

ELECTRIONIC BOOK

By Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami

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Every Day, Just Write

Volume 22

The Ocean and the Desert

March 14 - April 2, 1998

Also by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

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March 14, 1998, 12:22 a.m.

See clearly, be purified, practice your art, and aspire to make an offering to the Supreme Lord. Don't be ashamed of what that offering is, especially if it's made with heart. Or, *be* ashamed, if that's you. The brothers Dabhir Khasa and Sakhara Mallika were ashamed when they had to introduce themselves to Lord Caitanya when they first met Him at Ramakeli. They didn't want to enumerate their sinful activities to Him, what to speak of their not being able to immediately abandon those activities. Are we so different? We too cannot give up our *anarthas*, and in some cases, our sinful activities "at least not immediately. We certainly can't give them up by saying we will. We continue to criticize Vaisnavas, read inattentively, chant poorly, doubt. We just can't stop.

We often actually love what we are doing, despite the terrors it may bring. So ashamed or not, be purified and make your offering.

I'm writing this at Manu's house, where I've spent many a peaceful day. retired. Guilty. Hare Krishna. At least I pray that this lake strait doesn't become the Viraja river but the Yamuna. May Govinda-dvipa, and later, Wicklow, take me to Vrndavana.

* * *

On Beginning To reread The Nectar of Devotion

I want to reread *The Nectar of Devotion* with love. That means I have to *bring* my love. I'm not an outsider to this book, or I don't have to be. Srila Prabhupada wrote it for me, and by reading it, I can be with him. I remember fondly the circumstances of its composition. I now pray to stay in the mood of Srila Prabhupada writing NOD in 1970 "how we worshiped him, how we lovingly received his book and studied it. Let me "offend" reason and objective scholarship, and read with prayerful devotion.

Srila Prabhupada begins by reminding us how Lord Caitanya saved Rupa and Sanatana Gosvamis, and how He protected Haridasa Thakura. All were in the association of Muslims. This power to uplift the fallen is the purpose of Srila Prabhupada's books.

"*The Nectar of Devotion* is a summary study of *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*, which was written in Sanskrit by Srila Rupa Gosvami Prabhupada."

Rupa and his brother
were ministers
and spoke in rhyming Sanskrit.
I'm fit or not
to step off the avenue of doubt
aware I can deploy
various tricks to read in prayer.
I will bother, I will care
I'm not half-dead
with boredom
or effort. I just tread softly
in my attempts
waiting for mercy.

* * *

4:50 a.m.

Little human-brained computer "we use less than ten percent of our capabilities. I think I have everything I need for travel, but what do I know? At least I know that my Deities are safely packed, and Srila Prabhupada too. M. is confident that he can drive the Ford Econoline to Wicklow. It will be the first time I've left Geaglum in two months.

Hare Krishna. I wish I could sleep sitting up in the front seat, but it doesn't seem possible for me, and there's nowhere to lie down among all the boxes and luggage. O Krishna, may there be good days (and nights) ahead, and may I live enough in the present to experience them as they happen.

* * *

9:56 a.m.

Daruka and Caranaravinda's house, Wicklow

In an intense flurry of activity, I unpacked most of my things and have set up a routine here that matches almost completely the routine I had at Manu's house. Here, however, I have neither a private bathroom nor a private exit.

The monthly news summary arrived. President Clinton experiences a crisis "denies he had sex with a woman who is accusing him. The same president warns Iraq that America will drop bombs unless the Iraqis reveal their secret weapons. *Back to Godhead* also arrived. It contained a startling article by Locanananda Prabhu telling of the heart attack he had while on *harinama* on 42nd Street in Manhattan. The ambulance rushed him to Bellevue Hospital, and the attendants asked, "What is a man your age doing singing and dancing on the street?"

Sheep on the hill. I can see them from the window. Madhu gone for the day "always something. No head pain. Wondering why we moved, but I'm sure I'll get over that once I'm more settled. This neighborhood is called Rathdangan, "the place of winds." I can hear that wind and feel the peace it brings.

* * *

11:54 a.m.

Oh, the prose in the magazine seems lifeless, including my own. It's clever but dogmatic. Dogmatic? Dogs. Jargon and philosophy. Of course, I'm feeling jaded right now "tired from the move and the unpacking, and from trying to find the groove of this house and these devotees. It's not always easy. Who knows me, and whom do I know? What do we each care for? Only lunch?

Real prose. Ink. Heartache. We look for the grain of the wood.

Every town in Ireland has several pubs "at least one per block. Signs and displays out front "Guinness, Harp, Heineken.

Tell me something else.

* * *

2:17 p.m.

He wrote in an essay that doctors bluff. What we really need is *Bhagavad-gita*. Or maybe he didn't put it quite that bluntly. But he did say that those guys were selling books with twisted words, even as he wove his own with sarcasm to point out their shortcomings. After all, we have perfect knowledge.

But why put down all those well-known healers and writers? I see his point to some extent, but not completely. Why even talk of them if we don't like them? Why put them down? Not only that, but our magazine is for those who are already sold out. We don't really have to preach to them.

Anyway, let me paint the page and shut up. Don't want anyone to know what side I'm on.

* * *

2:55 p.m.

Preaching and Poems #1

Preaching to Myself

15 1/2 minutes

Critics are deadly. Whatever they say stays in the mind. Then why become one?

Better to give only encouraging words.

A man almost died on *harinama*. "Everything is superficial," he said.

But not heartache "you can't call heartache superficial. And you have to be prepared to let Krishna take you at any moment.

* * *

Dead or near-dead? Me? No.

I wrote to the editor of our magazine, "It's all dogma. Why do we always have to be right and put others down?"

Beyond "beyond can we go?

We are trying for that, I know.

* * *

Now break through with language. You know, cut back the forest in order to see the trees. Where else will we take a walk?

* * *

Breakthrough is like accepting Krishna when He says, "First you love Me, and then be satisfied with whatever I return." I mean, "First, surrender to Me."

Is it so hard? But He can *give*. What? How do I know? Because scriptures and sages say so, and I can think it out for myself. Even I have some success at finding the Supreme Source. We're no mystics, and we know that nothing's vague, because after all, Krishna is standing right there on the altar in His *tribanga* form. That's Krishna who is present in His own holy name. He's present in *prasadam*. To actually *find* Him and to taste the bliss of *bhakti* "that's the work of lifetimes.

* * *

#2

I thought the theme of this here section could be preaching and poems.

Poems are like homes

geodesic domes you

live in (without a wife).

But still there's strife

and anyway

what do you expect "to live as God?

The hod

carrier

potato eater

no meeter

but Krishna conscious

along the way.

* * *

Krishna consciousness: preaching. Listen. Work. Be cheerful. If someone asks, "Isn't it hard living alone?" say, "Yes," then laugh. Because it is hard at least once a day.

Preach
to yourself.
Hey, mister,
get your beads and read *sastra*.
Stay away from women. And
Remember, Clinton's scandal is *his* problem,
not yours.
He a pro-abortion, pro-
meat-eating
soul,
and he's bound to have such karma.

One poll stated that most people thought he was guilty, but most gave a collective shrug. The Pres can remain in their good graces because of *course* he has to lie to cover himself. He's the President.

Can't tell the truth.

"Sex and the leadership crisis" "ISKCON's topic too "good for an ISKCON seminar, ultra-relevant.

* * *

Preach "be happy, take
a 6 a.m. walk.
Hive and
jive
'cause poems are a way
to preach
to outreach
to college students
in music
poems preach *like*
a red rose a
fire hose
pose of poesy.

* * *

They mean Frank Sinatra and
Beethoven come to Krishna consciousness
by guru's grace.

* * *

Night Notes, 5:45 p.m.

They leave me alone, so let me get on with my work. I can use all the time I can get. I have hardly even begun to do what I'd really like to do with my life. It's not that I'm at a loss about how to use my time. Today was a passionate day "a travel and unpacking day" and I have spent the balance of it trying to adjust to the loss of my Geaglum routine. But they have nice wind here, and beautiful scenery, although it can never match the water and sky and land at Geaglum-Inis rath. I walked back and forth in the backyard in order to make that comparison. From this location I can see where the other Wicklow devotees live "Uddhava and family, the schoolhouse, Patri and family, and Praghosa and family. I can even see what will be my own thatched roof next to Praghosa's. That's exciting.

March 15, 12:08 a.m.

"*Bhakti* means 'devotional service.'" It's cold in this room, and I don't want to make noise by searching the hall for my coat or a heavier sweater. The little electric space heater they gave me may also disturb our hosts. But a guy's gotta live, and I depend on this midnight hour to set my direction. This is prayer. Slow down in *lectio* and read, read.

Bhakti means devotional service. Go ahead and read the rest of the paragraph, the one you think you know so well: "Every service has some attractive feature which drives the servitor progressively on and on." Are we driven by the pleasure we derive from our service? Sometimes I think we are driven just as much by obligation, duty, and often, desperation. But Srila Prabhupada says "pleasure". Ultimately, that means the soul is driven by *rati*, the taste of the relationship with the Supreme.

One could say that when there is no *rati* in the service itself, we seek taste outside our main service, perhaps in illicit ways such as extramarital sex, or by pursuing a hobby or practicing ritual, and then call *that* service. Srila Prabhupada addresses this point: "A businessman is not satisfied by working the whole week . . ." He seeks a change on the weekend but resumes his business activities during the weekdays as if they were giving him pleasure. "Material engagement means accepting a particular status for some time and then changing it." *Bhoga-tyaga*, or "alternating sense enjoyment and renunciation."

We cannot be happy despite the changes, because we have not situated ourselves in our constitutional position. It is to realize that constitutional position that devotees struggle with. We may think of changing our services or positions within ISKCON or its outer orbits, we may move from place to place, become more private, more public, do more preaching, do less preaching, raise a family, renounce a family, but the unrest never seems to go away. That unrest is a sign that we have not yet begun to taste actual *bhakti-rasa*.

For the materialist, the whole life endeavor is flickering (*capala-sukha*). Whatever happiness he attains is snuffed out by death. Death is imposed upon him by a higher force, and he cannot escape it. "Death is therefore taken as the representative of God for the atheistic class of men. The devotee realizes the presence of God by devotional service . . ."

Do we believe this? I do. We accept scripture. Yesterday while browsing through *Back to Godhead* magazine, I found myself rankled by how dogmatically we devotees present The Philosophy. I wrote to the BTG editor about it, as if it is something we can improve in our writing. I mean, can we eliminate the smugness? Granted, we do have all of the answers, but can we give them with more realization and less righteousness?

I told myself to shut up and keep writing. I should mind my own business, which is to make a revolution of one. I too spout dogma, and I too am restless. Where is my *bhakti-rasa*? For now, admit the state of your love and dovetail your desires in His service.

Here's what *The Nectar of Devotion* is about, from a Post-it I left in the book from my last reading of its preface:

Ultimate faith is in eternality. If you don't believe it, everything fails.

Daiva, destiny, awards us our next bodies. All *rasas* end in death except *bhakti-rasa*. "Therefore, all bona fide activities in Krishna consciousness are *amrta*, or permanent. This is the subject matter of *The Nectar of Devotion*. This eternal engagement in *bhakti-rasa* can be understood by a serious student upon studying *The Nectar of Devotion*."

"Preface, p. xiv

Driven by destiny "believe it, live it, pray for it.

Pray? But I have no Christian book here to teach me, such as *Art of Prayer*. How can I pray? O Krishna.

Somehow, I am looking for my voice in approaching You. Lord, I want to believe everything You say. Let me find the Truth in all Your words. My search for truth, and even for relief and satisfaction, is my search for You, the Ultimate. I want to be faithful. Let others laugh at my dogmatic faith, and let me laugh at myself too. I know that if You desire, You can show me actual experience. At that time, whatever atheistic voice is left within me will die. Prabhupada called it "a hammer blow to *maya*."

Now let us each make a quiet attack on our own personal atheist, and let us take encouragement from Krishna's words. I received some encouragement recently from a Godbrother: "I am about two-thirds of the way through the first volume of *A Poor Man reads the Bhagavatam*, and I'm appreciating it very much. It's a courageous format."

Oh boy, encouragement! It keeps us going. May I always encourage others. For now, I will encourage Daruka to care for his family as his devotional service, and encourage Praghosa to open a Govinda's restaurant. "Encourage them more and more," Srila Prabhupada wrote me when I was on the GBC.

Here's some interesting encouragement: How is Krishna consciousness *amrta*, eternal? Because even if you don't complete it in this life (and thus return to the spiritual world, where Locanananda dasa says the risk-taking preacher is going), you'll get a human form next life. (Yes, Virginia, there is a next life, literally, politically, belittlely, punnily, and funnily, and yes, it too will be full of misery.) With that next human body, you can continue your progress. Even a snail's pace is progressive.

* * *

3:15 a.m.

Read this in Jacob Needleman's *Lost Christianity: A Journey of rediscovery to the Center of Christian Experience*, in reference to his meeting with a certain bishop:

I have had occasion to meet a number of men and women considered to be exceptional. But often, I have found, what they are supposed to be is betrayed by their eyes. It is not only that certain kinds of movement of the eyes indicate someone stuck for that moment in the more superficial part of the mind; not that the too constant, steady gaze may indicate a somewhat neurotic condition masquerading as sincerity or intensity. All that may be true; and a sensitive reader of faces may be able to tell far more from the eyes than most of us would care to admit.

I am not speaking about this sort of thing exactly. I'm only speaking about the fact that in some people *something* is communicated through the eyes that authenticates them; while in others, something is communicated "or there is a lack of something communicated "that betrays them and contradicts what they are presenting of themselves.

A person may have all the "credentials" in the world, and something about him will prevent me from taking him really seriously. It is not what he says or what he does, it is what he *is*, and somehow this, in my experience, can come through the eyes.

"p. 17

One thing I remember well about Srila Prabhupada is his eyes and how important they were for me in our exchanges. I should say his *look*. It conveyed his inner, mystical existence. It definitely authenticated him. One couldn't penetrate his mind or psyche him out because his eyes were so mystical. Needleman prefaces his remarks by saying, "I might add that I have great difficulty writing or speaking about 'eyes' and 'looks,' not wanting to fall into sentimentality or imagination."

This is a dimension of Srila Prabhupada that is lost. I mean, we can't really find it in his books or on the audio tapes, or even in the videos. Perhaps a tiny glimpse may be found in the videos, but nothing compared to what it was like to be in his presence. You cannot fully be in his presence when you sit in comfort at a distance to watch a video, knowing he can't put you on the spot at any second with a glance. That eye contact is no longer possible, except perhaps in dreams or *samadhi*. I'm glad, however, that I suddenly recalled it after reading Needleman's comment.

* * *

4:36 a.m.

Maybe I should have given Radha and Krishna Their woolen shawls since it's so cold in this room. Let me attend to that.

Only a forty-watt bulb in here. Hope M. bought me a brighter one when he was in town last night. I didn't hear him come in during the night, and I don't hear him now, only the cadences of Rupa Gosvami's speech (translated into English) running through my mind: "O *sakhi*, you speak the truth . . . this foul-mouthed parrot. Madhusudana is gone! Krishna, speaking to Himself . . ." Krishna checks the others from speaking (so He can observe Srimati Radharani in the ecstasy of *prema-vaicittya*). "Now let us tend the cows. . . . Oh, here comes Jatila." Jatila enters and gazes at Radha. She says, "It is true! She *is* wearing the yellow garment belonging to Kana."

And on and on.

I didn't bring the tape recorder into the bathroom this morning because I didn't want to disturb our hosts. But I crave my daily shot of Srila Prabhupada. Maybe tomorrow I'll bring it down and play it softly. Hot water, cold water "water splashes from the tub onto the floor. I'll have to be more careful. So many considerations when you share a bathroom and a house. Everything has to be constrained in consideration of others.

The Great Unconsciousness, the Source Beyond that, the Source . . . they don't name Him as a person. Why not say more clearly that God is a person and that He dwells in our hearts in one of His many expansions? As Supersoul, He awards us the creative urge and provides fulfillment; He is the muse. An artist may tap into his gift through intermediaries, but Krishna is the source. Therefore, a devotee artist should be like the bird who will drink no water unless it falls from the rain cloud. Take inspiration only from Krishna.

And we can assume the water is falling because how else could we be practicing our art? Now we simply need to connect ourselves with Krishna by understanding how everything "the entire flow of our lives and our speech and our art "is coming from His mercy. His mercy is available at every moment if we allow ourselves to accept what He is giving and then allow it to come through us. To avail ourselves of His mercy may sometimes include writing from what we have considered the "roadblock" until we can allow the pure flow of Krishna to come through.

Now Rupa Gosvami describes how Syamasundara enters and plays upon His flute. All fall into a trance. What pious activities did the flute perform to have deserved the nectar of Krishna's kiss?

There is a large-as-life photo here depicting Srila Prabhupada taking *darSana* of Radha-Syamasundara at the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. Underneath is written, "O Lord, I am simply praying for Your mercy that I will be able to convince them about Your messankirtana movement?"

The boots downstairs. I plan to take a walk at 6 a.m. and hope to avoid a headache. I'll walk up the road and into the woods, talk to the air and clouds, and deliver my Hare Krishna mantras to the sky. I'll also use the time to rehearse responses to letters I am about to read: "My wife doesn't love me . . . I work in a health food store . . . I have a new guru . . . I have arthritis. . . . Why don't you come to the temple?"

Krishna, I have run out of steam. The music always stops every so often. Then all that's left to hear is the foghorn at sea. That's unnerving if there's no body of water nearby.

Krishna, please accept this flower. Please make me single-minded. Prabhupada assures us that *bhakti-rasa* is *amrta* and therefore better than anything material.

I ask, "How was your day yesterday? Did you get everything done? Did you see the master flute and accordion players? Did you sell the van and get a hair net? Did you manage to find a fiddler and whatever else you wanted to squeeze into those twenty-four hours?"

I add, "It was quiet here."

Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishnaloka.

* * *

9:31 a.m.

Someone wrote me, "I'm glad you're in Wicklow," but I miss the changing sky over Inis rath. To be able to see so much sky, land, and water, and to know that the temple is there yet I can be alone . . .

I feel a bit spaced out now, like an animal removed from its habitat. (The children in this house have gerbils in wire cages. The gerbils pull at a plastic tube to get food and water. Did gerbils ever have a natural habitat? They seem so timid, as if they were meant only to depend on humans. They weren't always that way, were they?)

NOD "way up there beyond the Geaglum clouds. Krishna, eternity, *bhakti-rasa*, perpetual engagement . . . For me right now, it's mostly book knowledge encrusted with too-familiar associations. Therefore, I will send for the taped lectures on NOD by two of my Godbrothers. I want to make it real, not just academic.

When I last read the Preface I left this Post-it in the book by page xv:

While reading this page on Love I think of my sister and her husband, Madeline and Tommy. That's not eternal love. Or my love for rock 'n' roll. Then I think of SK's book, *Works of Love*. He teaches the Christian love of neighbor, for God's sake. But Krishna consciousness goes directly to Krishna and then spreads out like ripples in the pond when the rock is thrown in.

Facing my life. One way to understand my situation is this: I'm no longer eager, or even so willing, to follow regulations *just because the spiritual master said so*. Neither am I able to relish devotional service as "automatic spontaneous eagerness to serve Krishna." Am I like a teenager trying to rebel against my spiritual father's control? But where would I go? I have no taste for nondevotional life or life outside what I have come to define as Krishna consciousness, nor am I fit for it. And although I have no taste for spontaneous devotional service, I do have active aspiration. So perhaps not a rebellious teenager, but what?

I so much like . . .

Geaglum.

You phony, you don't like anything but gravy and peas

I know you.

You just want a good book and

milk and yet

everything disappoints you.

You'll live with your small hypocrisies until Death, the Grim reaper, swathes you, and you miraculously (and conveniently) think of Krishna. Oh! Too late! I can't attain it because I keep complaining that all this is only in a book!

Everyone loves someone, but our love crisscrosses and conflicts. "The missing point is Krishna, and *The Nectar of Devotion* teaches us how to stimulate our original love for Krishna and how to be situated in that position where we can enjoy our blissful life."

"Our love can be fully satisfied only when it is reposed in Krishna. This theme is the sum and substance of *The Nectar of Devotion*, which teaches us how to love Krishna in five different transcendental mellows."

As I write, I hear M. talking on the telephone below. Should that distract me? Can I claim I was absorbed in reading? No, but at least I was facing this problem "that I don't know Krishna sufficiently. And the cure: read NOD.

Still, I don't sense His presence. My guess is that I am a dried-up old fart (not a lively, loving devotee), and that I think *The Nectar of Devotion* is too much a known quantity for me.

Well, I plan to give myself another chance.

* * *

12:05 p.m.

Waiting for the right-eye twinge to come up a little more before I take a pill. Otherwise, I'll be out of action.

Just took a peek at *Dear Theo*, the letters Vincent van Gogh wrote to his brother, but there were too many letters. I'm not ready for all *that*. What would I derive from it? I was into van Gogh's letters in 1966, just before I met Prabhupada. They fostered my own spiritual and inward misery and loneliness. They made me see I was living the so-called hip life of a starved cat, and whatever well-being I did have (so much of which was resting on the vigor of youth) would have crashed soon enough "through violence, sexual degradation, or "who knows? None of it happened because I met Prabhupada.

Anyway, I didn't mean to recall all that now "I'm digressing.

* * *

2:47 p.m.

Lunch is late, but I'm happy to be alive. Will I be happy to let go and die? Happiness to live comes from Krishna. See Him in that happiness and feel gratitude. In grateful acceptance of Krishna's mercy, a devotee can either live or die. Therefore, the blessing the sage gave to the devotee: "You may live or die."

We need to each ask ourselves where our own happiness lies and whether we see its connection to Krishna. Is our happiness rooted only in animal pleasure mixed with a sort of preliminary Krishna consciousness? Is it deeply spiritual? Could we be happy in pain and want? (I took an Esgic thirty-five minutes ago. I'm now waiting for it to subdue pain. If it doesn't, will I still spend a happy Sunday afternoon and evening?)

And what is our unhappiness? Are we afraid to face these questions? We think of unhappiness as endurance, being lost in the depths, want, loss. When things are taken away, the human spirit scrambles for a happiness newly defined by new confinements. Can we face unhappiness and find Krishna instead?

* * *

3 p.m.

Jacob Needleman's *Lost Christianity* is interesting. It makes me think that maybe I'm looking for lost Krishna consciousness. He is conscious of his quest and combines it with his professional work as a scholar, but he takes it personally. He visits prominent Christians, asks questions . . . His idea is that the inner form of Christianity has become lost along the way, but perhaps it has been retained in esoteric traditions or within

special people. I have some similar feelings about the ideals of ISKCON and our collective service to Srila Prabhupada.

* * *

3:30 p.m.

I seem to weigh the statements of Srila Prabhupada and the scriptures against my personal experience in the Krishna consciousness movement. When they describe the superiority of the *bhakta* over all others, or discuss the need to spread Krishna consciousness everywhere because it is the topmost welfare work, or assure the reader that both personal and worldwide perfection, peace, and happiness will come for those who study the *Bhagavatam*, I ask myself, "Has this been true for me? Has this happened in the world, even in the world of ISKCON?" Sometimes my answers express defeat. I have failed, and in many ways, so has ISKCON.

Again I wonder about ISKCON's "lost" message. Then I think maybe as a result of my drawing apart from the organized religion, ISKCON, I may have withdrawn my iron rod from the fire and am no longer privileged to feel how it *is* still hot. An ISKCON manager-leader might be quick to pass this judgment on me "perhaps too quick for me to accept his opinion. Yet these questions indicate that I am still aware of the fire, still want the fire, that I am still feeling the heat of the fire. I'm just not satisfied with platitudes that obscure the truth of what we are experiencing. How can we make the *sastra's* words true?

"*The Nectar of Devotion* teaches all men [and women] how to perform the simple and natural method of loving Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If we learn how to love Krishna, then it is very easy to immediately and simultaneously love every living being." (NOD, Preface, p. xvi)

The more I reflect on phrases in *The Nectar of Devotion*, the more accessible this work becomes. To me, accessible means I don't have to flinch or draw away "not only me, but any of us. Prabhupada's words help me absorb the shock of our reality and help us make the necessary confessions.

Srila Prabhupada uses powerful analogies. I won't say they've been used "too much," but Needleman's phrase sticks in my mind:

I was beginning to understand that everything I had seen in the Eastern teachings was also contained in Judaism and Christianity, although the language of the Bible was practically impossible to penetrate, because it has become so encrusted with familiar associations.

If I were to change Needleman's context, I would say, "I have faith in the Vaisnava scriptures as Srila Prabhupada presented them, but I now find it difficult to read them in a way that touches my feelings and inspires me to action because my experience in reading has become so encrusted with familiar associations and historical anomalies. For example, ISKCON's history has not borne out the promises. I have lived through making that history and am still participating. At the same time, I continue to read, and my quest for the original spirit "that spirit that spoke to me in my earlier readings "remains vital to me."

