm trying to tap and to steer and to ride all at once.

"Pseudo-profundity." Hammill said Issa's poem on the spring frost didn't fall into that category, but in the hands of a lesser poet, it could have. Well, I can't worry about that now. Enter the spring frost with February thoughts, and steer to Krishna.

* * *

In The Field Before Going Home
Remember: I want to go home not
any house will do.
O sir, you have six minutes in which to
write your will.
May my master be with me then
telling me what to do
and how to go
from this field to that one.
Because I want to go home "
and if not then to another field like this one
clear and free with
Krishna beads to finger
and more mornings
in which to plead

with resolute will.

* * *

Field Work

1 Opening Day

Time: 8:26

Grimace. Here we go we did not expect
to be escorted so quickly into the theater
everyone wants to talk

varnaSrama

inner prayer

bhajana

kill gurus

jail jerks.

* * *

Moderator said, "It's not an open mike. It's just one guy blowing for five or six minutes. Everyone else must wait their turn (if it ever comes)." He has no time to spare.

String of words

an intro in a big theater. Just picture it "opening night and I'm on despite head pain.
How's that for dynamics?

* * *

Controlled hysteria

you see in us many things

that could surprise you

write with head down and no distractions

except when we come up for air

in the lake.

* * *

Krishna-book growl. I'm trying to teach the whole world that Krishna consciousness is for them.

You mean like Sadaputa and the science exhibits between the Prabhupada Samadhi and the new temple in Mayapur?

No, a more private truth "that Krishna is protecting us in this field. If He gives, we take, and if He takes, we surrender. That's all there is to it. Get it?

Even if it hurts.

That's real.

Because it's His anyway.

* * *

O Madhava dasa, thank you
for liking my string of words on
the piano of spirit

* * *

no tag-on endings but
through and through real truth
words that name Krishna
as best
better than letters
than headaches
than sleep in bed
and better than
your new car.

Listen, I'm on stage with these profs who peer, brothers who say, "Who's Sats think he is, parading around with that horn? Why didn't he ask permission first? Does he think he alone has discovered something?"

No, he doesn't think that at all. He just knows that Krishna was with him in the old days when he wrote through his loneliness. Now he's happy to report that Krishna has stayed with him, that he has

Krishna consciousness Krishna
consciousness
and has become a servant of all
of the Supreme
and will one day see Him
face to face.

* * *

Night Notes, 5:25 p.m.

Reading Etty Hillesum's diary again. She became compassionate, wise, strong in the face of the atrocities the Nazis committed when they occupied Amsterdam. Her race was gradually being wiped out. We'll see how her bravery bears up when she goes to the concentration camp. But they say she maintained an attitude of trying to clear her heart of vindictiveness and went on loving others, remained cheerful, continued to see life as beautiful, and tried not to act on selfishness or faithlessness, although her concept of God was simple.

February 5, 12.05 a.m.

Do I have an infantile attitude toward the Krishna conscious philosophy? Have I lost my ability to think for myself due to so much group thinking? The infantile mentality could be a kind of salvationism "wanting to be spared from suffering in my next life, not owning up to the responsibility of a possible next life filled with reactions from my imperfect activities in this one. Or perhaps it's just a general beggar's mentality, not a

more manful expression of love for Krishna and serving Him in the present. I can't tell, but it's worth thinking about.

My life is mostly over. This occurs to me when I see Janmastami dasa, Abhaya dasi's sixteen-year-old son. I never learned to drive. Now there's no point. And there's no question of starting so many things up again in this lifetime "going back to school, falling in love, getting married, raising a family, finding a job, a career. I'm supposed to be free and fortunate, like a white cloud that doesn't carry much rain.

"This is who I am."

Who am I? Am I a *Bhagavatam* reader?

* * *

Living entities are punished again and again by birth and death. That is the definition of the *nitya-baddha*. We struggle due to our rebellious nature. The Lord and His devotees want to correct rebellious *jivas*. That's the purpose of the Krishna consciousness movement. "Similarly when the spiritual master trains the conditioned souls to become Krishna conscious, his position is successful." (*Bhag.* 6.4.44) Krishna is pleased with the devotee who induces others to take to Krishna consciousness and who gives them all facilities to do so. Srila Prabhupada expects all members of his Krishna consciousness movement to participate in this kind of preaching.

So somehow, even in my semi-invalid condition and despite my hermit tendencies, I have to work to spread Krishna consciousness. It is the way I can share hope and faith. My life provides an alternative to the straight institutional example, because I live it in Krishna consciousness. I "teach" (struggle with) how to face conditional emotions, past life, and how to remain a real person while following the demands of the Krishna conscious teachings "how to avoid the pitfalls in religious life.

Brahma and Siva are big *prajapatis* and Daksa is a lesser one, but Krishna is also pleased with him. Prabhupada comments that the Lord is pleased equally in a spiritual way with anyone who engages in His service.

* * *

I had a dream last night that me and several of my Godbrothers were in a war zone. Prabhupada was preaching somewhere behind enemy lines, and some of us decided to go and see him. All the streets were dangerous. Sudama managed to get to Prabhupada. When he returned several hours later, he told us that he had risked his life to go. The rest of us didn't see Prabhupada, but we arrived safely back at the U.S. Naval base. I began to worry that Prabhupada would ask to see me and that I would have to enter back into the danger. Then I realized that if I took the risk to see Prabhupada, however, he would see me and tell me what to do.

* * *

Quick, Surrender!

& Fast so fast they go and I'm on a
bicycle behind them. Madhu says he's frustrated

wanting to move faster
into a new house
at the speed of horn or
mind
car, plane

* * *

but still we can't reach that other abode
not with the swiftest running
soul-power
not without a real breakthrough
into love.

* * *

Slow down? No use trying?
Can't?

* * *

Small animals in the cold "how
quickly they run to catch prey
or to not be caught
themselves.

* * *

O Krishna, I ask Your mercy on all
us slow students
who unlike liberated souls
can't climb to You
until we rid ourselves of
the slow torture
of this
world. "

* * *

Old Flame
& Don't go back to that
old woman you knew
because now she's got pancake make-up
on her face and you
walk with a crutch.

* * *

Fat, drunk, woozy
cigarette smoking, you
both sit at the
cafe table, brush cheeks
and it's over "all
but the memory

* * *

of what never was or
maybe did exist
but now this cynic can only
fall into sentiment.

* * *

Listen, listen "a new bird
can sing and we can forget our sense
gratification long past
and remember only
Lord Hari.
All old flames can be
put out.

* * *

Because in a past life we missed
someone "loved and lusted
instead of wanting
the pure flame
the original
today we make farewells and
"Get thee to a nunnery"
and quickly too.
All we can do is hope

* * *

we can reincarnate somewhere in *sari*
or *dhoti*, some temple somewhere
in the CIS or Hong Kong "
a cook in the temple kitchen with
no past bubbling up
so importantly

and only the simple resolve
to march with the Swami
to Vrndavana. "

* * *

5:55 a.m.

I'm curious about Etty Hillesum's diary. I keep wanting to know if she'll be able to maintain her spiritual insight when it gets worse and worse under the hands of the Gestapo. The book reads like a novel though. She's an ordinary intellectual girl, sensitive, a free spirit, and has several simultaneous affairs with different men. She even begins an affair with her psychiatrist. Gradually, however, she realizes as the Nazis tighten the ring around Amsterdam's Jews that life is beautiful that God has a plan we may not be able to understand, and that she will not hate the Germans. Each person, she says, should work on the hate within themselves. She places herself in God's hands, come what may. When she radiates that kind of realization, I find it attractive and strengthening. Still, I keep wondering how long she will be able to keep it up.

I think the reason I'm so curious about her is that I have the same question about myself: Will I be able to keep up my Krishna consciousness under difficult circumstances? Some devotees are prophesizing widespread disaster. regardless of whether those prophesies will come true, we each have to face the disaster of our own death. I like to think that Etty Hillesum was able to keep her home-grown God consciousness until the end and that perhaps I can too. But what will be the reality when push turns to shove and gets worse?

* * *

9 a.m.

Etty Hillesum writes, "Keeping a diary is an art I do not understand." She was uncertain about what was fit to write of a day's events. When I read this, I immediately thought I have mastered the art of diary-writing. But I haven't. When I sense a persona telling my story, I wonder at the motive behind that; does the persona select and omit, and for what purpose? What is the meaning of an incomplete record? Like Etty, I don't know the art. Or at least I haven't mastered it. It's too much a learning process when you have to start each day with a blank page.

I like her diary. I skip the parts about "S", her lover and mentor. I only have about fifty pages left before the end (she stops writing because she is taken to the concentration camp). There are about 130 pages of letters written from Westerbork Barracks before she leaves for Auschwitz and is killed. I want to see how she was able to follow through on her belief in God and in the goodness of life, her decision not to hate her persecutors. Even if she doesn't carry it through all the way to the end, it doesn't mean she failed or her philosophy is wrong. It's like devotional service "there's eternal credit given for any progress made.

* * *

I read a letter this morning from a devotee who referred to my comments on the "zigzag path to truth." She said she is taking a "zig" in her desire to attain renunciation and full surrender to Krishna, but is hoping that in the long run, the honest concessions she is making will lead to realistic advancement. I encouraged her to do what she had to do. Then I thought of the different things in my own life that could be seen as "zigs" and "zags." Where is that straight path to full surrender? *Vairagya-vidya-nija-bhakti-yoga*. I want to at least do everything as an offering by dovetailing it in Krishna's service, but dovetailing implies concession: doing what we want to do for Krishna. Admitting that some of the things we do are not on the direct linear path doesn't mean we have to disparage ourselves. rather, we simply have to learn to live with what we are at any one moment. From there we can move forward.

* * *

10:37 a.m.

I have done little today so far, but at least I have no pain right now. The thing I *didn't* do, however, was to read deep, straight *sastra*. At least I'll hear Srila Prabhupada lecturing on *ISopanisadas* I massage him ""The Supreme Lord walks and does not walk . . ." One should learn both nescience and wisdom.

They had a good time in Vrndavana and would like to go every year. Their children loved it and didn't get sick. She said it was good to travel because "we were small-minded." As for me, I've traveled enough. For me, to become broad-minded means hearing many people's agendas and opinions, and moving in and out of different places. My passport is covered in stamps. I plan to stay here this year.

* * *

2.25 p.m.

Failure may be the pillar of success, but regardless of what happens in our life, we should have faith in the ultimate goal of devotional service. "We should not consider going back to Godhead a plaything." (*Light Of The Bhagavata*, #43)

I know, I know, I can't stay here forever. In the meantime, however, I am certainly enjoying this quiet landscape. Looking out at the marsh that leads to the lake strait and the island, I see the sky has darkened. It's an extension of the landscape pictured in the pages of *Light of the Bhagavata*. I think of Etty Hillesum loving her small study desk, her private room, her favorite authors (especially Rilke), and stirring up impressions of inward sanctity and strength for the incredibly hard times ahead. Although there has been no indication in my life that I will suffer such destitution, I sometimes dream of such things. Perhaps next life. Etty took it one day at a time "before she was taken away. Dig deep into the present moment allowed by God, and don't waste time on pettiness or nastiness. Krishna is giving me *this* time; let me use it in His service.

But you know, you have to leave this body to realize your ultimate goal.

* * *

In Times To Come
& He is here, Stefan, singing a song
on a flute made by Krishna
the inspired ingredient
and his own breath.

* * *

"Give Him your breath" "
selling flutes and wooden pipes,
that's what Visnujana did before he
joined the Swami's movement.

* * *

Lord of the *devas* who
teaches the herons to fly
but not like owls or
parakeets.

* * *

Breathy reed, stop up
holes and be excited "Krishna's
flute is like none you've
heard on earth.

* * *

Please, Lord, in the times
ahead when we feel
too much pain, please
let us remember You
and find inner peace.
May we rise to the occasion
when we no longer have
sweet solitude and can no
longer polish poems or
lay down on a quiet
and regular
bedstead.

* * *

O Krishna, please
never leave me,
and may I increase my
gratitude my
awareness "
what I want and can't seem
to find.
I am a broken man
soft, weak,
and You know how
to strengthen me
to make me a
supple bow
in the hands of
the great preacher. "

* * *

Field Work
2 What Love
Time: 15.20

We open again on a walk, our host dominant, although we have our own sanctified realm. What love.

Srila Prabhupada says there is no love except for love of Krishna. I heard Bhurijana Prabhu say that too "we are so likely to call lust love.

Hey, don't expect me to always write some crazy, driven thing. Sometimes I just want to tell you the reeds are still growing, that I'm aware, that it's easy, that I have time given by Krishna, that my heroics are still
quiet
my pension
for past services.

* * *

Devotees (and kings, merchants) go out after Caturmasya to do their thing. Who can we trust?

Only God and ourselves. I know I can trust God and His book and His best servants but I've lost some of my simple faith.

* * *

"I can't make sense out of anything much," he said, "I keep trying to remember."
One man said he wanted to leave his boss's association, but his boss said, "No, stay."
They talked back and forth and
back
and forth.

Both got hurt. One felt he had given too much, the other that his employee should be more grateful.

Ungrateful, ungrateful, I tell you.

They both said they were sorry, really sorry, and assured each other that they loved one another. But they had their feelings and they had to split apart. The employee begged for blessings.

One of those guys even cried.

* * *

I don't know, I can't quite figure it out. I'm only writing my Field Work tribute to my master.

Break *my* neck, he might, and I don't argue back.

My love "I do need to express more of it when I come before him
and at other times

because I'm meant to serve and
want to return to that simple slot
as in my best days
when I was so young
and subservient.

* * *

Master, see me through. Please. Even in this faulty movement, this
movement of hope

O master,
keep me solid.

* * *

5:12 p.m.

God existed before the creation, so He cannot be known by the knowledge-acquiring methods introduced after the creation. He can be known only by the practice of *bhakti*. He is the eternally Supreme Person.

I wrote that without much emotion, but I don't disbelieve it. Krishna can be perceived even in qualities such as *tapasya*, ecstasy, and in the demigods. If one is very fortunate, he'll know the Supreme in His personal form.

So off runs Madhu with Radhanatha to go play someone's harp. He has an hour-and-a-half drive each way. He thinks he's a young man, and maybe he is.

* * *

Night Notes, 6:05 p.m.

Reading Etty Hillesum's letters from Westerbork. Hope I can sleep peacefully. We live in safe times. She was extraordinarily brave. How did she receive such grace? She

worked for it "prepared herself. But that grace flowered suddenly within her. She read Rilke's letters and said the following about him:

I always return to Rilke. It is strange to think that someone so frail, who did most of his writing within protective castle walls, would have perhaps been broken by the circumstances in which we now live. Is that not further testimony that life is finely balanced? Evidence that, in peaceful times, and under favorable circumstances, sensitive artists may search for the purest and most fitting expression of their deepest insights so that, during more turbulent and debilitating times, others can turn to them for support and a ready response to their bewildered questions? A response they're unable to formulate for themselves, since all their energies are in looking after the bare necessities? Sadly, in difficult times we tend to shrug off the spiritual heritage of artists from an "easier age," with "what use is that sort of thing to us now?"

It is an understandable but shortsighted reaction. And utterly impoverishing.

We should be willing to act as a balm for all wounds.

Maybe if I'm to live in a peaceful time I can do that "mine gems of everyday Krishna consciousness that could help people at other times, even under circumstances much different than the ones under which I write. That's already true to what's happening in my life "that the "white cloud" *sannyasa* life provides enough peace that a man can practice *sadhana* and write poems. Others may not find the time. Poems are not only for people in the present, but also for people in other times and places.

February 6, 2:15 a.m.

Open *Srimad Bhagavatam*. The Supreme Lord is telling Daksa, "I am the reservoir of unlimited potency, and therefore I am known as unlimited or all-pervading. From My material energy the cosmic manifestation appeared within Me . . ." (*Bhag.* 6.4.48, purport) Go ahead, say it "*I used to read these statements with more faith*. I am no agnostic now, but I see in myself a certain lack of pure faith. Is it a lack of mercy? But mercy is bestowed by guru and Krishna on those who have faith. The *SvetaSvatara Upanisad* states, *yasya deve para bhaktir, yatha deve tatha gurau*: "Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed." What else can I do but go on reading the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*? I'll have more chance to revive pure faith.

I slept better than usual from 7 p.m. to midnight. I dreamt that some senior ISKCON devotees, myself included, had to climb a small mountain after coming out of the water. I did it pretty well; I used gloves to climb. Bhagavan dasa was there. When I was at the top, they said TKG would also be climbing today. I slipped away and went to a hidden apartment on the Lower East Side, but I had only an hour to myself before I had to return.

* * *

"Nothing is possible without *tapasya*." (*Bhag.* 6.4.51, purport) The Supreme Lord says Brahma was attempting to create but thought himself incapable, so the Lord

inspired him to perform *tapasya*. Srila Prabhupada writes: "The more we engage in austerities, the more we become powerful by the grace of the Lord."

Unfortunately, Daksa performed austerity to obtain the facility for unlimited sex enjoyment. Of course, he wanted to use it in Krishna's service. May I be spared from desiring my own types of indulgences.

Kardama did better than Daksa in terms of what he wanted from his austerities. Daksa later cursed Narada Muni. Srila Prabhupada says Daksa was able to commit such an offense because he was still a material sense enjoyer.

* * *

Devotee and Nondevotee
& I don't want bad
association
but God consciousness
for sure.
That sort of thing, you know.

* * *

Now be on time, praying
in that *avant*-shed way
where others also want only straight KC
from me. Does anyone object?
In this shed I beat with hammers
on piano strings to make
a string of words
to serve the Lord
of eternity, bliss, and knowledge.

* * *

It's not a plaything
he said. Then what
to make of me in this
situation
where I springboard
leaping off into the sounds
of speckled birds redbreast chirpings
gray-hooded crows? They're
not even devotees. "

* * *

Dreams
& I come upon a serious group

playing jazz "in a dream say "and forty
Godbrothers on a fence
like peacocks
fly away.

* * *

I came upon a tree shedding blood
and tears in a dream "I didn't
dream of ETTY or the Gestapo
or Auschwitz.
relieved.

* * *

I look at that clock Navy time
black face white dial said
14:00 the ship wasn't
sinking

* * *

in a dream it was 1952
Miles recorded the same
Riffs but changes were okay we
didn't want no
miffs

* * *

I was B.C. (that means
before Krishna consciousness) and I said
"Oh, God, I got no sex" so
smoked what smelled like burnt
orange peels to
LCDr richardson.

* * *

It was getting too sad
for words and I opted out.

* * *

Lower East Side, snow,
Rilke, and my own

big journal to write my lists
of Needs
it was happy?
Illusion only. "

* * *

4:20 a.m.

O Kana, You are bewildering us with Your sidelong glances. O Anuradha, you are the beautiful follower of Radha. The dialogue goes on among eternally liberated souls.

O Kana, You are like a bird giving up a lotus flower to go to Candravali "the followers of Radha tell Him He is giving up a lotus flower for an unwholesome swamp. We are on their side. We aspire to serve Radha and Her great devotees, the Six Gosvamis of Vrndavana.

A tiny spider "blow him away. *Krishna Krishna he.*

* * *

5:20 a.m.

There's a faint light on the horizon long before dawn. Is my spiritual state like that? I really don't know. I may be doing quite well in Krishna's estimation. He loves everyone. But in terms of attaining *prema*, B. says we are far away from *bhakti*. I could say it's a matter of semantics. Srila Prabhupada says we are practicing *bhakti*, that we're just unripe mangoes.

Yeah, B. says, *really* unripe.

And so the discussion continues, back and forth, and from it we manage to draw encouragement and the urgency to go on.

Put it this way: are we going back to Godhead after this life? Does it really matter? It could be said that going back to Godhead is not as important as remembering Krishna in any situation. Srila Prabhupada says we cannot attain love of God unless we serve. *Sevon mukhe hi jivadau*. Then what is service? Is delivering Krishna newspapers on your bicycle service? Is it service to conquer anger and lust? Depends whose pleasure you're conquering them for. Yes, someone could pin each of us down and say, "Look, this is it: you are a *prakṛta-bhakta*, and here's an ID card that proves it."

All right, we say, we accept it. We *accept* who we are. Still, we just want to serve guru and Krishna. And we're back to being a mango.

O Krishna, in that dream I finally prayed. I felt I was granted an abiding, deep realization, one that sustained me even when I met extremely clever people. O Krishna, I will never leave You.

* * *

9:25 a.m.

Reading of the HaryaSvas. "One who is too involved in his material environment and does not look within the core of his heart is increasingly entangled in the illusory energy." (*Bhag.* 6.5.8, purport) People who work only for sense gratification have no

opportunity to cut the bondage of *samsara*. Such work is a waste of time. But liberation doesn't sound like a practical program to most people. They don't believe in the soul or transmigration. They are covered by illusion and bodily designations. The HaryaSvas, however, were eligible for enlightenment.

* * *

Gray sky. Madhu in and out. Door. Wind. Pleasant. Pat yourself on the back for little increments accomplished "pots washed, utensils too, floor swept. I feel good. I am watching things happen in my life as if in a film. When it gets to the end? I'll remember what I'm supposed to do. Srila Prabhupada said it's just like a school exam. You get promoted or you fail. Well, I did pretty good at school. At college when I was serious, I studied hard. Yes, I'll know what to do.

* * *

Who Can Make A Poem To God?
& Sweet all the things You are
like sunset, sunrise and
the Irish gray sky moving "
all-pervasive Lord my
words are not enough.

* * *

This way we waltzed this street
we walked how different it is now
life should be lived
by a great poet
or even a little one
a pot-boiler man who
lives under the best shelter
and has something worth saying.

* * *

Pot-boiling man, you cleaned a pot with
plenty of suds and a sponge and
a Brillo pad, elbow grease "*and*
you offered it to Krishna
your song your
service.

* * *

The blare is never enough
'cause you make mistakes
and your tone
your embouchure
is not so tight

* * *

it takes practice
and more practice
and to dedicate your brief
time to poignant peace,
hearing Krishna's words
and going to Vrndavana
true. "

* * *

12:05 p.m.

"Narada Muni had mentioned a kingdom where there is only one king with no competitor." (*Bhag.* 6.5.12, purport) He was talking about the spiritual world, and of course that one king with no competitor was the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One male, one enjoyer. The rest are servants. "The duty of the human being is to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead." He is not subject to destruction or rebirth. Another difference.

We yearn for an experience of the otherworldly One, that all-pervasive Visnu. Give, give more, He says, before you can know Me. And Lord Caitanya prays, "You may make me brokenhearted by not being present before Me, but still I will love You unconditionally."

I'd love Him if I knew Him. So we say. Well, then love Him without knowing Him. *Seeing* God is not so important. Faith, hearing, submission "God, don't leave me out here with the atheists. Convince me, teach me, touch me with Your presence. Quell my doubts so I can go on with the work of *bhakti*."

* * *

2:37 p.m.