I won't recoil from the task; it seems to be necessary work at present, so I'm pleased to try for it.

Another phrase from *Lost Christianity*: ". . . to recover or recreate the inner, spiritual content of the tradition." This is a personal challenge, not something to present to the rest of ISKCON or the GBC. It starts with the individual. Not all individuals will even feel the need for such work. "It is myself that is in question, my own sense of what I am, what I need to know in order to begin living." (Needleman, p. 11)

Srila Prabhupada appeals to the "confused men of America," an indirect reference to the large numbers of hippies he saw throughout America during the time he was writing NOD. An outdated reference? No. There are no more hippies, but there are many confused men. Now, fewer people are likely to pull the one switch that will enlighten them.

"One may live without material discomfiture, but at the same time he should learn the art of loving Krishna."

"*The Nectar of Devotion* is specifically presented for persons who are now engaged in the Krishna consciousness movement."

It's nice to feel Srila Prabhupada's hope and momentum while reading those words. His new movement was gaining a foothold. He spoke this Preface into the Grundig dictaphone in April 1970, in the "ISKCON Headquarters," Los Angeles. Times sure have changed. Please, may we take Srila Prabhupada's spirit and apply it now. We have also changed; we are no longer the "boys and girls" of the '60s and '70s. What are we now? That we must come to know. But some things haven't changed: we are still missing the point, which is Krishna. Or at least, I am.

* * *

Preaching and Poems #2

Preaching Even While Sick

18 minutes

Sweet ribbon of sweet release. Here we is on our quest to learn who we are and how to serve our spiritual master in his preaching mission. We're on the ferry to Athos.

Pathos. Pain and

headache.

Hey, who's playing that flute?

Could be anybody, 'cause we're on the bus of imagination, pressing forward.

* * *

An old lady is seated beside us. Madhu will speak to her while I preach to my notebook. Is it that I can't be bothered? Maybe some archbishop of an Eastern Church will come to see me. He'll have heard I was some kind of valuable leader. I'll preach to him. Or to the gerbil in the cage: "Listen, Gerb, don't press forward. remain in faith." Said to the sound of friends playing.

The sound of many hands clapping.

Old newsstand,

please don't ring my bell. "I live in the city and am bombarded by New York questions and New York answers."

Robert Lax said that, then left for an island in Greece.

* * *

Man, you okay?
Fay wrote a poem hey
Nonney Day Shake's songs
fools and Caliban and teacher
watch out your shoes
are showing.

* * *

I'm okay on this day "burnt
a noble candle until
cold light remained
and Yeats said his piece
as did Matisse
and then everything
stopped.

* * *

It was over like a Good Humor ice cream truck moving on "only this truck wanted to bring Krishna consciousness to the boys and girls. We collected their money and refused to give the change
opened the door to our refrigerated trucks
found Popsicles, Fudgsicles, purple Ice rockets.

* * *

And O Krishna, I remember You
beside radha "days and nights
and fears banished. Krishna, please let
me remember You as I go
down, me serving You now
and forever.

* * *

Oh, I can't go a full route, and I don't have the credentials to complete this bus ride. In ISKCON we don't have ID cards; we are known by our beads and spiritual names, by our reps. *Someone* will know us. Locanananda was lying on the pavement at 42nd Street near the library on Fifth Avenue. He was having a heart attack. The police and the curious stood around. A devotee named Indranuja just happened to walk through the park in time to crouch beside him. The police asked, "Do you know this man?" Yes, he knew him as a resident of the Brooklyn temple, 305 Schermerhorn St. "Are you leaving your body or something? You should chant Hare Krishna." Controversies stand aside while a man dies. Simply help him to remember Krishna.

* * *

Let's provide some clues. Said some stuff. Preach and poems. Old lady on bus, young lady in front, lady mannequin in store window "preach to her? Or to the cabby's horse in old Russia. Preach where it's favorable. This is oblique, I know.

No sonnet.

What do we preach? The *parampara*, the Prabhupada said.

And sell the books.

Convey

and realize.

Preacher: You think about it too much. Just do it.

I am. I am. I am what I am. Yeah, I see what you mean. Talking *about* preaching ain't preaching.

* * *

They changed to a subway car, and our preacher took the opportunity to introduce Krishna consciousness to someone who asked about incarnations and the soul and "I" and how it all fits together. Then our preacher felt so physically weak he fell to his knees and gave the guy a Prabhupada pamphlet and excused himself.

But the cops said, "Get off the floor."

"I'm sick."

"No dying here. Go home and do that."

Preachers march. Preach and the money will come, the management will be at your fingertips, worries will flee.

I bought a preacher's kit
and lived with those who teach

learned a lot and now

I say one preacher is worth

a birth he'll save the world

but he ought to be sure he's full of love

to which our master replied

(via Miss Lynn Ludwig), "They're trying."

* * *

Night Notes, 6:40 p.m.

Get to bed. Theme for today: How to uncover my lost devotion.

But maybe it's not lost. Maybe I never had it.

But I did, because I'm spirit soul. At least in my youth I felt the need to *feel* the existence of soul and hope and attachment to Krishna consciousness. My intellectual demands weren't so great. I was more malleable. I wanted honesty then; I want it even more now. Was I simpler? Backward, in some ways perhaps, in ways I would have a hard time admitting.

Now plodding. Stopped easily by pain. But somehow staying; His Divine Grace got a good hold on me. "May Krishna save you from all calamities." See what you can do tomorrow.

March 16, 12:15 a.m.

"Let His Lordship's grace be on us so that there may not be any hindrance in the execution of this duty of writing *The Nectar of Devotion*, impelled by His Divine Grace Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Prabhupada." (NOD, Introduction., p. *xix*)

And may the Supreme Lord allow me to read it, inspired by my Srila Prabhupada. May my own mind cooperate with me. May I not go overboard in mental reaction, yet face the implication of my lack of surrender and other human failings and proclivities. After all is said and done, may I fully accept the gift of Srila Prabhupada's book.

Srila Prabhupada states that it is by the inspiration of Srila Rupa Gosvami Prabhupada and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Prabhupada that he engaged in "compiling this summary study of *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*." He thus acknowledges that he is mainly presenting an already existing text. Thus he develops a service relationship with the great author of hundreds of years ago, and in direct personal submission, with his own Guru Maharaja. Srila Prabhupada is thereby able to deliver to his own followers and to future Krishna conscious seekers "this hitherto unavailable nectar."

In the lectures on *The Nectar of Devotion* given in Vrndavana, 1972, Srila Prabhupada had Pradyumna dasa read aloud. Then he would interrupt and comment. They started with the Preface; I don't think they got past Chapter One. Srila Prabhupada's lectures were improvised. He expanded on the points in the book. He didn't appear to be attempting an overview of the book but speaking on its essence as it occurred to him at the moment. He spoke much about the Western disciples and how they should be accepted without prejudice by Indian Vaisnavas. His free-speaking is an exemplary quality I would like to follow in my own lecturing.

Free-speaking includes speaking to the people who are actually before you. Srila Prabhupada's NOD lectures were given in the radha-Damodara courtyard before the *samadhis* of rupa and Jiva Gosvamis. You can hear him chasing an occasional monkey, and hear the birds, the human pilgrims coming and going, the calling out of "Nitai-Gaura *Haribol!*"

Drew a picture in my mind of devotees resembling large aquatics playing deep in the ocean of *bhakti*. The impersonalists live only in shallow rivers or wish only to merge into the ocean without individuality. Srila rupa Gosvami prays for the protection of *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* from argumentative logicians.

How can I apply this to my own reading and writing? First pray that my own inner critics don't sabotage my attempts. Rupa Gosvami is not afraid, ultimately, because he knows whatever the nondevotees say or do cannot disrupt the presentation of pure *bhakti* to devotees. I recall feeling assured when I first read that: "In the midst of the ocean, volcanic eruptions can do very little harm, and similarly, those who are against devotional service to the Lord and who put forward many philosophical theses . . . cannot disturb this great ocean of devotional service." (NOD, Introduction, p. *xx*)

Srila Rupa Gosvami humbly thinks he is not a great preacher but says he is trying to serve as an instrument of the previous *acaryas*. "That should be the attitude of all preachers of the Krishna consciousness movement . . ." Somehow in the name of

transcendental competition, we ISKCONites have learned to assert ourselves and our projects. Do something big to please Srila Prabhupada. Is that where we went wrong?

Those days are over, I hope, for me "the pressure to give money to the BBT, to be a prominent leader, *sannyasi*, GBC, guru, lecturer. I am sick of cutting profiles just to be considered acceptable, lovable, and . . . worshipable. Sure, there was a good side to it. We really did want to enthuse devotees to develop farms and temples, and we wanted all the projects to glorify Prabhupada. In the end, however, much of what we did seemed counter-productive. Better we had learned to follow the *acaryas* in a humble mood with the hope and motive that "we may be able to do something for the benefit of suffering humanity."

* * *

In his *Lost Christianity*, Jacob Needleman discusses something similar to what I may be searching for in my writing mix. He talks about a state of being that is between spiritual and material, and how it is this important link that we have lost. He says the mystics stress extraordinary experience, and everyone knows about materialistic experience, but what about the intermediate state? Needleman has met Christians who have also become aware of this "missing link." One priest he interviewed was concerned that he seemed to "disappear" into nothingness whenever he felt stressed or irritated.

* * *

4:45 a.m.

Radha and Krishna are joking and sporting in the groves of Vrndavana. It takes all my attention to focus on the details. Today is Monday, and Radha-Govinda are wearing light green with gold trim. Krishna disguises Himself as a sapphire column, but Radha recognizes Him. She speaks a joke with two meanings. He takes it one way to increase the conjugal humor, and the flood of Their *lilas* continues for those who are eligible. Lalita blocks Krishna's way. Madhumangala defends Krishna, as do Vrnda-devi and the male parrot. They are together, then apart.

Keep going, friend. There's no other way out. A mother implored her daughter, who had locked herself in the bathroom just when the visiting guru wanted to use to wash his hands. "Come out! Come out!"

"No!"

An embarrassing moment. Don't harass the child or she will grow up to hate the guru. "O foul-mouthed girl," one *gopi* says to another.

Ready for a morning walk. There's just enough light to walk by, but it's still too dark to see things clearly. I will see only heaps and mounds. Are they bushes or the shoulders of the earth? One upright shape resembles a man or a standing bear. Is it Krishna hiding in the forest? No, I can't expect to see Him. For that, I'll have to wait for more light, because I want to meet Krishna with my whole self.

Srila Prabhupada says, quoting *Bhagavad-gita's susukam* verse, that Krishna consciousness is easy and pleasant. Just do everything for Krishna, listen only to music that glorifies Krishna, and so with each of our senses serve Krishna.

But I don't want to deny body and mind. I want to admit that I am raw and human, and that I have raw, human experiences. I want to admit that the *Bhagavad-*

gita's statements about the mind of a devotee don't always fit. I aspire for it, but it's an ideal I have yet to realize. When I see who I am, actually, I will have to account for that person if I want to deliver him Krishna consciousness.

I hear a computer scratching and a gurgle, but no sound from M.'s room. Maybe he's dreaming he's playing bouzouki on the street along with the former All-Ireland melodeon champion.

* * *

Mangala-arati Offering
& Let's be pleasant, you know, that
susukam stuff "is it
true of me too?
Why not?
Now be quiet
a little we don't want people
to hear you waltzing
on the ceiling
don't want them to hear you
playing gin rummy with the priest
and losing that
eighteen dollars.

* * *

Sing a hoarse romance
blues about no girl from
Ipanema no
priest watching pro football on
TV while scholars enter the
Room, pushing the door open
with their suitcases.
Sing Krishna songs and nothing
ordinary.

* * *

The only problem is
that after awhile you find out
that all the official Krishna songs
have been made limited
marketed by friends
and the real ones considered
too ethnic too
Rock
I mean
can we sing of Krishna
through world music

sung with heart?

* * *

The man was like a bear the
bear was like a man
the Krishna conscious element was strong "at
mangala-arati I wanted to tell my friend
about Needleman's book and
why I wanted to go to Vrndavana
to roll in the sand "
but there was a
problem. He
wasn't in the mood
my friend
to hear what I had
to say.

* * *

His talk was more urgent. He said,
"Sometimes when things get rough I
disappear. So where *am* I?
I can't claim to
be religious if I keep turning
toward nothingness."
Is he losing faith?
He said no and
don't give me that
mysticism crap "I'm
a missing link.

* * *

So I sing a song of sixpence
a pocket full of
Raisins and nuts
and no beer
but milk hot from
protected cows. And so the song
ends
with no form. "

* * *

5:45 a.m.

Suddenly, with hundreds of pages unread, I find myself finished with *Lost Christianity*. It contains some interesting points, but also endless talk with Christians practicing centering prayer, Needleman's impersonal conception of Hinduism, and

talking and talking. I liked the book's beginning where Needleman interacts with priests and visits churches in Greece. I was interested in his concept of what has been lost. I'm sure I'll keep what I gained: that we in ISKCON may have lost the human element, the ability to successfully mix matter and spirit, and have tried to leap forward to a spiritual platform we haven't truthfully attained. I wonder why someone like Needleman didn't find Krishna consciousness in America and take it seriously. Keating and Pennington, whom Needleman interviews, take inspiration from Maharishi and TM. I drop out there to search out my own losses.

* * *

9:00 a.m.

There are four divisions in the watery ocean and therefore four in *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*. Within the first division there are four waves: (1) the general description of devotional service; (2) the regulative principles (*sadhana*); (3) devotional service in ecstasy (*bhava-bhakti*); (4) devotional service in pure love (*prema-bhakti*).

Three long-stemmed roses in one vase and three in another. They are red with a touch of orange.

When I was walking on the road around 6:40 this morning, a flock of small birds flew overhead. They sounded like a whispering wave. I looked up importantly as they passed. Nothing to say about it. Nothing to say about the pines either, nor did I notice whether they had anything to say to me.

My coming to Wicklow has not increased work on the house. Everyone is too absorbed in preparing for the St. Patrick's Day parade. I tell them, "No one should stay back from the parade to cook for me. Just leave some rubber bananas, half a loaf of monk's bread, some peanut butter and jelly, and a little juice in the refrigerator. I'll be fine, barring head injuries as I bump it on the ceiling." Me and the creepy gerbils will be just fine.

Back to reading about first-class, spontaneous devotional service. Much of this is theoretical, analytical "the kind of knowledge you often forget after you have successfully transferred it to an exam paper. Does knowing it actually help me love God? Well, at the very least I'll be able to distinguish the copper from the gold. And Krishna's pastimes are told to illustrate the points. Perhaps Krishna will allow me to become attracted to them.

* * *

First wave, Section 1, general description: Srila Prabhupada writes that devotional service is a cultivation (*anuSilana*). Cultivation means that it takes physical and mental activity to develop *bhakti*. I just indicated that reading NOD was armchair work. Well, listen to this: "Without activity, consciousness alone cannot help us."

There are two kinds of action, *pravrtti* and *nivrtti*, or positive and negative. Positive means action which leads toward a particular goal, and negative means action which seeks to avoid a bad reaction. For example, I eat porridge with honey and milk both to enjoy and to be nourished. That's *pravrtti*. But I don't overeat despite my enjoyment because I want to avoid indigestion. That's *nivrtti*. A devotee acts positively to please Krishna and negatively to avoid sinful reaction.

To act favorably, we should be directed by our spiritual master. He will tell us what we should do to please Krishna. Prabhupada told me not to resign from my job at the Welfare office. Prabhupada told me to type, to write, to open the Boston center, to get married, to take *sannyasa*.

I think I'll stop this reading and writing for now. This is not the first time I have outlined *The Nectar of Devotion*. I'm finding myself asking why I should do it again. I hear myself bordering on sarcasm and self-castigation, admitting I don't feel much love or liveliness. Hearing the whispering wave this morning made by the otherwise silent flock of birds was more of an occasion, it seems.

* * *

Talking to Mr. Mulligan
& Listen, Mr. Mulligan "is that your name?
It's Foley? Well, listen . . .
He replies, "What is there to say?"
There's this "how come you talk on the telephone right under me,
my heart's in a quandary
and how come I have to be alone and
white-haired?
"Just be glad," he says, "that you
don't have a headache
a heartache
that you have no pain."
Yes. It's true. I know.
But listen, you know,
I wish I *did* have heartache I
wish They would talk to me.
I'd like to fall in love and stay like that
mellow and perpetual
with perks of original spiritual
work.
So Mr. Mulligan, I mean, Foley,
I guess my complaints peter out right there
because what more
can be said? "

* * *

You've Come Home
& Alone with a conga and good books. Now you've come home with noisy kids and
your own complaints
and me demanding
the work I wanted. You've
come home and found me in your house
taking up space upstairs "all these little trials.

I'm just having a good time while you run around losing your car keys, and I say, "Oh, this," "Oh, that."

The weather report "who cares? It won't rain on me here in this house, even on St. Patrick's Day.

You run on, but who is listening closely
to what you have to say? We are each sidelined items who don't seem to count for much

and I know that if *I* want attention, I'd have to become something "a Gurupada "again, so I'm quiet and just write things down

in my One Big Book
stare at the wood grain
open windows
measure the walk
to the bathroom
the hours spent
censoring
myself.

I like the man I first heard in those halcyon days. You joined ISKCON and got the topmost, like hitching a bicycle onto a truck, you sped along. Go! If you can hang on then

you become the truck
out of control.

Still, you have the topmost and
you have
come home.

I express silent gratitude for all you're doing on my behalf.

As for the *maha-mantra* "I'd like to *really* come home to that all-loving sound one day. "

* * *

12:18 p.m.

Signal when you're going to do a free-write. How about a big wink? A workman stands motionless on the road until the cars approach. Then he waves a green flag, sending them sailing through without delay. A little flourish of soft music follows. A picture slide "of a forest just before spring, March-mid.

He enters on sprawling feet. I decide to be quiet while M. and the others are tensed and overtaxed for St. Paddy's Day. I'll make no demands upon them. I already have the minimum "peanut butter and jelly and a roof over my head. Left alone. Being a good sport is my contribution to the push everyone else is making.

HK dasi is sick with a fever, but she still has to prepare the canopy for the rath-yatra cart. Extra workers down here. The women have to cook for them. Then there's the parade itself. It will take hours to get there, to get the cart ready, to march without a break. These devotees are performing all this austerity while I sit back, perhaps with a

headache, allowed to rest. Of course, I'll miss out on the rewards of such sacrifice "the reciprocation one feels at that time "and they will not.

* * *

3:08 p.m.

A baby llama was born nearby, and the children in this house were pleased to observe it: "The pigs ate the afterbirth."

All bodily activities can be offered in service to Krishna, but "all such activities must be in relationship with Krishna." The relationship is established by connecting yourself with a spiritual master. "Without initiation by a bona fide spiritual master, the actual connection with Krishna consciousness is never performed." (NOD Introduction, p. *xxii*)

I know this sounds stern, and I'm embarrassed to think of a wider audience hearing us say it and then criticizing us. But I'm not embarrassed by what Prabhupada says on my own account. I have already accepted it. But it does sound stern, or perhaps I should say narrow. In actuality, Krishna conscious people are not stern. When the children saw the llama born and the pigs eat the afterbirth, was that a Krishna conscious act on their part? Did their parents lecture them or teach them how to see the event through the eyes of scripture? Is it narrow for parents to always define their children's experience by quoting *Bhagavad-gita*? No, provided the parents take a broad view, that they themselves see with the eyes of scripture. We can't always understand scripture or our experiences by quoting texts. We have to actually be devotees as we see and touch and hear. And feel.

Great souls act under the internal energy. Who can see these energies or measure them? Who acknowledges that there are material and spiritual energies? *Bhagavad-gita* declares there are three general energies, but most people don't accept this at all. We devotees live in our own world where we claim these laws operate on *everyone*. This creates a kind of psychological identity that we have the absolute truth and that others do not, and because of that, we are marginalized. It's similar to what Christians experience, I suppose, except there are more of them, that there is a percentage of the world population that does not recognize their debt to Christ.

Why these rambling, relative thoughts of a marginalized cultist? Can't you just read NOD?

That's all right, but I have to know where I'm at. I believe the Vaisnava *parampara*, or I am trying to. Thus what I say from NOD is not likely to be accepted by a wide audience. It is acceptable only to those within our *sampradaya*. At best others might listen with empathy to the one with the curious beliefs to see how he handles his belief system and the fact that most people see life differently.

". . . energy is a sort of strength, and this strength can be spiritualized by the mercy of both the bona fide spiritual master and Krishna." (NOD, Introduction, p. *xxii*). Fatally parochial. I mean, "spiritualized by mercy"? Sounds like a cultist's view on reality. Is that the Hindu world view?

The spiritual energy "it's a jurisdiction under which we work. It's a protective force, better than deluding and punishing *maya*. Krishna consciousness is practiced under the Supreme Lord Krishna and the spiritual master. "This has nothing to do with the material

world." No, we don't live in the nondevotee's reality. We are exempt from material laws. We *seem* to be subject to them "it rains on our heads too "but Krishna gives His devotees special attention and preserves whatever we do for His pleasure.

And Krishna? Srila Prabhupada defines Krishna as follows: "'Krishna,' in other words, means everything and includes everything." Of course, "Krishna" especially means the Lord and His personal expansions, but "Krishna" also includes His pure devotees. Everything is clear, not vague or left unresolved. *Bhakti* is the desirable mode of life. In that state, you prosecute devotional service and please the Supreme Lord. Acts unfavorable to the Supreme Lord are not considered *bhakti*. Our actions either are or are not *bhakti*, although sometimes we do things with such mixed motives that they may be borderline. Therefore, the *acaryas* have charted what constitutes pure devotion, what constitutes non-devotion, and what constitutes a mixed offering.

I remember being challenged in college classes by professors and students. They wanted to know why we are always so focused on the point of pleasing God in everything we do. Can't we just take a break from being religious and enjoy a picnic or a walk in the woods with friends? Can't we simply go swimming without worrying about whether it's God conscious? I always had an answer for that challenge, and I assumed that I was myself so fixed in Krishna consciousness that I was tasting the highest bliss. Krishna is no bore; He's my best friend! Why would I want to spend my time pleasing myself or another when I have Krishna in my life? The super-confidence of youth. What was I *doing* in that college classroom? Looking for that rare soul who might join me in the attempt to practice *bhakti*. Sowing seeds. But at the colleges, few people seemed to even take us seriously.

A pure devotee: "His service is favorable and is always in relation to Krishna." That's what Srila Prabhupada said in his 1966 lecture. He was speaking on Bg. 9.4 - 5, where Krishna says that He is spread out everywhere by His personal energies, yet He is the Supreme Person. Srila Prabhupada commented that a devotee is thrilled to hear Krishna reveal His inconceivable greatness. Nondevotees think He's bluffing.

What is it that makes a person a devotee and accept Krishna's words? Srila Prabhupada told the story of the cobbler who believed Krishna could do anything, because God places a banyan tree within a tiny seed. The problem is, the nonbeliever will argue that it wasn't God who put the tree into the seed there. They don't want to give Him credit for anything. Yet the fact remains: the cobbler believed and the *brahmana* was faithless, and they both received their just rewards. Ya pays yer money and takes yer choice.

Who, me?

* * *

Preaching and Poems #3

What's a Preacher?

15 minutes

A preacher is someone who goes forth and, even if he gets interrupted, is willing to start again.

A preacher in a city temple is a stalwart front-liner. He doesn't have to ask, "Am I preaching?"

Am I singing?

A mournful bass "can this song
be preaching?"

I said a preacher doesn't have to ask.

But you musicians "yes, you're preaching if you're singing rock 'n' roll with propaganda lyrics and if the kids like it. If the singer has lots of tattoos and shouts and distributes 'zines with Krishna conscious philosophy and he's ready to speak up for it, he's definitely preaching.

* * *

What if the song has . . . uh, no words. Or no beat? Let's say it's something strange. "They ate the afterbirth." In North America, when it's spring and a cold front comes, the buds get blighted.

What?

Is that preaching?

Is it preaching when dandelions bloom "thousands along the public highways "and the devotees steal them and decorate their Paddy's Day cart with it?

The express mart is preaching. I know what you're asking "when stuff comes non-linear, non-logical, a free-write, is that bona fide preaching?"

Reaching meaching leaching. The power limits is what. Yeah, you preach: "Let's bust out of the usual groove. We devotees can lead the way in consciousness expansion even though we have funny haircuts and even funnier underwear."

Remember and go for it.

* * *

I don't even think whether it's preaching or song. Don't stop to ask. Break the record. Once there was a man from Ants who wore "sansabelt" pants he hurried to lead a crowd out of a fire and was praised this made the news and he said he cruised into danger because he knew God (Krishna) would protect His devotee or if he perished the soul never dies.

* * *

Preaching is all that? Can you stop for a drink of water? Can you powder your nose? Can you visit an uncle? (Only if you bring him *prasadam*.) Can you listen to your favorite old radio show? (No! Unless it's special research on behalf of the GBC.)

* * *

Spring wiggle "the owl lost its
prey right out of its talons due to
a strong wind. The prey ran away.
The buds, I told you, got blighted.
What can you expect? It's
the material world.

* * *

Fast here is much munching.
Nappies, I thought he was old enough . . .
gruff bare dwarf dreamer
stalker. Peed pants hive sakes
the parade crowd pressed forward
the *garda* said "Look at this"
and Aghasura twenty yards long
and fifteen feet high, a boy of
Krishna proportions saved them all.

* * *

I stayed home and ate *kichari*. Am I a preacher?
Shebang whiz fang
I rest in springtime water
thinking of Swami Satchidananda's beard
Rama-Krishna's foist
His attempt not to hoist
God up the
ladder.
Vaisnava kitchen ordeal "
beads around our necks
we strangle happy and
don't listen to doubters.

* * *

I'll fight back that's a preacher
that-a boy
get 'em
go fight and scratch
for Krishna
and win! We smashed you.
You smashed *us*
God-in-truth.

* * *

Night Notes, 6:12 p.m.

Look out the window. They don't have such hills in Geaglum. They are shaped like bowls "big, long, mounds of earth, not mountains as we would know them in North America, but mountain-sized for Ireland.

Wrote twenty-three pages today, read NOD, and did some proofreading. Welcome to a settled life again. The nondevotees have millions of books, so we should pump out a few of our own. May I add to the world of Vaisnava literature. As the Gosvamis wrote in the past, let us continue with our diaries and poems, written by the first Western *mlecchas* to take to Krishna consciousness.

I have also discovered the movements of the sky here. I thought the Wicklow sky couldn't possibly be as dramatic as the sky at Geaglum, but I'm finding its beauty.

March 17, 12:10 a.m.

"Thus, one should always be guarding against falldowns." Here Srila Prabhupada refers to any acts unfavorable to devotional service. Even ritualistic religious acts, and certainly impersonal philosophical speculation, are unfavorable. I suppose by this calculation I am fallen. We are required only to practice the nine principles of *bhakti*, or at least some of them, or any one of them to exclusion. Focus on *bhakti* and go back to Godhead.

Why do we keep asking, "Am I within the realm of *bhakti*? Is this act I'm contemplating *bhakti*?" Is it that we want to find a way to authorize what we want to do?

Well, I can't handle that question right now, but here I am, up and grateful to be reading NOD. I'm on p. xxiv. It's a left-hand page, and on the right is the glossy photo of Srila Prabhupada. He's seated on the lawn at Bhaktivedanta Manor, about 1973 or so I would say. Jayadvaita Swami once tried to make this the official photo of Srila Prabhupada "the one we published in all his books "but eventually we gave way to a variety of pictures. This one *is* nice. He's sitting so peacefully in the backyard of his beloved Manor, recently acquired and not yet developed. No garland, but that's okay, and just a simple cushion as an *asana*. There were a few devotees seated around him, although we can't see them. He seems to be relaxing, breathing in the fresh air, his hand in his beaded bag. It's a mild day. Let me sit with Srila Prabhupada and see the two roses that have been placed in front of his pillow-seat.

Take whatever is favorable, avoid whatever is not "that's the *bhakti* express, the streamlined, inclusive yet exclusive approach. Yes, it requires expert guidance.

Bhakti is performed with our present senses. The senses should serve the Lord of the senses with the understanding that we are Krishna's eternal servants. We are free of other designations (*upadhis*). Since we belong to Krishna, our energy should be employed in His interest.

These proposals appeal to me, and I wish to act on them. Will it actually be difficult? Am I already doing it? Is it too late to change?

Bhakti, pure *bhakti* "does the world know anything about this? They should.

* * *

Turning to the first chapter. Some devotees (and scholars) have questioned how closely Srila Prabhupada's summary study follows the actual *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*. I've always read his book without much interest in that question because this is what he actually gave us. And although this book does contain a lot of theory, and although I question whether that theoretical knowledge will actually help me in my advancement, Srila Prabhupada writes that the ultimate end of all understanding is that Krishna is everything and that one should surrender to Him. "If this ultimate goal is reached, then philosophical advancement is favorable . . ." (NOD, p. xxiv)

As a way to occupy myself more fully in *The Nectar of Devotion* and to further appreciate Srila Prabhupada's presentation, I'm going to read Dhanurdhara Swami's manuscript, *Waves of Devotion*. I'm also waiting for tapes to arrive in the mail of Godbrothers lecturing on NOD. I want this to be an NOD festival.

* * *

Japa rounds
always go well but
Prabhupada chants better
aspire for that
Rhythm and awake.

* * *

Real saints know
open heart
universal Krishna
nama devotion
does work so good
so good *madhuram*
madhuram.

* * *

5:30 a.m.

He asked, "What's your head like today, St. Paddy's Day?"

"It's shamrock green. It's bedeviled with crips." In fact, yesterday the Deities wore light green, and today white and blue with gold trim. Don't expect Them to pander to the whims of merry toads.

"I think it's silly," said Sal, "to write any old word that occurs."

He thinks it shows I suffer from dementia. But Krishna consciousness will cure me, don't worry. I simply have to read *The Nectar of Devotion* and I'll be all right.

In the meantime, I also need to let off steam, let out the bugs. I think I've heard that phrase "when you get a new computer, you work with it to find all the bugs.

Krishna, Krishna, the admiral said.

Don't take the name in vain.

"It's all right," he said. In *hari-nama* science even if you say it in jest or to blaspheme, it's all right. For example, Jagai and Madhai used to chant Gaurahari's name to insult Him, but that chanting became the seed of their good fortune.

Oh, I see.

Hey, how come when you walk you don't say anything?

Because I'm chanting the holy name and I'm occupied with that. I am not a nature writer or mountain-taster.

But I thought it would add ambiance to your book.

No, I'm not an author either. I'm a devotee through and through. There's no room for literary maneuvers or counting crocuses to titillate readers. There's room only for the science of Krishna. My duty is to tell everyone I meet about Krishna, and not to tell you how they cook and burn the gorse.

When the moon was full last, it was Gaura-Purnima. Wherever I go, I hope to remember that. As long as I try to remember Krishna, there will be hope, so let it rain.

* * *

6:30 a.m.

On my walk this morning I entered a tunnel of my own thoughts, but outside was also like a tunnel "a road lined on both sides with tall pine trees. Even the forest path I entered after walking that road seemed to tunnel down. While walking, I played with a concept for a new poetry series I would call "Sampler's Poetry Hall." I also thought about what I should title this volume of EJW. Because I'm reading NOD, I thought of the image of the ocean shore. Shall I assume the readers will know I am referring to the ocean of devotion, or do I have to spell that out? Songbirds twittered and called throughout these thoughts, and just as I entered the forest, the crows sent up an alarm call.

Madhu greeted me this morning with news of the last-minute panic over parade preparations. Madhu will be singing over the amplification system throughout the parade, and I'm sure he'll lose his voice in the process. He was wearing a little scarf of saffron material, something he usually doesn't do. Probably to protect his throat.

Yellow buds on the gorse bushes. Occasional rusting machines "car engines or washing machines "thrown into the forest. The forest is a commercial enterprise, planted for logging. We devotees use it for our Krishna meditations.

* * *

Sampler's Poetry Hall #1

In a dream I wandered into a college auditorium. It was painted light green, and many students were seated throughout in chairs. The auditorium had a study hall atmosphere. A black woman at the lectern said into the microphone, "Announcements over the microphone will now be perpetual." She seemed to be apologizing for interrupting the study hall atmosphere. Then she added, "When I was a child, we used to imitate the sound of a microphone." Some students then began to give their own imitations of talking into a microphone. The woman was amused by that, surprised that so many of them had memories of the old days. Then they all began to write poems on that theme.

The woman's name was Sampler, and apparently each day she made a remark upon which the students springboarded in order to write a poem. This was my first day there, and I didn't write, but observed the goings on.

Another day I think I'll enter that light green auditorium, sit unnoticed, and meditate. Then when Sampler makes her remark, I will take her cue and write on it.

* * *

9:26 a.m.

A devotee doesn't want any of the five kinds of liberation.

All devotees in this house have left to attend the Dublin parade.

"He is satisfied simply by discharging loving service to the Lord." (NOD, p. 3)

All right, I'll admit it. I'm too tired to read more. I can hardly count this as a reading session.

Stages, sins "chain. We can see the chain of sin by observing the reactions. We may not know what we did exactly to deserve the reaction, but we can understand the presence of sin by the presence of suffering. Pure devotional service stops the reactions coming to us because it removes from our hearts the desire to commit sinful activity. That's *real* devotional service.

Do you think that all our reactions are going away? Devotees do not suffer the same as nondevotees, we say, because we surrendered to Krishna. (Did we? When?) Our karma is finished. When *we* suffer, we are experiencing only a token reaction of what was our due. Krishna uses such token reactions to break our attachment to this world.

But as I said, I'm tired. Dry as grit. If we were gossiping, I'd probably perk up. But I can't seem to take this pure hearing right now, especially since I've read this book dozens of times before, and especially since I'm not a ripe candidate for *bhakti*. I can't get out of my body and head long enough to taste pure devotional service.

"Mature sinful activities are exhibited if one is suffering from some chronic disease . . . " People told me, debating, that I have headaches because I was a GBC ISKCON guru and I offended Srila Prabhupada.

I don't know if that's true. I do know that my life, and the lives of all other conditioned souls, is imperfect. Engagement in Krishna consciousness will free us from our sins. Proof: Lord Krishna told Uddhava in the Eleventh Canto, "Devotional service unto Me is just like a blazing fire which can burn into ashes unlimited fuel supplied to it." Of course, we have to promise not to do those things again.

* * *

Asleep Awake

& So you are awake so

measure now what is illusion.

Some guys (devotees) want to always be active lest they fall asleep "something that happens

over beads or a book.

Our master told us not to be *babajis*. Work hard harder

because racing a car to the next *sankirtana* spot

fighting crowds at ratha-yatras

or St. Paddy's Day parades

keeps you at least awake.

* * *

I'm not moralizing just
saying like a gruff fellow
who sings bugs out of wood grain
that sins without regret make you
fall asleep.

* * *

But running on momentum? I
want to see a guy calm
awake living
something deep.
"Hypnotized by Krishna." Srila Prabhupada
said that and chuckled
thought it over and
chuckled again, "Yes." Hypnotized
by Krishna. Instead of earning money they
work for Krishna at New
Vrindavan or in the Boston
temple.

* * *

Pressure creates heat. Well, when you
confront nondevotees there's
plenty of steam "enough
to cook by.

* * *

Singers in the night, traffic flashing, when they robbed us outside the Brooklyn
temple and we had to drive with windows broken and knowing the passports were stolen
and it was my secretary's fault. He was asleep at the switch
but awake now, alert.
I heard ISKCON has a sleepy farm
no tourist attraction demanding
constant Caterpillar tractors roaring and everyone running around on a marathon.
Awake or asleep in the deep
snows he died, blessed rest
Requested embrace
me and give me a dream
I can act out
for Krishna!
Christ's disciples fell asleep
while he prayed
and he pointed it out "that he *needed* them
emphasizing that he would have

to die alone.

But wake up! Death could come at any moment
even for you! "

* * *

12:04 p.m.

Very quiet "no one here but the gerbils in their cage. Just me and the Deities and my writing hopes for the day. I hear an unexpected sound. Robbers coming while everyone's in Dublin? No. It's quiet again. Probably just water trickling in the plumbing system or my own breath. Clock ticking like a heartbeat, the house creaking in the wind.

In a few minutes I'll go into action: boil the *kicchari*, serve the Deities, and then honor *prasadam*. Up and down the stairs I'll go while Srila Prabhupada speaks on tape. I'm not alone. "We shall discuss. Thank you very much." Next lecture: "*Jaya Radha-Madhava . . .*" and men pounding hard and awkwardly on the large side of the *mrdanga*, circa 1973, LA.

* * *

2:48 p.m.

Break the chain of sinful activities by engaging in Krishna consciousness. It is not enough to atone for sinful acts; we have to remove the desire-seed from the heart. "And this can be accomplished very easily by chanting the *maha-mantra*, or Hare Krishna mantra, as recommended by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu." (NOD, pp. 6 - 7)

I quote this as another piece of irony. See the claim? Is it true? Am I like an anti-cultist going through the books for evidence to hurt us? You mean, you've tired chanting and it's not so easy "is that your point? You mean you haven't eradicated your seed desire for sin?

I think I pretty much have.

Then?

I haven't attained more than that.

So? Who's to blame for that? Are you blaming the process or your spiritual master?

Neither. I know already who is to blame.

* * *

Evidence from scripture "when it is presented, we are expected to accept it. Much of *The Nectar of Devotion* will be this: "As stated in *Srimad-Bhagavatam . . .*" We listen to *sastra* and appreciate the line of argument. It is conclusive, *brahma-Sabda*, Vedic injunction, law. The evidence has to be presented rightly, and Srila Rupa Gosvami does just that.

Krishna consciousness is all-auspicious. Stay with it. Don't mock the progress of the author or the translator-commentator in getting this across. Krishna consciousness is good for all living entities. If you heard this on your deathbed, it would only be Krishna's mercy if the truths hit home. You would feel such regret for time wasted bored or awry.

A person engaged in Krishna consciousness develops all good qualities. Well, what about Josh dasa. Does he have all good qualities? What about Mareni dasi and the rest of us? And are we *really* the only good creatures on earth?

If you have to ask that question, you have missed the point. You're not hearing with faith. Only if you hear with faith will you be inspired to present this truth to the world.

Dear readers, I want to assure you that I am not *that* jaded, although these comments are coming out. I know some devotees who are extremely disappointed with ISKCON, and for them all these statements are like spears of agitation. All they can see when "Krishna conscious persons" or "the members of the Krishna conscious movement" are mentioned is fall-downs among the leaders, power trips, manipulators, and how they themselves have suffered from all that. Such persons feel they have to search hard to find an upright ISKCON authority and don't find themselves overwhelmed by evidence of devotees possessing all good qualities. And they are not completely wrong. Still, we have to carry the Krishna conscious banner and accept the Sastric statements. Reading is not meant to create complacency in the heart; we have to learn to reconcile our experience with the perfect statements, and that means facing our personal shortcomings. Reading should make us more modest, able to say from a depth that what we read is true and that one day we may attain it, despite the cynical voices within and without.

* * *

Preaching and Poems #4

20 minutes

I just want to prove I can enter hell and preach. I'm not sitting it out comfortably. I can go out on New Year's Eve at midnight and persist in giving out Krishna conscious leaflets "for Krishna I can live among such madness.

No, I'd

Rather not.

And that's the truth. I have to admit it.

Just give me a quiet situation.

But the other devotees carry on with incredible good will and determination in all kinds of situations. Like Lord Nityananda they turn the other cheek, if only their assailants will take Lord Caitanya's mercy.

* * *

So what am *I* doing? I can sing a song of praise for true soldiers. Will that exonerate me? Maybe.

It doesn't matter. I won't quit. Krishna consciousness is true even for those who like it quiet.

They left me a simple but delicious lunch "a pot of wet *kicchari* on the stove. I simply heated it up and added the bread and *laddu* that had also been left. Apple slices too. I offered it here in this quiet house. Maybe that's not preaching, but this is truthful writing.

* * *

Let me tell of the heroes and heroines, but I'll have to wait until they get back and tell me how it went. Did the mechanical Aghasura work or did it break apart? Did the

devotees look sharp or were they sloppy? Did the judge approve? Who got tired? Who couldn't walk the entire three or four hours? Did they quarrel much?

* * *

I hear you are reading NOD. How's it going? You say you are fighting to accept the precepts in the light of ISKCON's apparent failures? Oh, in light of your own? You always blame yourself. But where's the light, the nectar?

* * *

Tearing away fiction and poetry. Left only with memories, a mole on your left wrist, and your Seiko watch. Tuned in to another world. Krishna consciousness only.

* * *

Two flags crossed/ pics of alarm/ a pen that writes through hesitancy/ no more rhymes intentional/ no rules for fools.

The style sideways/ I want to
be with you a friend. Don't get sick of me.

Those sheep are dopes but mind their own business right up until they kill them. Is there

virtue in that?

Let go.

* * *

Miss Match/ Tom Mix/ Mix patches.

Krishna consciousness is the paramount place
and we shall go there and stay.

I never want out. I am only testing the waters so I can embrace all things Krishna conscious in truth. That's what I want to do.

Relieve memory/ peel back layers where he screams but never gives up his God-loving talents.

Those were bad times when they persecuted innocent people with mob mentality.
And it still goes on.

* * *

Krishna consciousness. Don't write him. Don't read him. Each lives on a thin thread while he can. Write it clear, will you? Tell us preaching stories one after another.

A child gave a man a sweet and said Hare Krishna.

A devotee revived a crazy person's lost memory of twenty years ago when he first received a book "it all came back as a moment of joy. He had given twenty dollars. The devotee was satisfied to tell the story.

A Christian born-again railed. A policeman kicked him out.

A store owner, a kind person "someone spat at someone else. Preaching includes pain, too. They return to collect money and settle scores, to count book scores, to feel the tremendous personal rewards "

that's what this is all about.

And helping people, of course. Pleasing Srila Prabhupada, pleasing Lord Caitanya, getting the mercy.

And this is just a warm-up, I assure you.

Some simple advice: chant Hare Krishna. That also counts "you are one of the converted.

* * *

4:40 p.m.

Darker, almost like it's going to rain. Look out at hills and schoolhouse and fence. I can't see the llamas or the pigs from here. Everyone else is in Dublin today. I'm sure the pubs are full. Devotees will be giving out packets of peanuts, raisins, and shredded coconut along with an ad for Govinda's restaurant, just about to open. After the parade, they'll go to the rented hall and sing, dance, and feast. All involved in putting on the festival have put out a lot of effort. Tensions and relationships "it's always a victory when the festival is put on. The insignificant Hare Krishnas find a place in the heart of St. Patrick's Day merriment. Just give us a toehold. Let us sing and dance. We want to infect you with higher knowledge.

* * *

5:05 p.m.

Happiness in Krishna consciousness. We are happier. But seriously, everyone wants *ananda*. In this world, however, our happiness is stolen by unhappiness. That's the nature of a world of duality. What does the author say? Srila Prabhupada keeps using the phrase, "Krishna consciousness," even when translating verses where the literal meaning is "devotional service" or even "transcendental perfection." But examine it and you'll find that he has given the scholarly, accurate, overall conclusion. Is not Krishna the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His topmost form? Why hide or deny that? "Happiness derived from pure devotional service is the highest, because it is eternal." (NOD, p.10)

* * *

5:28 p.m.

Lord Jagannatha, Baladeva, Subhadra were steady on Their platform because They are not easily shaken. It is Govinda who keeps us all on earth while we spin and fly through space. I'm shaky, but the show goes on. Daylight going. Pubs jumping. Sheep gnawing grass right to the roots. Srila Prabhupada in this room.

All right, friends, it's time for a square dance. All those who stayed back from the parade will have our own party. What? You don't want one? You want to be quiet? How about a little apple juice? Yeah, drinks around! No? You're afraid it may upset your digestion? Oh well. How about the two of us taking a late afternoon walk? You don't like to go on the narrow road because cars speed by? Then what about a stroll in the backyard? But the gerbil cage is out there. Well, would you mind if I drank some water?

Let's just try entering the green auditorium that we saw in the dream.

* * *

Sampler's Poetry Hall #2

I walk across the expansive campus of this Northern Midwest university to the big building and into the light green auditorium. Students are already seated there, not as a group enrolled in a course but as individual inhabitants of a free-time study hall. They're quiet "no one seems to be talking. I find a seat and take out my notepad. Then Ms. Sampler walks up to the lectern, takes the mike, and says, "Try a poem on the theme of symphony."

I immediately don't like being confined. What should I write about, Symphony Sid or, the Brooklyn Dodgers sym-phony band? Beethoven's Fifth? His Ninth? No, look for an inner meaning.

My Symphony

Out West where I boldly reside in a
cottage a poem appeared in symphony.
Thank you, Ms. Sampler, for
giving the cue, but I don't know what
a symphony *is* except a big orchestra
the music composed in advance "an
ambitious affair.

* * *

Toyota trucks "let them pass.
Let them *all* pass and leave me here
writing Krishna consciousness lyrics
no symphony for
the radio.
Imagine if everyone carried beadbags
like people wear shoes, carry
wallets and purses "it would be
a different world.
We could have another
New World Symphony "devotees
in good standing, real lovers,
humble workers, followers of
Rules no fools
but friends who live
simple days.

* * *

As sheep clip grass I pray for peace
my own and world "this ineffectual
person at least doesn't regret or aspire
for symp or phonies.
Simply funny. Ms. Sampler go
home and leave us to our own ideas "
in our Krishna conscious study halls.

* * *

After writing this poem, I decided to leave it in my notebook and get out of the auditorium before I felt confrontational. I returned to my room in Co. Wicklow and saw the gorse bushes budding on the way. It's St. Patrick's Day, but I'm alone and sober, an under-aged spiritual midget on the verge of night.

March 18, 12:12 a.m.

Those who are enamored by materialistic advancement think the Krishna consciousness movement is for less intelligent people. They don't know "that at any moment they can be kicked out of their material situation. Due to ignorance, they do not know that real life is eternal." (NOD, p. 12)

True. I agree. I'm for it "eternal Krishna conscious life. Oh boy, let me have it. Count me among the devotees.

But it's not that easy. *Grhastha* devotees must earn a living to maintain a place in the material world yet keep their sights on eternal life. *Sadhus* and *brahmacaris* must collect alms "another struggle. Money creates problems; striving to collect money in the Krishna consciousness movement necessitates struggle. Preaching requires money. One has to somehow cling to the vision of eternal life and loving service to Krishna for any of it to even feel worthwhile.

We sometimes say Srila Prabhupada writes only about the basics. But the basics are revolutionary. The nondevotees contest them. We say the nondevotees live in ignorance. They don't even understand the soul's eternality. Or they may give it lip service according to their nominal religious belief and live as if this life is all there is. The whole world is striving for material advancement. "This is doom for him, because this human form of life is meant for getting out of material contamination. By the advancement of material knowledge, people are becoming more and more entangled in material existence. They have no hope of being liberated from this catastrophe." (NOD, pp. 12 - 13)

Against this pull to join the rat race, we should pray to Lord Nrsimhadeva to become strong and steady in Krishna consciousness. Live for spiritual goals, and other goals will be achieved automatically. If devotees are fortunate enough to actually work for a Krishna conscious goal, they will be satisfied at heart. Practicing devotees should therefore examine their lives to see to what degree they are depending on material happiness for their satisfaction. We should all examine the true level of our detachment and seek to increase it.

Happiness and self-satisfaction are basic characteristics of devotional service. Everyone will agree that happiness is desirable and that it should mean more than relief from suffering.

Sometimes we doubt whether devotional service can actually make us happy. We always want more than we may deserve at present. Have faith in the process. Be honest, humble, and allow the spiritual master to sprinkle your heart with drops from the *bhakti* ocean.

* * *

The next characteristic: devotional service is rarely achieved. Lord Krishna doesn't easily award a person engagement in His service. We need the mercy of a pure devotee. This too is true. We may begin from the platform of argument and challenge, but if we want to taste devotional service, we will have to eventually surrender to Krishna's system. If we surrender to the spiritual master, he will guide us in Krishna consciousness, and Krishna will be pleased with us. Materialists don't believe in the existence of the pure devotee, nor do they believe in the reality of devotional service. They scoff at the relationship between guru and disciple.

We have proof in the existence of a pure devotee in Srila Prabhupada. He can teach us Krishna consciousness. He enlisted us in a movement meant to spread and establish devotional service as a viable practice throughout the world. Dedicate your life to it.

Sometimes I hear devotees reviewing their lives and wondering if they did the right thing to surrender to the Krishna consciousness movement. What have we gained by it? To myself I advise, "Be careful how you calculate. Don't think you did Prabhupada a favor by trying to help him. Devotional service is rare, yet you received the connection. To value it, keep faith."

On a previous read-through of this section, I left this Post-it:

Does this mean unless you're a pure devotee, Krishna won't help you? He'll give you what you want materially, but not Himself? Is that why I don't advance?

No "He will see whatever sincerity we have and magnify it.

Japa horse race "don't lag in the homestretch. How many laps per mile? Per minute? Per horse? Per jockey dressed in red and white silk? How many lives? How much *prema*? None? Can I face that without choosing distraction?