In the shed: it's raining outside, and a few raindrops have made it through the window frame and have landed on the tips of paintbrushes, tops of paint jars, and have sprinkled the cover of *Light of the Bhagavata*. Pause a moment and hear the rain. Does it make me feel snug? B. lecturing on *Srimad-Bhagavatam* said that at any moment we could die a violent death. So? What was his point? That we can't control it? Foolishly, we don't worry about that. Srila Prabhupada has urged us to become fully Krishna consciousness before we have to face our next death. Don't engage in non-Krishna conscious activities

thinking you have plenty of time to become serious later. Time is extremely precious. Once it's been used up in this life, it's gone.

Krishnaloka is the residence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the original Transcendence. "From the Transcendence . . . there emanates a glowing effulgence that resembles the tail of a comet." (*Light of the Bhagavata*, #47) Imagine Krishna's personal glow; imagine the expansion of His energies.

When souls travel to the spiritual world, they can see all the planets in the material universe. But such souls are not tourists. Their minds are fixed on the Supreme Lord's abode. Hare Krishna. Hear the rain. The sound . . . the beloved words of *sastra*.

Some carved wooden *murtis* arrived from Vrndavana today. One is a figure of Lord Caitanya seated in the Gambhira. The other is of Lord Nrsimhadeva with the demon (half-carved) on his lap. They brought more of Vrndavana to my altar and I hope to my chanting as well.

* * *

What's Your rush?
& Push and shove "a subway
life I only want to be with
one who can help me go to God.
Other than that, what's the rush?

* * *

Window fogging over piano rain.
A family returned from India.
What did it feel like
there? What does it
feel like here
in this skin these
bones my
life tooting along?

* * *

In a hurry to pen down sonnets
enough to last the millennium
and beyond

* * *

to do me good
to show me Krishna
beyond Devi-dhama
to take me to Hari-dhama better
Krishnaloka the

lotus with the flare coming
out in all His splendor

* * *

we're traveling faster
than light/ don't look
around just be glad
when you arrive.

* * *

Now soaked in a skin
phone rings next door
man upstairs practicing
I want to be alone to
pray.

* * *

But "Save the rascals!" too.
He's back from India but I
didn't go stayed
chanting
pennies
worries
rounds "

* * *

Field Work

3 Some Things I Won't Tolerate "Give Me Peace

Time: 22:21 (but I cut out at around 17 minutes)

Everyone, take your seats or leave now. You have that freedom. The times were hysterical "subways careening, screeching iron wheels on iron rails "the subway stations filled with crooks to plague the weak.

I'm out here at peace, far away from crowds. How did I earn such a privilege?
Detached? Bracing, blasting through the raucous cries of a wounded beast.

* * *

Okay, reporter, I thought you could "since you're paying for this field work "do something important.

Sure, here's my plan. I'll read my spiritual master's books more often no matter what else happens and despite that noise. You know, Etty sat in a corner and read rilke even in the madness. Like that.

What's the reading plan?

You see, I can't easily read the same thing over and over. It's just too hard. Instead, I thought I might just read verses or whatever purports came to mind "just reach out for any book and read it. You reach out. You reach out with feeling and intuition but randomly. Once you have it in hand, you stay with it, in the *lectio* spirit.

* * *

My purpose in field work is to preach and not waste time. My intention, if left alone, is to tune into the knowledge coming in the Vedic scriptures and into the material world. I don't need to interact with anything else.

Build on it. For example, now I am reading how Narada told an allegorical story to distract Daksa's ten thousand sons into becoming renunciates.

He bewildered them?

It wasn't cheating. It was a way to interest them and then point out this: One Supreme Person is the male enjoyer, and we are all meant to serve Him. Anything else in this world is a waste of time.

God, I love to hear the rain.

Hey, give me a rain check on this trip. I want to go back to the non-inflicted pain.

Why stick it out?

Let's just leave this theater. We can hear a wild beast or a garbage truck outside and the moans of the amassed people. The combined cacophony "in Vrndavana it's a mixture too, but at least all in a sacred place and much of it temple *aratis* to Govinda and bells and *bhajan*s describing Krishna playing and the name radha "even if you look out and see a monkey climbing a temple dome, or if you're afraid some big gun in ISKCON wants to take one-and-a-half hours and grind your poor head into pieces as you try to fence with him on middle ground . . .

I'm glad to be here. Although there could be more silence. That noise . . . They're . . . moaning, like at the end of some Greek tragedy.

I don't want that noise.

M. asks with raised eyebrows, "So? Now?"

"Yes," I say, and we get up and leave.

* * *

Night Notes, 5:34 p.m.

Santoka Taneda, wandering haiku poet, *saki* drinker, and at the end of his life he walked over a bridge in the rain and knew it was probably the last time he would do that. This was his last taste of that mountain, that season. It touched me "the sad, poignant temporality of this world. We who are trying to be Krishna conscious feel close to Krishna at such a time. A devotee in Vrndavana wrote me that there are three kinds of Vrajavasis: (1) those who are born in Vrndavana; (2) those who live there; and (3) those who die there. He said the third is superior. I'll write back and say there are two kinds of devotees: (1) those who live in Vrndavana; (2) those who live outside of Vrndavana but who think of Vrndavana. Of the two, which are better? Can we die in Vrndavana if our body dies elsewhere, or do we all have to rush to Vrndavana to die there, our minds

swirling? He said, "So-and-so went back to Godhead last month because he died in Vrndavana." That's it? That's all we have to do? If we have the faith, I suppose, that's true.

Anyway, not all of us will get such warning. Hearing the holy names, surrounded by devotees, with consciousness fixed on Vrndavana "those are the main things.

February 7, 12:15 a.m.

Let me learn, like the HaryaSvas, of that one Supreme Person who has no birth or death. He is eternal; don't decry Him. Let me not decry whatever appreciation I do have for hearing *hari-katha*. Sure, I fall short, but I do have taste and am submissive. I'm a ripe candidate, a white-cloud *sannyasi* who is free of family and financial obligations. I have nothing better to do with my time than to serve the Supreme Lord. "The duty of the human being is to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

Narada told of a hole, from which upon entering, we don't return. He could have been referring either to Patala or to Vaikuntha. "One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna." (Bg. 4.9) Prabhupada reasons, "Why do people not care about this?" Why waste time and experience more births and deaths? Can't we see this place is full of misery? Those who are sober dedicate their human lives to attaining that place of no return. They also help others to achieve it.

Of course, most people think this is too otherworldly. What about the here and now, they want to know. I'm not completely clear of wasting time on the "here and now" myself; I mean, I spend time both in pleasures and fear. Still, let me repeat the HaryaSvas' phrase, *kim asat-karmabhir bhavet*: "What is the use of impermanent fruitive activities?"

* * *

I was in the kitchen a few minutes after midnight washing my face, when suddenly I heard honking. It was wild geese or ducks flying in the dark. I parted the curtain and looked out. I couldn't see the moon, but it was light enough to see land and a few stars in the sky. The birds could navigate by that light, I suppose. Was that temporary? The Buddhists say it's *all* temporary, but poets draw a sadness and love of nature from such visions. Krishna conscious poets savor the poignancy of temporary things, but even more, savor the eternal "and if not the eternal Himself, then our yearning for the eternal and the direct meeting of the eternal in His names. Even if *we* don't *feel* eternal, we contact Krishna and know that's our real work when we look at geese honking by at midnight. We don't forget our mission for a moment.

Don't change dresses, fads, fashions, like the prostitute. Don't change bodies. Don't waste time in frivolities. "One should always be fixed in Krishna consciousness and take the cure of devotional service with firm determination." (*Bhag.* 6.5.14, purport)

It's all right to tell myself, "You should." Who's to stop me? I should read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* several times a day. I should keep bringing the mind back *to hear* when I chant *japa*. I should consider carefully what life is about.

Narada spoke on ten allegorical subjects. So far I have mentioned: (1) the king; (2) the hole which you enter and from which you don't emerge; and (3) the prostitute. The next topic is the prostitute's husband, who is polluted intelligence. Don't follow the dictates of bad intelligence and material consciousness.

I think it's healthy that we hear the "shoulds" and the "should nots," and I also think it's healthy to give ourselves credit for whatever we have achieved. We shouldn't be overly negative about our lack of advancement. When one devotee was here recently, she described herself as having no deep commitment to Krishna consciousness. She said she was practicing because it's all she knows, and because psychologically, she's a perfectionist. Now she has written to me from Vrndavana to own up to the fact that she *is* seriously committed to Krishna consciousness. That's good. If we're too negative all the time, we might begin to wonder why we even bother with what begins to feel like a pretense of practicing Krishna consciousness. A devotee lives always with hope.

* * *

Here Goes
& Narada said and don't forget
there's a king
a hole a
prostitute
her husband
a razor machine
mowing us down . . .
Is Narada improvising
speaking free?

* * *

All night I couldn't
sleep because I was excited I
didn't want to miss the gig
to get up and play beside
such an expert
even though my stuff is modal
and
modulating.
But in Krishna consciousness.
Am I hiding Krishna's names?

* * *

No no no
the way is the way
and Krishna is up a hill up a
hill like at Venkata

Tirumala Balaji.
Pilgrims always walk up
Knock and Lough Erne
to believe that austerities prove
they love God.
(People hate to hear that nowadays.)
It doesn't matter. We
stick with Vrajavasis
and what they like "
no sweets today no *pera*
but chanting Hare Krishna and
going out to preach.
Clever fellows we are
even in springtime. "

* * *

8:15 a.m.

Took my first Esgic of the week and now out for a morning walk. It must be just a few degrees below frost temperature. Some of the puddles are glazed in ice. The fields are green.

I was savoring my secret Hare Krishna mantra, just between me and the air, and thinking about the prayer to develop more taste for the holy names. At the same time a flashing sensation like a lighthouse beacon flashes every thirty seconds from behind my right eye. I couldn't help but also think (almost a prayer) that it would be nice to be free of the pain. If I had to choose, which would I like "taste for the holy name or freedom from pain?

Of course, I would be wise to choose the holy name, but it seems like I don't have a choice to choose either. So I'll just have to go on regardless, with or without taste, with or without pain. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

* * *

I remember Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura stating (Srila Prabhupada quoted him in NOI) that reading impersonalist books or studying anything Mayavadi is a kind of *atyahara* or greed. It's perhaps not a Vaisnava quality to be too intent on *anything* short of chanting and hearing in Krishna consciousness. Hear from the *sampradaya*, but don't be so mentally active beyond that.

I seem to want to know certain things, but I don't think they fall into the category of *atyahara*. For example, I have spent time trying to understand my mind. I have also tried to understand the mind of Srila Prabhupada. I confess that when I lecture, I try to convince the audience by using every device possible, including logic and emotional appeal, yet I myself may not have as much realization of Krishna as I project. I wonder sometimes about Prabhupada's private life, beyond his push to convince others of Krishna consciousness. When that priest asked him, "Do you ever have doubts?" he

replied, "Of course not." Still, he had a private life, something he lived out beyond us. We couldn't see the extent of his love, which was greater than what he projected in his lectures. We did not see him express so many feelings of unworthiness, but only caught glimpses of such feelings in a poem he wrote in Boston or a word spoken here or there.

I am different than Srila Prabhupada, of course, but not just because he is great and I am small in spiritual stature. We are both individuals, with our own way of seeing. It may not be wrong for me to want to examine the gap between my official presentation of Krishna consciousness and what I actually think and feel, even if he did not appear to do that, or if we did not witness him doing it. Is it so blasphemous to not always want to think of him as so untouchably pure that I can't inquire more about him? Am I afraid to know my father more intimately because it might break my faith? Or perhaps I am afraid that even if I see that he is much more exalted than I thought he was, that will make me too ashamed of my own position? As if they're connected.

I think it's best for me to see my spiritual father as the absolute representative of Krishna. At the same time, I have to examine myself, not harshly or negatively, but with as much honesty as possible. I can only assume that Srila Prabhupada accepts my offering and my attempts to live a life of integrity. I don't want to be a Kafka or a Nietzsche "an anti-hero who drives himself to honesty by driving himself crazy. I wish only for strong and simple faith in the perfection of God, the perfection of guru, and in my own neediness as a fallen soul.

* * *

1:45 p.m.

Can I start from nothing and write something?

No one ever starts from nothing.

Perhaps we call mental dormancy "nothing." Because I have years of study of Vedic knowledge stored up in me, layer upon layer of the same basic understanding, it is bound to come out somehow.

I also have put in years of practice at the writing table, rolling myself out and into thoughts and concerns. The silence of *not* writing can be crossed and broken. Again. Putting the first ink marks on a blank piece of paper is like the meeting of two people who haven't spoken for a while. Perhaps they haven't spoken because one of them bears a grudge; their last words were angry or full of pain, or just awkward, not deep enough. Or maybe it's something simpler. Perhaps one of them is just tired, even irritable. Maybe he has a vitamin deficiency. But they overcome it and speak something. There is certainly no shortage of things to say. Sometimes the first words that come after a silence sound wooden, especially to the one who speaks them, but if he follows through with more words, the real feeling in his heart can fill them out.

I heard on tape Srila Prabhupada giving an initiation lecture. I think it was 1970. He ordered the devotees to chant constantly. He said that *anyone* can be purified by chanting, because we are all simply souls that have been covered over by our own material desires. He praised the boys and girls who were working in the Krishna consciousness movement. He said they were not ordinary. He also said that the devotees could engage in devotional service in a variety of ways. He upheld the practice of

Krishna consciousness in an ISKCON temple. In 1970, it seemed that if one didn't work with Srila Prabhupada in a temple department, then he or she was less surrendered. Now ISKCON has evolved. It seems better for some persons to live outside the temple, especially if they are married, and to render surrendered service from there. We no longer praise one *aSrama* over another. One thing that's the same, however, is that we are still looking for balance.

In his talk, Prabhupada quoted *yesam tv anta-gatam papam* and *satam ittham brahma-sukhanubhutyā*. The cowherd boys who are currently playing with Krishna attained that position after many, many lives filled with pious activities.

Then I heard a tape of Sadaputa Prabhu arguing in favor of Vedic science. He said that the mind can be considered energy because it can bring about physical changes. This doesn't violate the law of conservation of energy. I couldn't quite grasp his point or understand its relevance, but I liked to hear him speak. He always removes that inbred prejudice I have that Vedic knowledge is weak because it doesn't tally with material science. Sadaputa Prabhu proves that material science either can accommodate the Vedic view, or that the Vedic view does not need its support. I appreciate it because we don't want to answer the questions about material science with dogma. We also want to prove the dogmatism of the material scientists when they insist that there is no consciousness and that everything has happened due to chemical reaction. They have no ultimate proof of such a claim.

After all that hearing, I now feel optimistic and hopeful. I also have no pain, which helps. My Govinda is sporting His new silver, crooked leaning stick and buffalo horn, both newly arrived from Vrndavana. Radharani is wearing Her reddish *cadar* knitted from wool purchased in Vrndavana. Prabhupada watches all. I am typing and know that my consciousness is more than neurons and electrical impulses jumping across synapses. I am really a servant who can choose words from a vocabulary and then praise Krishna with them. I can pray.

* * *

3:08 p.m.

"Some devotees from Wicklow are coming up tonight."

"Why?"

"In case you are giving a class tomorrow. It's Lord Nityananda's appearance day, and they want to spend it at a temple."

The class I intend to give, if I don't have a headache "yes, I will give it. I'm willing to take a pill to get through the pain if necessary. I'll start with *parama koruna* for Nitai and His brother. Then I'll explain the *bhajana*, or paraphrase Srila Prabhupada's explanation of it. Then I'll identify Lord Nityananda *briefly*, as He is described in the *Caitanya-caritamṛta's* *Adi-lila*. I'll also tell how Srila Prabhupada is a representative of Lord Nityananda. And then a favorite pastime "how Lord Nityananda gave Raghunatha the mercy to join Lord Caitanya. Here I can say what I don't really know: that we need Lord Nityananda's mercy if we wish to attain the goal of Krishna consciousness. I don't know Nitai personally, but I have heard about Him, the great *avadhuta* preacher. I also know that the two main ways to please Him are to chant the Hare Krishna mantra and to

preach. Finally, Madhu will sing *nitai-pada-kamala*, and I'll read from Srila Prabhupada's purport explaining that we cannot reach radha-Krishna unless we receive Lord Nityananda's mercy.

Nothing original from SDG? Why don't you lecture the way Richard Rohr does? Or give "an awesome lecture," three hours long, like some Godbrothers do? No, don't expect that.

* * *

I heard Bhurijana Prabhu say at lunch, after reading Queen Kunti's prayer for calamities, "Would you rather stay in a pleasant prison cell or go to some trouble and then be free?" Am I in a cell of my desire for peace above everything else? No, we prefer to avoid the calamities, even if Krishna arranges them for us. Bhurijana repeatedly asserts what the *sastra* says: that the material world *must* be filled with unhappiness.

No happiness, but a semblance of peace, especially here on the swan-filled lake strait. Store peace up for the rough times ahead.

* * *

"Men are accustomed to reach conclusions according to their capacity to understand, but the Supreme Lord is not subject to our limited capacity for understanding." (*ISopanisad* 4, purport) *Jivas* conjecture about the Lord, but better we hear from the *Vedas*. Srila Prabhupada advises we use our God-given individual initiative in executing the Lord's will. Surrender your will, in other words. I am trying for that.

The Supreme Lord is far away in the spiritual abode. "Yet when the Personality of Godhead comes before us, we neglect Him." (*ISopanisad* 5, purport) He has inconceivable energies and can come within the material energy, although remaining in His spiritual form.

* * *

From Gestapo To ISo to Trinidad on Lord Nityananda's Day
& Here, take a juicy apple and
take off your bulky coat
the Gestapo (in my mind)
laughs at me about to force me
as I believe it
and relax
thinking I've got a minute
of ease

* * *

ah that's better. I notice you have
"McGregor" stamped on your chest
and no gold Star of David is that

your name?
No, it's the brand of sweat
shirt. What are you from Mars
or time warp past?

* * *

That never was. I itch and the sun
comes in through a window on my right.
Everything was anticipated and they
thought they were improvising but were
wind-up toys made of the material modes

* * *

You see Krishna (hears from *ISopanisad*)
knowledge/ walks fast and doesn't
is far away and near "
how's that for a surprise?
Oh it's *deja vu* to me, man.
I knew all this before

* * *

when we learned *ISo* in
Boston '69 where they recited it every
damn day in Tarksa's
Reign in Trinidad that
emperor of the crew
good in own way
but unreasonable
although the sincere
Remained.

* * *

Remained
Remain
eating a big feast for
Radha-Gopinatha and staying up late
on Sunday nights bathing in sweat
while the *kirtana* dances back and forth.

* * *

Make sense, you snowball.
The Supreme Father has inconceivable potencies.
I'm also His
ironic part and tiny wise guy
Jimmy Cagney who will have *my* mouth
shut at the exactly right time.
After all, we're crazy in love of God
our tiny minds
blown. "

* * *

Field Work
4 Hard Worship
Time: 11:55

Are you going to tell us who this is who is hosting us? Your guru? Why the cover-up?
Hey, is that smoke I smell? Boy, I could write this up in the PADA newsletter.

* * *

Wise guys clear the air and clash sticks. You see, I never was an altar boy. I'm trying
to write this nice and clear.

* * *

He kept going, and we didn't know for sure whether he was off or was taking us for a
ride like those whose names it hurts to say.
Come on, tell it.
No, there's nothing to tell that hasn't been told already.

* * *

The holy one is out of breath. Don't try to measure a guy who's worshipping God.

* * *

Shoeshine boy
Walt Whitman random list
Manhattan Abe
ships,
uh . . . Smith and Wesson

* * *

don't say "Wall Street" or
"Fried-man" just because it
occurs. Be sensible and play
the piano according to the rule
you learned at school.

* * *

Krishna is wearing a beautiful
turban. The *gopis*
gave everything but
we can't speak about them
in *this* company
we are too busy
going back to face danger
in this world
dependent on Krishna
to protect us. After all,
He protected Uttara
Kunti, Vasudeva

* * *

but not before
He did what would
have broken the will of
any fair-weather *bhakta*.

* * *

Worship doesn't mean living always with pat answers in a churchy peace, a smile
beatific pasted across your face. It means going through hell "the God conscious man
has to scour the pot.

* * *

Night Notes, 5:32 p.m.

Night comes on fast here. Clerk looks in his archive boxes, sees where stashes are,
and tidies them, memorizes afresh his already mesmerized *sastra Slokas*, and waits. "Did
I do enough today? Will I get a good night's sleep?" Like a fisherman he baits his line,
hoping to catch at least one story-dream. I told M., "Let's have a slide show tomorrow
afternoon," then backed out of it. Better I stay here. I don't feel like talking to an
audience about my writing. Let them simply read the books.

February 8, 12:40 a.m.

Had to forgo the midnight rising. I felt head fog and wanted to assure I could give the *Caitanya-caritamrta* lecture at the temple at 8 a.m. I don't know if staying in bed an extra half hour will help, but now there is no time to read *Bhagavatam*. I'll invest my best (poor as that is) in *japa*.

Don't deride thyself, Ben Franklin. Get your Quaker Oats and go to the fount of the holy name. We each do what we can. And I want to encourage others too.

Woke up thinking of the Onassises. It started with my noticing that for a week or so, my left eyelid has been fluttering. It reminded me that Ari Onassis couldn't keep his eyelids open.

* * *

He was hard-pressed, just back from Vrndavana. He said, "I didn't want to be aware of anything, good or bad."

On the street "the cigarette butts.

He wandered out of the precincts of the temple *mandira* and all niceties, *chaukidhars*. He prayed in the streets of Vrndavana.

Another said, "reconciliation was my theme in Vrndavana this year."

* * *

Body and Soul (February 8 Take)

& I wanted to love Vrndavana
on the trail
but body and soul have to go there
and my body doesn't want to walk so far,
to be tired
and my mind wants sweet
Recompense. No *wonder* I seek it "
a laying-down rest.

* * *

Still the soul demands, whoever
he is "you, *atmaji*
atmavana
body, soul, mind
the sentiment and the swift
sayings of *Bhagavad-gita*
and our minds seeking that peak moment
when we actually hear
Krishna speaking to us.

* * *

We cried and hugged
two old enemies
standing before Radha and Syama
at Vrnda-kunda then
at Radha-kunda.
Then he wrote me a note saying he's
writing his own book God is now
his guru
and
go free.

* * *

Pressed leaves of *tulasis*
with old caked *candana*
and they sit now
in an envelope
in my out-basket.

* * *

Ship me out in a dream from here
to there and
back "a short trip
because this one spot-life
is really
not enough
and we're no ancient Egyptians
making provisions for the next life "
save no boats or cakes
or even so many intentions
to carry us across
to the other side of death.

* * *

The mind,
the sweet moments of this
life now "may we become free of *maya*
and live only for God
more tender
and true. "

* * *

5:45 a.m.

"Sukhada is making breakfast," he said.

Who am I that Sukhada should make my breakfast? Two EkadaSi breakfasts in a row "that's how I do it, because I like to eat early. O miser, O *brahmana*, who will judge you?"