Not too loud because you're in someone else's house. They're asleep as you race and click on six clocks. The fans watch silently. You hear your master's *japa* in the background. Hare Krishna. You're indeed a jockster riding the red beads, tiny microphones of assault on the brain's vast peace. The only way, they say in *Brhan-naradiya Purana*.

* * *

4:40 a.m.

I get wiped out doing the morning Deity worship, but I can't let myself stop until I have cleaned the altar properly, wiped down the pictures, readjusted Govinda's turban, and finally, enough. By then I'm becoming exhausted. I step away, although I feel I want to offer more obeisances, but enough. Am I obsessive? No, Krishna is really here. I am really His vassal.

Although I cannot hear much of Their conjugal pastimes in *Vidagdha-madhava* "it's too intimate for me "the tape plays on, and They continue to play and tease. Their wordplay is rich with meaning and humor and love. It's good to hear. It adds another dimension, another demand upon my aspiring heart.

Everyone in the house is sleeping later than usual because they're exhausted from yesterday's parade. The house is silent. I only know they're here because I heard them come in late last night.

Allow the mind to say something wonderful about the enemy of Mura. Be like Vrnda-devi, who always takes Krishna's side, and even tries to convince Srimati Radharani to give up Her jealous anger. Be Krishna's friend and serve the devotee within you who wants to serve Him. Accept what is favorable for devotional and reject what is unfavorable.

And surely we will be blessed by our contact with Srila Prabhupada. I heard his taped lecture while I was in the bathroom. He was talking about ParaSurama and government. I found it hard to follow, but I stuck with it.

What was so hard? When he sounded stern, criticizing materialistic governments; he also said we must sing and paint only for Krishna.

On the one hand he's permissive, and on the other restrictive. There's only one way to paint "everything else is condemned. But what's his point? Never forget Krishna, and always remember Him in everything you do. "Enjoy through Krishna," Srila Prabhupada said. "We say enjoy yourself, but through Krishna. You have to surrender as best you can." I hear him and it is good for me and good for those who are now hearing him through me. We are all blessed.

(skip))

A Little revival

& Hurry "squeeze something in before they
come in and take away your time
your sweet will
the way you
requested it.

* * *

O Kana I'm Your fan

son merry-maker

I'm here

for You.

I depend on You to love me.

* * *

Once a fellow invented a game
it was all the same he
mentioned Krishna in fifty-two contexts
and said "Think of Krishna in the
Rain and
even in pain."

* * *

So was He pleased?

He never knew but at least

His name was on his lips

and our fellow lived with

stalwart devotees.

* * *

Tell me more.
I don't want to bore you but
here's the scoop: Krishna played with
the cows and escaped for interludes
with the *gopis*
He loved.

* * *

Along came the monkey Kakkhati
then Katila, fierce old Jatila
and I realize my time is brief
that I have forgotten so much
and I wonder why it is
that I have come to this world at all.
O Kana, may I come to You? "

* * *

6:15 a.m.

Madhu gave me the scoop on the St. Paddy's Day festivities. It went well despite the fact that so many things were not organized and only came together at the last minute for the devotees. He told me repeatedly how wonderful the children looked running and skipping around Aghasura. The demon was a little shabby, but all right. The devotees were happy. No disasters. A long, exhausting day of singing and dancing and being seen by hundreds of thousands of people, all basically favorable. Early in the day everyone seemed happy and mellow, so they cheered the devotees with spirit. The drunken fights don't usually start until later the evening, but by then the devotees were gone.

He said Malati Prabhu was there, and she remarked how orderly the bystanders were. Such scenes in America would more likely be rowdy.

Madhu said the boys' entrance into the demon's mouth went well, but Krishna's popping up out of the demon's head was not very dramatic. It was supposed to be accompanied by fireworks, but that didn't come together. He added, "There were other things that didn't come together too, but there's no use dwelling on the negative, because the devotees were so happy." Sounds like a little bit of what I was reading this morning in NOD regarding happiness in Krishna consciousness.

* * *

Dreamt I was back in the Navy. This time my assignment was to edit sentences. I thought I could do it by intuition, but the Navy had a test to see whether you knew what you were doing. Gradually I discovered different people onboard who knew how to edit, and I had long discussions with them. They thought I should learn the work and become an editor. When I woke up, I felt sorry, because I would prefer to write and not be bothered with editing.

* * *

9:40 a.m.

Varsana, the youngest girl in this house, is crying because she can't have her way about something. Her dirge-rage floats up to my garret. Quite a difference from the quiet that permeated this house yesterday. But it makes me think about how much *I* sulk when I can't have my way. We simply can't control things or people or situations. A mature person doesn't become enraged by that, or deviated from his or her purpose. A devotee's purpose has to be so inward that he or she is interested only in turning toward Krishna. Nothing should be able to stop that. If we were to examine in each case what creates our whining (in Varsana's case it's now a singsong chant: *I want! I want!*), it would doubtlessly seem extremely petty. Ego struggles and little material desires of no real consequence.

Now I would like to turn to NOD and feel its familiar lines the way I feel a familiar landscape "with a good feeling of coming home. I *need* to feel that.

When the *sastras* describe devotional states I do not experience, I ought to be in awe of them and aspire for them. In my too familiar yet superficial state, however, the tendency is to regard everything I read as if I am reading an inventory, like articles counted and sorted by under-paid clerks. Here we have six characteristics of pure devotional service. Each one has subdivisions, and each comes with a certain number of Sastric quotes to support the point. I pass over them with my eyes, my finger sometimes helping me keep the count, moving me down the page, leaving them behind.

"The Happiness of Becoming One With the Supreme" "pale in significance compared with devotional service. The Mayavadis don't agree. So what, who cares for them?" "Such a transcendental devotee regards any kind of happiness other than devotional service as no better than straw in the street."

Regarding the rarity of pure devotional service: ". . . the Lord easily offers liberation, but He rarely agrees to offer a soul devotional service, because by devotional service the Lord Himself becomes purchased by the devotee."(NOD, p. 15)

Radha-carana dasi wrote me that she sometimes reads Christian mystics (in Spanish) because "they speak a lot of the love of God and I like these expressions of faith." She is struggling to understand that Krishna loves, that He cares for a neophyte person. Then she regrets having such a disrespectful thought. She writes, "The study slashes my villainous mind slowly, like the chisel of a skilled sculptor. But we must not forget that I am a very, very hard stone, and for that I sometimes cry."

Confessions of lack of love, lack of faith. One gets encouragement from mystics in general *bhakti*, but how to get specific help for our specific hearts? For that we have to go to Rupa Gosvami, to our own Srila Prabhupada. But I admire Radha-carana's struggle with such feelings rather than succumbing to worldly yearning.

Devotional service attracts Krishna. The symbol of the highest devotion is Srimati Radharani. She attracts Krishna, who attracts everyone else. Therefore, ". . . devotees in Vrndavana put themselves under the care of Radharani in order to achieve perfection in their devotional service."

We say it all the time ""I will go to Vrndavana if Radharani allows me." Fortunately, Srimati Radharani is present with Krishna in our *puja*. She is a spiritual boon to our lives. What can I tell Radha-carana dasi about taking shelter of Radha? What can I tell

her about the desert between the fulfillment of spiritual aspiration and our own shortcomings? She quotes a mystic: "The desert is where the apostle forges himself."

Since I'm reading *The Nectar of Devotion*, I was thinking of calling this EJW volume something like "On the Shore of the Ocean of *Bhakti*." Probably too presumptuous. I'm not swimming in the ocean, but can I say I'm even on the shore? That I am always seeing and touching the ocean, feeling the breezes, may be too great a claim for me. I'm more in the desert thinking of the ocean.

But to be in the desert is itself a great claim. I'm really in a comfortable room sometimes mechanically thinking of deserts and oceans and nectar and saints and *bhakti* and Prabhupada and who I wish I could become.

* * *

11:19 a.m.

From the window, as I have mentioned, I can see each devotee's house in Wicklow. I can even see the white van, so I know where Madhu is. During the Deity worship, I heard Srila Prabhupada give an initiation lecture in 1972. "If you are lazy," he said, "you won't chant your rounds in the morning, but when you love Krishna, you know you *must* do it."

What else? My Srila Prabhupada doesn't have as good a view outdoors as he did from our room in Geaglum.

* * *

Twinge, twinge, little star
behind the eye how near how
far?

* * *

Twinge, twinge, and yet I read
to hold you back I
cannot hold my beads.
Is it right for you to stop me?

* * *

Twinge, twinge, what's your signal?
Do you want me to be sad?
Is this my way to surrender to Him?
But what of the onward work
of making a poem? My rounds?

* * *

Twinge, twinge, go away
I'd like to say
as in "Little Johnny wants to play."

But if you must remain
then what can I do but
surrender to Him?

* * *

2:38 p.m.

Devotional service attracts Krishna. Be at least respectful when you read scripture, as you would upon entering someone's home, talking to someone's wife, or entering a place of bona fide worship held sacred by serious people. Aside from these examples, be respectful when approaching your own spiritual master and your chosen scripture. Don't allow the mind to blaspheme or become wildly negative ""Maybe I hate you. Maybe you are stupid and cruel toward me because I am suffering," etc. Srila Prabhupada used to say we shouldn't accept things blindly but should ask our real questions. Just don't to argue or waste time.

Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, was so attracted to the Pandavas' devotion that He came and lived with them during His descent into this world. "God is great, but devotional service is greater than God because it attracts Him. People who are not in devotional service can never understand what great value there is in rendering service to the Lord." (NOD, p. 17)

When I hear the wind coming on strong, it seems to affirm what I'm reading and invites me to develop a prayerful mood.

To read with faith simply means trusting what the writer says. In terms of spiritual literature, it means the faithful reader should have implicit, full acceptance. I remember how I read NOD when it first came out in 1970. I tend to look back at those days and assume my enthusiasm was full faith. Maybe it wasn't faith but naivete. I assumed much when I considered myself fully surrendered. Or maybe I *was* surrendered but just couldn't keep it up against the vicissitudes of fate and karma. My idealism has been worn down somewhat. Maybe that jading affects my faith in scripture. That can happen, but I don't even know if it has happened to me.

An example of naivete: we read the misprint in the *Bhagavad-gita* purport, "There is a planet of trees" (a typist's mistake "should have been planet of *pitrs*) and said, "Far out!" We accepted verbatim whatever the Swami said and thought nothing more about it.

Another: we heard that women were less intelligent, that civil liberties (the standard of the American Way) should be abridged, that we should all do *sankirtana* and live in the temple for the rest of our lives. We heard that we were better than others, that everyone was envious of the devotees. We believed it all without question.

Similarly, "*Bhakti* is topmost." What does it actually mean to us? Are we even trying to find out?

He says devotional service continues from our practice in a past life, but even if not, if we are fortunate to have taken up the pure devotee's instructions and become devotees, we can advance. "Anyway, for persons who have a natural taste for understanding books like *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, devotional service is easier than for those who are simply accustomed to mental speculation and argumentative processes." (NOD,

p. 19) Give up inconclusive arguments and follow in the footsteps of the Krishna conscious authorities.

Now we're more aware how these simple statements have complicated twists to them. We have postmodern minds, after all, so we may have to reword it like this: "The truth is complicated, and there are many conflicting opinions about what it is, right? The best thing to do is to accept whatever I repeat from the Vedic scriptures. Let everyone agree to that, and we'll have no more arguments or bewildering differences of opinion. We'll all accept the words of guru and scripture, okay?"

Of course it's not okay. But some of us, strange as it sounds, have agreed to it. That's because Prabhupada was so pure, and *brahma-Sabda* so true.

* * *

Preaching and Poems #5

Trying to Get Beyond

Preaching About Preaching

Heated discussions on preaching:

We had a good time.

I didn't praise him enough.

I was sick but got better.

The music of time was playing but

the nondevotees were so drunk they couldn't hear.

Then we came home. Heard we should preach where it's favorable. When you have a headache we don't expect . . .

research the subject as much as you can and

earn credit for concentrated *tapasya* credits.

Why are you writing this? They want to know.

* * *

I am writing this, waiting for one of us to break out of the pack and take a solo. But we're each lingering, we voices, each a serious devotee and special person. We each want to do our own presentation. He told her, "Don't talk long." She nodded, "Short but sweet?"

Leave me to work. I have to concentrate. Preaching doesn't mean I just repeat what I've heard. Preaching isn't only lectern-platform lectures.

Then what else *is* it?

* * *

It's a scream. It's being quiet and taking care of children.

You say that, but the master says even animals take care of their offspring.

Yeah, but how do they do it? Do they teach their children to surrender to Krishna? It's preaching to be a Krishna conscious parent.

Sharp. What else?

Else is apron in the kitchen, hammer under the car (or ratha-yatra cart). Talking on the phone, talking in his sleep, talking real, straight, wild "

if we all did that one after another "I mean, talked true "and if we were all sincere men and women, it would be good, good.

* * *

Whaddaya mean you don't repeat? You mean you just make it up? Just screech?

* * *

No, I mean "it's subtle. You hold the line but do something original, something which reflects your own soul. Something you can do in association with like-minded pioneers you express your soul for Krishna to

Krishna
to others.

"And this, is it *parampara*?

"Well sometimes it wobbles. But yeah, if you are an essentially faithful disciple, essentially faithful expression will come out. Because it's in your blood and the original offered own-self-genuine cry doesn't betray that truth.

But it might wobble sometimes.

* * *

#2

Miss, Mrs., Ms., Mr. alone and celibate, don't have sex because the Vedic system says that's too much for sense gratification and not to please Krishna's senses. If you gotta have sex, at least get married and have lots of children to be raised in His service.

I'm preaching, because I heard that today and am passing it on. repeating.

But I know it's controversial, and many actually reject it. They want to change the meaning of the master's definition of "illicit."

But I don't go original on that one.

Then how are you speaking your original offered own-self-genuine cry?

Uh . . . I told you to be celibate with personal sincerity.

* * *

There was a Krishna conscious charge.

They charged us with insanity, child abuse, and preaching at the office. We in ISKCON wonder if preaching means staying in the office and dealing with the stress, the taxes, the flack and repercussions of everything we once called preaching. They throw stones at our buildings and we call the police to help, but all they want to know is, "Who's your lawyer?"

Does anybody here . . .

Can we opt for, say, simple brahminical preaching, and still be true and hard-hitting?

Only if we respect the more *ksatriya*-like spirit as greater, and we thank all those who support our preaching.

Singing, swinging . . .

I think that's all he wants to ask. He doesn't seem much interested in forever talking on the subject of preaching. He was interested in original expression but bored by the whole preaching topic.

Whew. Stop talking so much *about* preaching. Just do what you can. Sweat it out. Be a preacher. *Be*.

What you *are* "
not so much an advocate.

* * *

But Improviser Jim was afraid
he'd be seen as an impostor,
not as good as the others (his
brothers), so he got out his
definitive Lewis Carroll
Alice and looked up White rabbit.

* * *

Then Improviser Jim was afraid of the
subway and stayed home
didn't roam, and even loam
made his ankle hurt. And
he was afraid of Burt.

* * *

How then can we expect him to
join the pioneers
of raw wisdom, forces new
emerging? He can't. He only
wants not to be thought of
as . . .
Milquetoast? He
prefers yogurt and applesauce and
austere talks and walks and
juicy *Krishna-katha* to
Redeem himself.

* * *

Play taps and light
out from here.
I'll pray to God in secret and
wish you all good night. Please
chant Hare Krishna Hare Krishna,
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/
Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama . . .

"Whose wildest onslaughts are gorgeous artifacts of blah, blah?"

Just turn to scripture and simplicity and trust: "Because my Guru Maharaja told me this, I don't trust my own intelligence. He's the preacher. I just follow and serve." Put it down like that.

(Play ends, and I go my way chanting. I tried, and I haven't cried yet.)

* * *

5:18 p.m.

Head vise. Limping to the finish line. *Tapasya* is voluntary; do it for Krishna. It would be so nice if I could see my pain as not merely stopping me from work but as an alternative way to be with Krishna. Put aside other concerns and enter this narrow corridor with Krishna. He's calling you. You could do it if you had enough presence of mind and devotional intention. Hare Krishna. The vise is not vice, but the Lord's grip. "Handle me roughly by Your embrace." O Krishna.

* * *

5:55 p.m.

I thought of a title for this volume, *The Ocean and the Desert*. I want to mention both. *The Nectar of Devotion* is the ocean I approach three times a day, but I experience the desert when I do so. *Bhakti* is the ocean; my heart is the desert. Both exist, and there is a dynamic between them. The desert forges the disciple if the disciple will just enter the heat and search for the ocean within it.

* * *

Grateful soul, finish out your day living with friends. The headache vise is just a reminder. May I worship Krishna through my life, just between the two of us.

March 19, 12:07 a.m.

First Srila Prabhupada will discuss devotional service in practice. Devotional service is our natural instinct, now dormant. Practice brings it out, just as churning milk brings out the butter inherent in it, or rubbing wood brings out the fire.

Hey, you in there, my own *bhakti*-nature, please come out!

Bhakti: No, you don't believe in me. You doubt I exist.

Oh, but that's just my petulant, contaminated mind, which is influenced by the modes of nature under which we live in this world. Why would I be practicing devotional service for all these years, faulty as it may have been, if I didn't believe in you? Come on.

I am. Don't be impatient.

* * *

The atheist doesn't believe, the agnostic isn't sure. The bloppist isn't blopped. The Mayavadi doesn't want form. The so-and-so doesn't want Krishna to be God. So many, and they live in me and speak out when I read. And the tired old guys who say, "Yeah, we believe in Krishna. We are Krishnaites, but not vibrantly. It's just our culture, this hybrid conglomerate we call ISKCONism, as in the pop Krishnaite culture you see in ads for new devotional paraphernalia at reduced prices."

We are all more or less mad.

Yes, and that's why we joined. We want to become sane.

Because we have to believe in *something*. I see that whenever I contact a representative or authority of any body of knowledge. A hard scientist, a psychiatrist, a doctor of some school or another "they each have big assumptions, axioms, laws about the nature of matter and reality or the mind and the unconscious, the nature of human happiness, theories about toxins, positive and negative attitudes, etc. "Each time I see a client it's a crisis of faith," one clinical hypnotist admitted to me. Another admitted to fears passing through his mind that he's a charlatan. Some may be totally convinced in what they do, while others may be fanatics. Some are eclectics.

So? What are *you* and what do *you* want? Do you want to enter the ocean of devotion or stay on the shore? Why are you wasting time in the desert torturing yourself with doubt?

In this age, it's the rage.

So please go gently and don't disturb this quiet zone. I read without shedding tears. "Spirit soul in his original condition is joyful, blissful, eternal and full of knowledge. Only by his implication in material activities has he become miserable, temporary and full of ignorance. This is due to *vikarma*." (NOD, p. 21)

Soak yourself in that; there, scoop some of that ocean water and rub it on your arms and chest. Stay with brothers (by hearing their lectures) who talk of this ocean in an analytical way in seminars. Get yourself "brainwashed," influenced, and you too will talk as if you believe it. Or, to use the axiomatic language, your dormant instinct for *bhakti* will be aroused.

O Lord, a Ford's got to be sold
M. is so bold as to ask a price
they can afford but they never
go for it because they want to cheat
him down, thinking he's a bereft
slob or why would he try to
sell such a pretty white one-man
rV that could take a preacher
to France?

* * *

The house, dear readers, is not being worked on day after day. I don't know when we'll ever move in. We ought not stay in this family's house too long. Oh, for a song . . . "Generally the conditioned soul is mad . . . "

Sadhana helps cure madness. It makes a man sober and clean. Oh, you can attain transcendental madness later.

We're under the spell of *maya*, material illusion. Chanting the Hare Krishna mantra can fix our minds on Krishna. Narada says to King Yudhisthira, "My dear king, one has to fix his mind on Krishna by any means." (*Bhag.* 7.1.32) *Just do it.*

Another apparent "madness": you chant the Hare Krishna mantra over and over (and over) until you don't know the beginning of one mantra from the end of the last, and even if you can't pay attention, you chant them because the master has given you a quota. Without chanting your quota and beyond, you can't bring it into your heart. So

you chant your quota without cessation. You keep going no matter how well you feel you are succeeding. Crazy? Pitiful? Only because you are practicing without love or realization. You do practice with faith.

You donkey, why do you do it?

Because "there can be no question of refusal. That is called *vaidhi*, or regulated."

You're stubborn enough to continue, even though you sometimes feel foolish. You're stubborn enough because you know, deep down, just how blessed you are. You are actually grateful. You have been to Vrndavana, to Mayapur, to Puri, been with Srila Prabhupada. So you chant on.

* * *

4:37 a.m.

In the bathroom, a moment of truth and embarrassment: While drying off I heard Srila Prabhupada say that Ravana built a "subway" from Sri Lanka to Brazil, and I found it hard to believe. I wondered why Srila Prabhupada said such an odd thing. Is it a spiritual truth?

Then I wondered why I had to burden my faith with such a difficult thing to imagine. I thought of Sadaputa Prabhu and how he might answer my doubt. Whatever he would say, I've probably already heard something similar, perhaps something about higher dimensions or his sort of neutral, non-proof but implicit acceptance of whatever Srila Prabhupada says. We don't have all the proofs, not the empirical ones. I can't demand it. It is possible that Ravana built such a tunnel simply because anything is possible by God's will. Why can't there be something wonderful like that? After all, Ravana worshiped Lord Siva, who certainly has the *Sakti* to grant Ravana the ability to build such a tunnel.

In the same lecture, Srila Prabhupada said that Lord Rama was able to float gigantic stones on the ocean despite the law of gravity. The Lord said, "Let there be no law of gravity," and so the stones floated. Somehow I was able to accept that traditional story. Srila Prabhupada's "guess" (as he called it in one lecture) about the gold in Brazil was the only stumbling block.

Maybe he and Krishna put these stumbling blocks out to see which serious *bhaktas* would get tripped up by their latent attachments to the pronouncements of material science. Doubting Thomas has to come back and put his hands in the wounds of the risen Christ, who said, "You believe because you see and touch. Blessed are they who have faith even without empirical evidence."

Then I think of Radha-Madhava's sweet pastimes as they are told in *Vidagdha-Madhava*. I could ask where these pastimes came from. Do they exist only in rupa Gosvami's play? That is, did he make them up? Or were they actually revealed to him? But we know that Lord Caitanya both supervised and blessed Srila Rupa Gosvami's efforts. Anyway, what does it matter? Does hearing such pastimes culture *bhakti*? O Lord, I am just a pea in a pod and don't know why I raised my objection. Please keep me, and expand my consciousness and faith in Your ability to do any wonderful thing. Only fools whose intelligence has been stolen by *maya* doubt Your potencies. I don't want to be a fool.

* * *

Veering Toward Krishna
& Tad, I want to ask you can I go
to Vaikuntha? I want to sing a song for
Radha-Krishna, so may I?
Yes, you may. You may take
one giant step.
Permission granted. Krishna was wearing
copper clothes and a peacock
feather. He stood with Radha as
I offered Them cups of water in
a Vrndavana forest where They played an
excellent trick on Abhimanyu and Jatila:
Krishna masqueraded as the goddess
Gauri!

* * *

Excellent day ahead I say without
a hearing aid or electric timpani because
I can already well hear the wheeling seagulls
over West Virginia ignoring the
downfall of practically everybody.

* * *

Millennium end can't save us but
Krishna will. He will evince simply
by a fragment of prayer while the
full Ganges leads us toward
the "seven hundred" wonders
of the spiritual world.

* * *

I'm not here to make it accessible
or to drink whiskey, and I don't allow
cigarette smoking.
I want my air clear with a draft
of smoky-pure clouds.

* * *

I intend to remember Krishna
the Lord of the Yadus
who was such a close friend of Arjuna
and all the Pandavas
although they suffered.
So what is this? What is this

"hypnotism" that their love
increases despite the bad
luck?
It's Krishna's nature, and taking it
is like drinking hot sugar cane juice.

* * *

I mix that together, quiet
in this house,
like a granola trail mix the
saintly expert abode and
mull down the lane and avenue
hoarse and happy
from singing Hare Krishna in my own
parade.
O Lord Krishna, You love Your devotees
best even the neophyte
tigers "who preach to the people about
cows, camels, dogs, and asses and tell them
to take to Krishna consciousness ASAP. Such
preachers assure such people they'll be relieved
of gallbladders and stones in their next lives
or else they'll be able to think of Krishna
if they aren't
and say, "Lord, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna
You have done this
and I don't know why." "

* * *

5:38 a.m.

M. says the narrow-minded country people don't like Hare Krishnas; they see us as cultists. The local hardware man blabs it up with Uddhava because he's a good customer, but M. says he knows they don't like us. So there it is again. Does it make me sad to be a rejected specimen? Well, what can be done? We can't give up our affiliation with Lord Caitanya's movement over it. It doesn't matter so much. I already live in my own world, and in Ireland, I'm a Yank anyway. I just want right of way to walk on a road without being run over. My desert, ocean, brambles "I'm a spirit soul too. I want prayer time, a walking stick, and to be able to mumble a cordial good morning as I go on my way. Hare Krishna.