Tell me more about Vrndavana. He comes back with a conundrum for his guru "something about, "When is a *babaji* different from a *gosthyanandi*, if *everything* we do is preaching?" His children loved Vrndavana, even though it wasn't like the descriptions in *Krishna* book. But it *was* an experience!

"What are you doing in Vrndavana?"

"Absolutely nothing, *mataji*, and that's the truth."

What are you doing in Loi Bazaar?

I'm renewing my *curna* and *sindura* and pepper.

Words stream from a pen. Now if *I* had been there, I would have held on tight to the rickety rickshaw so I wouldn't fall off!

But you can't stop it from happening if it's meant to be.

Lie on my back in the bed in this room and relax so headaches will seep into the mattress. Gloves on, scarf too, because it's *cold* in here. But don't face the truth.

She stored up her God consciousness to meet the test, then wrote beautiful sentences and printed them. She broke through.

The priest prepared his lecture again and again and thought, "Let the unconscious have some innings." He means when he's in the hall, he'll wait for remembrance. But is there something he wants to say, something that would really help them, something that would carry them through at least another week "these children with asthma, these women without husbands, these husbands and wives who get along or don't, these boys who want to write nondevotee books?"

* * *

8 a.m.

We won't go over to the island until 8:30, because they are having a longer *kirtana* for Lord Nityananda's appearance day. I'll carry over a pill in the rowboat along with three books, the Post-its, and what little I know of Lord Nityananda. Nityananda-vamSa. Don't ever be disrespectful toward Lord Nityananda or His devotees such as Minaketana Ramadasa. And get the mercy of Lord Nityananda by approaching the Jagais and Madhais. Will you say that this morning? Lord Nityananda did amazing things, but Prabhupada said that the servant of Lord Nityananda can do even more by His mercy. The servant can rescue *thousands* of Jagais and Madhais, while Lord Nityananda pleaded only for two.

* * *

Noon

My talk and especially the questions and the discussion afterward focused on receiving the spiritual master's mercy. That seemed to turn the focus, indirectly, on me. At least that was in the back of my mind as I responded to the questions. Uddhava dasa

remarked that Raghunatha dasa received Lord Nityananda's mercy by following the Lord's order to hold the chipped rice festival. He wanted to know how we could be given service by our spiritual master when he gives us only general orders, such as, "Chant Hare Krishna."

I don't feel right about asserting that I'm the one they have to serve in order to get the mercy, but ISKCON has trained us all to think like that. As I was preparing the class, I thought I might be able to focus on chanting Hare Krishna, and of course, on preaching, as the two main ways to please Lord Nityananda. Still, I had to admit that I don't know Lord Nityananda. I had to link that discussion to the fact that we have to serve Srila Prabhupada. Of course, if we serve Srila Prabhupada as granddisciples, that means we have to serve Srila Prabhupada through his disciples. I wish I had such concentration on chanting or preaching that I could help them feel their own sincerity. A few hours after the lecture, all I have left is a tight vine of pain growing around my head.

* * *

2:34 p.m.

First scripture I've read all day, except what I read in class. The temple room was crowded during the lecture. O Lord Nityananda, I don't know You because I don't know anyone, any supreme Lord form or any of His expansions. Maybe I know the Lord in the heart through the intelligence and direction I feel. I don't even know myself.

They renamed the *ISopanisad* "Discovering The Original Person." Is that supposed to be more catchy? "The fact is there is nothing but God within and without." (*ISopanisad*, text 5, purport) Although oneness is all, the Lord in His personal form enjoys all that the *jivas* enjoy in their minuscule way.

Someone incessantly ringing that brass bell at the quay. Someone wants the boat to come so they can be rowed across to the Sunday feast. Does this go together? "He who sees everything in relation to the Supreme Lord, who sees all entities as His parts and parcels, and who sees the Supreme Lord within everything, never hates anything or any being." (*ISopanisad*, text 6)

I brought Ety Hillesum's letters from Westerbork out here to the shed. The point for me in this book: she is in a situation which is as bad as it can get, a Jew in the hands of the Nazis. Yet she transcends her situation by turning to the Lord in her heart, which she claims they cannot touch. She chooses not to hate them, and she chooses to see God in every aspect of life. She encourages and helps her fellow sufferers to try to do the same. Where is my own optimism and heroism in the face of a life far more peaceful?

* * *

It's Sunday, ring the Bell
& Hon-ney day
I'm doomed to hear bad
news today "
contralto sigh . . .

* * *

on stage my bosom, hand to,
this prima donna sings
O life alack . . .
and then I joke back
from this balcony
of peace.

* * *

Boat across the lake. He said,
"This is the *grhasthas'* rowboat."
"Leaky."
"And rocky."
I said (meaning, "Don't get so down
on married life"), "At least it's crossing," and
I glanced at his fiancée in
her rubber wellies, her feet covered
by water that swilled
in the bottom.

* * *

Etty says this *is*
the song, swing with it, find
Him here. *Ekatvam*. Every-
thing belongs.

* * *

Song on Sunday "open
mouth
sing
no bell for crossing
to where God's feast
Really awaits.

* * *

Be with God
with rhythm and poise
Remember Him
use up available fuel
only rule
of love
is *bhakti*. "

* * *

Thanks for what feels like free passage. I only want to help folks and be at peace. Maybe I've got to get a *lot* more lessons and lesions. In hard places. Like those who died to death suddenly or those who did so in Vrndavana. Stack us. File us. Lord, take us to the spiritual realm or give us the strength to preach in Your ranks without flinching.

* * *

Field Work

5 Sunday Feast Lecture

Time: 12:00

Folk series. I'm going to open this forum to all. First man says there's no need to wait for a self-effulgent *acarya*.

That's all right.

Next man says . . . uh . . .

* * *

Stop. Open a *sastra* and tell a pastime of the *avadhuta* Nityananda and how to approach Him at Ekacakra.

I . . .

I don't know "never go there. I stay here and roil.

"Vrndavana is here in the muck!" said Arjuna. Good.

* * *

Then I danced. No, I'm kidding. I received three hundred pages instead.

God, we all gotta go, and until then, we all gotta sing.

* * *

He was in a different holy place every day. He even walked around Govardhana.

Five-thousand-year-old Vedic head found in Delhi "proves what? How they wore their hair?"

* * *

Krishna chant startles Weston. They say the West is stupider. Don't know that God is in their souls, that He enjoys, that we must serve, actually *want* to, and that we don't have to stay in this place at all. We have that choice.

* * *

They were told that if they want to march in the parade, no coats or boats, but long underwear is allowed.

We joked by the light of the moon
as the rowboat scraped.

The joke? I wanted to say that the thing I fail at is to love all over, but at least I have my *Bhagavatam* volumes neat on a shelf and can speak *something*. The funny part is that a time will come when even that will not be allowed. I will have to die on this battlefield or another.

When he said, "Yeah, I know," he meant he knew God was true and that life was blue. And he knew we had to live it anyway.

Avadhuta in blue
He kicked His devotee
who was overjoyed by that.

* * *

Because of that, we spend time with Him
in quiet increments
and pray to fall
down a waterfall
with a wail.

* * *

A message from the superintendent: "I don't know where this is going, but insert a Krishna conscious message in beginning, middle, and end, because four kinds of persons . . . you know "the *madhyama-adhikari* understands: God, devotee, innocent, and demon "all need the *kirtana* or already love it."

* * *

Don't be afraid to open "you won't
crack. Skirt danger.
Improvised from
the shed. A sincere beat
and *my* Sunday Feast, my nectar
filled with
assonance
about as simple as Krishna in Vrndavana.

February 9, 12:12 a.m.

I still have thoughts that I should increase my rounds and Sastric reading, and decrease my attempts at making literature. As soon as I begin to develop some resolve in that direction, however, I'll hear Srila Prabhupada say we should not chant Hare Krishna alone; we should join the preaching mission. My preaching is my writing. How can I give it up?

The pulling in the two directions will probably continue with me, and I will have to sort it out gradually, as each of us must. I am not the only one charged to both increase my attention on *bhajana* and to preach. Why don't most of us increase our rounds? Is it because we have little taste? Why do we perform our preaching services? Is it because they provide more stimulation than we would feel if we focused only on *bhajana*? We think, "If I had seven days notice, as Maharaja Pariksit did, I would wind up my desires for such stimulation and get down to chanting." But I wonder . . .

There is also something to be said for remaining steady at one's service over time. Srila Prabhupada writes in his purport to *Bhag.* 6.5.14 that a Krishna conscious person does not change his profession, "for his only profession is to attract the attention of Krishna by chanting the Hare Krishna mantra and living a very simple life, without following daily changes of fashion."

Yes, to understand that attracting Krishna's attention is the goal of both our chanting and our service.

If we examine our lives, we can find room for improvement and for making our preaching service more the kind of *bhajana* that attracts Krishna's attention. We can learn to focus our minds and love on Him. For me, I find it difficult to contemplate a *japa* increase, because I find it hard to chant when I am in pain. And I am often in pain. I would like to work toward changing that, however. I would like to learn to chant when I'm in pain, to turn to the holy name as nondifferent from Krishna, my best friend and only solace. I would also like to learn to concentrate my writing on helping others and on helping myself to focus on devotion.

I'm sorry, dear reader, to subject you to these pendulum swings of an undecided man. But this much I can say with certainty: we don't want to deaden our life interests. We must use our creative intelligence to find an exclusive love for *japa* and hearing, and we have to allow those interests to fuel our preaching. How to keep the holy name flowing through our hearts and minds? Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura said, "The best *gosthyanandi* is a *bhajanandi* who preaches." That is what we have to become, and that will take intelligence.

* * *

6 a.m.

On February 2 I woke from a vague dream "I couldn't remember the details except that I had a new feeling of renunciation. I began writing at midnight and came out with the radical proposal that I stop everything supporting my writing and simply increase my rounds. I wanted to taste real renunciation, and I planned to focus on the most important things in my life. It couldn't work for me as I presented it to myself on that day. Today's mood seems more realistic. Here's a list of ways I can help myself:

1. Record *Srimad-Bhagavatam* onto tape and listen to it later.
2. Read *Namamrta* "maybe record what you read.
3. Try for something small at first; even a small increase can bring satisfaction.
4. Reduce unnecessary activities for a week and see how it feels to simplify. See how it gives you more time for hearing and chanting.
5. Think how more hearing and chanting makes you better qualified to preach.

6. Remember seriously how time is short. Your life is almost over. You ought to do what's most stimulating for your Krishna consciousness (*Sreyas*, not *preyas*).

7. Use whatever motivation pushes you forward. It's not wrong to be motivated by fear of deviation, fear of *maya's* power, or even fear incited by hearing of the gross falldown of Godbrothers "knowing it could happen to you.

8. Visualize yourself as someone who chants more rounds and reads more often. Sense what it feels like.

9. Remember the saying, "The best *gosthyanandi* is a *bhajanandi* who preaches."

* * *

8:30 a.m.

Puddles, muddy water. Wind through bare trees. Warmish. The collie, Tilaka, walking along with me. *Syama*-colored clouds all the way down and all the way up. Me, like a Chinese man in an ancient landscape, hoping to actually go forward in *Sravanam kirtanam* and to cross the desert.

* * *

12:50 p.m.

Bhurijana Prabhu in his *Srimad-Bhagavatam* lectures (now on Queen Kunti's prayers) continues to emphasize that in the material world, *we must suffer*. I took an Esgic at 11 a.m. to avoid such suffering. Srila Prabhupada states that suffering could be seen as the backside of Krishna. When a devotee suffers, he feels Krishna's presence. The Pandavas suffered constantly, moving from one dangerous incident to another, but Krishna always protected them and they continued to depend on Him throughout their lives. I want to learn to do that too. Nothing else can save me.

Coming up with good ideas for how to increase my *Sravanam kirtanam* is the easy part. Perhaps I choose a notebook, I become excited and hopeful, and I lay out my beads. It's easy, because it doesn't involve facing the crunch. Although I try to anticipate the eventualities, I will actually have to face them "the dryness, my lack of *bhava*, how to chant with pain "when I put my plan into action. I hope to gain a greater dependence on Krishna from my increased *japa*. I'm going to try for it, because as I said, nothing else can save me.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

Aridity. remember the first time you encountered the word in your spiritual reading? I think it was in a book by Teresa of Avila. I couldn't penetrate that book "I read it for the first time when I was living in Staten Island "but now I know about dryness. It means you don't have a taste for your prescribed spiritual duties. It means you are dry as dust.

It appears that our *acaryas* do not dwell on that subject. They say that if we apply ourselves, the result will come. Not much examination of aridity, and an apparent lack of sympathy for it.

I acknowledge that it exists, however. Even though Ireland has the heaviest rainfall in the world, there is dryness to be found here.

So I sit in the shed, listening to the comforting sound of rain, and remain dry. Why? *Ekatvam anupaSyatah*. See everyone as a spirit soul including yourself. What about God and His word and His name? Start with understanding your own spiritual nature and work up from there.

All right. I am not the same in all respects as the Supreme Lord, although I am one in interest with Him. I am meant for His enjoyment. Giving Him enjoyment is the seat of my own enjoyment. Currently, I seek enjoyment separately from that reality. Therefore, I cannot be happy. There is no way to be happy separate from my relationship with Krishna. Can I say that I am not interested enough yet in a harmonious, loving relationship with the Supreme Lord? Is that why I live in the desert?

It may be true that I don't yet have enough interest, but I won't say I have *no* interest. O Krishna, please allow me to chant Your names despite my fallen condition. Please allow me to hear Your teachings. Can You hear me, Lord? Can You see my renewed attempt to reach You? Please help me to achieve steady attachment and devotion in these practices. Give me the determination to keep my life simple in this way.

* * *

3:10 p.m.

I'm trying to finish ETTY HILLESUM's letters from Westerbork. I find them riveting. The indescribable misery of her situation. It touches me even here in my quiet shed "the memory of Auschwitz. I know I live on a cushion of peace. I should at least use what I have to become more transcendental. If I cannot retain *sastra*, then at least let it pass through me like a refreshing immortal breeze, like a clear, life-giving stream of mercy. That's the best use of my time. That, and awaiting Krishna's mercy.

* * *

3:45 p.m.

Starting tomorrow I'll have a week to myself "no daily meetings with Madhu (he'll be away). Perhaps it will provide a good opportunity to gently return to a deeper *sadhana*.

* * *

Night Notes, 6:34 p.m.

I don't want to think of ETTY HILLESUM's letters from Westerbork, only want to thank God for the respite I have. In this easy space, please let me use my time to write honestly and to praise Krishna. I beg to live a decent life, so that my honest reports will be uplifting to those who read it. I'll be honest in any case "what's the use of living the pretense of a devotee's life? If only Krishna would reveal Himself more to me. That's what is so inspiring and impressive about ETTY's writings "her sincere praise of God, her turning to God even under the most stressful conditions, her dependence on Him. She lived in God and was able to write about that experience. She is also inspiring me to improve the simple basics of my *sadhana* practices, my hearing and chanting.

February 10, 12:08 a.m.

Turn to *Vedanta-sutra*, *Bhagavad-gita*, and other Vedic literature as proof, and not to modern science. In this day and age, accepting the word of *sastra* over the word of the scientists seems old-fashioned, even untenable, but we defend it anyway. For me, I must learn to both trust the truth and learn to present it in an objective, convincing way. That is my function both *asbhajananandi* and *gosthyanandi*. We should want to be preachers as well as self-realized practitioners of Krishna consciousness.

How do we preach? We simply quote appropriate scripture and explain it according to the Gaudiya Vaisnava *acaryas*. Everything comes from the supreme cause, the Absolute Truth, who is known as Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan. Where did Bhagavan come from? He is *svarat*, independent. He is *anadi*, original. He needs no cause.

Narada keeps telling the HaryaSvas not to live for frivolous, temporary sense gratification. As preachers and *sadhakas*, we want to heed his advice. We want to feel our own sobriety. Narada speaks of a swan. The *sastra* describes how as a swan is able to separate milk from water, so we should understand the Supreme Lord as the source of the material and spiritual energies, and not be bewildered by other apparent and temporary causes. "The words of scriptures consist of variegated vibrations. If a foolish rascal leaves aside the study of these *sastras* to engage in temporary activities, what will be the result?" (*Bhag.* 6.5.18, purport)

Narada describes an object consisting of sharp blades and thunderbolts, the *kala-cakra*. Time is independent and unstoppable; it drives the activities of the material world. Don't be mowed down by this *kala-cakra*. If we waste a moment, there is no possibility of gaining it back.

Yes, preach to others and preach to yourself. Let these sayings make good sense. Use them to inspire your renewed attempt to simplify your life. "One is advised not to create a disaster by misusing his lifetime. One should be extremely careful to utilize the span of his life for spiritual realization, or Krishna consciousness." (*Bhag.* 6.5.19, purport)

* * *

2:45 a.m.

Just did fourteen rounds in about an hour and forty-five minutes. Hurry, hurry, Krishna, Krishna . . .

Krishna

Krishna.

How will I do more?

I feel I could be doing something that needs doing, such as answering letters. Pare down, keep down, subdue the bubbling and the babbling. return to hoeing the garden of your *japa*.

* * *

8:30 a.m.

I received a letter from a disciple who has just returned from a three-week visit to Vrndavana. The letter was well-written. She told how she felt depressed at first to be in Vrndavana; she considered herself unworthy. It was also the coldest winter Vrndavana has seen in twenty-five years, dark day after day. Of course, there was no heat in her room. She fell ill, suffered from culture shock, and said, "I was appalled at the idea of walking barefoot on *parikrama* among the different varieties of stool and spit in the street, and I was especially upset when we went to Govardhana Hill and it looked like a pile of rocks. I felt I could relate to our *halava* hill in the temple more easily." She added, "Several times the thought popped into my mind that I wished I'd stayed home, and that I would never come again. I felt really annoyed with myself for thinking such things. I felt disappointed and frustrated most of the time that I couldn't seem to 'get' Vrndavana."

But bit by bit, things happened to help her understand that Vrndavana was special. For example, one day she saw a middle-aged woman arrive at the Radha-Damodara temple carrying her full-grown daughter on her back. Her daughter was crippled. She said, "But both of them looked so cheerful and happy. There seemed to be such a culture of humility there, of accepting one's lot." Another time at Govardhana, the guide asked a passing goatherd, in Hindi, how he felt. He replied, "How could I not feel happy being so close to God?" and he gestured toward the hill. She concluded that Vrndavana was really the only place to practice Krishna consciousness fully, and she felt she was at a great disadvantage in the West.

Despite this theoretical appreciation, she remained miserable until she returned to the West, where, feeling more physical security, she felt transformed. She no longer felt neurotic or anxious, but as happy and enthusiastic about Krishna consciousness as when she first joined. Now only while in the West is she remembering and savoring all the things that happened in Vrndavana. "It wasn't until I got home that I really had my Vrndavana experience; then it was astonishing. I feel like a different person, as though a load of muck has been cleaned from my mind and heart."

Her experiences work in my heart too, to build that pressure to return to the *dhama*. For now, however, I am asking myself to live out the essence of Vrndavana by absorbing myself in hearing and chanting.

* * *

10:10 a.m.

M. is gone for the week. Found two new sponges. Completed my correction-reading of a GNP manuscript. Looking now at the *Caitanya-caritamrta* section I am scheduled to read next Sunday. Here's the last one I read: "You have come here specifically to deliver me. You are so merciful that you alone can deliver all fallen souls."

(Cc. *Madhya* 8.38) I think I forgot last week to look into the well-worn order, "Deliver fallen souls." It means to permanently transform a person. Such a person is delivered,

lifted out of *maya*. Ultimately it means he returns to the spiritual kingdom. Whoever can deliver a fallen soul is potent and merciful.

* * *

12:28 p.m.

Foggy head. I counted the pages I wrote last week "only 103. I wish I could do more; I wish I could live with everything connected and flowing, chanting, reading, writing, living, dying "all in Krishna consciousness. But I am learning to accept what comes. Everything belongs. This week like last, I will wait and see and then endure whatever happens with those blood vessels in my head. I won't ask to be pitied. I have already received my life on a silver tray. Find out now how to be kinder to others.

* * *

3:40 p.m.

One extra round so far, like an egg laid. Drew a picture of a cartoon duck, yet took it seriously. Then did a careful illustration of Janardana as He appears on the cover of the *ISopanisad*.

Somehow. Somehow I am in transition. Sober, quiet "can I write my way through to something?

Here's some advice, buddy "stick to *japa*. Despite everything.

Lunch was nice "no decisions. All I had to do was eat it. Hare Krishna.

Saw feathers scattered over an area and sprinkles of blood. I looked for a corpse but saw only the feathers.

The price of pearls is down.

Maybe I don't have to "don't want to "write such scatterings anymore. Like the six changes that all living beings experience, I am experiencing a move toward death. Who can escape it? Intelligent persons will plan for their next life and act in such a way that they get promoted to a better situation.

How about going indoors? I am too spaced-out right now.

Three swans in a clump of reeds in the lake, now paddling off. I play a tape of me reading "*lectio divina*." I'm so far from that now. Indoors I have a 20"x26" sheet of drawing paper tacked to the board. Instead of painting, I could try to write words that come while standing there, but I feel a certain lack of conviction right now in my work. What about the long-term process? I have seen over time that free-writing and the other methods I use do produce readable material. I know my work is not meaningless. But I want to be a devotee more than anything, and I want to find the most conducive process for *that*.

* * *

Night Notes, 5:35 p.m.

Go quietly into that good night. But I'm nursing a head vise. When they come for me at death, will there be a chariot, an Oldsmobile, Yamaraja's men, a priest, a Navy guy, or my master?

And me, will I still be so unworthy?

I hope to keep my mouth shut and not say anything in delirium. I want to remain a reputable guru up until the end.

He said, "When you go to Wicklow, be sure to report back. It sounds like you are off on an exciting adventure."

But I don't think it will be that much different from what I have here. It will just be a matter of degree. At the end, that degree will be tested. I will have waited all my life for that moment.

Never the same since reading Etty or *anyone*. Jewels, Issa, words at bay.

It's dark now, let them see me at my desk. It's where I should be. And let them know he bought me a jumpsuit and that I can't use it because I don't have enough physical energy. We chronics commiserate and crank out words anyway. Today was awkward "no extra *japa* or reading. It's as if . . . Give me time.

* * *

Japa Log

How was it? I don't know. I just "did" them.

Did you hear? Not much.

Did your heart open?

I don't know, why don't you consult Timothy Ware on how to bring the mind into the heart? Or Teresa of Avila? Better yet, what about Srila Haridasa Thakura?

But I'd be interested to hear your own strategies and observations as we chant, waiting for the new millennium.

* * *

The Japanese didn't chant this
only Krishnaites
Reared in India?
Prabhupada followers
around the world/ 16 rounds

* * *

sleepy rounds on beads.

Heard Srila Prabhupada in lecture speak about inattention. He said it's offensive if your mind goes elsewhere. He recommended hearing, which he said will produce *samadhi*. It seems far away.