* * *

6:20 a.m.

On my walk, I met my first rabbit of the year in the South. We could barely make each other out in the dim light of dawn. Unlike a nature lover, I didn't seek intimate

contact with the rabbit, so when it started bumbling in my direction, I tapped my cane until it hopped the other way.

A half-moon lantern was shining in the sky. The clouds were vivid pink streaks, and the jet trails were even more vivid, almost as if the jets were emitting a pink phosphorous as they flew from America on that overnight flight. Pink chalk down a blue chalkboard.

And it was cold. The walk started out gray, but I could see today would have a fair blue sky. The pines stood straight, not for my inspection, but they reminded me of Northwest Canada.

Loud creek. Mourning doves cluck-clucked in the pine trees. All the sounds felt healthy. The forest where I walked reminded me of the photograph on the cover of *Where God Begins To Be*.

Maybe such forced marches as I tend to take on my walk will provoke head pressure, but they seems worth it to capture impressions of pink streaks against blue. After stringing the words together and making an improvised composition, I stood face to face with the sign, "Rathdangan Community Alert Area." I read it aloud as if I were taking an eye test.

"How many roads must a man walk down/ before they will call him a man?" Maybe Krishna will absolve me after all "let me think of Him and bring me back to Him. Wouldn't that be nice? To be free to return?"

* * *

9:50 a.m.

A manuscript of approximately 600 pages has arrived. How? By carrier pigeon? No, by flying carpet. Anyway, it's none of your business. It's Dhanurdhara Swami's *Waves of Devotion*, with his commentary on Srila Prabhupada's *The Nectar of Devotion*. I plan to read it after I read each corresponding section in *The Nectar of Devotion*. I accepted the author's preface that a scholarly explanation of *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* can (1) make clearer what Srila Prabhupada stated, and (2) give us more access to *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* than we could get by reading *The Nectar of Devotion* on its own. I don't think, however, that I'm inclined toward doing such scholarship on my own. I'm too old for it now; I don't need it exactly, and my headaches make me incapable or disinclined to such concentrated and sometimes tedious work. I don't feel a need to significantly increase my Sanskrit vocabulary, or even my knowledge of the technology of devotion. (Adrienne rich titled one of her poetry collections, *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far*. Somehow, that phrase comes to mind just now.)

So?

So I'll let you know how it goes between book and manuscript.

* * *

"When there is no attachment or no spontaneous loving service to the Lord, and one is engaged in the service of the Lord simply out of obedience to the order of the spiritual master or in pursuance of the scriptures, such obligatory service is called *vaidhi-bhakti*." (NOD, p. 22)

That's me right now, but something else too. I said I was thinking of the words "wild patience." I'm pushing forward, being myself "because I have to. But I definitely work from a position of obedience. I'm glad for that. Prabhupada told us to read his books, not to talk with women, not to shame ourselves, to prepare for the end because what we think of at that time will determine our next life. There *is* a next life, and with it the chance to enter the realm of bliss and eternality. He told us to be preachers, not salvationists. He told us to want nothing but to please Krishna and the spiritual master. I want to obey. I try my best.

But sometimes it's like wrestling a steer to the ground and tying its feet.

That's because we have a certain amount of freedom. Prabhupada has given us that. The strict master is also lenient. Because the important thing, according to the *anyabilasita-Sunyam* verse, is our *intention* to serve Krishna favorably.

I don't always know why Srila Prabhupada says one thing after another. I don't always see the connection. But if someone explains it to me in terms of the original text Srila Prabhupada is describing, that usually doesn't add much to my personal experience. It becomes additional *jnana*, something I could explain in a classroom. Clever I'd become, and perhaps one-up.

But do I prefer to stay in the dark? Prefer the dryness of non-understanding?

No, I'm just saying I don't become "wet" through intellectual explanations.

So in *The Nectar of Devotion*, Srila Prabhupada defines *vaidhi* as mere obedience. Then (following Rupa Gosvami) he quotes the *Bhagavatam*, where Sukadeva Gosvami tells Maharaja Pariksit that he should hear and chant about Krishna at the end of his life. "If one can chant and hear Hare Krishna and always remember Lord Krishna, then he is sure to become fearless of death, which may come at any moment." (NOD, p. 22)

We don't know where we will go after death; so practice remembering Lord Visnu.

* * *

We come to Krishna consciousness with a particular taste that has been developed over lifetimes. How much attraction for Krishna do we have? What about our brothers and sisters? How far can we go with it? Gee whiz, this is like sledding down sand dunes.

Let's dovetail
tailgate, hitch that
working thumb to the back
of Swamiji's speeding truck.
How far can a wild patience
a fearlessness to be with him
and the compassion
and love for fellow riders
take us?

* * *

If you met a guy with more taste than you, would you ask him, "Hey buddy, give me some of that taste"? Or, "Hey buddy, got a taste?" He'd either say, "Get your own," or he'd turn you on. Then you'd become intoxicated by a higher taste. Or he might say,

"Work your ass off in my temple first, and call me in twenty-five years." Would you do it?

Oh, listen to this "it's not merely intellectual scholarship "our *sadhana* must not only be mechanical. We have to yearn for Krishna's service.

Yeah, but we already know we don't want His service in *your* service.

Is that part of the problem or part of the solution?

Boy, are you gun-shy.

Who said you had to serve Krishna by serving me? Just listen. Do you serve with yearning? Feel the *bhava*.

Okay, okay. I'm yearning to hear Srila Prabhupada chanting on the tape recorder; he and I are doing a duet while my mind goes through these trips.

Oh! First fly of spring just came in the open window! Now I remember why I can't keep the windows open: the Irish don't use screens. You can't even buy them in this country.

Obedient. The main thing to being obedient is to not just wash pots but follow the guru's order to *remember Krishna*. "It is the duty of the *acarya*, the spiritual master, to find the ways and means for his disciple to fix his mind on Krishna." (NOD, p. 21)

But Sukadeva Gosvami was telling Maharaja Pariksit to think of Krishna not out of love for Him, but out of fear of his own death. That's *vaidhi-bhakti*. I learned this from *Waves of Devotion*. Acknowledge your debt.

* * *

11:55 a.m.

Last minutes of morning before it becomes afternoon. Time moving along, and still I don't get the meaning. "Everything smashed," Srila Prabhupada says, speaking of Death's devastation of Hiranyakasipu and anyone like him who prefers to cling to the things of this world. The bank balance, the family, the prestige, the car "they don't always get smashed, but we do, we and our bodies. Then someone else has to take care of the car and the boots.

"Awaiting your early reply." The TP writes me that there's a political coup to remove him from his position. He's holding on fast. "Don't let those in the mode of passion [who want to get him out] rule your life," someone advised. I can't help in this situation. I'll tell him . . . what?

Something. That there's no hot water in this house, and when cold water courses over your body it tingles. Cold water ensures a quicker-than-usual bath. I wash, then hurry back to my sunlit (a rare occurrence) room. Here, let me write on this notepad to warm it up. Krishna conscious empire? The Krishna conscious way of life used to be simple "just a little agriculture and the keeping of cows. Hare Krishna.

The Alsace-Lorraine "the terraced gardens of North Italy. I have seen them from the van window. I have also driven through the Italian tunnels. The roads are all called "Via this" and "Via that," and they carry you into the dark as you move through the Italian Alps. Where have we been? The day always got later wherever we were, even as we crossed the border into France.

O Krishna, I simply want to pray to You. The heart (thump-pump) is a desert.

No, it's not really; it's a blood-pumping organ, full of life. It's my sentiment that's dry. Well, at least I can eat. My body craves *something*. If no pain comes, I'll stay on my schedule.

Chant Hare Krishna with quick response. God appears in sound vibration. Chant more often with yearning.

Yearn "go ahead, *try* it. Give what it takes to feel
from the brain, in the elbow,
frown the brow.

Can't find it "those yearning muscles?"

A way to yearn in words:

"O Lord, please engage me in Your service.

Please purify my consciousness in

Right earnest intent to serve You."

* * *

1:35 p.m.

Visited The House. Ani (wearing a sweatshirt with the word "Nantucket" written across the chest) and Leo were working. Looks like more than two weeks worth of work left. It could be a wonderful new phase of my life if I'm actually permitted to stay there. There's a whole room for painting, and I can see the hills from the window. The house also comes with the promise of solitude.

* * *

3:02 p.m.

"The principle of remembering the Supreme Personality of Godhead constantly and not forgetting Him at any moment is meant to be followed by everyone without fail." (NOD, p. 24) Everyone is meant to satisfy the Supreme Lord by his work. The *brahmana* should eat on behalf of God, and he or she should also preach.

If we develop even a small attachment for devotional service because of our association with pure devotees, then we are very fortunate despite the pain of our material attachments. Writing it down, this gloss, while I look on from this chair. Who is he talking about, and why am I writing it down? There are no free tickets to the spiritual world; we have to work to attain love of God. At certain points we are carried along by mercy and association, but always we are set down on our feet to continue our own honest work toward *bhakti*. Don't begrudge it. Just keep the goal in the forefront of your mind and know you are on the right path. We each seek the signals to prove that this is true.

* * *

Preaching and Poems #6

Keep It Up Even If Not Inspired

16 minutes

When you're weary and don't feel like it, you will still stand up and lecture. I've seen a devotee so tired he kept massaging his face and head while he lectured.

* * *

Well, what do you say? You know. People think they are this body. Ask any, "Who are you?" And they'll give a name or sex, a racial designation, a creed "all bodily designations.

* * *

Hey, but the song in it, the lilt "can you hear it?

Never mind. When you're tired, you just keep going.

In the hall there were many parcels, but I kept chanting or writing or reading, figuring it would all add up to something significant. I didn't want to waste my time wondering about the mail. I have to keep walking despite the fact that I have no romantic-religious metaphor, no desert monk image to which to cling, no Coca-Cola or Limca or even devotees with whom to joke to alleviate the pressure. I wouldn't even mind someone slagging me a little, just so I knew I was alive and well.

* * *

On the roof of the . . .

Oh, preaching, preaching, man, don't forget the message.

Time is running on

so don't botch this valuable human . . .

* * *

Yeah, preach: You people, why don't you take a book so I can go back to *thinking* I preached successful. In time, you might feel vulnerable enough in your life to read it. It's a time bomb. It will go off in your brain and heart when the time is right.

The preacher walks on stage, strutting a little, entertaining the people with a beat smile like

a James Brown soul show

the audience tappin' their feet and the preacher distributing free *halava*.

* * *

"Don't just stand alone before the Deity,"

he said, "but bring someone there with you,"

and he looked at me, a *babaji* culprit staying too long in Vrndavana.

But he *lives* here!

Preaching is reaching

for a man's heart and mind.

* * *

You'll reach the goal, won't be in a hole . . .

this is the target

just getting it out for you.

* * *

But he was tired
dull
didn't say otherwise.
This may not be the most inspired
he thought
but at least it's a reaching
poem written
against the clock.

* * *

Tired, but heard
Snyderji Mahatma talk of his lectures
in Russia where he combated
the snobs and the Orthodox
and even the KGB
insurgents, Mahatma
preacher of the year
with no fear sturdy and
strong in faith and knowledge
of *sastra*, the basis
of *vaidhi*.

* * *

Decided to get rid of humanizing
that leads to womanizing or
at least deviation. Listen, I'll be
glad enough if we get one person from
all these lectures to become a devotee.
That's all he asked. Just one person.

* * *

Sampler's Poetry Hall #3

This is the third time I have entered the green auditorium. Ms. Sampler did not appear. Just as well. I want to write free of assignment.

I don't want my poem to be part of any competition. I come here because I enjoy the ambiance of the study hall. Now let me write.

* * *

Stevie Study Hall prepared for
his exam in *Bhakti-Sastri*.
He didn't have to rhyme ham-bone.
He would only be expected to regurgitate
Sanskrit *Slokas*.

* * *

I passed *Bhakti-Sastri* in 1969.
Why do I have to take it again?
"There are no records of that,
and this is an updated,
harder test than what Srila Prabhupada
himself gave."

* * *

In the study hall, a beautiful blonde . . .
Why should I be here? I should
be in an ISKCON tepee
or at least alone. Yes,
I will rise and go now to a
thatched-roofed cottage to practice
nirjana-bhajana while my disciples
stay active at the K-Marts.
I will . . . I hereby . . . but who cares?
I will not do it for cheap adoration.
Even Prabhupada wanted to do it
(see *Bhag.* 2.8.33 and the Sixth
Canto where Daksa curses Narada).
The alone *sannyasi*
is not condemned provided the time
and place
is right.

* * *

Well, *this* is a productive session.
In the future maybe I'll just think
of a light green auditorium without
having to come here, leaving the shelter
of my room, the altar, the shelter
of silence punctuated only
by the sounds of the wind.
Srila Prabhupada's books
are nearby.

* * *

5:40 p.m.

Too tired to do anything that requires discrimination. Spaced-out with aches. Maybe take rest early. Is this what I'll be like all the time in ten years from now? I'll sit in a rocking chair and smile feebly; no duty.

Sometimes I speak from my accumulated experience as an elder of the Krishna consciousness movement: "I remember the time when Srila Prabhupada . . ." Younger people listen.

But I have no energy. Oh well, let's stay with today and not imagine the future. I make out a personal calendar each month and check off the days in blue, red, or pink, depending on whether or not I took an Esgic. I know the pills can't deliver health, but they do stave off the pain.

Madhu has been working at the house. He just returned. When he comes upstairs I'll catch him to hear his report. These are night notes although the sky is blue and has been all day in this land of almost constant rainfall.

March 20, 12:08 a.m.

Now when you read, remember to do it with yearning for more than the mechanical. Only then will your reading attract Krishna's favorable attention. Perhaps one day He will bestow upon you *bhava-bhakti*, or spontaneous devotional service. You won't attract that mercy simply by going through the grind of *sadhana*. remember also that a devotee needs strong faith and knowledge in scripture. You can't claim you're beyond this, or even that you're too old and decrepit for it. Maybe you can't consume books the way you could when you were younger, but you need Sastric knowledge and faith. How to get it? All right, at least the book is open.

Neophytes have "no firm faith in the objective." "And a wise man who simply realizes the greatness of God is also counted among the neophytes." We can learn certain things from such neophytes, but they really can't help or inspire us toward love of God in Krishna consciousness. *The Nectar of Devotion* makes it perfectly clear that we are after much more than a vague God consciousness or a moral goodness. Walk the path by associating with pure devotees.

* * *

The people who come to Krishna for material benefit can be purified and raised to the status of accepting "*vasudeva sarvam iti*."

I was thinking how my free-form of writing and concentration on personal honesty, personal expression, is more important than merely being a scholar of Krishna conscious scripture. Perhaps I've become proud of my approach. But that doesn't exempt me from the need to study scripture and to present it clearly when I preach. It's important to study scripture in an on-going way. I make a caricature in my mind of a person who has neglected self-awareness but goes on lecturing or even compiling scripture, teaching others, speaking about Krishna consciousness "and I make fun of such a person. But perhaps he is doing the best he can in his own humble way. Maybe he has his own way to attain self-honesty. I don't ever want to be proud about what I am trying to do for Srila Prabhupada. We should each do what we can with true poverty of spirit.

Those who are wise are actually spiritual; they know they are subordinate to Krishna and should therefore serve Him.

* * *

I feel happy and intent right now. The new house promises more of such satisfaction. It occurred to me that I shouldn't allow a low mental or physical state to push me toward

radical changes. Stick with the plan that we already have. The life I am proposing for myself feels right for my Krishna consciousness.

But if Krishna decides otherwise, then that way would be right. The inner core of how I plan to live is not based on a particular house in Ireland, or even on the idea of having free time to read and write. It is based on finding my love for Krishna and surrendering to His will. I want to use my time well. If I am forced to live in a different than what I am planning, I will continue to try to do as much hearing and chanting as possible, and of course take advantage of the situation to write something different. Last night's nightmare showed me that I could be forced to give up *everything*. I pray to Krishna to maintain my devotion for Him, and the awareness of my connection to Srila Prabhupada.

* * *

4:32 a.m.

It's nice to hear Narottama dasa Thakura saying Radha's form is golden while I'm beholding Her golden form. I also like to hear him say he wants to be Her maidservant, to dress and bathe Her, while I'm performing those services in the Deity worship. Then he says (in *Prema-bhakti Candrika*) that *sadhana-bhakti* and *prema-bhakti* are the same devotion, but one leads to the other. He wishes to take birth as a maidservant of Radha's *gopis* in Vraja. Pray to retain these thoughts wherever you are. Hare Krishna.

Srila Prabhupada said that this world is not false. We take service from it and we have to work with it, so how can we say it's false? Eating is not false, but we have to eat in such a way that our main purpose of life is achieved. That's done by eating *Krishna-prasadam*. I liked hearing it. He says it's the Mayavadi who bluffs that the world is false, even while he works within it. Hare Krishna.

Frankincense and myrrh. All glories to the Lord of the universe, who is best loved in Vrndavana, without awe and majesty.

O Lord, I am waiting for the house to be completed. I am very grateful that people are giving me the opportunity to live there "a two-story thatched cottage. May I use it in Your service. Because, as Prabhupada said, this world is not false; it must be utilized in Your service.

My pain doesn't seem to be false either. I may take a pill if I feel the need, but I still expect to feel pain and have to put up with it. That can be my voluntary offering. No point wasting time worrying about pain. Is time lost when I have a headache? It gives me a different way of looking at time. I can use that advantage in my writing. Therefore, no regrets for what appears to be downtime.

Krishna will tell us what to do. I am mad after this Krishna consciousness and don't need anything else. Throw away the newspapers and magazines, the books and the restaurant guides!

Oh, you folks use them? Of course. But I say throw them away because I personally don't need them anymore.

What about light bulbs?

All right, I'll admit it. I'm hooked into that infrastructure of police and sewage systems and the European Economic Community and so on "but not really. I am subservient to Krishna. The sages approach the Lord's lotus feet, and as they come to the

ocean, it shrinks to the size of a calf's hoof print impressed in mud. They can easily cross over it without even using a boat. When you get to that same shore and you need a boat, well, there it will be, left by the sages for your use.

Hare Krishna. Here is a zoo, and here is another project, a Krishna temple and restaurant in San Diego. Here is downtown La Jolla on a Saturday night, and here comes the Hare Krishna *harinama* party. As they pass an outdoor restaurant, a waiter keeps time with his spoons.

As we near the end of the century, the moon will . . . I don't know what. I am starting sentences I cannot complete. I chant Hare Krishna and hear the vibration, and my master is chanting at the same time. I don't have devotion, but I put in time and ask for dispensation, mercy. Make your life good (Krishna conscious), and the writing will follow it. There is no other way.

Stand fast and chant *haribol*. Go on awake and stay awake, Mr. Persimmon. The mission will ask you what you did for it.

* * *

The Promise
& The promise I made to the Swami
I will not abrogate
the gate is
open and
freedom is ours "
the regulated principles of freedom.

* * *

Obey orders "ours to serve
and I promised I'd love to be with
the Lord.

* * *

But this promise I can't keep up
by my own strength.
I can only wish to be with Krishna who is
the real promise-keeper.

* * *

Although He broke His promise
to save His devotee "the
greater of two promises.
My little wish to die
in good grace but
more than that
I promised I
would never leave His service
I won't renege.

Ah! Sore point
the demanding kid
demanding reneger
the eternal servant Govinda who
copped out after six months
and this world ain't false.

* * *

O Krishna, what can I renounce for Your pleasure?
Nothing. Only the illusion
that I am the Lord.
But the Lord is my master, O Krishna
You are my promise
and to You I promise
You promise
to take me to You
that promise I live
for "the ground is sure.
Your name will break the bones
of Death. You will never fail
those who taste it. "

* * *

6:47 a.m.

This morning's walk was brought to you by Cloudy Skies, Inc., a branch of All-Out Weather, emanating from a fragment of the energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The preacher devotee in the official's booth says, "I don't know how to yearn. I just bat out rounds and leave it at that. read on the surface. Act in service as much as I do but no more." He says he doesn't know how to increase.

And an elderly man I knew just passed away. His hair was gray even before I met him. Whatever I say here, however, will be inadequate, so let me refrain. He was, after all, a human being and a dear devotee. His name was Rajarsi dasa. At least I can say that anyone who has rendered service in this life will receive a better next life.

Heifer and Feifer pulled the load
as long as they lived,
two oxen. But when they grew old
they roamed and ate and
remembered the days when
"Whoa!" and "Gee!" governed
them and they pulled the plow and
once a wooden sleigh
carrying the mayor of
Cambridge on his way to a
Krishna conscious Slide festival where
Heif and Feif ate some kind

of *luglu*-looking ox-ball
sweet which could deliver
them enough *sukrti* to take
birth as tough human *bhaktas*
on Chicago's South Side.
Their hides were used for *mrdangas*.

* * *

9:02 a.m.

Many verses are quoted to prove that *bhakti* is superior to impersonal liberation. Somehow I'm not interested in them. My excuse is that I have head pressure. But if you want to advance in *vaidhi-bhakti*, you need faith in and knowledge of scripture. What if you're just not interested in certain points? Is that offensive? I know the *gopis* sometimes complain when Krishna preaches philosophy to them, but they love Him madly. I can't compare my *ennui* to the *gopis'* disinterest in what they saw as *jnana*. No, I can't.

So, what shall I do? I don't want to skip that chapter. Then plow through it, as long as the headache doesn't worsen. The caravan must pass, just as you must chant sixteen rounds even if the mind doesn't remain fixed on the holy vibration and you never pray once while uttering it.

Devotees don't care for *bhukti* or *mukti*. Any wonderful desirable thing that is not pure devotional service is a fig to them. They enumerate the Lord's glories and describe their attraction to Him. See? By reading those words, you remembered that this is something for which you should aspire.

Downstairs to shave my face for the first time in three or four days. Washed it with hot and cold water. Then decided to go back upstairs and try again with the fourth chapter of NOD. It's not meant to be boring or unnecessary. That seems to have worked. I'm moving through that chapter now, reading aloud. At least I understand intellectually what it says, all on the theme that devotional service surpasses liberation. Prabhupada's words are nectar despite my leaky-sieve concentration

And I have lowered my expectations "I gave up the idea that I should read only a little at a time in order to enter a spirit of *lectio divina*. No, read everything as it comes. I won't be able to remember it all, and I don't really want to note all the points down, but just by reading I will be engaged in favorable devotional service. Sometimes "favorable devotional service" includes recognizing our limited capacity.

As I read prayers such as, "I simply pray to be an eternal servant at Your lotus feet. Kindly oblige me and give me this benediction," I gradually feel their import by osmosis. We simply have to put ourselves in close proximity to such words by reading, and the Sastric prayers will gradually become our own. And why not? We too want that benediction.

DDS mentions that the verses in this chapter may be studied minutely and that one can see how they differ from one another, pointing out in different ways how devotional service is superior to liberation. Another approach is to stay alert while reading, allowing the verses to create a trance state where one after another they sway you and persuade you to understand that *pure devotional service is the best*. " . . . the particular thing to be

noted is that the Personality of Godhead is not understood by great liberated persons, but only by devotees such as Queen Kunti in her humbleness. Although she was a woman and was considered less intelligent than a man, still she realized the glories of Krishna." (NOD, p. 44)

Beyond liberation is worship of the Lord in Vaikuntha. Beyond Vaikuntha is pure devotion with unalloyed affection for Krishna in Goloka Vrndavana.

* * *

Letter

& This is just a short note to say hi I'm fine in Wicklow hope you're good up there in the sky with Thornton Wilder and company.

I saw egrets you sent

Krishna is here as well. I know, He's everything! I just read that Krishna's devotees in Vrndavana are topmost and if we can't live there physically we should live there in our minds.

So I was thinking . . .

well, I said the sky in North Ireland but

you know what I meant

I'm failing my face

growing older

sagging and who can blame it for that? The soul "dies" seven months at physical death and

rises again in the next body in a painful condition. We've all heard this before, but I always wonder

what we're doing about it.

Srila Prabhupada told us to tell people what to do, but I'm sorry, because we seem to fall down

ourselves

crestfallen

sagging faces

lost in one another's trips.

* * *

So you had better say hello to the plants and other creatures for me. Absolve me and make me happy with a Krishna conscious wish

that we can chant a garland of beads in

an ecstatic state

in the heart of Vrndavana.

Yours, "

* * *

11:44 a.m.

Aches in flashes "they come on, then subside, then come up again. I'll just do what I can, working around its in and out. Nothing sustained though, I can tell you that. I won't be writing any big American symphonies this afternoon.