* * *

Walking and chanting in the rain, back and forth like a squirrel collecting nuts.

February 11, 12:09 a.m.

Yes, it seems best to pare down to essentials. I've tried this before. But a living entity is pleasure-oriented, even an old man. If he doesn't like a life of freedom surrendered to reading scripture and chanting on beads, how will he keep doing it? "How ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm/ after they've seen Paree?" The answer is there is nectar in the holy name and in the pleasure of hearing *Krishna-katha*.

"He who discards scriptural injunctions and acts according to his own whims attains neither perfection, nor happiness, nor the supreme destination." (Bg. 16.23)

Don't look now, friend, but you're on a spiritual retreat. You just signed up for a week of solitude to chant and hear. In Vrndavana, is it?

Oh, it's not up to me. I need health and peace and mental control, and if Krishna withholds the taste, what can I do? Krishna might do that if He finds I'm chanting but depending on my own resources rather than on Him.

The HaryaSvas accepted Narada's instructions and renounced the world.

I'm supposed to hold an initiation on Gaura-Purnima. There will probably only be one candidate, a young man, Pradyumna. He has been a devotee all his life. I should prepare for that initiation so that in the initiation lecture I can recommend chanting the holy name and renouncing materialistic pursuits. Let it not only be theory.

* * *

One should not endeavor to visit different material planets. They are all places from which we will have to return. Therefore, visiting them is literally a waste of time. Better to endeavor to return to the spiritual planet, Goloka Vrndavana. Bg. 8.16 states, "From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place. But one who attains to My abode, O son of Kunti, never takes birth again."

Chant and hear, chant and hear.

Bhajanandi to *gosthyanandi* scenario: I get deeply into chanting and hearing. I develop the courage and health to do as Narada Muni and Srila Prabhupada advise: "By chanting the transcendental vibration *Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare . . .* they should go everywhere to deliver the fallen souls by vibrating the Hare Krishna mantra and the instructions of *Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Caitanya-caritamrta*."

(*Bhag.* 6.5.22 purport) My spiritual master is pleased.

Going *everywhere*? What does that actually mean in the ISKCON context and with me being who I am? This lean old horse looks at the flooding, turbulent river, that river which is carrying away stout young horses, and says, "Let me cross." Is preaching as we know it in this institution actual preaching? Is preaching synonymous with socializing, with institutional gossip, with solving controversy after controversy, with the inevitable bog of relative and usually material problems? Is *that* what preaching means? If so, I can't take it "not my body, not my mind. Anyway, the first step is to learn to be absorbed in the holy names and the scriptures. Then I can worry about taking up my *vina* and traveling.

* * *

3:27 a.m.

I have a confession to make. I just read from an unpublished EJW manuscript "one of the poems. I loved the language and the mood, how they intensified. It was risky, but it didn't seem decadent or corrupt. Do I need to renounce such writing, mortify it, as the Christians say?

* * *

4.55 a.m.

Today is the appearance day of Narottama dasa Thakura. My mind is spinning dizzy. I love the beautiful faces of my Radha-Govinda. I wish someone could take a photo of them every day and that I could distribute the pictures to friends. Hear the wind buffeting outside this stone house? O noble Purnamasi, O beautiful boy, O killer of Sankacuda "the cadences of *Lalita-madhavalinger* in my mind.

* * *

After reading that poem in the unpublished EJW, I have decided not to completely renounce song.

* * *

The Take-Off And Flight Of The Blue Heron
& Songs, and the
beauty of this world? No cinema song this
but like Barhi, will I be sent down for what
my ear demands?
Or my eye? The beauty of a doodle in
ink, the joy of a moment
may the Lord
bless this work.

* * *

I belong to Krishna. No fictive ploy when I say
I have dedicated this life
to Krishna.
reminds me of that high school dance the
sagging crepe paper I had no girl
was meant for God "even then I knew
in my make-believe romance
calling out unknowing to
St. Francis, St. Teresa, Rupa Gosvami
Please place me at my master's
feet let me dance that
dance live

that romance
and they blessed me on Second
Avenue. And I escaped
a fading utopia.

* * *

I'm still here have
already heard the worst
but no one
no one
can take from me
my right to chant.
Flamingo flies up suddenly
from the marsh
I unwittingly scared a
blue-gray heron into clumsy flight
while swans rest and play in the cold
water and I can see all this only with the
Lord's permission this
only a filthy minuscule suffering place,
perverted energy.

* * *

No dissembling art here.
This is for real. "

* * *

8:30 a.m.

Walking. I brought the umbrella out because it was raining, but the wind is tugging it hard, and I can't see where I am going. Few devotees use umbrellas in Ireland; I noticed that.

Facing the fact that my Big renunciation of everything but hearing and chanting has turned out to be not quite what I wanted, not what I'm actually going to do right now. I have learned something from the experience, some intensity.

* * *

9:25 a.m.

The point about demands that art forms make on an audience "haiku, for example. To get something from it requires participation. You have to help create the effect by using your own imagination. Otherwise, it remains simply a fragment of prose. When you can't get inside a haiku, you suspect the poem to be a bluff, the author's play with pseudo profundities. No one likes to be bluffed. Therefore, many readers prefer writing that

explains itself fully. Visual art too "much of modern art is savagely primitive, "distorted," abstract, or non-representational. Like art, the science of Krishna consciousness demands that we accept Vedic axioms and truths of which we have little or no experience, no cultural reference, and no other grounding point. If we don't, the Krishna stories remain mythology and transmigration only a Hindu belief. It's not enough to hear convincing analogies about why transmigration is a universal truth; we also have to accept the authority of the *Vedas* in an axiomatic way.

When people read my books, they have to agree to the mixture of Vedic truths and honest expression, the perceptions of a conditioned soul, if they want to get anything out of them. They have to accept my sincerity, and that I write this way for self-purification. They are not being bluffed by the mix but benefited, if they enter it.

I know that my improvisational poetry is the most I've demanded of my readers so far. The poems do not provide clear messages or stories; they are not discursive, linear journeys from point A to point B. They move quickly from topic to topic, and often there seems to be no particular topic at all. I write fragments, or as one reader put it, "A string of words." If listeners (and these poems are perhaps better read aloud) let down their defenses and approach them instead with love, they will have a different experience. I am aware, however, that many are not prepared to enter.

Can Krishna consciousness be expressed in this way? Is it decadent? Can it preach? Is there something to be gained from improvisation both for author and reader that makes it worthwhile?

* * *

11:50 a.m.

All the different things that pass through the mind "recent falldown of an ISKCON leader, scientific evidence of transmigration from Ian Stephenson, presented by Sadaputa Prabhū, and somewhere I want to stop. M. says he wants to build a six- or seven-foot wall around our house in Wicklow, but I know you can't keep things out with a wall. No phone. Good. No death allowed? No chance.

The very basic things about which Srila Prabhupada speaks are most important. The soul has to take another body, so we should be serious to improve ourselves during our lifetime if we wish to be promoted from our present status. We should try to return to the spiritual world, and nothing should distract us from that goal. We shouldn't waste time either in temporary pleasures or in trying to ease temporary sufferings. We should chant Hare Krishna, hear about Krishna, and please Krishna by preaching.

But . . .

But what?

It's just so hard. It's hard to find people with whom we can work congenially, to be satisfied in the institution, and to rise above our material tendencies. Srila Prabhupada tells us to surrender to Krishna, which is also what Krishna tells us in His conclusion to the *Bhagavad-gita*. We have free will, always, but we should use it to serve Him. At the very end, Krishna tells Arjuna, "Now do as you like." These words reverberate in my being.

What is my struggle with those words? That I can't seem to renounce my interest in becoming an artist? That's it, basically. An artist has a connection to the world. I don't want to be an artist more than I want to be a devotee; I just want to use my art for Krishna's pleasure. I want to learn to express Krishna consciousness in a compelling way, in a way that is easy to take, that is interesting, and that is not only accessible but true. I want to enliven the self by breaking through staidness, dogmatism, and mechanical practice. You see, if I try to follow what we define as fully surrendered Krishna consciousness, it comes out mechanical and lifeless. I just can't repress those other parts of myself.

Then dovetail them.

I know. I try to do that. But often I regret those other parts. Shouldn't I be living without amenities, like Gaura-kiSora dasa Babaji?

No, I can't even say I *wish* that. I wish I could keep going with the art, then come to a natural stage where it feels worked out, where I have no interest in anything but chanting. Art reaches that point. In the meantime, as I aspire for such a focus, let me preach through my writing. That's what I want to do. I want to be connected to that life.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

"One who has heard from the undisturbed authorities (*susruma dhiranam*)" "the phrases we're raised on. They don't even seem awkward to us. What are "undisturbed authorities" anyway? We let them slide by and don't even let them affect us.

Do I want to be undisturbed? As undisturbed as a granite-faced mountain?

No. I'm a thinking, feeling, and willing being "vulnerable, doe-eyed, and tender. I don't want to tremble at a lady's touch, but neither am I a scar-faced poker man or an angry lout. I don't want material passions raging through my body and mind, but I want to resemble a calm *sadhu*, a Srila Haridasa Thakura or a Srila Godbrother. They're all human, some more elevated than others, and then we become lost in more familiar, cliched phrases.

I want to be who I am and to use that to surrender to Krishna. No Steppenwolf.

Undisturbed authorities or bona fide spiritual masters don't make up their own spiritual systems. The result you get from following them "the bona fides "is to attain Krishnaloka. Get the right ticket from the right agent for the right place and get there by right acts. I line up correctly with pure devotional service despite my improvisations and artistic inspirations. I don't worship demigods, don't accept unauthorized interpretations of the *Bhagavad-gita*, and don't disagree with or break the regulative principles. I live a strict devotional life. But I don't yet love, not yet, and I don't know Krishna as I would like to. How to attain those things?

* * *

Field Work

#6 Field Notes of a *Haribol* Man

Time: 22:18

Welcome back to Field Work. Got your pitchfork? Scimitar? Wheelbarrow? You'll need them. And don't forget your hat against the rising sun.

"You there, what's your name and purpose and religion?"

"I'm Satsfer. I was in the old AI comics, and I sometimes appear in the dreams of others. I'm growing old, but I'm a Hare Krishna sort."

"Sort?"

"Sort of."

So he introduced himself at the work booth near Jute Fields in Trinidad (or was it Berbice?). Ah, this is just imagination. He wants to preach to the workers, to tell them the story of Prahlada, and to get worked up about it.

* * *

Nityananda dasa works in the first aid shed. He doesn't have much to do, so he sits and reads *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. (If this story starts to sound familiar, you should know that there's more to it than either you or I think. To get that "something more," you and I simply have to bear down on it. A simple man like that, without exposure to Sartre or Brooklyn College or to any North American culture, is relatively free to imbibe what Srila Prabhupada says without the hang-up of being too sophisticated.)

* * *

Why are you screaming?

Because it's getting dark so early here.

O Nityananda dasa, am I improvising when I say you love Krishna and your guru, and that you have been dislocated from the pack? Over here we're all post-traumatic shock figures still trying to figure out what happened and what's going to. Everyone here "no one can explain it to the others. Each has to figure it out for him or herself. Each also has to find satisfaction in some kind of work and not bother others with his or her trip.

* * *

Where am I going with this story? Wherever it wants. To God, I hope, and God help me. I know this Field Work is just a preliminary kind of service, but I'm not up yet to giving the straight ritual presentation of Vedic sound. They say Lord Brahma *wanted* to create, so his service was passionate, not pure. But he created for Krishna "and he *had* to do it that way. That was his attempt at *bhakti*, and it inevitably led him to the purest expression of love. I know we'd all prefer to think our service could be considered immediately pure, but that isn't how it works for most of us.

* * *

Okay, let me finish the story:

Nityananda dasa reads in the shed most of the day. He has such an easy job. He gives *prasadam* to the workers, who are simple, then starts home. I am with him. We chant as we meet: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. We chant again later too, first him, then I respond. Outsiders think it monotonous, but we sing God's names trusting that *He* doesn't find it tiresome to hear the inattention in our pleas, or even the mindlessness of them. We trust Krishna to accept our prayers. What else can we do? We have that trust because we both know Krishna is always with us.

* * *

Japa Log

Jaws move I don't
always know how good or bad "
Prabhupada, I pray now
always
I need your mercy.

* * *

Jaws move but I don't, am not able to revive lost Krishna consciousness. At least I chant, I suppose, but it is disappointing.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna "this morning a few rounds went to eight minutes, one almost to nine. I want to practice at investing my chanting with helplessness, with actual calling to Lord Hari. I have no other shelter but Him. My guru has taught me to aspire for this attitude.

* * *

Chanted a round with Srila Prabhupada's *japa* tape. Keep him with me. right away I think of things I'd like to do other than chanting. right away my active life force (especially when I am pain-free) leaps to the forefront. I tell myself, however, to simply chant this one round. And then I do chant it. I add it to my total. Fruitive? Whatever it takes.

* * *

I chanted two more rounds after reading in the evening. The light on objects in the room looked divine "a special moment. Srila Prabhupada was chanting with me. I felt his presence during the last light of the day.

As I write this, someone is ringing the bell to call the rowboat over.

February 12, 12:10 a.m.

That last dream "back in the Navy, on a huge ship, plenty of departments for creative expression, but I lacked a decent uniform. I looked for the uniform shop, but was too shy to ask anyone where it was. Glad I woke up.

Now to the *Bhagavatam*. Narada Muni took advantage of the HaryaSvas' good behavior to "direct them not to be involved with this material world, but to use their culture and knowledge to end their material affairs." (*Bhag.* 6.5.20, purport) Daksa was angry at Narada for delivering his sons, but Narada (and the devotee-preachers in his line) refused to give up his mission.

I heard the wind blowing all night "a comforting sound from snug in this house.

Daksa's second set of children (one thousand) were known as the SalvalaSvas.

O wind, I am up and will soon begin to chant. Do you too vibrate Lord Hari's names?

Narada advised the second set of sons to follow the example set by their older brothers. They did so, and "like nights that have gone to the west, they have not returned even until now." (*Bhag.* 6.5.33)

Next we will hear Daksa's blasphemous words against the great preacher and devotee, Narada Muni. I appreciate Narada's tolerance. Narada teaches everyone to seek liberation from material bondage and encourages them to practice *bhakti*. He couldn't enlighten Daksa, however, because Daksa was too proud.

Narada, I am here, a *sannyasi* with indigestion from the biscuit I ate yesterday afternoon. Please rescue me from my dullness and intolerance.

Swami Manners, Swami Acyuta,

Wishbone Swami, and False Swami "each

hoe their own row

lamenting, happy, usually

seeking relief

but each praying

the holy names may descend

and bring order

to this troubled world.

* * *

5:03 a.m.

Listening to *Lalita-madhava* softens your heart. You listen and don't try to figure out the plot. You know you are not qualified to hear of Krishna's conjugal pastimes, yet you do it anyway, greedily, and don't feel mundane disturbance. You hope it will wipe out material conceptions. You don't want sex; you simply want to hear of Krishna's attraction for Radha and Radha's attraction for Krishna, and about Their playful tricks. Hearing of their separation evokes pain in you. Call it sentiment, but it is better than what you usually experience in your own hard heart. Then go on hearing. The poetry is so beautiful: "All of my heart yearns to hear the pastimes the way a bee yearns to enter a lotus flower."

No, we are not always bound to talk like New Yorkers and to show off our worldly knowledge or memories or other forms of conditioning. Not bound at all. Prabhupada has given us that much freedom.

When I went to take a nap, I reviewed the things I have read recently in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* "like counting sheep. I recalled that Daksa sent one batch of sons to practice austerities, but Narada preached to them on ten subjects. He also delivered the second batch of sons. Daksa became angry and cursed Narada. And so I fell asleep.

That's another little gimmick to encourage yourself to keep what you read flowing through your consciousness. Now when I prepare breakfast, I can hear something on the tape recorder.

* * *

"O Lalita, O ViSakha, don't tease Me in this way," Radha says. Today is Thursday, and Radha-Govinda are wearing clothes the color of burnished copper with gold trim and *jari*. Krishna holds an ornamented gold flute and leans on a gold cowherd's stick.

When I take care of the Deities, I forget my own body. I usually treat my body as if I live in an intensive care unit "I give it so much attention.

"Hare Krishna," he said. "I was sleepy during some of my later rounds this morning, but I persisted in the chanting and got them done."

What will it take to chant with the awareness that Krishna is present in the sound vibration? I don't think it is enough to increase the chanting if it is offensive. I get immediate relief from reading. But try to hold that verse by Mahaprabhu in your heart: "When will My eyes be decorated with tears of love when I chant Your holy names, and when will the hairs on My body stand on end? When will My voice choke up by the utterance of Your holy names?" O Krishna, that I could feel the whole world vacant in Your absence.

Sri Krishna Caitanya. A man wrote but didn't want to tell his story. His letter announced that he was coming back to Krishna consciousness after having spent many years away. He wrote this to his initiating spiritual master, then added that perhaps there was nothing vital connecting them any more. Too much time had passed, or he had become too independent and mature. Perhaps this guru had nothing left to give that he hadn't already figured out himself.

Krishna consciousness, and especially the relationship with the spiritual master, cannot be practiced with artifice. Will I tell him that? Yes.

* * *

Warm Up
& Now we sing a song:
well I didn't
always feel this way see I
Really meant to be a nice fella
the way my Mom and Dad thought
but you know how it is
Prabhupada captured me like

Narada got the ten thousand.

* * *

I still put myself on top/ O body, be
peaceful and drive me like in a car
to write poems and to suffer my
lot like
the nearby forest branches.

* * *

Dog bark interrupts my melody
and my concentration. May the sound
of this music scour
the pot to the quick
of me
Right to my
Vaisnava heart.

* * *

My beads in hand I
chant my worth
as God wills. "

* * *

8:20 a.m.

We're definitely moving toward spring. Songbirds this morning! And I feel too warm in my winter clothes. But spring is different here than my memories of it in my native Northeastern United States. I don't know the names of the birds here, and they don't even sound familiar "just groups of chirping, chortling melodies. Besides, in Ireland there are no strong seasonal divisions. It's always cool in the summer, and there is almost never snow in winter. I never get the feeling of having survived a long, hard winter.

Before coming out to walk this morning, I again looked at Merton's diary and thought I wouldn't read any more of this volume. I just don't have an appetite for his complaining, although I have to admit that I'm sympathetic to his problems at the monastery. His intellectual life is also different from mine (he reads *so* many books).

Then while walking, I faced a stout tree and realized just how I focus on myself. I wish I could give that energy to God.

I counted nine birds in the top branches of the tree, and all of them were ignoring Tilaka's foolish barking.

* * *

10:45 a.m.

Took an Esgic. recovering now from the pain it was used to kill. Swans on lake. I do love this world "inordinately? Got to give it up, you know. Until then, I'll be dovetailing and hoping to leave some songs behind.

It will soon be time to massage Srila Prabhupada and offer him his noon bath. Let him face the lake. If I actually saw him, the full force Srila Prabhupada, what would happen? Perhaps our meeting would be different than it was. So much has changed. I don't think he'd be entirely the same as he was in the 1970s. I hold on dearly to what I got then, but I can't deny that a lot has changed both in me and in the movement. I hold on dearly to doubt his only purpose, if he were to suddenly reappear, would be to restore things to exactly as they were when he was here. We can't go back. He'd take charge in the present. His coming back to us as we knew him is a fantasy. We have to serve him now in separation.

Twinge not entirely gone "my crippled old head is going to make it, cautiously, through the day, though.

* * *

2:20 p.m.

I won't be satisfied if I am not Krishna conscious, no matter how much I do otherwise (art, self-work, expression, etc.). Today I listened to Srila Prabhupada three times, twenty minutes at each session, and listened to Bhurijana Prabhu lecture for twenty minutes, read aloud from *Krishna* book for half an hour, read *Bhagavatam*, chanted sixteen rounds "but did I become Krishna conscious?

Collie roams where I can see him in the marsh on this side of the lake. He has his head down, sniffing. Suddenly he looks up, alert, his winter chest-manerippling in the breeze. Yes, I could have absorbed myself more exclusively.

Come to *ISopanisad* now. I'm not so inclined to answer letters "I'm enjoying the solitude with M. away. Speaking to no one. It's a relief.

"real service to humanity is rendered when one teaches surrender to and worship of the Supreme Lord with full love and energy." (*ISopanisad*, text 13) The best method of knowing God is to hear about His activities. Speculators think He and His activities are imaginary, so they concoct. That is, they neglect the real meaning of the *Bhagavatam* and the *Bhagavad-gita* in order to put forth their own theory of spiritual reality.

Hear that wind? It's music. Even if we can't be happy in this world, I still like to hear the wind.

* * *

Quick Blues
& Quick speak
into this record your
Dad's coming home from
the Pacific and
you don't know what "

your master is high
the ISKCON picture
shows a
twisted Agha
Suhotra
Agnihotra and Sue and you
know who
the Murphy case "that Sue
and robin
Patrick
devils I caught you
brought you
to trial in your
pajamas.

* * *

I'm sober this isn't
written by me while I'm drinking wine
I gave that up when I met Prabhupada
after the Navy where
we had use of a storeroom
and drank wine from Barcelona
now my blood is free runs
free
for
love of God
for chanting
mechanical and all
but I will never
give it up.
Never. "

* * *

Field Work
7 Feelings of ISKCON Mistakes, Chaos,
Loss, and reform, By an Insider (Loyal)
Time: 11.10 + 9.17

I went off to do my work at a time you could never imagine. We were looking for a man to lead us. It's like the chaos of ISKCON as seen from the inside "one guy falling down after another and vicious schism leaders "this is the age of vile newsletters, yellow-teethed journalists ""That guy fell down with his secretary. He was wearing a little bathing suit when he was supposed to be in a *dhotion harinama*."

Is it quiet out there yet? Sometimes it's so still I have to wonder. Can a *sundara-arati* in a lonely temple make up for all the loss we've experienced, or at least make it worth continuing?

But can we even go to the temples anymore? The temples can no longer support us, especially if we are not completely in-line, sold-out, do-the-needful *bhaktas*.

* * *

Up and down so the phases, one after another, one moment to the next. Someone thinks it's like a good night on the town. There are still stalwarts who champion book distribution as The Way, who hold their zone tight and centralized. I have to wonder, "Is that kind of control healthy?"

Cars crash and so do people these days, and both happen even during times of relative peace.

* * *

At least we're free. Gunshots in freedom? Yeah, we're free to get shot, fried, to select a guru who will later fall down or not ("It's your own sinful desire coming back at you, Prabhu").

So sad I'm happy.

Happy the fanfare is finally over. The time is riper.

I'm just saying what comes to mind as I try to ward off the blows.

Find a way to insert Krishna conscious teachings. Love of God is attained only by unalloyed *bhakti*. Don't go to God for material stuff. Go to surrender.

Endless teachings, the same examples.

But where is a *good* example?

Oh, our guru is the best example.

Yes, Srila Prabhupada.

And who can match him?

* * *

I never thought I would adopt this pace, but here I am with the rest. Hope I can sleep in peace after this.

* * *

We march with ISKCON and don't want mundane sociologists to analyze our cult. The truth of it is best told in diaries, although, of course, such reports will never become the official GBC version. Because who would want to hear the shrill trumpeting of twenty volumes' worth of history by one who lived through it? Who wants to count mistakes and injuries?

But count we must. And hold people accountable too. Names must be named and to jail some of them must go

and Srila Prabhupada, I want to know who will take charge of this house of reformers now?

* * *

O Prabhupada, I love your old *kirtana* tunes,
your book distribution,
that your women disciples find their rights
that the children can go to school and we can build our houses, educate ourselves, and
find our own purity eventually.

* * *

I guess freedom isn't an answer either, because life just goes on and on in waves. The real answer is to give those waves of life up to the master. We call that surrender. *That's* the freedom we seek "the freedom from birth and death. Otherwise, our creative genius will push us into further and further passions. Our energy will become ourselves. And we will train it well but get nowhere.

* * *

Night Notes, 6:07 p.m.

Chanted with lights out while it grew dark outside. Gray clouds moving in to further darken the skies, but the lake is still visible, and I can see the bright yellow light in the boathouse. I'm on round twenty. Who can say I'm not satisfied? I like my life. The only possible fault is my offenses to the holy name. But to be able to chant peacefully . . . I thank Krishna for what I do have.

* * *

Japa Log

Just apply elbow grease
and listen, mind,
Prabhupada's chanting with you
and you can't go wrong;
devotion's never lost.

* * *

Japa rolls on into night
count extra
it pleases me
to go up and up I
never know how high
or how it will come in handy
when I reach for the eternal.

February 13, 12:10 a.m.

Escaping is not bad if you go from dreams of an old life where you see your Godbrother looking like an old Frank Sinatra doing a gig in a townhall to the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Was it wrong for Daksa's sons to leave the idea of *grhastha* life for renunciation? No, as long as their renunciation was genuine. Was it wrong for so many sons and daughters of Western parents to join the Krishna consciousness movement, and under the Swami's influence, give up illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating, and gambling? To have given up our nominal or more than nominal Christianity or Judaism? No. Most of us were already lapsed, fallen, sinful, and neither *grhastha* nor religious. To leave *that* to take up a life of hope and aspiration for the transcendental loving service of the Supreme Lord.

"Devotees engaged in preaching should be prepared to be accused by ignorant persons, and yet they must be very merciful to the fallen, conditioned soul." (*Bhag.* 6.5.39, purport) This purport provides personal solace for any preacher who meets materialistic critics and enemies. Srila Prabhupada assures us that we should remain unafraid. "Our only duty is to satisfy the Lord . . ." remember such statements and turn to them when you need them.

As for me, I avoid enemies and align myself with the saffron-dressed devotees of Krishna. My critics and enemies tend to be imagined, or those I don't imagine but who operate closer to ISKCON. Such unimagined enemies see me as corrupt, a left-over guru-pretender. They would love to expose me as a fraud.

These enemies don't concern me much. I create enough to worry about all by myself. I worry that I am not worthy without the help of those who question me, and I fear I will fall out of favor with Srila Prabhupada. As for renunciation, however, I am confident that Srila Prabhupada placed me in the right *aSrama*. He "aroused the spirit of renunciation . . ." and gave me knowledge. "Such enlightened renunciation is desirable."

Daksa said that one has to experience material enjoyment for oneself. Only then will he learn that it causes suffering and give it up. Srila Prabhupada negates this argument. People, he states, do not learn from experience. rather, we will never cease our attempts to enjoy. "The young boys and girls of the Krishna consciousness movement have given up the spirit of material enjoyment not because of practice, but by the mercy of Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His servants." (*Bhag.* 6.5.41, purport)

It was you, my dear spiritual master, who aroused the sense of renunciation in me. It was you who made it possible for me to practice, and who continues to direct me through your *vani*. Thank you. May I pass this valuable knowledge onto others, even though the world "especially its parents and guardians "don't appreciate it.

* * *

In Walked
& He's the cynosure. Krishna "
the kids want to play
Krishna games, but we mislead them

in so many ways and
to be teacher parent guru king
is no light thing
no light thing to deliver from death
or to die.

* * *

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
seven mothers seven miseries,
four and threefold three-
fold bending form
I am smart Mama
because of DNA and American
education
I read the curriculum and learned
Kafka, O'Hearn
Smyth and
other bearded bros.

* * *

I learned to improvise
tap dance, chew gum
sin in schoolyard
and scared and anxious
to hide it all.

* * *

Krishna Krishna Krishna "what
I didn't know
because I missed *that* part
of the story
the ecstasy
the pain
and the opening of
eyes.

* * *

Then in walked the Swami
and I got into something.
I was a bit laid back at first.

* * *

So now don't miss a beat "
it's a terrible thing
to miss. "

* * *

8:15 a.m.

As warm as a cool spring day. A duck insistently quacking as counterpoint to my *japa*. Is he stuck in the mud? Song birds grace the upper bowers of the trees. I don't know you, but you sing nonetheless, and I hear you.

* * *

9:30 a.m.

On Saturday mornings I had to vacuum the stairs. That was my cleaning assignment in addition to cleaning my own room. I didn't like to do it. It was a matter of contention between my mother and I. But of course, I *had* to do it. Our vacuum cleaner had different attachments. I put on the proper one to get into the angles on the stairs. Just remembered it now, while lying on my back in this borrowed room and bed. We stay here and there in this material world thinking this is our home (or someone else's). Was I that teenaged boy vacuuming stairs on a Saturday morning?

Then I thought of my father and how he sometimes made me work with him in the garden. My parents wanted to form my character; they wanted me to understand the value and necessity of work. They also didn't want me to think life was a free ride, as if I were a prince and they were my servants. I worked and sometimes joked in private about it with my sister, who had her own chores. I was, I think, a selfish fellow, with a very limited outlook on life, "covered over" we would say now in our Krishna conscious jargon "covered by the modes of nature, possessed of a poor fund of knowledge.

Earlier this morning I thought that perhaps young people join the Krishna consciousness movement to establish their own righteousness. Don't we all like to call the rest of the world asses and *mudhas*? It gives us a feeling of power and superiority "all false ego. Isn't it easy to dispense with anyone with a different opinion by calling them an envious snake or a fool? We believe in Krishna so we are automatically perfect, and everyone else who doesn't is automatically wrong.

But only a few people can even understand Krishna, are even attracted to Him. It's unfortunate, then, that a proportion of those who come to Krishna consciousness come for the wrong reasons and then later give it up. Even those who stay do not really make that much obvious advancement. Where are our saintly, compassionate, God conscious qualities?

Yet if we doubt the benefits of our life in Krishna consciousness, then we are entering dangerous waters. How to find the actual essence of Krishna consciousness and to learn how to desire *that*? We consult others and perhaps receive more pat answers. We swallow it because we don't know how to find anything else.

What if the elder tells us to work harder, points out our envious nature, and reminds us of our mother insisting we vacuum the stairs? We know he's probably right, but we're looking for the whole story. How to satisfy our hearts? Nothing seems to work. Still, we

know better than to consult with nondevotees, who cannot understand the sincerity we feel to discover our innate Krishna consciousness. Anyway, their answers are so superficial when we compare them to the *Bhagavatam* teachings. In which world, then, do we fully belong?

Despite our lack of full surrender, full belonging, full integrity, and full certainty, we must go on. We may never have those things in full. We can live only with less-than-perfect certainty and satisfaction. That's also the nature of this world. "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation," Thoreau said, although he would have us believe that he was satisfied. We don't even take advantage of the material world's version of temporary relief "ignorance, intoxication, illicit sex, and other forms of forgetfulness.

The devotees have joined what is supposed to be an ideal society, following an ideal philosophy. They are certainly led by a perfect person. It may be hard for us to admit our dissatisfaction. We are not *supposed* to be dissatisfied. If we are dissatisfied, it must be our own fault. It's not ISKCON's fault, or the fault of guru or Krishna. You doubt that? Who me?

"Stevie!"

"What?!"

"It's 11 o'clock and you haven't vacuumed the stairs yet."

"All *right*."

I know expecting a headache every day adds to my dissatisfaction. Or perhaps dissatisfaction is not the right word. I have come to expect so little. That's more it.

* * *

10:33 a.m.

Well, first sign of a behind-the-right-eye twinge and no pill allowed today. Remember Krishna and work up those endorphins.

* * *

2:32 p.m.

Took a pill after all. Mail arrived. I opened the box, spilled the contents on the bed, and came out here to the shed. Thank God I'm free of pain to do my daily work. I think of words such as grateful, relieved, and sacred. Sacred relates to my work "my attitude about it, its purpose. The time I'm given by God is precious. That's another good word. My connection with Krishna through Srila Prabhupada and the *maha-mantra* "all that is sacred too. If I get a headache tomorrow, I won't take a pill but will try to accept it, see it as sacred, and be grateful.

Isopanisad, text 17 "a prayer to be offered at the time of death. At death we don't pray for four more years so we can finish our work. "Let this temporary body be burned to ashes, and let the air of life be merged with the totality of air. Now, O Lord, please remember all my sacrifices, and because you are the ultimate beneficiary, please remember all that I have done for You." Srila Prabhupada assures us that even if we don't remind the Lord, He will remember us.

When I make that prayer, I might add, "And please forgive me for all the things I *haven't* done for You. Lord, I'm just happy to be able to function now. May I always be rightly situated as the servant of Your servant."

"The desire for lordship is the material disease of the living being . . ." A person in *maya* remembers his heinous activities at the time of death. Let's not remember *that!* Don't cling to mundane memories except as they lead you to feel gratitude for Krishna consciousness. Srila Prabhupada said we should always regret what we were, but if at death our memories are surcharged with material *desires*, then we're in trouble. A devotee's life should be full of sincere service rendered to Krishna. So, "Even if a devotee does not remember his godly service at the time of death, the Lord does not forget him."

* * *

Thanks For Pain Free

Swami taught us we could be with Krishna
and that would be the best thing that could happen to us
who were so mundane and foolish
thinking back to days that
never were
but who were now here
chanting.

* * *

Is the truth different?
It's warm today.

* * *

Remember how much I wanted to be whole and free of pain?
To work? Now here's the work staring me in the face and I sit here
solo, human in the end.
This isn't much of a song but my heart will beat until it bursts. "

* * *

Field Work

#8 Happy Work Song

Time: 16:23

Wanted to come to the field pretty bad. Didn't want to stay home *sick*. I hope you guys appreciate that.

Yeah, well, here's your shovel. If you ain't sick, you can work.

* * *

Yeah, I'm happy to be up and working today, I can tell you. I don't exactly work for the jute field boss, either. *I* work for Krishna.

O happy song
of worker blessed
of those who suffer
accepting everything that comes down the pike,
not just the sweet rice
or guitar-pickin' Sundays
singing Queen Kunti's prayers
as if they were just a pretty song.

* * *

One devotee picked up his trombone and
that really tickled the guests.
They didn't know you could do that for Krishna.
The Indians were amazed at the blues kick
and at his obvious proficiency.

An overall happy, surprising combination of guitar and trombone and drums.

It's when the novelty wears off that the trouble begins. First they want to know when it will be over. Then they want to know whether it's bona fide to beat on those tubs in a holy temple and

"What would the master say?"

I don't have the answer to that because I have only imagined everything up until that question.

* * *

Ah, look up on this
sad-glad day
the lake strait
is calm and
so am I but I paid for my relief.
The final price "I cannot say.

* * *

5:30 p.m.

I read world news when Kirtana-rasa sends me a compilation of it once a month. The thing that aroused my interest in the last shipment was Clinton's sex scandal. I found myself rooting for him, hoping he would be cleared of the charges. What foolish prejudice on my part. Why, because he's a Democrat? Turn away from it.

Heard a man question Srila Prabhupada in 1971 about "those who are butchering in the Bangladesh war." He wanted Srila Prabhupada to condemn the butchery. Srila Prabhupada generalized the situation by referring to Vietnam and so many other wars. It's *all* criminal. Our program is to chant Hare Krishna. He refused to be dragged into it.

February 14, 12:07 a.m.

Received a letter in which a devotee told me of a brother who reads Srila Prabhupada's books for five or six hours a day, "and he quoted Prabhupada as saying that any of his disciples over fifty years can simply read his books, chant Hare Krishna, and in this way perfect their life."

Srila Prabhupada said other things too. When Daksa cursed Narada to be without residence, Srila Prabhupada called it a preacher's boon. Enigmatically, he added that he had been similarly cursed by the parents of his disciples. "I do not mind this curse by the parents of my disciples, but now it is necessary that I stay in one place to finish another task "this translation of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. If my young disciples, especially those who have taken *sannyasa*, take charge of traveling all over the world, it may be possible for me to transfer the curse of the parents to these young preachers. Then I may sit down conveniently in one place for the work of translation." (*Bhag.* 6.5.43, purport)

* * *

8:19 a.m.

Out and back from the walk. It was sprinkling. Comfortable to walk in my wellies "and not so cold out. I didn't attempt to speak or even think while I was outdoors, but some of the persons whose letters I answered recently were visiting in my mind. One devotee sent a picture of herself posing by a large rock at Govardhana, ringlets falling over her forehead, the rest of her covered by a white *cadar*. This devotee is a little eccentric and has an unrealistic idea of the guru's role. Her latest letter was a cry for help. What can I actually do for her?

I tried to relax while I walked, to stop these people from crowding in even on this walk. There's a tall, tilted tree I use to mark how far I've walked in one direction. I felt its presence.

What did I hear? Not much. I had so many hoods and hats over my ears that all sound was muffled.

O Krishna, Hare Krishna. Chanted rounds fifteen and sixteen, felt them on my beads but not reverberating in heart and soul. How can I give all to a repeatedly pronounced sound vibration? One Godbrother wrote and told me he performs twenty-four-hour *nama-vratas*. That was interesting.

* * *

Dear Mister

1

& Let us hear from you master
each letter you write is a help
tell me when to eat and walk I'm
thinking of leaving the temple to go to Texas
to join the Big Bopper and whaddy
think? Give me your blessings.

I say I never give them "have none "so
why not to you, dear Prabhu.

* * *

2
Dear Mister Master you're looking fine today
prancing on the green thought I'd write you
from here say my family is okay but
I work like a horse to keep it going.
What happened to your
plan to open a spa?

* * *

3
I'm glad I came to see you before the war starts 'cause
I'm about to burst! I moved from
X Street to Y
Street and
Realized that won't help. I passed my exams
and my father and the boy kept it in him
for tens whole years that . . .
I am not at liberty to sing that song.

* * *

4
In India five percent speak English and want to drop it. In Somalia
no, let's talk about the White House
where they fear scandal and prefer to concentrate on
Baghdad bombings
accomplished by February.
"I'm a terrorist and proud of it," he said and
the judge sentenced him to 240 years because he
"worshiped death and destruction."

* * *

5
Relief "I am not responsible for what I say
I'm just a news reporter a singer
with drums and
my watch band is too tight. I
speak *Caitanya-caritamrta*
and tell the worst

the best
and pray to see this thing
the day
in one shape or another
according to *God's* insight
even if I really can't express it.
She wrote from a mental ward, "I'm sick
they call it ""
You're doing okay "I replied
with words like that. "

* * *

10:37 a.m.

This morning I cleaned the floor. It was satisfying. I took a knife to get between the floorboards and dug it all out "the dust and grit. Then I wiped the bathroom and kitchen floors with a soapy sponge and saw filth and strings of dust wash down the drain. Black water gives me pleasure. It means I accomplished something "cleaned the floor and cleaned my heart, as we always used to say.

Answered last letters. One was from a young man newly married. He too sent a photo of himself with his new wife, holding hands as they walked down the stairs in the temple building. He said they were on their way to *harinama*. They both have just-married smiles. Now he's worried about the future "how he will support them both if he continues as he is doing now.

* * *

12:30 p.m.

Lunch "I listen for the outer door to open and someone to place the plate on the trunk. Then I go out there like an intelligent dog and bring in the offering plates. When I hear my own plate arrive, out I go again to get it.

* * *

2:40 p.m.

ISopanisad, mantra 17. Death "no foolin'. And what is my thought? The pie crust ought to be flaky. O Krishna, You and Your agents continue to remind me of the inevitability of our meeting. May You forgive me if I remind You of my service. "I's Nancy, and here I come through the straight and narrow "wailing I entered and wailing I exit." Can I come to You, or am I too tepid and undecided, too unbaked and unripe? If the qualification is pure love and unflinching determination, then I already know the answer to my question, but if You have any mercy cases . . . "Please, I'm the most fallen, and You are *patita-pavana*. My case comes first."

"If one is on the right path, even an occasional occurrence of worldliness does not hamper one in their advancement of self-realization." (*ISopanisad* 17, purport) If we

practice to use our senses in Krishna's service now, "One can utilize the results of such practice at the time of death."

* * *

Valentine's Song

& I'm almost sixty years old and want no shake up
'cause I'll be back next life
born in a good hospital "the best! "and be a strong bully boy
Reading to grow up. A girl will love to strut the street with me
her hand in my hand.
But I won't see Goloka.

* * *

O Krishna, please reconsider my request
give me a tutor/ an extension
of my one guru to straighten my head
I'll study hard and then press the button
for release from the herd.

* * *

So sang Sats on a cool sultry Valentine's Day
he didn't worry how bad it sounded because
God is Love "He loves Sats and Sats loves Him
toot on my plastic horn
with eternal love for
Him Acyuta, see Him. "

* * *

Field Work

#9 Freedom Suite

Time: 23 minutes

I think people are confused about what the possibilities of Krishna consciousness are. I'm in that camp too. I do know I must stay with my master. He said, however, that we should work for Krishna "whatever our work. Take Arjuna. He didn't avoid the fight just because Krishna was on his side, did he? We can't stop acting, anyway. Make it an offering "he was strong about that "and convert matter into praise of God.

So here's one small area which is not small to me. As a matter of fact, it's all I know:

The swan ducks its head under the water, Lough Erne and the weeds stand upright in ecstasy. O Krishna, those swans "are they intertwined in the lotus stems and am I praying to die at Your feet?

The plane the sky/ the jukebox glowing in the 1950s
the dark corner throwing off colors

a liquor-drunk man finding "Cherokee" by
Johnny Smith
playing (in a fantasy?)
on an alto wooden recorder
wild and improvising.

* * *

Rilke misled me.

Tell me again how your master approves of your actions and how he guides you, yet you're taking a chance. That master said, "It is risky," but he meant that people chose by their activities to take a lower birth, an animal body, distracted by sense gratification.

But to take *this* risk is a different thing. I don't think he would disapprove.

* * *

When I look within myself (where characters like Ryan and Shannon and Irish Joe live, and the scene of a band playing at a Sunday feast "that sort of thing)

when I look within myself I find . . .

honesty stirs

and I have no desire to eat

corn syrup on EkadaSi.

Secret messages touch me

and when two best friends fight, a third can send a peace proposal.

* * *

They put Dracula on U.S. postage stamps, retreating from the cross.

Issa teed off by biting mosquitoes he

dedicated many haiku to being bitten and then cursing them.

When is a haiku a mere fragment?

* * *

Green grasses one blue wool glove "just imagine what it's like to live
in process and

to write like that.

Reporter: How do you like living alone?

Satsvarupa dasa Goswami: I'm never alone. God is in my heart.

* * *

They should call that strait Three Swans Way. Stride to the piano, folks, and find the confines of this night.

Krishna conscious marriage took place as civil ceremony in nearby town. The bride carried a bouquet of flowers and her mom stood in the row behind her. The groom wore a gray sweatshirt, a white *dhoti*, and Birkenstocks!

I have to laugh/ living in Vrndavana (I wish) I'm getting many realizations and my family is a list of names only.

Laugh and the world laughs with you.

* * *

Don't say life is too hurried for you to chant Hare Krishna, that you'll try it later. Krishna teaches that you don't die and Ian Stephenson proves it's true. A guy with a bullet birthmark from his past life, and John Glenn going out into outer space at seventy-seven years old. Did he chant Hare Krishna on the moon, the first devotee to do so?

A Valentine's Day theme: If I want to be Krishna conscious straight but with freedom, I ought to be allowed.

Queen Kunti, while standing on the track, says she's amazed He is God, because *kajjala* ran from His eyes when Mother Yashoda threatened to punish Him. We live with them now, her words and images, fresh and simple, breathing in to find ourselves attracted by the Krishna magnet.

February 15, 2:12 a.m.

Yours truly here, reluctant to rise but couldn't find enough objection not to do it. It's Sunday, and I'll be giving the *Caitanya-caritamrta* lecture today. Keep the old race horse going.

When his spiritual master entered the hall, Indra did nothing to offer his respects. So much trouble followed. I go to the temple and bow before Srila Prabhupada, but there's so much more to it than that. You have to surrender deep in your mind. You have to really feel the service attitude, and you have to be prepared to deal with any mosquitoes of doubt or criticism that attack. Kill *ninda*.

By now I may have gathered a small wealth of literary ability and honesty. Does that make me proud before my spiritual master, as if I have some power? Indra said, ". . . I was proud of a little opulence . . ." His mind became polluted by false ego. "Alas! I condemn my wealth and opulence." (*Bhag.* 6.7.12)

In 1975, Srila Prabhupada toured America and invited it to become the first ideal nation to lead the world. The offer still holds, but we ISKCONites are less confident that we can lead others. Nowadays, many American temples function without temple presidents. That certainly wasn't the case when Srila Prabhupada made his tour. Perhaps world leadership will begin with good ISKCON organization, and that requires that each member of this movement practice good *sadhana*, be prepared to work hard, and learn to live cooperatively with one another. We have to first free ourselves from daydreams, lethargy, and weakness. "They should take advice from the spiritual master, the representative of Krishna." Then they will be happy. But Lord Caitanya warns, "O Lord, I do not aspire for material opulence or wealth, nor do I want a great number of followers to accept me as their leader, nor do I want a very beautiful wife to please me."

(*Siksastakam*, verse 4, cited in *Bhag.* 6.7.12, purport) Stay poor, and lead from the rear. But work hard.

Draw here the picture of a good boat (human body) manned by an expert captain (Srila Prabhupada). The winds of Vedic instruction make the crossing favorable. How far before we're across?

Well, a lot of time has been spent parading in front of others, and remember those rocky seas? He's not quite within sight of Goloka yet. But it's not too late. Keep sailing.

* * *

4:40 a.m.

I am confident I'll be able to speak about Lord Caitanya and Ramananda Raya. Their first discussion centers on *varnaSrama-dharma*. That is the copper. The ultimate topic is touchstone. None of us should claim that *varnaSrama-dharma* is the highest expression of Krishna consciousness. It can, however, be an essential step forward toward the understanding of *bhakti*, if it is practiced with that goal in mind. In every audience I meet the pro-*varnaSrama* people, and usually they want to assert that unless we organize ourselves socially and economically, and unless we protect cows, we will not be able to chant Hare Krishna peacefully.