The epiphany of an ox. The sudden enlightenment as opposed to the consistent crawl I usually accept. Krishna, Krishna, I'd like to get at that *The Nectar of Devotion*, but these flashes prevent me like lights on a highway warning me to "slow down, no shoulder ahead." Or maybe I just have to pay the toll "give something that will break my sustained effort.

Well, I'll go for the minuets and *ragas*, or play my short symphony on the toy piano in four minutes.

I was never
in a desert except
with Sully and Dad and Madeline at
Everyman's Desert of Maine
filled only with a rudimentary
Christian concept that teaches one to go
to Athos, or Egypt, like Macarios the Great, etc. When one got there, he was supposed
to pray and read the Bible, and eat old bread.

Me? Our desert tells us to
sing and dance,
use body and mind
in His service
even if you don't quite
know Him yet.

Madhu brought a man here. Is he trying to sell him something? Maybe he's an electrician for the new house. At any rate, NOD is waiting, and when the traffic jam clears, I'll go through it. I felt good encouragement this morning on how to proceed, even when I thought I wasn't interested. I am. I just have to apply myself.

* * *

2:22 p.m.

People who are born fallen and grow up sinfully can still take to Krishna consciousness. They become as pure and cultured as those who were well born and trained since birth. We take this for granted, but it's a great achievement that *acaryas* such as Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura and Srila Prabhupada have forged with support from the Vedic scriptures. Once we are initiated, however, we must follow strictly or fall down.

There is practical guidance here. Thus Srila Prabhupada called *The Nectar of Devotion* a law book. We often refer to this statement that if we fall down, we don't need to perform atonement (*prayaScitta*) but just go back to following the devotional principles. We quote, we guide others, and we try to follow it ourselves. Our law book "let us know what it says and what imports it carries. Let us look also for meaningful experience in every paragraph. Pay attention. Krishna will be pleased, and you'll gain immensely.

* * *

3:23 p.m.

Flurries. M. says he's leaving at 2:00. He runs out, returns ""I'm in the mode of passion" "runs out again with Bhakta Leo. They're driving up to Galway for a Hare Krishna festival. Caranaravinda has also gone and come back before making her final exit. Meanwhile, the mail has arrived. Let me look through it while the devotees come and go. (M. just came back for the third time but is gone again.) There's a pack of leaflets from the National Headache Foundation, with information about the remarkable success of Imitrex and Sumatriptan, and about rebound headaches. There are book catalogs, tape catalogues, all of which are now resting in the garbage pail. A few letters. I didn't open them.

The house is finally quiet. What do I want to do? I took an Esgic at noon. I am paying for this ease, so I had better use it well.

* * *

Preaching and Poems #7

Simultaneous Voices of Preachers from Different Traditions and

Our Hare Krishna Man in There

Doing *Pracara-kirtana*

When you preach, a lot goes on. You can't expect everyone to be attentive. There are always distractions. You keep going anyway. Srila Prabhupada experienced this at 26 Second Avenue. If it gets too much, you quit.

* * *

There's also the noise (racket) of the mind. It's not measured in decibels, but you hear it nevertheless. The mind sings in four different voices at once.

One voice is Jewish, one Native American, one African-American, one a tuba "oh, and there's another voice . . .

"As for me," he says, "I have a head too, and in it I have a Protestant and a Catholic and a fellow who says, 'Do away with all this extraneous nonsense.'"

Is it too late to simplify all these layers? Let the cadences of *The Nectar of Devotion* live through all of them.

* * *

Drugs like Imitrex are very good for you, but a guy writes in, "Can I take it in suppository form, because those injections are socially . . . "

Oh, and watch out for rebounds.

And the Lord who comes as Death to finally drown out all those voices.

* * *

The preacher sits back and smiles tolerantly. There's nothing he can do but wait for more favorable symptoms. Even when everyone is quiet, you know they have similar noises within themselves. Say, an ex-Catholic will think Krishna conscious morality is too much like what he's trying so hard to give up "his guilt about his sex desire, or whatever. Fear of material pleasure. Similar issues. People can't hear over that.

* * *

And these are complicated times. They always were, but now we're recognizing it more. Krishna conscious speech can still come through: "Dear Friends, thank you for attending this festival. One thing about Krishna consciousness "please don't think it's an Indian thing. Although Krishna appeared in India, He never says He's teaching Hinduism. He is teaching the science of the soul. We are all souls, so He is talking to each of us. For example, our spiritual master used to say gold is always gold. If a Hindu has gold, it doesn't become Hindu gold." It takes time to approach the point, and some people find that tedious, but you can't usually start with "surrender to Me" because people won't understand.

Not only that, they're mainly standing there with the burning desire not to hear the preacher's message but to get their own message across. So the main thing is to speak *parampara* always, whether people can hear it or not.

Those are the guidelines.

Krishna, Krishna.

Now stand up and sing.

* * *

5:00 p.m.

Developing love for Vasudeva is the point of human life. If you do lots of other things well "you're the best salesman in the world, the most popular psychologist, the greatest experimental poet or musician, the most outspoken commentator "but you don't develop love for Vasudeva, then you'll have to come back for more lives of exciting and miserable activities in this material world. You may say that's all right, but it wouldn't be if you had to take birth in a lower species. Anyway, it's not all right.

Success in reading NOD is to read (aloud is good) with attention, and to feel the worth of it. Warm up to it, warm yourself by it, and come closer. Rupa Gosvami gives evidence from *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and other scriptures, and Srila Prabhupada translates and comments on them. This is the substance. Just stay with these wonderful, authentic verses. Sure, I'm alien to it, an outsider, but let me surrender to Krishna. I have no other obligation. If I make a mistake, the Lord will correct me. I trust Him to protect me.

* * *

Sampler's Poetry Hall #4

Now or never

you'd like to write a Krishna conscious
poem under light in view of the clock
in view of Supersoul in the heart
but there are mixtures.

* * *

Write sideways, scratching alone.

Krishna. I feel reassurance from my
spiritual master. Someone wrote me from
India, Mumbai, and said he was happy

writing a book on falldown and recovery
until someone told him that Srila Prabhupada
said he'd been poisoned, so
he asked me, "Tell me in one word
'yes' or 'no,' was Srila Prabhupada
poisoned?"
I replied "To the best of my
knowledge, Prabhupada was not poisoned."
Can't be ironic or sardonic about that.
I don't believe he was poisoned,
we disciples are not *that* low.

* * *

I didn't poison him. What an
understatement. What a small
virtue. What did you do that was positive?
In the larger sense, did you
poison his movement? Did
you add virulence or sugar?

* * *

These issues mar the attempt, or maybe they are
the attempt. Chant and be with him
and leave rumor mongers and accusations
and even your own shortcomings. Fill up
your hours with refreshed reading
and look for him
in his books.
March 21, 12:08 a.m.

Remember the *lectio* advice to center yourself and make some kind of prayer before
you attempt to read *sastra*. You're going to do something special; you're going to enter
the transcendental realm. You're going to hear from Lord Krishna and His pure devotees.
Although you'll be alert to your own mind and feelings, it would be good to tune in
submissively to what you are hearing. That will improve your own feelings and
thoughts. Act on faith; enhance faith. Please, Lord, let me hear from You.

The first of the sixty-four principles of devotional service is to accept the shelter of a
bona fide spiritual master. I read and think of my spiritual master, who was certainly
bona fide. Yesterday, however, I received a letter by a Godbrother who was bewildered
by the rumor that Srila Prabhupada was poisoned. He said someone played him a tape
where Srila Prabhupada said he thought he had been poisoned.

Tick-tock "what to say? I was reluctant to get out of bed at midnight. Dreaming of
escaping into the precincts of Vrndavana where the worldly punishers could not reach
me. One thing after another, then the topics looped back into chewing the chewed.

Accept the spiritual master as good as God. I think I do. The doubts I have, the faults I
find, seem to be directed at both guru and Krishna "but ultimately, they loop back to

myself. It's a test for me to accept Srila Prabhupada fully. Failure to do so means failure to accept God through His representative. Finding fault with the guru is like finding fault with the Ganges because it's muddy during the rainy season. I think of another reference in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* where one is advised to develop firm friendship with the spiritual master. My old friend and mentor, all these years, who formed and forms my life more than any other person "Prabhupada, the central figure for so many.

Prabhupada "around whom is madness, rivalry, confusion, and sometimes betrayal. Who serves him properly? Who betrayed him? Who is his successor? How to obey him? You could go crazy with the group strife about this one person. But you serve him anyway, in your own way, and honor all those who try to do the same in their own ways.

"He must never be considered on the same level with an ordinary human being. One should never be envious of the spiritual master . . ." (Quoting Lord Krishna to Uddhava, NOD, p. 60)

"One should learn *Srimad-Bhagavatam* seriously and with all respect and veneration for the spiritual master."

* * *

After reading leaflets I received yesterday from the National Headache Foundation, I'm impressed by how allopathic-drug oriented it is. Yet they clearly warn against the rebound effect from taking analgesics daily. The only cure for rebound headaches is to stop taking the pills completely. Then your headaches will go away. I tried that, but you don't simply live happily ever after once you kick the painkillers. Eventually you are supposed to take more appropriate medication. For me, the main correction seems to be not to take anything every day. Three a week seems to be the limit.

But that's hard to face, because I have pain almost every day. Three pills a week means living with pain the rest of the time. I've become quite attached to fulfilling my quotas of reading and writing. I like to be active all day with no time lost. Also, I have a growing aversion to succumbing to the intrusion of pain in my life.

Still, I decided not to take a pill today. Dear quotas, please understand if I don't fulfill you. I was going to say, "Dear readers," but I am already overtaxing the readers, and I doubt they'll mind if I write less.

Another one of the sixty-four items of *bhakti* is "inquiring about devotional service." Questions come up. Nowadays I note them down, but of whom can I inquire? I seem to simply eject them into the ether or onto this page, but some of the questions burn.

Or perhaps they are more shocking admissions than burning questions. For example, where is God? Why doesn't He show Himself? I've been practicing for so long. Why doesn't He give me a break?

Reverting to emotional and doubtful inquiries "the same I made thirty years ago. How could Prabhupada expect me to believe that Krishna could marry 16,108 wives? But he did convince me.

I suppose that happens, though, that emotional cry for Krishna's mercy. Some senior devotees say they never indulge in such things. They make it sound like smoking cigarettes. Am I smoking? I don't think so. I am purging, crying, and wishing I were more earnest.

* * *

3:45 a.m., *Japa*

Words can't describe, and the mind can't access what benefit we derive from faith. I know I don't *feel* focused love for the Supreme Person. rather, I *feel* myself counting individual beads, I *seethe* the clock, I *move* the counter beads. Hearing? Literally? I don't do much of that. Occasionally I remember I'm supposed to, so I do it for a moment. Aside from hearing the mantras, I am aware of one thing or another "memories, plans, etc. And duty, yes. Dedication, yes. Sense of righteous activity yes. Gratitude, yes "attached to my beloved practice.

* * *

4:35 a.m.

Feeling good that I did my *puja* of Radha-Govinda and Srila Prabhupada, ending with prayers to Lord Nrsimhadeva. Deity worship is sublime, and it can alter your consciousness.

Alone in the house overnight. Did you sleep? Of course. Krishna protected me "Lord Krishna, the Lord of everyone. He appears in His original form as a cowherd boy and sports with the *gopas* and *gopis*. Who can understand it? There is no inkling of it in the teachings of Christ, Mohammed, or Buddha. They don't reveal anything. But the Vedic sages are generous, so just open your beak, little bird, and receive it.

Come on, now, tell us what Krishna says. I couldn't understand what happened when Kamsa kidnapped the *gopis* and Purnamasi saved them. It had something to do with Putana capturing Radha, and something about Narada. I didn't get it. Anyway, let me simply worship Radha and Krishna. Getting the details won't make me a better devotee. I simply have to worship whatever They do.

I can't find my rubber bands. Someone asked whether I was doing *nirjana-bhajana*, and I said I didn't like to think about it like that. Srila Prabhupada wrote in at least two different *Bhagavatam* purports that he wanted to be alone to complete the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. He said his disciples should preach around the world on his behalf. Let him sit and write. But we couldn't manage without him, so he never stopped traveling and preaching and managing his movement. I'm not Srila Prabhupada, so although I stay in one place to write, the results are my offering to Srila Prabhupada's preaching movement. Even though I don't move around physically, it doesn't mean I'm avoiding the charge he gave each of his disciples to take Krishna's message around the world. My physical presence is not in demand (as his was), and I can go many more places in a book than I can in this ill body.

* * *

He will reproach "that man in the Nantucket sweatshirt. The devotees were up until 1 a.m. talking with guests in Galway. They'll be back today, and I'll ask how it went, what they did, who they met. If they ask how I was, I'll tell them I was fine. I didn't eat too much.

I've been reading how certain foods cause migraines. Bananas, raisins, figs "hey, wait a second, I like all those. Cigarettes too, but that's not a problem, and alcohol. They say

if you must drink, make sure it's Seagrams. Cheese is no good, or lima beans, or sourdough bread. What about Irish soda bread and chocolate and apple pudding tarts and mundane sounds made with or without tuning forks? What about bouzouki *bhajan*s? Anything, it seems, can lead toward a headache.

* * *

Dancing Hari
& Nice time for all including
those who went to Mass and ate hot cross buns
because isn't it Lent?
The Passion of Christ "outside our scope.
We dance with Krishna, not even with Durga or
any devil or Kali-yuga puppet. We simply dance
kirtana.

* * *

Some of us have secret indulgences though
and some practice
even in private
the nine principles of devotion
and in public
dance to book their exit
from rigid religious upbringings and
to learn how to make
decisions for oneself. We're gonna all be
all right, Albright. We have all
we need.

* * *

Hail Mary, Ligouri, Black Madonna
Hail Mary, full of grace, every creature's
soul "save the flowers to offer to God
and give up renunciation and possession "
both kinds of *lobha* "
and take the lift to *bhakti*
swift.

* * *

Some want to know why
bad things happen to good people.
I can explain if you give me two minutes.
And I can recommend chanting God's name "
any bona fide name of God "
then I can run the government
write a poem

cook
Refrain from sex
and beg money even while I read
Sastra.

* * *

Why not hire me for your
next bar mitzvah "
seriously? If it's a success
we'll celebrate. "

* * *

In a dream I was watching Charlie Mingus rehearse his band, but it wasn't really Charlie Mingus, it was an actor imitating him. Later during the gig at a club, a fight broke out and the audience ran away. I too escaped. I was running and running, and suddenly found myself on the outskirts of Vrndavana. Someone directed me to the ISKCON temple. I was glad to be there.

* * *

9:20 a.m.

The things you should do and the things you should not do to advance in devotional service. What about feel your headache pain? When a headache comes, should you see it as favorable or unfavorable for your development of *bhakti*?

That depends on your actual attitude, but no matter what your attitude is, you have no control over the pain. You could say, "On the strength of my personal vow and willpower, I will observe *nirjala* every EkadaSi," but somehow or other the ability to do it is given or taken away by Krishna. Therefore, one thing having chronic pain has taught me is that it is best not to boast of our various achievements. They're not really ours, but given by mercy.

NOD states that you shouldn't associate with nondevotees. Neither should you increase the number of disciples you take simply to gather flattery and praise. Don't act in a way that obliges you to your disciples. Don't be enthusiastic to read books that don't lead you toward spiritual aspiration and advancement. All these guidelines. A spiritual master shouldn't be overly concerned with constructing costly temples. "rather, his first and foremost activity should be to preach." (NOD, p. 66)

I may read one of these items and feel complacent, "Ah yes, I'm doing this, I'm following that." Then the next item unseats me.

Don't lament over material loss, but always think of Krishna within yourself.

"A Vaisnava can never support animal slaughter or even give pain to any living entity." (NOD, p. 67)

Even the items I like spontaneously I'm not able to perfectly follow. But I like the image these items present of a saintly person.

* * *

10:55 p.m.

Fifty minutes ago I took an Esgic, my third this week. That's it, my quota has been exhausted.

A friend praised me for how I conduct myself through a life of chronic pain. He heard me say some months ago that I remain active when pain-free, and when pain comes, I lie down and think of Krishna. When the pain is gone, I return to work.

I have to admit I'm not really on that level all the time. Over the past few months, I have become even more attached to getting something down on paper "doing my work" and I don't like to be sidelined by pain. Only after I have exhausted my quota of pills do I agree to lie down. Am I sure I think of Krishna through that?

* * *

11:30 a.m.

A possible definition of outer and inner in devotional service:

Outer is important. It means doing things with the body as well as the mind. For example, every day I go through a ritual of massaging, bathing, and dressing Srila Prabhupada. Surely this physical offering builds over months and years and becomes part of my life as his servant.

I might have to perform an inner form of this *puja* on days when I have headache pain. Ideally, then, I would lie in bed and meditate on doing the service.

Srila Prabhupada refers to the "cultivation of activities in Krishna consciousness" in *The Nectar of Devotion*. There he speaks about both "bodily" service and "mental" employment. Often we find the outer form of our service tends to become mechanical over time; the mind wanders and the body feels tired. Still, there is benefit in making a sacrifice of time and physical energy.

But why not take advantage of the accumulated strength gathered from outer activities to meditate more as a servant within? The constant endeavor to perform Krishna conscious activities, even mechanically, is a kind of earnestness, and it can give one the strength to pray. That we can draw inner strength from our outward activities proves that Krishna is accepting our attempt to serve Him despite our faults.

* * *

11:58 a.m.

O Bill, the morning's almost over. I just heard the noon whistle. I'm still feeling fragile, and I have indigestion. It was the carob cake that did me in. They left a whole cake in the kitchen. I was alone in the house and had planned to eat only fruit and yogurt for breakfast. But I couldn't resist the cake. I only took one piece for myself, but I also ended up eating the pieces from the Deity plates. Now I turn to Tums.

Stomach, head, liniments, ligaments. Does the soul have parts? They print tons of books on New Age spirituality and neo-Buddhism. Buddhists and neo-Buddhists are not pure devotees because they deny the Vedic scriptures and the Personality of Godhead. Christians could be considered *bhaktas*, if they worship with devotion. ISKCONites are generally accepted as *bhaktas* because they say "Krishna" and "Hare Krishna."

M. said the festival went well last night. He sang well, and the audience liked it. I didn't ask him for the details because when he returned, I was lying on my back. Now

Radha-Govinda and Srila Prabhupada are awaiting their lunch. I have already placed paper towels before them where their plates will be set.

After lunch, M. will spend the rest of the day at the house. He has a separate shed a few feet from the main building. That's where he will live, and he will be laying the tiles on the floor today.

I'll be here, hoping to tune in to *The Nectar of Devotion*. I'm up to the section about the items of worship. Srila Prabhupada writes that Lord Krishna kindly arranges for a *jiva* to enjoy material facility as he likes, but in the end, everything is destroyed. The Lord wants to bring the *jivas* back to the spiritual world when they have finished playing with their material toys. I've still got toys, illusions, dreams, and how long they live on.

* * *

Mini read-and-write session before lunch:

Don't tolerate blasphemy of the Lord or His devotee, but tolerate insults toward yourself. Argue against the blasphemer, but if you can't defeat him, don't "just stand there meekly." You should give up your life (NOD, p. 73).

Ha, who's going to do that? He's not seriously recommending suicide, is he? *Is he?*

That's it, can't do more. My head won't allow. It's crazy to keep working when pain persists. Cool down.

* * *

Preaching and Poems #8

Yearnings and Preaching

1

This is symphony hour "time to discuss preaching and poetry. The children who live here have returned to the house. The family had been away at a festival up north. They did extensive advertising, then when the people began to arrive, they sang *bhajan*s, perhaps employed a Bharata-natyam dancer, then gave a little lecture with time for questions and answers. After that would have come a drama, then Madhu's music, then a feast. Later, people could sit around and talk informally with the devotees. If enough people become interested, the *nama-hatta* crew can follow up with more meetings in that town.

So, what is preaching?

You see, there are lots of varieties. They're all preaching as long as in the end, Krishna is proclaimed.

Imagine the great preaching done by Srila Rupa Gosvami through his *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*. Just imagine Srila Prabhupada's contribution. Their efforts are tremendous and timeless "they can help generations of people and bring them to Krishna consciousness.

* * *

The sweet by and by.

Uh, I'm feeling clearer now, because I took a pill or else the pain decided to leave this old body alone.

It's good to feel rushes of emotion in Krishna consciousness, but true spiritual emotion has to be earned usually, unless the Lord Himself decides to send some out of His causeless mercy.

* * *

Hare Krishna. This afternoon feels like the Lord's offer to give me a chance to do service. I think of exchanges among devotees and my own attempt to build a fire on the plain of this cold desert. Something like that. All these centuries, Krishna consciousness was kept in India. Then suddenly it burst out, on fire. It's incredible to think how it never left India until this one person, our Srila Prabhupada, carried it. How special he is among the *acaryas*, not merely because he was a first pioneer, but because he actually did so much. We have fallen on our faces in so many ways since his disappearance, but we must continue to preach. It is the only way we have to uphold our honor as disciples.

* * *

Got a poem or something?

* * *

2

No. I have pens in box and my *Nectar of Devotion* stacked on top of my *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*. When I opened the box of crayons, the crayons tumbled everywhere.

Push over the edge, you tight, rigid man trying to get your work done. Tight because you have measured your limited, daily energies. Where is the scope for cathartic outpourings and worship with tears?

* * *

Calm down and be patient over this mile, then read your own piece. Leave behind the twentieth-century karma, at least most of it. See yourself as a "devotee," and inside that as spirit soul, eternal servant. Just reach out your hand and sing a song of six pence.

Grand feelings, comrade. They drove in the early morning the several hours from the festival site, and although he intended to chant his rounds, they had a good talk instead.

* * *

Preach from your convictions. Gather it in and then take to platforms, venues, and join forces with Prabhus who have market savvy. Let them place you on a stage for a ten-minute slot. Better yet, let them give you a writing assignment. Play a traditional role "*Srimad-Bhagavatam* class giver, etc. But always find your way through.

The grand emotions of speaking for a whole country, whole religious movement, universe "whew, that's asking a lot "how to rise to the occasion and shrink down again afterwards to the regular, daily persona. And why get so big in the first place?

Answer: Because the greater-than-you passes through you when you:

quote the great *acaryas*

give their evidence "

what Srila Rupa Gosvami quoted from

Srimad-Bhagavatam "

and pluck the strings of the same

instrument they played in the days of old . . .

* * *

Finale: In the sweet by and by, we shall meet on that beautiful shore, on the morning of comfort and rest. Our dearest friend Krishna will embrace His long-lost servant. That's the sweet by and by, the beautiful shore is the Yamuna, and particles of sweet-flavored water will be carried in the air to cool the lotus-eyed Krishna.

* * *

O Krishna, lover of my soul
bring me to Your chest
out of the tempest raging modes.
Please bring me close.
I'll be fearless in the storm
if You grant me fearlessness.
But receive my soul at last
and let that give relief to others
as Your healing stream of love
suffuses all with purity and
strength.

* * *

We made a mess, but we wanted only to bring Your beauty to one and all in Your eternal home or whatever You wanted us to do.

* * *

Finally I hope by every step we'll get nearer. Let the *kirtana* seduce us, let the incense and flowers on the altar overwhelm us, the beauty of the *murtis* "Krishna and Radha, my simple prayer.

Bring us to You
our song shall bring us to Thee
sweet Lord cut through all
crippling majesty
and all sin gone
arm and arm with Your eternal
playmates, far away from crocodile
of doubt,
Lord make me.

* * *

4:10 p.m.

The short description of each of the sixty-four items of devotional service seems straightforward enough. It is a mine of valuable and practical instructions (some of which we can't follow under our present circumstances). I read them in a matter-of-fact way, without emotion. This is a law book, and I am reading it as such. Alas.

Here are a few: wear *tilaka* on your body, wear garlands worn by the Deity "these practices make a serious impression on the heart of an aspiring devotee. They're not just ISKCON social customs or sentimental habits. But we have to *feel* them, be aware of what they offer, and have faith that this garland that was worn by Krishna is made of pure mercy. We can't fake faith or realization, but *vaidhi-bhakti* means to do it anyway. Bhaktivinoda Thakura states that *vaidhi-bhakti* means going through the motions of love. Still, if we learn the moves of the dance, we might eventually learn the emotions that fuel it. It's a fact, we *are* wearing Krishna's garland, whether we feel it or not.

Srila Prabhupada will mention later that different attitudes are rewarded with different degrees of benefit. The great benediction promised "if you wear Krishna's garland, you'll be relieved of all reaction to sin "may be true for some, but not for all. There's great benefit in dancing for the Deity, but if you're not actually dancing for the Deity, you may not achieve ecstasy. Still, bow down before the Deity, you fool. realize it or not, but place your head on the floor and it may be the best thing you have ever done for yourself: ". . . the person who has once offered respects, bowing down before the Deity, will not come back to this world, because he will go directly to the abode of Krishna." (NOD, p. 75)

* * *

Sampler's Poetry Hall #5

1

Oh, I'm tired, but we ought to go to the poetry hall. Know any pretty girls there? (Someone once called Tagore a poet in front of Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada replied, "Poet means young girls.") No, we're not really looking for pretty girls or pretty boys. We simply want to write in all seriousness on our plank seat, full of our own airy presence.