* * *

During *japa* this morning, I noticed a few times that I was thinking of something besides the holy name. I was going over letter exchanges mainly. I ordered myself to drop that meditation and to concentrate on what I was doing right now. I did drop it, heard the mantra briefly, then off the mind went again. At the end of fourteen rounds, I faced the portrait of Srila Prabhupada and also candidly faced myself: "I have no awareness that this chanting is the Supreme Lord." No particular love for it. But neither did I feel offensive. I am dutiful. Being honest is important.

Being honest is *always* important. It is better than pretending you love the holy name when you don't. I want to be authentic and to go forward from there. One of these times as I face myself, I may be moved to cry. When will that day come when I will feel my incredible misfortune and be able to cry out to Krishna to beg for His mercy?

On Sundays, Radha-Govinda wear pink with peacock decoration and gold trim. It's nice to sit before that altar and sing prayers. I may, one day, one lifetime, become a Gaudiya Vaisnava. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

* * *

10:50 a.m.

Class went okay. I didn't get to speak about the first question and answer exchange between Ramananda Raya and Lord Caitanya. I'll get there next time. Manu asked the sankirtana partners were stopped by the police last night on their way to the island. The police asked, "How could you allow an IrA man to become a Hare Krishna devotee?" Leo replied: "We let *everyone* join!" He didn't seem to assure the police that after

joining, the IrA man would give up that affiliation. I reminded them of the story of Valmiki and how Narada changed his heart.

The headache began after the class. No one could tell. "Were you referring to the diary of Anne Frank in your talk?" Syamananda asked.

"No, it was another one." I embroidered, wove in details, used what came to mind, and all the while my heart hankered to come back to this room.

* * *

12:30 p.m.

Appreciated Syamananda's letter of appreciation for my books "he doesn't want to read them in a passive way. He sees them as a secret manual to help him get through his own maze. He's a keen reader and seems to know something about what I'm attempting.

* * *

2:20 p.m.

I'm a machine with an alarm. I go through my motions. Something tells me to offer Radha-Govinda wool *cadars* to fend off the chill in this room, and so I do it. Then I head out to the shed, past the kitchen windows, past the field in which the cow and the goats stand in the distance, and down the path where the dog's footprints show clearly in the mud. It's warm enough, so I don't need the gas heater. Then I turn to *ISopanisad*, mantra 17. I can't read it with the same spirit in which it was written, although I try. "O my Lord, powerful as fire, omnipotent one . . ." Since the Lord is in the heart, "He can give directions to His sincere devotees by which they can attain the right path. Such directions are especially offered to the devotee even if he desires something else." (*ISopanisad*, mantra 17, purport) In this mantra, the devotee prays to the Lord to rectify him from within his heart. Scriptures, saints, gurus, and the Lord within one's heart all guide the devotee toward the ultimate goal (*param gati*).

* * *

Sunday Blues
& On Sunday go to island feast
I had mine
same riff same rut
No say it's God
God omnipotent
and I pray to You please.

* * *

Don't even know what to say
because I respect boundaries.

* * *

You know the way
to blow down the
chorus
wall

* * *

Right on script wall the
automatic
soul
Reveals
What do you expect
peace you want
a piece you get.

* * *

In Italy so many cars everywhere
tit for tat killings
in Belfast
Falls

* * *

this message is written on the
sly. The coming through message
You are the boundary wall
and You the reluctant self
in me
O Lord Unseen. "

* * *

Field Work
#10 Despite Circumstances
Time: 18:08

I was walking down the crime-fearing streets and hearing a funny sound coming out of a taxi cab (inflight film).

* * *

I thought, "Oh no, where is that majestic sound coming from? Could it bring me to God?"

But no, it was just
city madness.

* * *

It wasn't that easy
wasn't
to be. I have to find
my resources to tell me how to go
in the way my master told me to go
despite circumstances.

* * *

The truth is I want to be with the best devotees in an ideal way, one
that doesn't seem to exist.
I'm like a *mataji* in ISKCON who never got married. Now she will never be a mother.
You tell her to find the best in her situation
despite circumstances.

* * *

What did Yudhisthira tell the Yaksa? The most wonderful thing is that although we
are surrounded by people dying, we still think it won't happen to us.
That's true.
There's only three things we can trust: guru, *sastra*, and *sadhu*
No point screaming harmonies just to irritate the self
into a sweat.
Where
where is that lady-like slipper peace
under a willow tree, where the haiku
or the man who can read
the haiku
I mean, in a way where
he stays fixed on appreciating it for a while.
Like this one:
It could be
that punishing
is another way to get the hell out "too many syllables "
but like me getting the hell out
of the Navy
the grind and
in the meantime
out of going back to Katan Avenue "blue shutters, white, Cape Cod house, and those
roof shingles

* * *

got out and went to a haven, eventually, living in two rooms at Samika Rsi's house

was it heaven?

* * *

That's what this message is here to tell us today: we want to hear a *person*, a true person, praying to God. We want to hear ourselves.

* * *

But we can't. Too much infield chatter.
So go and say the unspeakable
say it wonderfully
like no one ever did before
and feel that love supreme.

* * *

I'm becoming thirsty. Here's water.
I'm becoming lonely? Then?
I'm becoming crazy.
Then better tell a *sane* story. Or even just a happy one.

* * *

"How to be a person for God in accord with His will?"
You just *do it*. I felt like saying that to him
Real loud.

* * *

I'm telling you how I feel. Field Work ain't what you expect each time. Get unstuck.

* * *

5:11 p.m.

Indra planned to offer obeisances before Brhaspati and to ask his forgiveness. "A disciple should never be a hypocrite or be unfaithful to his spiritual master." (*Bhag.* 6.7.15, purport) But Brhaspati made himself unavailable. Due to offending their spiritual master, the demigods lost their power and were defeated in battle by the demons. ". . . by the strength of the guru one can become most powerful within this world, and by the displeasure of the guru one can lose everything." (*Bhag.* 6.7.23, purport) *Yasya prasadat . . .*

February 16, 12:12 a.m., Appearance day of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura

Visvarupa gave a Visnu mantra armor to conquer Indra's enemies. May Lord Visnu protect me at all times. That's a good prayer. It's contained in the Hare Krishna mantra. Please protect me from my mind, which leaves the lotus feet of the Hare Krishna mantra. Does the Narayana-kavaca mantra call upon various Visnu incarnations to protect us in different ways? Of course, we are taught to protect ourselves simply by praying sincerely to the Hare Krishna mantra. That was Lord Caitanya's order. Krishna protects His devotees in all circumstances: *kaunteya prati janahi, na me bhakta pranisathi*. Receive the mantra from the spiritual master and satisfy him by chanting it purely.

O mantra shield, please protect me. I know there are discrepancies in my performance of devotional service. I have to live with my shortcomings because what else can I do? Therefore, I can only ask Krishna to see the good essence of my offerings.

* * *

4 a.m.

In the bathroom I heard Prabhupada lecturing in 1972 in Vrndavana. He said that when Krishna appeared, He didn't only dance with the *gopis*, but performed so many important activities. He instituted good government through Maharaja Yudhisthira, He killed demons, He behaved as an ideal householder, etc. Prabhupada said that India's fall down is due to the fact that the *brahmanas* didn't accept lowborn persons, such as those who had converted to Islam, back into Vaisnavism. Then he said that Krishna consciousness has jurisdiction everywhere, whether in religion, psychology, or philosophy (I added "writing"). Prabhupada said we want leading personalities to take to Krishna consciousness. He said that all these different fields of culture need to be adjusted and brought into Krishna consciousness. I was thrilled to hear it. It seemed to reinforce my own contribution. In my most ambitious moments, I think that I am helping to introduce the culture of Krishna consciousness into the literary world. At least that's my aim. *And that's what Prabhupada wants.*

* * *

Plain Talking

& This is an easy-going track. I am feeling good because Srila Prabhupada supports me "dreamed I was going to him to get straightened out.

Now can I sing and convert the masses (or anyone) to Krishna consciousness?

* * *

Is the answer to that question a secret?

* * *

So long we have waited,
open the treasure, will you

No longer can I . . . oh yes
God makes you wait until you
please Him sufficiently or whatever it
is He wants

* * *

or what *you* want as you
indicate by your lackluster

* * *

this is no poem or
song pretense.
Just talk to me.
I opened letters but
wanted to vault in my imagination.
But I can't deny I heard the news of devotees in Vrndavana
partaking of a feast on a roof in honor of some guru's birthday.
Which guru?
It doesn't matter "it was a good feast.

* * *

Bird calls at dawn. Gray-hooded raven
so big it dominates the whole treetop.

* * *

Paying his dues
candlelight
nun. Write
while you can your
spurts of devotion. "

* * *

9:10 a.m.

Vise. I won't be afraid. M. will be back around noon, and I will be able to hear about
what he has been doing. I had a good week.

* * *

Japa Log
9:30 a.m.

I have a vise headache, so must chant silent mantras. I don't usually count them, unless I have to.

If I were actually in trouble, I'd chant better. I know I sometimes run it silently by my inner attention, praying to remember Krishna in a jam and to offset the preoccupation with the dangerous.

But here I am with an hour at my disposal "can't read, can't act, can't write (normally), and as for reciting the *maha-mantra* . . . let's put it positively "I like to chant when I can do it with vigor.

* * *

10:20 a.m.

"By the practice of these nine elements of devotional service one is elevated to spiritual consciousness, Krishna consciousness. When one's heart is thus cleared of material contamination, one can understand the science of Krishna." (Bg. 9.1, purport) Is this dogma? Perhaps dogma is any Sastric truth we repeat which we don't know for ourselves to be true. But how can we hold ourselves and our experiences up as the measure of truth? Because we have not attained a thoroughly satisfying level of Krishna consciousness, we doubt the process.

Right now I can't pursue this line of thought because I have pain. At least I know that association with confident devotees will remove doubts. Beyond that, we have to do it ourselves because it's also true that when we're in company, we tend to go along with the dogma more easily. Look for truth and pray for the mercy to find it.

* * *

11:50 a.m.

Twinge holds onto me and keeps my vision narrow. I don't feel free to roam or romp. Look up at the clouds "how low they are, and how gray. Everything moves in the sky in this beautiful lake country. Can't count up my Hare Krishnas now. Stop even these wordings. But I am dedicated to the process. Will lunch and rest help today? I still have a pill left in my quota if I think I need it.

* * *

Ten Minutes After An Esgic
& My head my pill
when will I learn?

* * *

What can I do for humankind?
This talking and some
Reader will be kind in turn.

* * *

When I face God "I cannot.
But I think about Him and resolve
never to leave His camp "that much. "

* * *

2:37 p.m.

M. told me of two eighty-year-old ladies on the bus to England who were so energetic that they were entertained (and unafraid) of fights breaking out in the back of the bus. If they can be so worldly-alive at eighty, why not me spiritually? I am not almost dead.

Turbans for Krishna and golden tiaras for Radharani arrived from Vrndavana today. I also received a new idea about how to approach *lectio divina*. Let's see if I can get it to work. What else? Just the feeling that writing throughout the day is good, even if it seems like play.

Also, someone sent the 1997 souvenir magazine from Janmastami at Krishna-Balaram Mandir. It contained wonderful color photos of the devotees there.

* * *

Joy Broadcast From Shed
& This is my parade day "
Memorial Day, Great Kills or
Salvation Army on streets "
something I like
to sway with in a holy embrace.

* * *

The *brahmanas'* wives took Krishna into
their hearts, He couldn't stop
them because they were free to do
what they liked.

* * *

Trouble in North Ireland doesn't reach me
although I talk business with Madhu
and for an hour see
the gentle acorn of my heart
pulling to itself the striving of
aloneness, the up and down
and through the
day
and the happiness.

* * *

O Krishna, let me love You.
Please break down the wall between us.
Do I have to live always
in this desert of confusion?

* * *

Row across the lake on a sunny day
the oars flash like
imagination
scratch to the bone. "

* * *

Field Work
#11 A Joyful Cry To God
Time: 15 minutes
Grizzle-faced
Red-headed, angry-solemn *pujari*
holds the *murti* and goes on parade
barefoot round and round the
mandira.
I'm not there . . .

* * *

He's splitting my cool my
composure, "calling out to God a
shout from the chest
be! For me! God
I do try! I love to cry
but can't fake."

* * *

Calm down,
hold our hand say you're
all right be all right now . . .
the players of the twenty-four-hour
kirtana keep it up the
Rhythm and blues of Hare, Krishna, and Radha
behind closed doors or open and
plenty pilgrims
come by
their lips dry for brackish water
'cause this ain't America.

Her visa expired after ten or twenty years in India

* * *

and I too can't expect to live all my life on a shore in Eire
free of birth and death
feeling supreme love
in mantras chanted
and silence too
is part of this Mass.

* * *

My resolution is rousing and I'm ready for it.
This is no staid church
but the church of one soul
in a desert shed

* * *

crying with joy O
O God be with me!
I know You and my heart itches
and aches

* * *

for You, Lord Krishna, in Your green turban
and Your devotees crying tears of
joy and breakthrough.
My place O Lord I know is
on this Popsicle raft speeding down a gutter
flying my colors
praying to be saved
before it's too late.

February 17, 12:15 a.m.

I began an auspicious, prayerful reading of Bg. 9.1 yesterday, going over the verse several times aloud, intoning it, trying to enter an attentive and faithful state. Now I wish to try it again at different times throughout the day.

Now reading *Bhagavatam*. Here is ViSvarupa with his three heads, and here, the demon Vrtrasura. The descriptions have a mythical sound to them. What do I prefer? Sages discussing pure *bhakti*. Srila Prabhupada immediately states that we cannot go to the heavenly planets and therefore have *no experience of what is described there*. "The Vedic knowledge is called *Sruti* because it must be received by being heard from

authorities. It is beyond the realm of our false experimental knowledge." (*Bhag.* 6.9.1, purport)

Some things I read seem not to apply to our modern (postmodern) situation, but the essence of the *Bhagavatam* is steady and transcendental. The demigods could not defeat Vrtrasura, so they prayed to the Supreme Personality of Godhead who grants fearlessness: "When one is afraid of being killed, one must take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead." I take this to mean we hope Krishna will spare us from death, or if we must die at a certain time, due to the time factor, we pray to Krishna so that we won't die in fear, absorbed in pain and forgetful of Him.

This prayer to the Lord is the real action of the chapter. Don't grab onto the tail of the swimming dog (Kafka, Rilke, etc.) if you want to cross the ocean. The demigods refer to the Lord's incarnations in which He saved the lives of His devotees, such as Matsya-avatara and Lord Visnu's saving Brahma from the waters of devastation. They say the Lord is always present before them as the Supersoul, but they cannot see Him. "We are unable to see Him because all of us think that we are separate and independent gods." (*Bhag.* 6.9.25)

Yes, thank you, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, for pointing out the source of my own vitality. Let me go to the essence, to the prayers. Next time I read I'll hear His response to those prayers. His response is *Sruti*.

* * *

Japa Log

2:45 a.m.

Fourteen rounds in an hour and forty-five minutes.

My body is sitting here in a chair, alert, leaning on me. Words awkward now "trying to convey what? That I sometimes *heard*. Nothing else, just that edge-of-your-seat hearing. It takes vigor. And prayer.

* * *

4:40 a.m.

I'm tired from my forty minutes of Deity worship. It's a good kind of exhaustion. I wash Their golden forms with a wet tissue, then dry Them with a cotton bud. I love to choose from among Their outfits and jewelry. This morning I lost a red earring. Maybe it will still turn up. In one scene of the *Lalita-madhava*, radha worships a sapphire *murti* of Krishna, but then He takes the *murti's* place, so *murti* and Krishna are the same.

It is likely that I will get a headache today, but I cannot allow myself to take a pill. Stand by to find a way to become more simple, satisfied only to utter the *maha-mantra*, and tolerant.

* * *

Mellow After Worship

& I hear you lost an earring is it in
the crack of the floor

under a bag
hiding never to be found?

* * *

So many nice things came from Vrndavana
the blanket the crown
turban neck beads Deity
thread and especially words from the devotees
wishing they could help.

* * *

Yell out: "I want Krishna!"
Bow your list of things to do:

* * *

1. Don't cut yourself when you shave or are
on the razor-edged
path.
2. Be attentive.
3. Hear him sing.
4. Hide some things.
5. "He's crying," I thought, but then listened better and took it more seriously. It's not
wrong for a man to cry, especially in his youth, on a quest.
6. Don't forget, a *brahmana* doesn't want political power.

* * *

Sawing away I'm just mellow and see
only good in the yellow
of this legal pad. "

* * *

It Never Entered My Mind
& He's so sweet it's embarrassing.
Slow rising and falling, we heard
he was irascible but he's tender
and it never entered my mind
he was muted
and graceful
a friend too.

* * *

In the back of the bus
where they were fighting the
woman cursing and
the cops with bludgeons

* * *

how delicate life is this
body
and the measures we sing to it
stately enough
to make us cry
for devotion unattained "
we simply complained
and got nothing
not realizing
that the Lord of
Vrndavana was here
all the time.
It never entered
my mind. "

* * *

11:40 a.m.

Asked for lunch early in hope it may bring down twinge. No pill today. Have to face the stark frontier without it.

Jimmy Thompson wrote me, "Did you read of Captain Scott in your childhood?" His ship "Discovery" is docked in Scotland. I remember Captain Scott and his Antarctic exploration. He provided a symbol for me of my life in NYC in the '60s. I played around with the concept of his life, you might say, in a literary way, and I read what I could find on the Antarctic at the 42nd Street library. Why? Because of the cold, the alone, the march unto death, the seeking of immortality by making one's stamp on an age, by staking a flag at the South Pole. I made sense out of something that seemed totally senseless. Something Rilke might have done. Living in that piano teacher's studio in the '70s "was it near Central Park? Oh, that's all sad madness. Better drop it. (I have.)

I also dropped the biography of Ornette Coleman someone sent me into a carton, unread. Then a friend sent me a letter sankirtana such as had never been heard before. He was severely criticized. But his *bhajan*s have prevailed, and nowadays Gaudiya Vaisnavas sing them as if they have always been standard and bona fide. Narottama was convinced despite the criticism he received, that he was doing something worthwhile.

Yes, my *kirtana* is also different. Thinking about this reminded me of Ornette's position in the evolution of jazz. He's not so much like me, and I don't look up to him or his music, but he certainly broke with tradition, and later people appreciated it.

I walk down my own path humbly. Our *sampradaya* doesn't value concoction, although there is room for innovation. Srila Prabhupada was an innovator, and so were

others in our line. But Prabhupada "they said what he accomplished couldn't be done. Yet he did it; he converted *mlecchas* into Vaisnavas.

February 18, 4:30 a.m.

Sharp pain all night. It hints to a time when I may not be even as active as I am now. The pain has been going steady since 9 a.m. yesterday morning, and still it grips me in its pincers.

Through the sharp pain I dreamt I was back on Katan Avenue, traveling in a rickshaw and then walking. I met some of my Godbrothers, but became separated from everyone I knew. I thought I could take care of myself. I could just lay down on the ground and transport myself back to where I was before I fell asleep. After all, this was just a dream. But it wasn't so easy. When I finally awoke, I found myself under the picture of Radha and Krishna. It was interesting to think that I could transport myself like that. It pointed to a spiritual essence which was assuring me that I don't really belong to anyone or any place, that I do not have to remain imprisoned by this body, at least not in my consciousness, and that the pain is worse because I identify with it. There are higher freedoms available. Of course, I know that I must transport myself by pure chanting and by hearing *Krishna-katha*.

* * *

6:20 a.m.

In the same mail pack I received both the *GBC Journal* and an anti-GBC newsletter called *Dharma-katha*. The anti-GBC publication states that the GBC members are all hypocrites. They name me several times, and accuse me of committing the mad elephant offense because I did not openly support Srila Narayana Maharaja. In the *GBC Journal*, an article describes just how hard it is to serve on the GBC. The author says that it's particularly difficult to be both a member of the GBC and a spiritual master. People constantly demand to see such a person, and there is no way to continue in both services unless one can renew his courage in the understanding that he is doing what Prabhupada wants. Thus service on the GBC is the classic example of accepting work one would normally have no desire to perform, but doing it for Prabhupada and Krishna.

I browsed through both newsletters while feeling pain. I felt a pang of guilt when the GBC asserted that GBC men don't quit because they are selfless. I quit. But the pain in my head reminds me why I resigned. I couldn't do otherwise. At the same time, I respect those who are doing something despite the difficulties.

* * *

12:04 p.m.

Pain finally subsiding. What can I salvage of this day? I had to chant my *japa* silently this morning, and I have no soapbox orations to present.

Dressed Krishna in white with silver trim. His turban sits back slightly on His head, and I can see His hairline and His ears. Thank you, Lord, for getting me through this

ordeal. I hope I can learn something from it. I seemed to grope through this session with no attempt at relaxation or deep breathing. I just survived.

* * *

2:33 p.m.

Why write to yourself if you actually want to touch others? Sleight of hand. Deep in me is planted a desire to write. Radical: it creates a reality "one I prefer, one I need. It also simultaneously turns writing into art. I write for me, but for Krishna.

Anyway, Krishna freed me from the pain. Or should I say *prakrti* relented? For the time being, the arteries and veins are running okay. M. doesn't have to grimace or wince on my behalf for awhile. I'm out in the cool shed now, preparing to write Field Work #12. It will probably come out shorter, mellower, indifferent to the fact that it was a rough time.

Newsletters from both sides saying I have offended Vaisnavas and that hell awaits me.

* * *

Bhakti
& Bhakti, the sky is made by
God so we can see it.

* * *

I'm a puppy looking around
to love all
wagging tail stub
I'm Bhakti's dog

* * *

I'm my own man/ solemn sober.
Tell my doctor how
I got through
and you? You have what?
A cold? Influenza?
But I thought I was the only . . .

* * *

Brahma with four heads in a
joke shop they sold
black ink spill
rubber turd and
an electric thing you put in your hand

to give your partner a shock.

* * *

O Bhakti, I'm the happy
Recoverer recluse
singing the story
of a poet (restless) who just
wants a little fruit with his yogurt
and everyone to say he is really
good.

* * *

Lord, when You wore Your
white turban You sure looked
nice. I didn't put Your
earrings on today and Radha's
I was just so weak
and pained "You understand "
but I'm okay now
I'll rest some more
and when hell comes who will
be spared? Those guys in charge? The
Rebels? The counter-blasphemers?
Me?

* * *

I write for You
in me even while I seek You. "

* * *

Field Work
#12 Employed *Bhakta*
Time: 18:50

We wanted a Field Work we could handle, something soothing to our blue tone, gray sky, and just-recovering-from-headache syndrome. Our man inside tells me to just go for a walk. But this is an old-time bucket, and I'm a retired monk living off a 5x20-foot garden intended to feed four.

* * *

Sure I get lonely when I chant and dream of brothers raising victory flags
over their preaching sites, but I know I can't sing no one's tunes
but my own
indominateable ones
that I get
from the spark of
God.

* * *

And I'm doing *my* bit to improve the city on the edge of this lake. But it's slow here,
real slow, because you see, they have to row you across.
He said, "I'm an individual and don't want someone to tell me I'm wrong."
Okay. Be as you are and I'll try to find room for you,
but besides that, you will have to see the truth in yourself and face your own chanting.
My, my, what a mess.
But I forgive you if
you forgive me.

* * *

Lord gives us sacred time in which to seek His love and pleasure and not be put down
by others in the meantime. That newsletter called me a pig, a dog, and said I would see
hell.
Like Yudhisthira Maharaja?
So many elegies we sing.

* * *

2

Rock 'n' roll in ISKCON was not at first accepted, but the lads persisted with a push
from rocker gurus. Now it's a catalogued *sampradaya*.

That dim circle of pain "I envisioned it all night, my vigil "then was offered a soulful
repose as an outpost scout.

* * *

5:50 p.m.

Pain is an angry response from the body. Pain has both physiological and
psychological aspects; the second is called "the suffering component." How much can
pain intrude into a life? How much *does* it? When it intrudes a lot, it is said that one
suffers from Chronic Pain. I took these words and ideas from a book called *Making
Peace with Chronic Pain*, by Marlene E. Hunter, M.D.

Pain has intruded into *my* life. I'm deep in a hole with it. Still, I'm learning to be more
progressive in terms of how I deal with it. I'm not suffering from a loss of income or
even being prevented from what I most like to do. I am fortunate in that sense "more

fortunate than many people in this world. However, pain dictates the dance steps, and I am forced to follow. Within those limits, I dance as I like. It hasn't stopped me from writing yet.

I live in Ireland because I can find peace and solitude here, both of which are necessary for my free dance within the limits of the pain.

But I just read a statement by poet Claudia Kellan, who said that poets should not live in exile; they should live in their own countries. She rejects two writers, James Joyce and Milan Kundera, who lived in exile. She says of them, "The urgencies of these men, removed as they were from the very literal body of their countries, remained adolescent, rooted in a narcissism of self. Give me the terseness of Miroslav Holub, that eye to the microscope; give me the attack of a writer like Baclav Haval. Let me find the courage to write to the decaying body *in* my country, which for the poet is the word, the true word." (*What Will Suffice: Contemporary American Poets on the Art of Poetry*, p. 77)

No, I live in exile by choice. Anyway, a devotee is already in exile from the material world. What does it matter what country he chooses for his residence? We tend to live within our cult, our association with devotees and congregation, and meet with the nondevotees only to preach. I don't live in America, and I don't really live in Ireland in that sense. I take any quiet place.

February 19, 12:08 a.m.

The demigods prayed to Lord Narayana, "Since we appeared after You created this cosmic manifestation, Your activities are impossible for us to understand. We therefore have nothing to offer You but our humble obeisances." (*Bhag.* 6.9.32)

I'm aware somewhat that to be faithful to the scriptures we have to go against the intellectual climate of the day as well as the general drift of heathenism. In that newly arrived poetry anthology, the editor speaks of the characteristics of our changing relationship with the world: "The rise of science and technology; the decline of traditional religious practice "the death of one god is the death of all . . ." And he views "religious fundamentalism" as one of the post-Cold War phenomena, to be feared along with neo-Fascism, destruction of the ecosystem, and AIDS.

Devotees flow against the current of atheism. We're flotsam in the current. No one out there (outside of ISKCON) even knows we exist, no matter what kind of superstars we are in ISKCON. And in ISKCON there is already such a flurry of opinions that we have little chance of influencing the tide.

There are two quotes from poets about the meaning of poetry. I think I can apply both of them to my own case as I exist within ISKCON and in the larger society that ignores and resists us and to whom we are trying to preach. The first is from Marianne Moore: "I think it is high time that everybody/ with a true love of rime, asserts his views."

About what?

The second is from Czeslaw Milosz: "The purpose of poetry is to remind us/ how difficult it is to remain one person,/ for our house is open, there are no/ keys in the doors,/ and invisible guests come in and out at will."

* * *

The Supreme Lord gives benedictions and as time later destroys them. The demigods know He existed before they did, and therefore they cannot claim to know Him. The Supreme Lord is realized only by topmost *sannyasis* who travel and preach. "When the darkness in their hearts is completely eradicated and You are revealed to them, the transcendental bliss they enjoy is the transcendental form of Your Lordship." Srila Prabhupada states that God realization is possible when one is full engaged in devotional service. "The covered core of one's heart is then completely open to receiving an understanding of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His various forms." (*Bhag.* 6.9.33, purport)

It is very difficult to understand the Supreme Lord. He does not fit into the patterns we know of ordinary persons who are born and die, and who live with their limitations and desires. For example, the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* states that God has no material body; He has a spiritual body. His human-like activities are most bewildering. "How can God be a cowherd boy? It must be a myth." He never leaves Goloka, yet He is all-pervading. To know Him we have to give up the material investigation (science, physics, microscopes, telescopes) and our mental speculation. The logic of philosophers cannot locate Him, nor can we understand Him according to the mood of the particular time in which we live: "How could God have allowed the Holocaust?" Even the demigods raised doubts in their prayer-inquiries. It's not wrong to be confused about God's nature, as long as we inquire submissively from the proper authorities.

I'm supposed to know the answer to all these doubts and to know God. All I know is contained in *sastra* and in the words of the *acaryas*. I regularly record those words as part of my life's work.

I had better stop. My head is still weak. I can't seem to assimilate much right now. I do know that the demigods are praising God. Let me simply stand in that rain of mercy and then extend it to others.

* * *

Dream: I went to a room where Prabhupada was sitting in a rocker. I think he was reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, but he was carving a block of wood with a knife. He handed me both the wood and the knife and indicated that I should complete the carving. Then a Godbrother came and sat in the rocker. Prabhupada pretended he has a piece of incense and mimed a *puja* to my brother. He did this with quiet humor.

* * *

5:10 a.m.

This morning I lost one of Radha's *candrikas* "brushed it off the altar while I was dressing Them. I searched everywhere for it, Madhu too, but we couldn't find it.

Dr. Hunter's book on chronic pain uses dance as its main metaphor. She also defines chronic pain as coming from an unknown cause, unlike the obvious cause and effect of pain caused by appendicitis or a car accident. It seems to me that my pain, although chronic in the sense of continuous, does have a biological cause. Anyway, she hints at a deeper cause, from the psyche and emotions. The result: one's life is now choreographed by pain into a dance expressing anger, suffering, and helplessness.

I prefer to think that my chronic condition has been given to me by Krishna, as something I have to work through. Karma, if you prefer that word. In any case, whether it's karma or a self-inflicted dance, it seems right to improve the nature of the dance. I can learn to see suffering as something positive in my life.

* * *

8:45 a.m.

The professional, dedicated poets in this new anthology seem to say that you should spend a lot of time getting out one poem. They're interested in peak expression, something that comes after a lot of training, work, and revision. Poetry, they say, should be a distilled experience or imaginative piece. A poet doesn't write many poems, although he may write frequently. Fortunately, I was liberated from that concept years ago. William Stafford's *Writing the Australian Crawl* helped. I am no slave to revision. I'm in the process school. Keep writing, and write passionately as an expression of spiritual life (Krishna consciousness). I hope I'm spiraling inward and cutting deeper each time I speak. Even if I am static, I'll continue my earnest record.

* * *

10:18 a.m.

I see Arjuna and John in a white van driving away from Geaglum as I walk back to Manu's. Friendly eye-contact and folded palms. Tilaka ambling nearby. This too is something spiritual. We mean no harm to one another.

When I walk, I seek to learn something from the air, sky, and water "from God. He may give me insight.

Why is it the headaches seem to be coming more than usual? Every day without fail, I begin to feel pain around 9 in the morning. Don't ask. Just maneuver around it. Srila Prabhupada smiles down at me.

Another devotee is about to leave for Vrndavana-Mayapur. I'm going to ask her to get Radharani some little crowns. She'll be back in six weeks. She said she's going to India because she needs a break. Her temple president has also gone to India, but not for a break. He has gone to take part in the GBC meetings and the festival.

Oh, bring me something from Vrndavana. Even a nuance.

No poets in Krishna conscious movement since Govardhana.

What do you mean by that?

I mean . . . I'm writing from the West.

I mean I can maneuver within the grip of a headache. There is *some* space every day in which to write a song and in which to massage my master's form. I always seek his assurance. What more is there to say?

* * *

12:10 p.m.

Sukhada cooking again. How's your head, Fred? Too pressured to say? Think you'll do a Field Work this afternoon?

Ironic self-mocker. raise it to a cosmic level? No. There is no cosmic irony. Only purity, everywhere purity. Wonderful Krishna.

* * *

2:25 p.m.

Anyone who has taken a material body has to suffer. The collie walks around light-footed and flea-bitten. Up and down in different parts of this head, I feel pressure. Dr. Hunter calls it the "pain-fear-pain cycle."

I've brought my *Gita* to the shed. Dear Krishna, I know Your words are true. I have heard them repeated by the *susruma dhiranam*, I am worshipping Deities, I vibrate the holy name, and even though sometimes I'm surly or unsociable, I appreciate the friendship of Your devotees.

Hare Krishna. How many mantras to get me from the house to the shed? How many before I am allowed to love them? Prabhupada said it could take place within a minute or it might not take place within a million births. I'm waiting, not sure which it will be for me.

* * *

4:45 p.m.

A big, gray-haired guy suddenly appeared at my window "my private view to the lake strait. I went around to the door to see him. He didn't identify himself but was some kind of official with a covered legal pad. He was looking for someone named Vilnis. No one by that name in Manu's house. Someone said Vilnis was on the island. The guy said he'd be back Monday and that we should have Vilnis lined up to see him. I wanted to ask him who he was and what department he represented, but since he didn't volunteer the information, I let it go.

When he appeared at my window so suddenly, I had been absorbed in writing a letter to Narayana-kavaca, to be delivered in India. Absorbed also in pain. Now I'm more alert to the fact that I'm alone and have less than two hours before evening.

* * *

5:30 p.m.

White fence. Spray paint. Words arranged. My head. Yours too. All souls. Preach. Faded out. Wrote twenty. revolted against mediocre. Turned off set. Appeared all right. Didn't want analgesics. Wanted peace. God needs our faith. I mean, we need faith to know Him. Coming and going from India, I observe them. In- and out-baskets. recite replies, "Dear So-and-so." Radha and Krishna. My solace. I merge into the person whose hands put Them to bed.

Layers of clouds. Day's end. In bed. Seek relief. Then midnight again and another chance to read and pray.

February 20, 12:10 a.m.

Someone prayed, "Lord, I have faith. Please give me more." My prayer is like that. I also want interest and absorption in Krishna's message. I want that interest to be distinguishable from any other interest I seem to have in this world. I want it to be special and exclusive.

I heard an ISKCON speaker urging and pushing his audience to appreciate how beautiful, great, and inconceivable is Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As the emotion of his urging rose, I wondered if he actually knew about whom he was speaking. It's a speaker's convention to get worked up, but it doesn't seem right for me to do it. On the other hand, Srila Prabhupada doesn't want us to remain silent. Say what we can actually say with grace.

We're fortunate when we can break through to emotion in a lecture, or break through to *anything* that evokes our Krishna consciousness. All the days we spend unconscious and dry but doing the groundwork leave us open to the opportunity. It's how we worship "now.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead can do anything, and He contains no contradictions. "Your potency is so great that it can do and undo anything as You like. With the help of that potency, what is impossible for You? Since there is no duality in Your constitutional position, You can do everything by the influence of Your energy." (*Bhag.* 6.9.36)

"There is no question of material pains or pleasures for either the Supreme Personality of Godhead or His pure devotees, although they are sometimes superficially said to be distressed or happy. One who is *atmarama* is [transcendentally] blissful in both ways." (*Bhag.* 6.9.36, purport) *Acintya khalu ye bhava na tams tarkena yojayet.*

* * *

4:45 a.m.

Listening to *Lalita-Madhava* while dressing Radha-Govinda. I love the night outfits that were made in Vrndavana. I hope they are pleasing to Them. I love the colors and the feel of the cloth, the way they fit. I am not fit to hear of Their pastimes, but I do anyway, they are so sublime. Rupa Gosvami composed these books just to delight the hearts of advanced Vaisnavas. I am like a squirrel looking on. Even I can take pleasure in it.

Even in Krishna's pastimes, time appears to be moving along. In *Lalita-Madhava* we hear that Radha and Krishna are enjoying in Nava Vrndavana, but we are also aware that at any moment, Rukmini-Candravali will enter and bring about Radha-Krishna's separation. Although Krishna appears to be a rake, enjoying both with His queen and His *parakiya* lover, Krishna actually enjoys only with Radha. And Radha is like a captured deer in Rukmini's palace.

* * *

Rough Soul
& Song flute is Krishna/ Radha a star
always with Krishna

and what I want to know is how
such a rough person, an angry person, can be
Krishna conscious. Because he can
because even stubby fingers
can turn the pages of a book
and Krishna can accommodate
even rough souls
turn them smooth
enough to hear
the Krishna conscious melody.

* * *

Srila Prabhupada was there in West Virginia and brought Krishna consciousness to
the land of phlox. Taught of Narada and Vyasa, taught
Krishna book nectar

* * *

and man, we had seen some hard times
and nothing
like *this*.

* * *

I told my sister in '65 "
actually, I wrote it in a letter "
been up all night, sitting on a bench
in Central Park: "I am
giving birth to a child, my
book, my
writing." She had
just become a mother and I thought
I was a follower poet
my guru, Rilke.
But that *Krishna* book
heard with my *adhira* mind
who saw only art literature life passion

* * *

and who needed the expert assistance of the person
on his knees before the altar
he touches the Deities. Is someone
at my door or window? The
Raven? A break-in?

I trust it's just the fellows
exhorting me on
O Krishna "flute song
be kind to me
a rough fool
because now Krishna consciousness odes are breaking
like surf over my heart
and want to be allowed
to enter the world. "

* * *

8 a.m.

Pleasant sight on the walk, holes filled up with gray pebbles. Warm (but windy) weather persists through all February. I heard the winter is also warm in the Northeast United States. Stand alone on the back road facing the sky, and hear the wind.

* * *

10:32 a.m.

Sukhada is going to India, and I'm sending her off with one of Radha-Govinda's night outfits. I want her to bring it to the tailor and ask for two more just like it. I also want some fancy day outfits. I want to get lost in this Deity worship. Hare Krishna.

* * *

Offering

& Hurry you've got to go to the
bathroom "hurry you
can't refuse you are going to live
and die and you are the fastest
senator but the slowest devotee.

* * *

Oh, Sats, get off the seat and let's hear
the hairy swami scary leader
big GBC

* * *

before the old and swinging ballad
dances back in
and makes us fit for separation
from Vrndavana.

* * *

I turn my head to view the
mesh that prevents the pigeons
and monkeys from entering
and find that I have been interrupted
twice.

* * *

I bring my attention back because
this is serious. The speaker said
Pariksit Maharaja. He pronounced it
just like that.

* * *

Rain blowing sideways
strait clear
devotees in orange
Row hard
and
smile in earnest.

* * *

This song is for Him. "

* * *

Magpie alighting on a fence post, now taking off. Colder today, and I can see the gray water blowing hard across the strait. Clouds in fragments flying.

I'm waiting for *prasadam*. I wait for two sounds: first the outer door, then the inner door. When I hear those sounds twice and all doors are closed, I sneak out like a genuine monk and grab my *thali*. Outside, the clover is nourished by the rain.

* * *

2:22 p.m.

Dear God, thank You for allowing me to live, and I thank You in advance for helping me at death to accept what's coming and to be detached. I know You will help because You always do. You have always been there as I struggle to turn to You despite my present circumstances. Please allow me to accept my next destination with gratitude. I see how disciples express disappointment, how they insinuate that they would like more from their guru, how they want to be a special object of his mercy. I find that

unattractive (although human), self-serving on their side. It's emotional politics, this attempt. I don't want to do that with You.

The beauty of life "I perceive it in the chuffing wind, the water bird landing on a winter tree. The elements are clean in this rural land despite the ugliness that seems to hide better here.

* * *

We Mortals Sing
& Little man we mortals
pray
would like to receive
God's word
in the inner mind
free of intellectual challenge
while in the desert abiding.

* * *

Each one free to move his own way
I tell you mine "
I let the sunshine in
mayam idam . . . yoga iSvara yam
preaching on behalf of the
Acintya Lord.

* * *

My song has been laid down by
previous masters and I repeat it
in my own way
natural my
voice
I don't invent no
God or *sastra*.

* * *

As You glance at land and sky
Krishna I want to accompany You.
Krishna, Krishna
I was there to commit
many mistakes but
always sang
for Your pleasure
or wished

I did.

* * *

The sky in this world is
a spark of Your splendor my
song a spark of His song He
empowers me to sing
it here and later
in the spiritual world. "

* * *

Field Work
#13 Pursuance And Psalm
Time: 17:50
1

I take my cap off to those who serve God and the good.

* * *

I will always acknowledge (small enough act) Krishna is God and guru is not to be changed by me. I will stumble and fall.

* * *

I'm angry at how things have turned out? Why?

* * *

Pursuing God who's pursuing us "
God is the hound of heaven.

* * *

Krishna, I worship You as Deity
offer my food "isn't
that enough?
I live with headaches five days
a week. Isn't it enough to stay
in a house in rural France
and stay out of trouble?

* * *

Isn't it enough that I don't
fall down from the minimum

standard but go to the grave saffron?
"Not enough," said St.
Francis "he said his
God demanded the hell out of him.

* * *

2

God, we praise You in our liturgical way in the temple. Your Majesty, You bring about all things.

Be peaceful, I tell myself, and pray to evoke His presence. Be that old-time preacher and try to pull the congregation to their knees, crying in group, rolling in the aisles. Catharsis. That's what we need.

I heard a Godbrother say in a lecture that the Pandavas had so much depended on Krishna that they were shocked when He was going to return to Dvaraka. Queen Kunti came before Him and prayed that the calamities never stop. How could He leave?

We make psalms out of everything we know. *Please* let us praise You in this faithless age. In whatever time I have left, Lord, I beg You to

1. accept this offering
2. inspire me to serve better
3. give me strength
4. pray for others
5. recognize my limits, what's realistic
6. come into my life so I can better know how to please You

* * *

5:43 p.m.

Sitting facing the altar. My Deities. I can't see Them. I don't have eyes of devotion. If I think I own Them, I'm wrong. Only half an hour left until I put Radha-Govinda and Srila Prabhupada to bed, then get ready myself. At that time, I like to play Srila Prabhupada singing *Hare Krishna Bhajana* or *Mangalacarana* prayers. Both are mellow, and both make me feel close to him. His singing is so devotional, pure release. He would have preferred to stay in Vrndavana to practice his *bhajana*, but he said he gave up his sense gratification to help others. Now valiant preachers go on his behalf to cities around the world to teach Krishna consciousness, and to take on the burdens and the madness.

The book on chronic pain suggests we may be angry or feel somehow thwarted, so the body expresses itself through pain. In other words, the chronic pain may have psychological or emotional roots. It's how we say to the world that we are angry or hurt. Until we find another way to say it, we will have to suffer. Often we don't find another way because we deny the anger, grief, or other intense emotion, and thus deny it an outlet other than through pain. If this were true in all cases, what can be done about it? Do I have a secret suffering which I refuse to acknowledge? Perhaps not.

Seems people would need someone else to help them get it out. In my case, am I angry at ISKCON and its workers? At Krishna? At my spiritual master? They promised

me a life of eternity, bliss, and knowledge, or at least an ideal society in which our only trouble would be to subdue demons. No one told me I would have to first subdue myself. Am I angry because this movement failed to become a happy home even after I had given up all other homes? Perhaps I am traumatized by all the of falldown experiences we have had in this movement. I belonged to a club once, and there are few members left. And the critics are so harsh, vicious, actually, and they cause more trauma from a spiritual childhood spent in ISKCON. It has been hard to grow up and to face the movement's failures.

It has also been hard to face my own failures, both in action and in attitude. Sometimes I resent how Prabhupada calls me to surrender when I can't seem to fully respond, but there is no outlet for such expressions because they are forbidden for a disciple to even feel. Disciples who do feel them must then live with generalized emotions and humble platitudes, such as, "I'm very fallen. I'm an offender."

I don't think anyone could help me with this unless he himself were a sincere disciple of Srila Prabhupada. I don't want to be released from my bond of discipleship. Neither do I want someone to offer me "exit counseling." I am not looking to go off and enjoy myself, free of the "tyranny" of my relationship with Prabhupada. Still, there ought to be a way to face my inability to do all that he said, yet not feel guilty about it. I pray Krishna will adjust all these things for me. They are probably normal feelings, and maybe I don't have to give them such power in my life. I want to learn to release them by learning to live with a less-strict image of what it means to be a disciple, to move from fear of failure to love for the spiritual master. Some would call what I just expressed teenage rebellion. To some degree, though, we each have to face such issues and become our own person in serving the spiritual father. Srila Prabhupada was *his* own man, yet just see how he served his spiritual master. We may have to shake off our childish dependency and learn a more mature expression of surrender. Surrender must be voluntary. It is not only a matter of discipline.

February 21, 12:05 a.m.

People have different opinions about God. Some fear Him, some don't believe in Him, and others accept that He contains all contradictions and take shelter in Him. But God is one. He is not touched by our opinions.

Give up the idea that you are alone and can take care of yourself, or that there is an infrastructure that doesn't include God. Understanding God's presence in all things through His energies requires intelligence and guidance (from guru and *sastra*), and presupposes that you are interested in the subject in the first place. Nowadays people don't care much about such things. Human beings have always been interested in survival, but now people are more interested in sense gratification and how staying alive can serve that purpose. Theology seems abstract to them. I remember one reporter describing Srila Prabhupada's traveling around America as having "philosophical chats" with his followers. He wanted to know about the here and now.

But Krishna consciousness *is* the vital interest, the way to peace and prosperity. By understanding Krishna, we naturally harmonize our interests in economics, world peace,

and other aspects of physical survival. Our survival is eternally secured only when we free ourselves from repeated birth and death. "Philosophical chats"?

"Therefore, O killer of the Madhu demon, incessant transcendental bliss flows in the minds of those who have even once tasted but a drop of the nectar from the ocean of the nectar of Your glories. Such exalted devotees forget the tiny reflection of so-called material happiness produced from the material senses of sight and sound."

(*Bhag.* 6.9.39) These devotees are real friends. "Only a pure devotee can preach the glories of the Lord for the benefit of all conditioned souls." (*Bhag.* 6.9.39, purport) He who is absorbed in Krishna consciousness is the best preacher.