You mean, not grounded?

Grounded. Did you know that a shmoo is an imaginary creature? I saw it first in "Al Capp," or was it "Li'l Abner"?

Who cares. Bring on the Krishna consciousness "only that which has been offered to Krishna and then accepted as His remnants. Can you write a poem in *that* vein, as rupa Gosvami did, only a modern-day version?

Doesn't seem so. Whenever *I* write, out comes something sprinkled with vinegar. Is it an ISKCON trip-up? I'm not always sure.

* * *

2

Whew "you expect me to step *into* that?"

A motorcyclist passes

hunched forward

colorful embroidery decorating the back of his jacket.

During the war, they wore jackets with maps of Guam

or the Guadal Canal, Imo Jima or
the name of their infantry division.
I was startled to see them
at an airport
while I wore a frock and
flat-bed trucks rolled by. I thought it
would be someone coming to
interrupt me, and this is usually
such a quiet road too.

* * *

Foxgloves not out yet. First gorse has
appeared. No dandelions. Gray and
gradually lighter when I leave the house
at 6 a.m. and enter pine lanes.
I won't go there tomorrow but will stay
in this garret room.

* * *

#3

Hare Krishna road show. Does that bore you
stiff? I plow through *sastra* gradually and
toast all the world's
acaryas, then fall asleep on a mattress
on the floor "collapsed, too weary,
but knowing I will surface
like a small whale
with a dream that must
be recorded.

March 22, 12:05 a.m.

I may say I don't feel this or that as I read *The Nectar of Devotion*, but it's a central activity in Krishna consciousness to read and chant. Without these activities, I would be nowhere specific. Therefore, I am grateful for whatever I can accept and give.

Now, read any one of the listed items of *bhakti* and see whether we are practicing it. If not, why not? If we can't practice a particular item exactly as it is stated in *The Nectar of Devotion*, can we at least practice it in essence? For example, devotees visit a temple each morning: "Persons who are impelled by pure devotional service in Krishna consciousness and who therefore go to see the Deities of Visnu in the temple will surely get relief from entering again into the prison house of a mother's womb." (NOD, p. 76)

I don't visit a temple every day, but I do visit my altar. That's just as good if I do it impelled by pure devotional service. The quality or attitude with which we perform the sixty-four items is important, although we will benefit in any case.

How much benefit are we receiving? How to increase it? How to purify our motives? We forget the terrible pain of being born in a mother's womb. "In order to make an

escape from this material condition, one is advised to visit a temple of Visnu with devotional consciousness." This is very important, and with this item I feel I have a toehold.

* * *

The construction on the house here is going slowly; there's still so much to do. It's right that we moved here so that Madhu could work on it every day, but I'll still have to be patient. I may have to stay here at Daruka's longer than expected. It's not inconvenient, at least not for me.

I find myself pushing to reach my quotas in writing and reading. Rodin's motto, "*Toujours travail*" seems to apply. Maybe it's too much for me with my physical condition. I get frustrated when headaches come. I can't take it easy and relax at that time because I want to work. And I want to work because it's how I make effort in Krishna consciousness. The first symptom of *bhava*, "Don't waste time," drives me. However, you may have to learn more about quality and not be stuck on quantity.

Item: Circumambulating the temple of Visnu. How can I physically do this? I can't walk around the house. Or I could, but I'd feel silly. Maybe we don't have to do all sixty-four items. What did Srila Prabhupada demonstrate? We will read that there are five items that are most important. When we study those, let it impress us that even if we can do nothing else, we should do those five.

As I read, I am thinking of Bhagavata Purana dassankirtana with the twenty-four-hour group. Now he is deep into that *bhava*. For devotees who live in Vrndavana, it's like they have left the material world. They have a service that keeps them in Vrndavana, or they just stick to the dust of Vrndavana. We try to do the same from outside Vrndavana, whether in a temple or at home, but it can only be done if we make our hearts into a temple.

Many of the statements in *The Nectar of Devotion* speak of leaving this material world and going back to Godhead. We are warned not to become salvationists whose main motive is to save ourselves. That would be selfish and not in line with the devotional mood. But we're also urged to get out of the cycle of birth and death. Do I read this with any awareness that I must go from here to there? I mainly cope with each day. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil therein." But keep your eye on the spiritual goal, despite your small capacity to lift yourself up to achieve it.

sankirtana: "A *brahmana* who is constantly engaged in singing the glories of the Lord is surely elevated to the same planet as the Supreme Personality of Godhead." (NOD, p. 79) Chanting the holy names rids you of sin. Hear the Lord's pastimes: "It is indicated here that chanting about and glorifying the Lord is the ultimate activity of the living entity." (NOD, p. 80)

Submission: I submit; please accept me. The devotee prays to be spontaneously attracted. He wants to be re-instated in his original position. That's a lot to ask when we don't even know our *rasa* and can barely realize that we are not this body. Therefore, pray with submission, prepared to confess your spiritual poverty. Tell Krishna how low you are, how sinful, how in need of His mercy. He is Patita-pavana.

Well, those words were easy to say. Here they are again: ask, entreat.

But what is the price we must pay to actually mean those words? What use is eloquence if we are not prepared to do the work to achieve our goal?

While we look for that meaning in our hearts, let us use the body as our battlefield to develop our Krishna consciousness. In my case, I desire to be free of headache pain, yet I am not. In the meantime, I need to learn how to use the downtime to do inner work. This is my daily test: to remain in higher consciousness even when the body cannot be active.

* * *

4:39 a.m.

My beautiful Radha-Govinda deserve to have Their photo taken, but there's no one to do it. Although I want to share Their beauty, I will have celebrate it alone. It's not a beauty that can be captured and preserved anyway; no photo could do Them justice.

While dressing Them, I was fortunate to be hearing a stream of Rupa Gosvami's playful Vraja poetry. Now I have nothing left to say. I can't describe the Lord's pastimes as Rupa Gosvami does. But still, I wanted to register that I was glad to be part of the *puja*.

Padma plays a flute; another *gopi* plays the *vina*. I can't keep these pastimes exclusively in my head, but while they pass through . . . I don't say anything new.

Nor do I have the passion to seek something new.

It's good when I hear something Krishna conscious that I have heard before, but to find one's deepest level of appreciation "to see new facets in what we are hearing "that's what I want to do. We don't have to make the effort to always hear something entirely new. The craving for novelty is sense gratification. rather, let us rest in the grove of *kadamba* trees with Radha and Krishna meeting for the first time. Jatila suddenly enters and speaks some horrible things about Krishna "that she doesn't even want to utter His name and that He is spoiling all the girls (except Radha). She takes Radha away.

In the bathroom this morning, I heard Srila Prabhupada say that Krishna bowed down to Yudhisthira Maharaja and to Queen Kunti. He played the role of a human being, but He is the source of the *purusa-avatars* and is Himself the Supreme *purusa*. Ordinary mortals try to play that they are *purusas*, but that's ludicrous.

Krishna, Krishna, please save us. The *timingila* fish is chasing us. We are tiny and cannot resist death. Therefore, we depend upon You.

Then we wonder, "If I am not saying those words out of pressing necessity "if I don't really feel the pressure of the *timingila* fish chasing me "then what's the use of uttering them?" We all want to be good devotees, but why are we so empty?

Oh, what does it matter. We simply continue.

I'm currently reading the account of last December's travels to the Caribbean, now edited into a book. I am ashamed because my thoughts seem so petty and repetitious. Or because I say I want something that I don't really try for, or I assert something I can't carry through.

Read to Madhu from the National Headache Foundation newsletter how sufferers try to use a drug like Sumatriptin, although they have been warned about the rebound effect.

I wanted him to see how complicated and delicate this issue is. I don't want him to pontificate or to express extreme, anti-allopathic views. Most headache sufferers turn toward medicine because it may help them remain active in the world. More shame: I am reduced by pain. Then feeling better: I can at least read *The Nectar of Devotion* and comprehend a little of it.

* * *

To Hold Their Attention

1

& Mr. Smith, I'm awake at the top of
this shoe-store ladder looking for size 8
Hush Puppies in alligator gray.
Should I be ashamed? O Krishna, You allow me
to improve under any circumstance
and I am grateful.

* * *

I climbed that ladder as if I were
John Climacus
ascending steps toward God,
came down like Charlie Chaplin
the ladder falling
after me.

Ladder
latter
former
farmer
of cows we
won't sell him silage because
we don't patronize slaughter
don't even want to hurt *any* living being.

* * *

Then those Krishna conscious persons
who didn't want to sell their silage
put on hats and marched around town.

In the hall, the lecturer tried to hold the audience's attention, but it was hard with just one soloist, and he had a British accent with which he proceeded from one analogy to another on the transcendental science. The audience wanted more variety.

* * *

But this was low budget and could only end
in chanting together,
all science aside.

"I wouldn't want to lecture," said M., who sings,

and the lecturer didn't sing.
I, for example, am best at writing.

* * *

#2

When I die I'll be likely
to *some* kind of Krishna conscious
thought. Then can I go to Him I
don't insist it has to be back in
Goloka right away because
I don't have that kind of *laulyam*
but with Him in a next life where I can
continue to yearn intimately.

* * *

One twilight/ one
morning
a solo "O people
chant Hare Krishna with me.
That's all. Then go home
singing and barefoot
covered in the dust
Raised by the cows. "

* * *

Link
& Fast movers know I'd
like to go with them and inject Krishna
consciousness in
whatever we do
but in dreams
they know
I live in the Navy.
Please forgive me.

* * *

Now I'm awake and riding while
Krishna dances by moonlight
until dawn with
doe-eyed *gopis*
and real does and
bucks, trees reflecting
in the Yamuna's water.
Is that all right?
One heard the flute

the flute/ the
flute
the fruit
of ascetic
wrangling men
striving to get
free. "

* * *

8:36 a.m.

"One should feelingly pray and become eager to render his particular type of service to the Lord." (NOD, p. 83) Tears can be an expression of our perfection. We pray, asking the Lord to be engaged in a particular service in our eternal *rasa*. Please let me serve You in that way.

My head goes down, the wilted neck-stem.

If we hear about Krishna, we'll be free of sin and go back to Godhead. "A devotee should not expect immediate relief from the reactions to his past misdeeds." (NOD, p. 91) Continue to work seriously despite impediments. "When such impediments arise he should simply think of Krishna and expect His mercy."

We are not really serving Krishna in pure devotional service if we are giving Him the results of our activities or chanting and hearing in a mechanical way. Only when we are consciously trying to serve Him are we serving Him in pure devotion.

Once again, when we analyze ourselves, we are left outside the magic ring. We may think, "Then what's the use? If they're going to define me as a materialistic outsider . . . I'm not perfect, I'm not even a devotee . . ." Srila Prabhupada used to encourage us, "Don't be disappointed." Sometimes he even said we were some kind of "beginner" pure devotees. At least we thought that's what he was saying.

And what am I saying? Why don't I fully accept that my service offering is tainted by the material modes? Is it that I want to be respected beyond my actual attainment?

* * *

12:03 p.m.

Head shaved. I'm used to shaving my head every two weeks and always wearing a saffron *dhoti*. To me, it's normal; it's how I show that I'm really conservative. This dress and shaved head will always set me apart from nondevotees. Even those who are favorable to Krishna consciousness see it and think of me as "religious." To me, I am everyday.

Moving toward lunch. Studying the contour of the Wicklow hills with my eyes. Are they actually mountains? Apparently, no one lives on them.

So that's life up to the minute "ocean, desert, scrub, and brush.

* * *

12:30 noon

Lunch late because he has to bring it from another house. I drew a cover for today's EJW "Wicklow mountains as brown humps, added green pastures, blue for sky, roads like a map, a big black bird in foreground larger than the hill or van. Van Gogh didn't know perspective, then learned it. I'm avoiding his too-sad letters.

* * *

2:48 p.m.

Surrendering oneself completely to the Lord: I read it and think I still don't know what it means to me or how to go about it. I can't do something heroic or even too austere. Does that make me less than fully surrendered? What does surrender actually mean? Undoubtedly Krishna will demand more of me: "Surrender, you rascal!" Maybe an astrologer could even see it coming: Krishna will force you to surrender in the next two years, starting five months from now. At first you'll think it a painful reverse, but gradually you'll accept it and surrender voluntarily. For now I read the selected verses where devotees assert, "I surrender unto You." Srila Prabhupada admits. ". . . it is very rare to see surrender which is mixed with sincere ecstatic devotion. One must give himself completely to the will of the Lord." (NOD, p. 98) I think of St. Francis of Assisi.

And give Krishna your favorite things. Act in the world for Him. Consider yourself His servant.

More aspects of transcendental service: read revealed scriptures. Krishna becomes pleased with the keeper and reader of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and other Vaisnava literature. *Bhagavatam* readers lose their taste for mundane writing. Become dear to Krishna.

* * *

Preaching and Poems #9

On a Sunday Afternoon

It could be that when you grow "too" old, you lose the fire to preach. But great *gosvamis* don't feel that way. Maybe they can't get around as well, but they preach effectively. The word goes out.

Teresa preached, but sometimes a humble person isn't aware how widely they are influencing.

Very interesting. Got anything else to say?

Sad cat, sad

child,

a Japanese rock garden's timelessness. A certain . . . mood "wood on the desk.

When he wrote an odd story.

Also, "preaching" doesn't mean doing it negatively, when you push too hard and people resist.

Did Anne Frank preach in her diary? Some people make such strong testimonies just by telling us who they are "determined, kind, eloquent, influential.

* * *

On a Sunday afternoon they preach in ISKCON temples. Usually the favorite part is the feast "it draws the crowd. And who was *your* favorite preacher today? Oh, it was the *halava*, for sure. It was excellent *halava*, with whipped cream.

Who was another good preacher? The hallway. The lady smiling there. The garden was nice in the small temple backyard. The temple aromas.

What about the lecture?

Well, I couldn't understand it. Something about surrender and karma. The speaker kept saying, "Uh, um . . ." and it distracted me, reminded me of someone I don't like.

* * *

Oh, preach to me. Please come and tell me about Krishna
but in a *soft* way.

I need to hear philosophy
from a friend.

And don't cheat in the name of preaching. Don't go and preach to women and seduce them.

* * *

Tent campaign, radio show, weekly TV spot "some devotees in Guyana preach independently of ISKCON, and that upsets the ISKCON devotees because they feel those others are preaching too harshly, smashing Christians and Hindus alike, misrepresenting ISKCON's interests. "Well, *someone* has to smash them! Look what Prabhupada did!"

Yes, look what
Prabhupada
did.

So, preachers disagree. Each one does what he thinks best. "Each one goes forward," Srila Prabhupada wrote about the spiritual sons of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati. Prabhupada began ISKCON; the others did other things.

And me? Why aren't I out preaching this fine Sunday evening?

I am. This is it.

This? Where's the codpiece, the Vedic reference, the raised and fervent voice? Geez, where's the whompers? Are you actually trying to convert souls?

Krishna says preachers are dearmost. Don't dismiss my little effort to approach Him in my own preaching way.

* * *

4:37 p.m.

You can order a T-shirt from the National Headache Foundation; it shows a face with crack of pain in middle of the forehead, a down-turned mouth, and superimposed over the face are bars (vise pain). They say by wearing the T-shirt (they also have a banner), you can educate others. They also have an art contest. Send in your illustration of a headache and win a Cherokee jeep. Well, I doubt I'll do any of that. Still, I'm sitting

through the last part of this afternoon not quite in the grips of intense pain, but not quite whole either.

How good it was in Trinidad when I would type a page, then return an hour and a half later to type another. Words seemed so real at that time, and I liked to look at them later. The climate was hot, too, and I got along all right performing as a visiting *sannyasi* who was really a lone spirit.

Today I'm cruising quietly underwater so as not to disturb any pain. Silence pounds in my temples. Can't pick up NOD for another session right now. It wouldn't work. I couldn't give it the attention it deserves.

All right, you have already reached your quota anyway. You can't go back, not to Jordan or Judea. You belong to the Vedic culture and especially to Krishna. It's the Christian holy week coming, but I don't belong there. Srila Prabhupada proved that. "Or why would these Americans take to it? They are not fools; they are educated young men and women." He didn't bribe us. We honestly wanted to give him our life; to give our lives for Krishna. We thought we would live happily ever after, and we will soon enough.

* * *

Sampler's Poetry Hall #6

Holy night I

hold back. There may be a message
for me in the hall
which could make me
forget I have a headache.

* * *

But probably not, or
the air is all I'll get.
Lie down and nurse that pain
my blood singing soft in my ears.

* * *

Did you ever think of why you
get these headaches and what
their secondary benefit might be?
People want to know about that.

* * *

I roll toward the wall, say Hare
Krishna, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu
think of Vrndavana at Karttika and
how I would like to go there one day
again. But perhaps I'll wait
until it's time to go to heaven until
I have the *adhikari*.

Master, master, this day is gliding toward dusk
and how glad I am to have been left alone
to feel this pain under my comforter.
The present is never quite
what I think it will be
so I close my eyes and expect to
wake in two hours
suddenly
semi-conscious
alert. A noise can waken me
then I can fall back asleep
only to waken again.
No, the present
is never quite
what I think it will be.
Life is always hard
and Krishna is always kind.
March 23, 12:06 a.m.

"But even higher than the worship of the Lord is the worship of the Lord's devotees." (NOD, p. 102) But who? Our Godbrothers? We hear a voice of warning: Be careful. Sometimes Godbrothers have misrepresented Srila Prabhupada, not just in ISKCON but in history. Should we then only serve great devotees such as Srila Prabhupada, rupa Gosvami, and Narada Muni? No, that doesn't sound right: "I'll serve great devotees, not little ones." We also serve disciples by training them. This *Nectar of Devotion* section seems to be describing recognized devotees who bear the outer symbols of Vaisnavas. But there is more. We cannot approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead directly: ". . . the first duty is to accept a devotee as spiritual master and then to render service unto him."

Srila Prabhupada preaches to us at each stage of *The Nectar of Devotion*. There's nothing wrong with that. He emphasizes what he wants of us according to time, place, and person. At the same time, he is faithful to *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*. Dhanurdhara Swami's book assures us of this while simultaneously providing information about exactly what Rupa Gosvami and his references indicate at each point. Now we can see where Srila Prabhupada expanded on a point for his own purposes.

We could even say, in some cases, that Srila Prabhupada occasionally used one of Rupa Gosvami's verses to springboard into a meditation or to preach on a point he wished to convey to his readers. That shouldn't puzzle us. For example, why does Srila Prabhupada explain that devotees are not interested in *mukti* under a heading like "Serving the Deity with Great Devotion"? But *The Nectar of Devotion* is a summary study, and Srila Prabhupada wrote it through his own meditation and emphasis, and to give us the opportunity to understand the highest Krishna consciousness despite our disqualification. The more important consideration is not the comparison of Sanskrit texts between Rupa Gosvami's work and Srila Prabhupada's, but our receptivity to our spiritual master's preaching emphasis. This principle is also mentioned in connection

with the *Bhagavatam*. The *Bhagavatam* is the ripened fruit of the *Vedas*, "And as ripened fruit becomes more relishable when first touched by the beak of a parrot, or *Suka*, *Srimad-Bhagavatam* has become more relishable by being delivered through the transcendental mouth of Sukadeva Gosvami."

I hope my handling of *The Nectar of Devotion* does not bruise the fruit. I'm no Sukadeva, rupa Gosvami, or Srila Prabhupada, but I too am trying to serve. Anyway, Srila Prabhupada already made the fruit available to each one of us. It is up to each of us to help ourselves to what he has given and to show our personal appreciation.

* * *

Next, Srila Rupa Gosvami discusses the five most potent forms of devotional service. He also warns us not to go and see Govinda on the banks of KeSi-ghata if we do not wish to become captivated by the Lord's beautiful form. "The actual import of the verse is that one must see the form of Govinda if one at all wants to forget the nonsense of material friendship, love and society."

I hope this happens with me. If we are so pleased to see Krishna, we will not want to see anything else in this world. Similarly, if we are pleased to hear *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, we will lose our attraction for mundane reading and ways to waste our limited energies. To find that taste, we must spend our days worshiping Radha-Govinda, reading Srila Prabhupada's books, and sharing what we have read with others. We must renounce other interests, even if they are spiritual but don't focus on pure devotional service to Krishna.

The same emphasis is given to chanting the holy name; the holy name cuts away other attachments and interests. To experience that cutting, we must chant. Our time and capacity are limited, so it is important to use them properly if we wish to develop actual devotion in this lifetime.

* * *

3:47 a.m.

Japa "it's like warming yourself before a fire on a chilly day. What goes on underneath, I can't say. I can't understand the extent my *aparadhas*, my distance from *Suddha-nama*, but I know Krishna is pleased and am therefore blessed by *whatever* effort I make to chant with attention.

Aristasura, Aris . . . I cannot even speak straight 'cuz I'm used to speaking so fast. A seven-minute round isn't that fast, but it's faster than regular speech, and I don't have to stop to think about what to say next "the mantras roll right out. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare. I can't keep track of everything, O Hare Krishna, a prostitute was saved, so why not me? She chanted with Haridasa Thakura and I chant with Srila Prabhupada. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare. Wristwatch, counter beads, big red *japa* beads, and my madly wandering, indulgent mind.

* * *

4:38 a.m.

How sweetly Srila Prabhupada is smiling. Is he pleased that I have performed the worship of Radha-Govinda? I, his disciple, have done this service on his behalf, bathing the limbs of the Divine Couple and dressing Them in magenta and white. I'm no expert, but still, by Their own mercy, They look very nice. Yes, that is Their reciprocation. While I did the worship, I listened to Rupa Gosvami's *Lalita-madhava*, how Krishna disguised Himself as a *brahmana* and performed the worship of the sun-god for radha right in Jatila's presence. I also heard of Sankhacuda's entrance and his intention to kidnap Srimati Radharani. Krishna will kill him, don't worry. These sweet *rasika* words were conferred upon me this morning.

My body was engaged in dressing Radha-Govinda, my ear in hearing the nectar of *Lalita-madhava*, and I felt the seed of affection warming my heart. Now on to my writing. I cannot say what this life is all about. Each moment passes, indicating that life in Krishna consciousness is wonderful. Please spend your time practicing the five most potent forms of *bhakti*.

The pile of yesterday's clothes on the floor, ready to be washed. The house is quiet, although Madhu is up. O Lord of the energy, O energy. It's as if at any moment I will have to declare my bankruptcy in words.

Then Hare Krishna. O Krishna, I don't know what else to say. There is no lecture, no meeting, no obligation. I merely have to live with myself and the nectar flowing from *sastra*.

Two vases of daffodils on the altar. There's a bright yellow one, then two white ones. The yellow one is bold enough to tower over Radha and Govinda. It's as if They are celebrating the arrival of spring.

O soul, don't look at Radha-Govinda, and don't worship Their *murtis* or you will lose out on material enjoyment. Don't be so foolish as to stay indoors and read *The Nectar of Devotion* or you will miss out on *jnani* sports. You'll be too absorbed in Krishna and His flute and miss everything else. Do you think that is right?

* * *

Practicing Alone

1

& Do you remember when you used to
be able to dance? I remember I couldn't
dance with girls, so afraid of stepping on
their feet
but alone I can dance and now in
kirtanas I dance an
exquisite rumba.

* * *

We are the ones who come in out of the

cold. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. From nine days
on nine islands of Navadvipa to Govindadvipa
to house alone in
Wicklow.

* * *

Krishna told Arjuna to be responsible
for his human life
to do as he liked
after hearing from Him.
Go to hell or Goloka "
it's up to you.
I chose the Bhaktivedanta Swami *marga*,
although that way is sometimes hard
to follow.

* * *

2
I remember you could work well
with a group or alone "I don't mean
practicing vice
no self-abuse but
self-liberation
not self-love but *bhaktas* must work to
pray to Lord Hari
in the quiet caves
of an honest heart.

* * *

Fastest man on *mrdanga* . . .
expresses himself and slows his playing;
he wants to be natural
a happy, Krishna conscious person.
Is that possible
in this degraded age?

* * *

Yes, if we work from our niche,
do something
we can do.

* * *

3
The first guy on my block
to meet prose standards
Rose growing in mud

daff.

* * *

They come over the wall
but I fight back
kick and punch
give no quarter.

* * *

But that was a dream
in which love dissolved
enmity and I was no longer afraid
of any judgment.

* * *

O Lord, I felt relieved by that
and now chant Your names "You
who may take away anything
but Your promise
to us eternal
souls. "

* * *

8:15 a.m.