The demigods asked the Lord to kill Vrtrasura. The prayer to defeat their enemies shows the demigods to be *sakama* devotees; an *akama* devotee wouldn't have asked for relief from material distress. "Even if an *akama* devotee is suffering, he thinks this is due to his past impious activities and agrees to suffer the consequences." (*Bhag.* 6.9.40, purport)

In *Making Peace with Chronic Pain*, Dr. Hunter mentions both internal and external directors and players who take part in the dance of chronic pain. She fails to mention either God or karma. That, I can imagine she would think, would be too fatalistic, an outmoded religious trip that has no place in the world of healing. If it did have a place, it could serve as a distraction or an aid for people to disassociate themselves from the pain. She does, however, encourage people to pray to their "higher power" in order to bring themselves peace.

At least the *sakama* devotees go to God as soon as they are in difficulty. Therefore, they are seen as pious. But although *sakama* devotees receive the results of their prayers, they do not go back to Godhead at the end of their lives.

"A pure devotee always engages in the service of the Lord without demanding anything. The Lord is present everywhere and knows the necessities of His devotees; consequently there is no need to disturb Him by asking Him for material benefits." (*Bhag.* 6.9.42, purport)

Keep this in mind when you have pain or any other type of misery. Pray to Krishna to receive only the mercy of His service. If a devotee does pray to Krishna for material relief, he apologizes for that, aware that Krishna already knows his need and is taking care of him.

* * *

4:31 a.m.

Sitting facing Sri Sri Radha-Govinda, Srila Prabhupada, and the other sacred pictures and forms on my altar. Today Radha and Govinda are wearing red with gold trim. In *Lalita-Madhava*. They look at pictures on the wall of a cave at Nava Vrndavana. The pictures depict Krishna's *lilas* in Vrndavana and were placed there by ViSvakarma. He left out the Kaliya pastime because he thought it would give radha too much pain. radha and Krishna look at the pictures and recall Their pastimes together. Madhumangala is with Them, and also Nava Vrnda-devi. They all see the wonderful pastimes of the *rasa* dance, and Krishna asks when He will be able to have those pastimes again.

I don't plan to travel with these Deities. I have too many outfits and too much paraphernalia. I also wouldn't want to leave Them in someone's care. So better I don't leave at all. Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishnaloka, and the chanting is my connection, along with this Deity worship.

More from *Lalita-Madhava*: Madhavi, Rukmini's assistant, exchanges the clothing gifts made by ViSvakarma. She gives Radha's clothes to Rukmini and Rukmini's clothes to Radha. This causes various confusions and intrigues which Krishna has to overcome with the assistance of His *parisads*. Later in the story, all the obstacles are overcome, and Radha and Krishna are together. Krishna asks permission from Rukmini to go to the forest to see a certain ascetic girl. He is lost in happiness with His Radha there. Madhumangala wants sweets, as usual.

* * *

It's *mangala-arati* time at the temple "arati just ending. I wrote to Bhakta Sam, who has just gone to the India festival, to assure him to simply worship Krishna and read Prabhupada's books. I spoke earnestly to him. "Don't expect everything in one lifetime."

* * *

5:33 a.m.

After a few chapters, I find the book on chronic pain tedious. Too many anecdotes. Doesn't do much for me, and I'm not sure how I can change anything after reading what I have. She suggests we identify the players and try to modify something in the way we "dance," perhaps by confronting an inner actor (an ego state) or an outer actor. But I can't even identify any crucial outer actors, it's mostly me and the pain, or even more, me and Krishna.

Perhaps I'm not interested in the chronic pain advice because I had a clear day yesterday after four bad days in a row. When I get a good day, I tend to think everything is okay now. Foolish. Or maybe it's not foolish. The other reason is that I am trying to become more serious about seeing my relationship with pain as part of my relationship with Krishna. Just me, Krishna, my karma, and three Esgics a week.

* * *

5:55 a.m.

Scrape, scrape "M. stirs porridge in a pot. He came in at 9:45 p.m. last night. Woke me up by slamming the door. I'd been asleep for almost three hours by then. Hare Krishna. Stir, scrape. One banana almost black on the outside. Will he serve me that one? What do I want? Speak up. I should ask what I want that I'm prepared to pay for. Don't say only, "I want *Krishna-prema*," unless you are willing to pay the price.

I want twenty pages a day. Okay, that I know.

Boredom shift/ ocean bottom/ rivets weak in

Titanic/ open shifts midriff

shifts/

earth

shifts.

Words: Krishna-oriented monk finds happiness in North Ireland lake country.

Headline: Monk beheaded his make-believe in shed; opens surprises that harm no one.

Monk displays witchcraft, says local board.

Devotee of Hare Krishna blows glass while devotee recluse gets headaches, sees bright side.

Sports: Devotee clown takes first place in semi-finals at County Down, seeks his grandparents' county of origin roots.

Editorial "we believe he stinks.

Poem page, or thought for the day: Man who flies upside down . . . No dirty jokes allowed. GBC man says, "GBC stands for 'Good Bathroom Cleaner.'"

Ajax, saxifrage. Where did you hear that? In a Krishna conscious manual for *bhaktas* (a separate one for *bhaktins*).

Photo: Skinny monk with big eyelashes smiles and says, afraid, "Howdy, Yanks."

* * *

7:55 a.m.

I don't like the collie walking so close beside me, but it's her new habit. It's ridiculous how she barks under trees to chase away birds. It is just as ridiculous for me to be proud of people seeing me walking around with a dog. I remember Jayadeva asking me if I'd ever enjoyed the manly privilege of walking down the street with my own girlfriend.

There is a letter on my desk from Patri. Madhu already told me that the doctors have now put him on a list for a liver transplant. They've given him an electronic beeper so that the moment they have a fresh, compatible liver, they can contact him day or night, and he can rush to the Dublin hospital. The transplant operation will take ten hours, and his family will be offered an apartment within the hospital compound for the two weeks he will have to remain in intensive care.

Glimpsed a European robin at eye level, jumping from branch to branch.

* * *

2:19 p.m.

Right now I can't honestly say something from a deep spiritual place. I am perched on this moment "Saturday afternoon at Geaglum. Little things going along. Took an Esgic and *therefore* I am clear right now. Ink flowing. Sunlight suddenly. Tomorrow I will speak on Lord Caitanya. I'll make eye contact with these men and women. Tomorrow. As I said, I am perched on this moment.

* * *

Why Do You Go Back?
& I'm a monk who goes
his way a writer
who prays to God

with his pen.

* * *

In *kirtana* they danced like rugby stars
and he scoffed. I don't like the rough stuff
either I want it pure.
Imagined I dropped out on
the zonal red carpet
but I didn't
give up or
give out.

* * *

I said "Stop" but I didn't
Really. I swallowed the
tinsel, smiled at the girls
let them blink
and look devoted
at me the giver
of blessings.
I pressed sweets
into everyone's palms.

* * *

Could have been worse.
Could have been back in pre-ISKCON
freedom where at least I was
insignificant
and dying
a friend of van Gogh's
depressed
sorcerer
sorrow-faced . . .

* * *

You mean you wuz better then?
No, I'm just trying to
understand why I
go back to any of it
at all. "

* * *

Field Work

#14

Time: 12:27

He broke down and sobbed, and they made fun of him, but he knew what he was about. People in those times (1960s) took it in stride, sure enough.

Do you mean Judson Hall where the Swami appeared? They didn't think we were much.

* * *

Right now I look down into the page and think of someone who might share this with me.

* * *

It happened this way. Murray would not become a devotee, but I did. I went to Boston and sweated it out. I just dropped my past behind me, as if I were leaving my apartment, no forwarding address. Who would find me in that vast metropolis? I smiled and told stories of the Swami in the basement.

* * *

It was as simple as that. Got married, my temple got stoned, I got cut, sung my guts out, became a brother to the girls, a skinny TP, scared and scarred with nowhere to go. Somewhere along the way, I became a cult figure in a cult.

* * *

The guys who were sad, FK and FD "I chucked them off. Can I now look the Swami in the face or even at his feet? From *this* distance of separation?

I almost think it's safer to stay on this side of the chasm, like a Robinson Crusoe in a fortified forest home, ready for cannons and to worship from here.

These ain't easy times.

* * *

He said he was angry and didn't hate anyone but prayed to God in a particular way "everything ordinary enough. He put up with pressure and prepared for the investigation that would come now or at the time of death. Suffered some inconvenience to get ready.

"Are you Sats?"

Yes.

"We have an order to bring you to a higher level of sanity. Will you come along peacefully, or do we have to handcuff you?"

Krishna, Krishna, my dear Lord Krishna, bless me with one more round.

* * *

Alone, here is a slightly unorthodox secret:
I kept Krishna in the cash register and the key under the
mat. My secret love.
Crutch. Anger?
No. Fierce? Sense
Of sound
holy name.

* * *

5:20 p.m.

M. is going out to play melodeon with some lads at a christening. He'll wear his devotee robes and play Irish trad music. Good. I'll stay back. Drank some cranberry juice and saw Radhanatha building the front of the Aghasura demon. It looks like a Wright Brothers' airplane "a humble beginning. He smiled over to me in his ripped pants. Two bicycles and a handle make the jaws open.

Back from the shed where I proofread some good writing. Is Krishna's turban too tall? Maybe a bit. Time is running out. Do I really think I would have time to read van Gogh's letters again? Not in the same way I read them in the past. Can't stomach Rilke right now. Why not just stay with the chilled cranberry juice and the *Bhagavatam*?

Yes, I will.

He was glad to see his fiancée off to India: "Her last fling as a *brahmacarini*," I was going to say, but held my tongue. I do that often "wait for something in me to say whether it's proper to blurt what comes to mind. That mechanism saves me often when I think of something clever that might hurt someone's feelings. Hold on to silence.

From eight feet away I can't see Radharani's features so well. I know, however, that She is beautiful. Somehow I can Krishna see from here. He is golden, but in my mind He is Syama. That's the way Deity worship is. "Brass idols," the *mudhas* say. They know nothing.

I have stacks of different weight *cadars* for Prabhupada's use. That's the way I serve him. It's my compensation for not being a better devotee.

As usual I am probably too well prepared for tomorrow's *Caitanya-caritamrta* class. Ramananda Raya and his proposal that *varnaSrama-dharma* is the *satya-sara*, the perfection of religion. Lord Caitanya will say *eho bhaya*, "That is external," and so it will go. I hope they won't want to talk about implementing *varnaSrama-dharma* in ISKCON.

* * *

Take care of yourself, men. Drive safely, and get to the christening and back. I will be asleep by the time it's over, if Krishna allows.

Remember Jean Shepherd reading Robert Service's rhyming poetry to a rollicking barrel house piano background? I might like to do something like that too. He did "The Cremation of Sam McGee," which is actually a tall tale from the Klondike Gold rush.

Pretty funny too, as I remember it, with ghastly down-home details and homespun chiming words. Maybe I can call mine, "You'll Be Chastised, Young Man," and it can describe the time I elbowed my way into the temple presidency "meek typist rises to the top of the fastest selling, highest rising, quickest sinking cult. How a wimp got whomped and traded in his sneakers for book points.

February 22, 12:07 a.m.

"One need only seek shelter of the shade of the Lord's lotus feet. Then all the material tribulations that disturb him will be subdued . . ." (*Bhag.* 6.9.43, purport) Why don't I think of Him in dreams or even when awake? I dreamt of grief, real and pretended, over the death of someone I didn't even really know. I just wanted to contribute something, but if I had just turned to Krishna "chanted His holy names in prayer "I'd have gotten relief. Even if my prayer had been inadequate. We have no other recourse. Lord Caitanya has made it as easy as possible. Yet still we don't turn to Him.

And when we do finally turn to Krishna, we often realize we have been seeking material desires. Then we really pray to Him, leaving it up to Him how to deal with us (*marabi rakhabi yo iccha tohara nitya-dasa-prati tuya adhikara*).

"A devotee who has sacrificed everything for the service of Krishna and whose only source of relief is the Lord is known as *akinjana*." (*Bhag.* 6.9.45, purport)

* * *

For trees . . . Lord . . . the trees in winter, did he notice them "Santoka Taneda? The loveliness of this place. It's a tight plot of land, an almost private lake. No wonder I am not in a hurry to move to Wicklow. It's so beautiful *here*.

* * *

4:28 a.m.

Such pleasing waves of satisfaction this morning. Why? I found Radharani's *candrika*. That's one reason. It was also delightful to hear another installment of *Lalita-madhava*. And I'm pain-free right now.

Syamananda is coming over to cook an EkadaSi breakfast. Later, I will speak at the temple.

And I have an expert spiritual master who has been willing to keep me in his shelter all these years. I have no heavy managerial obligations, no family troubles, and I feel like the white cloud described in the *Krishna* book.

When I care for Radha-Govinda and Prabhupada on my altar, I feel purified. My anxieties also tend to diminish. The worries will return, no doubt, but for the moment they are washed away. Radha-Govinda in pink with embossed peacock feathers and gold trim. He wears a gold turban and Radha Her little *candrika*.

* * *

Message from friends: they are printing my book. They want to know how to design the cover.

I'm on the last day of another EJW volume.

Looking for humility.

Frank Sinatra is dead. Herb Philips is too, although I only made him up. He died without ever having been alive.

The Iranians gathered and cheered the denouncement of the U.S.A., "The Great Satan." No one cares enough about us to denounce us, thank God.

Radharani is sad when She is subordinate to Rukmini. Rupa Gosvami tells us that in *Lalita-madhava*. But She is happy to meet Krishna. He employs many deceptions in order to associate intimately with Her without Rukmini knowing. All glories to Their love. A tiny bird catches nectar in its beak.

* * *

Dream: Prabhupada was in a big hall with hundreds and hundreds of devotees. He wanted to leave, but devotees were blocking the aisle. He asked them to move. He moved some of them physically, including me. He has the right, and I felt that in the dream.

In retrospect, I remember how meek and submissive I was when I was around him. In the dream, I managed to stay with him as he navigated his way through the devotees.

* * *

Turning To Krishna

The grass, the day, the men,
the small talk, the ISKCON-y
way you turn it around to Him "
"Krishna also has a pet deer
in Vrndavana and so does Radha "
He also has a peacock . . . "

* * *

Childish how we insert
the Lord's pastimes into
our agendas, like great *yogis*
we go to any planet we like
skip back and forth it's
a trance in which we get lost.
"And so dear friends, brothers,
sisters, let us get out there
and not persecute the
demons
but let them know
who is Boss."

* * *

It's a forced march sometimes
but the Lord of plenty creates
an atmosphere in which devotees
can turn to Him
our errands are for Him.

* * *

Krishna, I'm a fool
hanging on all these years it will
seem so brief at the end,
and what will I have done?

* * *

Krishna, here's a song, a flute,
a water, a glass, a
book, a look, an act
of repeating Your teachings
and I did all this for You. "

* * *

5:55 a.m.

Up and up. Hare Krishna. Look at the red beads as you chant. Imagine each one is a microphone, someone said. They think the biggest problem is inattention. Work solely on that. But sometimes I think that's impossible, so I focus on a more spread-out participation in the chanting, like a gestalt "whatever is available. That includes well-being, wakefulness, and tracking the time it takes to chant each round. I assume I am chanting, because my body and being are attuned to it. And I am getting the good effects "even though my chanting is full of offense. There's not much more I can do for myself, it seems. Once in a rare while I pay attention to a single mantra. "Pray as you can, not as you can't."

* * *

9:40 a.m.

The *Caitanya-caritamrta* class went well. A lot of explaining why Lord Caitanya rejected Ramananda Raya's first two proposals. Finally came to the point that chanting and hearing are the priority. Devotees raised good comments on how to emphasize *sadhana* in our lives. Radhanatha said I was setting a good example for them. It's true that my life is clear of other duties, but I have also found that I can't simply chant and hear and do nothing else. At least I make *sadhana* my priority. What else can I do?

* * *

12:05 Noon

The thing that came out in the class that I hadn't expected was the force of the conclusion: the most important thing is to chant and hear. We tend to think of our *sadhana* as something almost too easy, but if we were actually to attempt to do it without offense, we would find another truth. Don't, then, give *sadhana* a relative position in your life. Make as much space for it as you can afford. Even if we say that a decent, clean life is required, be clean and get back to chanting. Don't make cleanliness the religion.

On the way back from the class I asked Arjuna who had filled in the potholes. He said he and two others had done it. I told him about Madhu's music gig last night.

When I went over to the island, I felt I had done this many times before. The same man met and rowed us across, and the same man met us on the other side. Then a brief but tingling walk through the woods to the temple building. I told myself that although the little journey to the temple may be the same as the one I took last week, turn it into an offering of devotion. Life is brief, and *this is it*. Surrender now. I didn't hold back.

Just before reaching the quay, I said something appreciative about the Aghasura demon Radhanatha is building for the St. Paddy's Day parade. He added, "Ireland now has it's own *ratha* cart." In other words, we *do* things other than chant and read. We preach. It also occurred to me that all the devotees here are Irish and that I am now part of their scene. I am like one of them, surrendered to this place. In one sense, I have no particular ties, no Irish wife or binding temple commitment. I am free to leave at any time. But nothing elsewhere attracts me much.

* * *

2:28 p.m.

At this time of day, my body is liable to bring the mind down into a valley, unlike the optimism I usually feel in the mornings. Life is like that, and we simply have to carry on.

So many distant and perhaps pretentious or unreal relationships in the guru-disciple connection. I think of them, disciples living in poverty in their marriages, disciples disappointed and disgusted with ISKCON. And the many early NYC initiations I gave, at least ninety percent maintain no connection with me. Some disciples do attempt to make our relationship meaningful, and many are serious devotees who feel Krishna's reciprocation in their hearts. They serve Prabhupada, read his books "but am *I* vital to them? For some of them.

* * *

Field Work

#15 Wise One

Time: 17:41

Hooded crows cruise by with what mentality? A swan arches its neck.

Crescent moon "any moon or sky that He cares to send. Etty said, "Just give us a patch of sky above, and we can hold up our hands in prayer." Please, Lord, send us a Sastric verse to go with that now and then. So we can live in any circumstance.

* * *

All right here's something. I was ranked eleventh among the best (out of twelve?). I renounced my place for a little widow and stepped back into the shadows. Stepping forward came Mr. New. He wore a '60s suit with a narrow tie. JFK style. He smiled. Little did he know what would happen five minutes from then. I couldn't see a thing. Fix those damn wipers.

My friends want the Holy Grail. A teenager cursed his mother, "You think you're going to transcend in a beam of light? Give me a break!" He shouldn't have said that, and her eyes filled with tears as she tried to tell her son why the *sastra*, the *Bhagavatam*, touched her so deeply, why she didn't need to watch objectionable TV to find joy. He got angry and smashed a hole in the plaster wall.

* * *

May Krishna fill her life and mine with peace of the strongly awake kind. We want no poison. I guess I'm just another Hare Krishna kid after all, no goatee, no hat, thirty-fourth from the right, now better.

* * *

2

Wise one "guru "wise one from whom we revolted, refused, found it too hard either to desert or not to. The war rages on around us. You maintain within us that lamp in a windless place

because you gave us your time.

As eternal guide you taught in *parampara*. You made it clear. I'm writing this letter to you, aware that separation brings on strange changes, and that we may not quite recognize each other the way we used to. Time does that too. But there's a live connection, and it's personal.

I sometimes think I'm all alone, holding up my end. I dare not ask if you have forgotten me in your *samadhi*. Where are you now, Srila Prabhupada? It seems a futile question, because I can never feel it quite enough. You asked a better question of your Guru Maharaja: How can I serve you?

* * *

You were full of dance. You sent us out to preach. You said, "If they arrest you and put you in jail, go on chanting Hare Krishna. Don't mind." You were pleased, and we rallied. We somehow stayed in your group and your temples, although now we have splintered, our impurities telling.

Wise one, dear servant of the Lord, I write this letter to be with you. It's a lingering, a kind of prayer. We needn't live in confusion as long as we can hear the words you spoke which made even Vyasadeva's message clearer, or more appropriate to our struggle to take up Krishna consciousness.

* * *

Night Notes, 6 p.m.

Night getting slowly darker. Last feasters being rowed from the island. Pradyumna dasa will be ready for initiation on Gaura-Purnima about three weeks from now. Pause before night.

My dear Lord Krishna, please have mercy on this sinner who has left such a trail of books and who has gone through changes by reading them. Proud and foolish I am, fulfilling my desires in a Krishna conscious way I am, wanting to see You and become tinier I am. O Krishna, may I give You to others? No pretense "please remove any hypocrisy from my heart.

Appendix

Quotes From the Diary of ETTY HILLESUM and From Her Letters from Westerbork.

"All disasters stem from us. Why is there a war? Perhaps because now and then I might be inclined to snap at my neighbor. Because I and my neighbor and everyone else do not have enough love . . . And I believe that I will never be able to hate any human being for his so-called wickedness, but I shall only hate the evil that is within me, though hate is perhaps putting it too strongly even then. In any case, we cannot be lax enough in what we demand of others and strict enough in what we demand of ourselves." (p. 95)

* * *

"Give your sorrow all the space and shelter in yourself that it is due, for if everyone bares his grief honestly and courageously, the sorrow that now pulls the world will abate. But if you do not clear a decent shelter for your sorrow, and instead reserve most of the space inside you for hatred and thoughts of revenge . . . then sorrow will never cease in this world and will multiply. And if you have given sorrow the space its gentle origins demand, then you may truly say: 'Life is beautiful and so rich. So beautiful and so rich that it makes you want to believe in God.'" (p. 97)

* * *

"German soldiers were already drilling at the Skating Club. And so I also prayed, 'God, do not let me dissipate my strength, not the least bit of strength, on useless hatred against these soldiers. Let me save my strength for better things.'"

* * *

"I'm not the slightest bit concerned about cutting a fine figure in the eyes of this persecutor or that. Let them see my sadness and my utter defenselessness too. There is no need to put on a show, I have my inner strength and that is enough, the rest doesn't matter." (p. 161)

* * *

"This much I know: You have to forget your own worries for the sake of others, for the sake of those whom you love. All the strength and love and faith in God that one possesses, and which have grown so miraculously in me of late, must be there for everyone who chances to cross one's path and who needs it."

* * *

"One moment it is Hitler, the next it is Ivan the Terrible; one moment it is resignation and the next war, pestilence, earthquake or famine. Ultimately what matters most is to bare the pain, to cope with it, and to keep a small corner of one's soul unsullied, come what may."

* * *

"I'm beginning to feel a little more peaceful, God, thanks to this conversation with You. I shall have many more conversations with You. You are sure to go through lean times with me now and then when my faith weakens a little, but believe me, I shall always labor for You and remain faithful to You and I shall never drive You from my presence."

* * *

"One ought to be able to go without books, without anything. There will always be a small patch of sky above, and there will always be enough space to fold two hands in prayer." (p. 181)

* * *

"Give me a small line of verse from time to time, O God, and if I cannot write it down for lack of paper or light, then let me address it softly in the evening to Your great heaven. But please give me a small line of verse now and then."

* * *

"And in spite of everything you always end up with the same conviction: life is good after all, it's not God's fault that things go awry, the cause lies in ourselves. And that's what stays with me, even now, even when I'm about to be packed off to Poland with my whole family." (p. 280)

"Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*

And Letters From Westerbork

Published by Henry Holt and Company,

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