The promises of benediction gained by performing devotional service are not exaggerations. "They are actual facts, but they are true for certain devotees and do not necessarily apply to all." (NOD, p. 111)

Get elevated. Become ecstatic. Remember Vrndavana and feel a thrill. Go to Vrndavana and evoke your Krishna consciousness. Practice these items of *bhakti* without offense and experience *bhava-bhakti* as well as freedom from the desire for sense gratification. Act for the Lord. He is Syamasundara, playing His flute in the moonlight on the Yamuna's shore. The four Kumaras recommend reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* as the means to attain all this. read and grapple, then relax and take it in. Complain (about dryness, too much technical knowledge without active realization, that you're a dolt, etc.), then forgive and benefit. Whatever else, go on. Now into Chapter Fourteen.

Devotional service leads to devotional service. No other process is needed. "One should not give up anything which can be utilized in the service of the Lord." (NOD, p. 115) The spiritual master directs us how to accept things in Krishna's service. While you're learning, keep your emotions active; don't harden your heart through false renunciation. Use your feelings as well as material objects in Krishna's service. And execute all nine principles of *bhakti*, or at least one.

* * *

10:20 a.m.

I just read aloud onto tape an account of my birthday as it was celebrated in Trinidad in 1997, with some background sounds. Then I started something else, a poem I had

written on that day, but a car pulled up and people were coming in, so I had to stop. Hey, but when I played back the first thing, I thought it sounded good, something I could share. Serious, profound, grave. Loose, yet serious, composed. I remember the relaxed smiles I exchanged with Patita-uddharana dasa and company at the Longdenville temple that day. I also remember noticing just how faded my red beads have become. By those beads I swear I love my life and its byproducts, and I want to churn it even more. Put honey or fructose on your porridge or yogurt and you're in a quick heaven, and it's just as quick to come down from it. But live this life as Prabhupada has given . . .

Still, I am plodding along in my worn slippers. Thought of devotees over there in America, of the soul said to be located in the heart region, of heart attack, of detachment, of great souls transcending the body. Then thought of Krishna and how the *ragatmikas* can approach Him.

Then the word *joinery* popped into my head. Madhu used it today. He said it's a special skill one acquires in woodworking. From there I thought of inviting Baladeva to help me create an art room in this house. When I mentioned the idea to M., he said, "No, he's not good at joinery. He's good at covering a room with plastic taped from ceiling to floor, as we did in that ritzy house in Italy. He's also good at putting up a quick board, but not at joinery." Still, he could do a job, I'm sure. And he would get me to paint.

Heavens, no biscuits? Not even a scone? O spirit soul, I still smart from the days when I sat down in a Templeogue building with ISKCON Ireland's chief and my secretary, suffering jet lag, and conking out on an overstuffed mattress. I played a role. O figurehead, I figure the worst is over in Ireland and Trinidad for me.

* * *

12:08 p.m.

He who has ears, let him hear. I read a little of St. Mark's Gospel in honor of the approaching Christian holy week. I couldn't understand one part, but otherwise it contained solid, God conscious instructions "they could have been inserted into any general Krishna conscious lecture encouraging devotees to be steadfast once they receive the word so that they will not be like the seed that doesn't grow. To those who have faith, more shall be given, but to those who don't, whatever little they have can be taken away. I couldn't quite figure out the nuances Mark intended for us to understand, nor have I heard much Christian interpretation of such things. I could make a Krishna conscious purport, but Christians might object.

Ragatmikais the correct word. All right. *Ragatmikas* are devotees who have already attained the perfect state of total absorption in Krishna. They are so perfect that it is impossible to divert their attentions to something else. They don't practice Krishna consciousness out of duty to rules, but out of spontaneous love. The *ragatmika* mood is manifest fully only in Vrndavana, and there are two kinds of *ragatmikas*: those in the conjugal *rasa*, and those in parental and friendly *rasas*. Devotees who aspire for the perfection of a *ragatmika* are known as *raganuga-bhaktas*.

Oh, for the day when it will be impossible to divert me from Krishna-thought. I certainly can't claim that now. Still, I live in Krishna's shelter. I'm quite aware of it and

won't deny it. It's the dullness of my focus that is the problem. No love. Not enough yearning to attain it.

Damn, I'm in a desert "
every man sees for himself where he is "
but Sats is a *cela* and writes God-given
hurry-and-wait words.

* * *

2:50 p.m.

I can't claim my *Nectar of Devotion* reading times are prayerful sessions. If any one of them is, it's the midnight session. But I want to read frequently. So some sessions are simple read-throughs, attentive but scanning, *covering material*.

Raganuga-bhakti. Don't try for it until you are free from material contamination. Then live in Vrndavana and follow a particular eternal resident in a specific *rasa*-service. If you can't live physically in Vrndavana, then meditate on doing so and follow the eternal devotee. "A devotee who is actually advanced in Krishna consciousness, who is constantly engaged in devotional service, should not manifest himself, even though he has attained perfection." (NOD, p. 126) Always follow regulative principles. Practice one or some of the nine principles of devotional service according to your taste. (DDS's *Waves of Devotion* is helpful when trying to understand this section.)

* * *

Preaching and Poems #10
Sounds Far Away and Very Near
20 minutes

Preaching is using sound to serve Krishna's purpose. Such sound becomes transcendental vibration. It comes from far away.

That's an almost faithless understatement. Such sound comes from *so* far away that we couldn't reach there after traveling at the speed of light for millions of years. Yet it descends in a moment when a pure devotee chants the holy name or speaks *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

Imagine that.

* * *

When an average devotee preaches, how does that tie in with the transcendental system? Doesn't he speak from his brain and larynx and all that?

No, if he repeats Vedic sound, it descends "works through him "like an electrical hookup.

That's a little difficult to understand.

But that doesn't matter. A preacher doesn't have to know this exactly, I don't think. He simply has to faithfully repeat the transcendental sound he himself has heard.

* * *

Well, if we don't have to understand it technically, then let's preach.
To whom?

You preach to me.

Okay. You ought to reach people with Krishna's message. If you can't personally go out and meet people, support the devotees who can. Give money to help the book distribution, help those who are distributing *prasadam*, or support some other Krishna conscious project "anything that catches your fancy or your whimsy. Because Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

* * *

1

A poem came down from Golo-
loka, written by God or a
pure devotee like Rupa.
Now people want to write from
their neophyte attitudes and that's
good too provided they don't
jump over.

* * *

I chanted in the temple.
I brought my mind
back to the higher Self or
I wished I had.

* * *

Bob did 40 books and Josha
in Berlin did 25.
We gave them a peach
as a reward. They smiled,
knowing something tastier.

* * *

The remnants in the Deity room
assume you ate them and
gave some to friends.
People. Be. Faithful.

* * *

#2

Jumping up/ I'm ashamed in
such a goofy beat mood
to look at my master.
He sees me
preachin'
in the sway
talking about sound "those guys,
where did they go?

* * *

All that's left is a crisscross
man with pen drawing
"Krishna" words and
"*bhakti*" and saying
"Listen to *this*."

* * *

Of sound I am silence, Krishna says
and a stone drops into a well
makes no sound
too deep
while frogs croak
and nearby llamas spit
the sound of a drum drumming
all transcendental
sound changes the heart and
gives life to preaching
hairs stand on end
while we find the edge
of our chairs.

* * *

4:45 p.m.

A car pulled out. Alone again. I read aloud "for Madhava "a poem and some diary notes. Then chanted two loud rounds extra, pacing back and forth, glad for a clear-head day. The wood grain in this house looks old and tired, but it cheered me on. I looked out the window and saw a person on horseback leaping a creek, then canter clear across the pasture to herd the sheep. I'd like to peek at NOD again before this day is over.

They say *nistha* is good enough, still within *sadhana*, although you're still a conditioned soul at that point. But from that firm faith, you can begin *raganuga-bhakti*.

* * *

Sampler's Poetry Hall #7

Mike entered the green study hall and expected all to go as usual. It didn't. Ms. Sampler was already present, lecturing at the podium. She had written the words "Ars poetica" on the chalkboard. She said, "'Ars poetica,' the art of poetry, occurs when poetry is the subject of the poem. It's when the poet takes stock, writing down his or her articles of faith."

She wanted each of us to write our own 'Ars poetica.'" She left the room. After she left, some wise guy went up to the chalkboard and wrote, "Arse poetica."

It made me feel suddenly serious, and I got down to business.

* * *

Well, I'm not *really* serious, just tired of guys
who are atheistic dogmatists because they think
stories they've concocted come from random clusters
of stars in the skies. Do they threaten me?
I just don't like smug atheism.

* * *

God. God. A poem should be in His
service. I don't care so much for vowels
or consonants. They come and go naturally
with any speech, so why make a big deal
out of any of them?
That's my *ars poetica*.

* * *

Praise God with eloquent speech.
And I wish I could. Is that what Manley
Hopkins did? He used homely metaphors
and we use lotus *lilas*
some use skill in Sanskrit
or English, American,
Siberian.
Whatever, *ars poetica* has got to be real
and devotional "
strong, honest God consciousness

* * *

against atheists and only for praise.
To make the slant implicit
not spouting divine rhetoric but
daily experience
is tasteful.

* * *

This green study hall is a good place to write
but I'm too timid to stand up on stage
and give a KC lecture to these louts and
eggheads about *bhakti* and surrender. It just
wouldn't work. They would hoot and
holler. O Krishna, You give the ability
and if they could be interested
they could reach You.

* * *

5:30 p.m.

Srila Prabhupada writes that conjugal love develops "only with those who are already engaged in following the regulative principles of devotional service, specifically in the worship of Radha and Krishna in the temple. Such devotees gradually develop a spontaneous love for the Deity, and by hearing of the Lord's exchange of loving affairs with the *gopis*, they gradually become attracted to these pastimes." (NOD, p. 128) This is encouraging for me in my private worship of Radha-Govinda. Not that I intend to jump forward and imitate anything, but just to hear Srila Prabhupada state it that way "the connection between the Deity worship of Radha-Krishna and becoming placed in spontaneous attraction of conjugal love.

March 24, 12:04 a.m.

The connection between our present state and the very advanced state . . . *vaidhi-sankirtana* movement.

But just learning words or grasping at them doesn't seem to change our lives. Take the word *bhava*, for example. It means ecstasy in spontaneous love. What can happen is that we can *discuss* higher and higher, discuss *prema* and even beyond that, all the stages of *prema*, and it can become another mechanical, theoretical, tasteless act. We do not attain *bhava* in that way. rather, we attain *bhava* by association with pure devotees.

But so often in ISKCON, it seems, association leads to politics and quarrels. That's human nature. We don't seem to inspire each other much. Although that's not always true; sometimes devotees *do* inspire one another. How to turn what seems to be superficial association into actual Vaisnava *sanga*? We need a place to express our Krishna conscious heart. Perhaps we're afraid that others will disapprove of our realizations. And some devotees do have rigid ideas about what real Krishna consciousness is. At least we can appreciate the efforts of all devotees, and praise their determination to follow their vows and preach on Srila Prabhupada's behalf. We can pray for more.

It takes such work if we are going to advance. To offer praise is a kind of work because it usually doesn't come naturally to the conditioned soul. Few students can expect to receive an honorary degree without of going to school. "Similarly, one should devotedly execute the regulative principles of devotional service, and at the same time hope for Krishna's favor or for His devotee's favor." (NOD, p. 132) The work Srila Prabhupada and Rupa Gosvami outline includes "that one constantly associate with pure devotees who are engaged morning and evening in chanting the Hare Krishna mantra." Narada is an example of one who achieved *bhava* this way. (and he spent only four months with the *bhaktivedantas*).

Also, I've read that we can associate with pure devotees through their writing and by following their instructions. ". . . when a realized soul who is engaged in the service of the Lord is speaking, he has the potency to inject spiritual life within the audience." (NOD, p. 133)

Knowledge of God (*samvit*); love for God (*hladini*); love descending from God (*Suddha-sattva*). We have our own "mystical theology." We don't need to go to St. John

of the Cross or others. Such truths come down from pure devotees and enter our hearts. Then we too will feel emotional ecstasy.

Sometimes we become ridiculous in our self-analysis: "Was that a ray of *Suddha-sattva* I just felt? Has *bhava* begun? If not, that satisfaction or spontaneous desire I feel right now "what is it?"

What do we want, a dashboard panel to show us how fast we are moving in devotion? Something to reveal our devotional temperature? Our mileage? O Krishna.

The heart "we want it to soften. When other's hearts soften, we don't want to feel envious because ours is still hard. That would be ridiculous.

I'm not sure how to personally take the map the *acaryas* have plotted to show us the way from *Sraddha* to *prema*. I'm still learning that language's alphabet, the terminology of ecstasy, not ready to feel ecstasy itself. Besides, I'm suspicious of bodily ecstasies. Anyone can cry and the next moment be a bastard.

I may scoff and admit that I'm a dwarf who cannot reach the moon, but I don't want to disbelieve *The Nectar of Devotion's* statements that point me to the possible. Such statements are neither irrelevant nor unimportant. Just wait and see what develops by endeavoring in *sadhana*. And *krpa-siddha* descends through the words, good wishes, or glances of the Lord or His pure devotee.

In the eighteenth chapter of NOD, the steady symptoms (the symptoms that cannot be imitated) of *bhava* are described.

* * *

2:50 a.m.

Japa and what I am aware of constantly: the rain on the roof during the two-hour session. Or things of which I am dimly aware: the ephemeral thoughts passing through the mind. I can no longer recall them. My accomplishment: fourteen rounds. Done as early as possible this morning, chanted to the warm, friendly sound of my own voice repeating the names again and again. I felt myself slowing down at one point, so took a walk around the room. I chanted quietly so I wouldn't wake anyone, but loud enough to hear, to hear. Occasionally, half consciously, I adjusted the pronunciation to be more sure I was saying all the syllables. Thought in terms of numbers. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

I'll have time in the day for more later. There comes a stage when one wants to chant all the time. The meaningless develops meaning, and the sound penetrates the heart. "The Lord is present in His name" "that line occurred to me while I was chanting, despite a river of other thoughts. It is raining still.

* * *

4:40 a.m.

Listened during *puja* to Akrura taking Krishna from Vrndavana. The *gopis* each spoke a verse of lamentation. Radha spoke in madness. She was no longer shy in front of Her elders, but with tears in Her eyes, She stared at Lord Krishna as He seated Himself on the chariot.

Today Radha-Govinda wear light green and gold. I offered Radha yellow earrings, and Krishna, green. They look very pretty. I'm entering a deeper lake of attention when I serve Them. Maybe I'm finally becoming a religious soul.

"Actually this is very sad," Madhu said, when we were reading the section on Krishna's departure for Mathura.

EkadaSi today, but I will eat and work as usual. If I feel head pressure, I will also seek relief. The demon Sankhacuda was killed by "peacock-feather-crowned Krishna." Oh, you're going to keep talking of Him, are you? Yes.

Srila Prabhupada in Pittsburgh in a large auditorium "he held the audience's attention, despite the fact that they had come to see the devotees' rock opera. He said knowledge comes best by hearing, especially when that knowledge is of things which are by nature beyond the grasp of our senses. He also told them that the soul is encased in subtle and gross material bodies. Such tiny spirit souls are meant to depend on the one Supreme Soul. Modern civilization educates us in eating, sleeping, mating, and defending, but does not inform us that we are the vital force, the soul, within the body. The human form of life has problems that animals don't experience. People tend to be foolish. He was a revolutionary, our Srila Prabhupada, and somehow they gave him their attention.

Answering Madhava's letter. He says he reads Krishna conscious manuscripts while at work, hidden among his business papers. He also wants to spend his vacation time in Vrndavana. But Krishna is at his workplace too. He has begun to notice that.

Caranaravinda came to the house at 3 a.m. to type on the computer. They have moved out to give us more quiet, but it makes me feel I should move out as soon as possible. M. insists that it will take more time. The walls of the other house have to dry before they can be painted, and they're damp from years of rain water leaking through the roof. He is trying to dry them with humidifiers, but it won't happen instantly. I think we could move in even before the rooms are painted. I could live in one room, and they could work on the rest. But I'm trying to be patient. Why jump into a situation that will be so inconvenient? Like Rilke, let me find a castle here or there in which I can write poems that will last hundreds of years. Because a crazy piece of the puzzle has come together in this house of grace.

* * *

Let it rain. I'm not going for a walk anyway. Let me just do a few backward bends while waiting for the water to heat in the tap. I get exercise when I pace through my *japa* too, what to speak of going up and down the stairs to the bathroom.

Spiritual exercise comes while listening to Rupa Gosvami's drama: "O kadamba tree, have you seen Krishna pass by here?" Lalita will tell Radha anything to prevent Her from giving up Her life in separation.

Rain falling even harder on roof and windows. This is a special day in this universe, if only I could feel it. But I'm too dull. Prabhupada said, "Chant Hare Krishna, and become a strong man."

O Lord, this material body "then I fall asleep at the typewriter but see in my mind someone placing a plate of noodles and sauce before me. But it's EkadaSi! Why envision *that*? Why not envision the Panca-tattva dancing, or something completely

spiritual? Did you know that the *gopis* and *gopas* don't want to please their own senses, but wish only to please the senses of Krishna?

Then how do they get their kicks? Someone asked that once. Because, he added, *everyone* has to let off steam.

Well, the *gopis* and *gopas* are always letting off steam through their emotional surrender to Krishna. Don't confuse Radha-Krishna pastimes with mundane affairs.

* * *

This cold-cream kid analyzes that his mother was born in such-and-such year and that she is still living. Does he think she will communicate with him telepathically at death so that he will know she is departing? But what about all the other mothers he has had in all his previous lives? Is he also asking for their deliverance?

It is the ability of man to go beyond the dimensions we usually recognize. Don't disbelieve material or spiritual wonders.

O Radha-Krishna, I appeal to You. My hands fell to the floor, startling the people who thought I should do better than that. "Hare Krishna," I smiled, and went on with my skylark version of too-good-to-be-true.

Be happy in Krishna consciousness, and drink the milk that is offered to the Lord. When you sleep, try to see Radha and Krishna and the birds in layers of geological time. See if you can trace the beginnings of your stone heart.

* * *

Pure Devotee? Not Me

& Not me

but I'm in on it,

I'll be there with the others.

I'd like you to know that.

* * *

I won't miss the boat although

so much intensity is required

I've heard.

Searching. Calm.

* * *

He became expert and wanted to pay

no price except to be better. But

what does that mean?

Krishna left Mathura

I mean

Vrndavana

but didn't really

because He remained in the *bhava*

of separation.

* * *

I can ride a pen on a page
and eat a small meal
voraciously I can
draw a crude three people in color
and chant sixteen rounds.
I can be satisfied to be alone
and can answer your letter in several
pages. I can lift a small
bundle, endure my own
headache
to be Krishna conscious
if I'm not mistreated much.
I don't know how I'd do if it got
Rougher. I just don't know.

* * *

You? You can drive a car,
Rent a car,
avoid a
swerve,
go into the city
Run a restaurant,
pay a phone
bill sell
a painting
and remember Krishna the Lord
of the *gopis*?
Can you also go to India
and be welcome?

* * *

Who here can obey Srila Prabhupada?
"Me!"
I mean in particulars and hard essence?
"Me!"
Who here will go back to Godhead at the
end of life?
They are singing songs of liberation but
not for me.

* * *

"Strictly commercial" to tide us
over make people happy, sweep it under
the rug, didn't hear about the missing leader
And Sats too kept silent

in the rain
these disparate elements
he thought
might just look better later.

* * *

A brother says not to disparage *any* devotee
trying to go through the changes
cuz we may be small-timers but we
won't ever be like *karmis*
and it's hard *work* to remember Krishna.

* * *

That's what he said but
what about him?
I think he'll be a saint forty births
from now if a pure devotee gives him
Suddha-sattva "a glance or a wish
some words
but no one attains it on the strength
of his own self-controlled ecstasy.

* * *

I mean, anyone can finish
but that doesn't mean we can finish in first place.
We have to finish empty and exhausted
and that's the truth.

* * *

Pure devotee?
Not me. "

* * *

8:14 a.m.

This year, the performance of GBC members was assessed, and brief critiques published. Some were criticized for not being more visible in the way they practiced their *sadhana*, some for not attending the morning program, some for not associating enough with devotees in their zone, some for not preaching enough. One devotee with ill health was advised to get a professional assessment of his condition and to act under the supervision of the ISKCON Health Minister. I also heard that the GBC is considering providing a similar critique next year of ISKCON gurus.

Madhu said I shouldn't worry too much about that, at least not yet. Anyway, I don't have to form an extreme response based on my worry. I have personal integrity and know what it is I have to live with in this lifetime. If I am asked to reform in certain ways, I can consider it as long as it doesn't compromise the spirit of my life.

* * *

Utilization of time: "An unalloyed devotee who has developed ecstatic love for Krishna is always engaging his words in reciting prayers to the Lord. Within his mind he is always thinking of Krishna, and with his body he either offers obeisances by bowing down before the Deity or engages in some other service. . . . with not a moment wasted on any other engagement." (NOD, p. 135)

* * *

11:36 a.m.

Perseverance (*Santi*) means one remains undisturbed, even patient, when there are causes for disturbance up until the end of life. Maharaja Pariksit is a good example of such perseverance. He was able to be so patient because he took full shelter in Krishna.

He was also able to be detached because of his deep transcendental love for Krishna. Such love raises one above all material desires.

Prideless: even though a devotee is elevated, he feels no pride. Srila Prabhupada mentions persons who took to begging: "The devotee of Krishna can accept any position in the service of Krishna."

Great hope: "Because I'm trying my best to follow the routine principles of devotional service, I am sure that I will go back to Godhead, back to home." (NOD, p. 137)

Although our self-assessment reveals to us that we have no good qualities, "one should continue to hope against hope that some way or other he will be able to approach the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord."

Eagerness: "I want so much to see Him in Vrndavana!"

Nama-ruci "the taste for chanting the holy name.

Attachment to praising Krishna's qualities.

Love for the holy *dhama*. Go there and visit the sites of Krishna's pastimes.

Why am I noting these down? So they will stick with me in the future. Consider how to attain each one of them.

* * *

The GBC committee is not just a fantasy; they can investigate anyone. They can speak to you, then determine which things are going all right, and which need improvement. Then they can give their recommendations and publish them in their minutes. I don't want people, even my Godbrothers, prodding into my private life. What if they want to know why I chant *japa* alone? (Because I can't stand to pack into a hall full of devotees. I'll get a headache. Besides, for years now I have been chanting between 1 and 2:45 a.m. Later, when most devotees chant their *japa*, I'd be too sleepy.) "No, we don't accept your excuses. Change your habits. It doesn't *look* good; it's a bad example. You must be visible to others when you perform your *sadhana*."

Bah.

* * *

12:10 p.m.

If I keep writing, I'll find the pot at the end of the rainbow. Because I'm trying my best. Mercy comes down in torrents from the *acaryas*. How can I tell? How can I judge

who has received such mercy and who has not? This guy has seven out of the nine symptoms of *bhava*, and he's in the shadow-attachment mode. His left side is better than his right, his genitals are male, his star is in Taurus, and now let's toss him into the dung heap (or Ganges. Which?) because he's not real.

You talk nonsense. You have garbled the Vedic science, and that's an offense. You are hereby censured. If you don't apologize in writing by next year, you'll be kicked out.

Uh, what's the official word for kicked out?

Excommunicated.

That's a Catholic word, right?

Yes, and we use the word *penance* too. Your penance is to chant ten extra rounds a day and to travel to Russia as a GBC aide. You need to get out and preach on the front lines. If you think you have a medical excuse, let's see your CAT scan to prove it.

* * *

Dreamt I was with Srila Prabhupada. There were very few of us present. We had one of his manuscripts, and he was commenting on it. It reminded me of how he goes over a list in *The Nectar of Devotion* one after another after another. He asked, "Are you recording this?" I was doing the recording. Then two women disciples wanted to touch his feet. He became playful, kicking his feet so they couldn't touch them. It was very informal, intimate association.

* * *

2:33 p.m.

The slight flickering behind my eye is preventing me from reading NOD. I can't seem to relax. It's quite an act to read Srila Prabhupada's book with the *bhava* I desire, and at the same time, to assimilate the clarification and Sanskrit terms from DDS's book. I can do it when I'm peaceful and alert, not otherwise. Now waiting for the twinge to build so I can pop a pill (I'm allowed one today if necessary).

* * *

Preaching and Poems #11

Let Me Be

Now, man, go your way. If the GBC comes down on you, see it as Krishna direct. You're no controller anyway. We know you want to preach but that you don't want to be pushed to do so by some unloving force.

* * *

I say, "Please spare me," but I know if I'm not meant to be spared in that way, Bhagavan Sri Krishna will show me the way through. He's the controller and my well-wisher.

* * *

Do I really think that ISKCON is the "manifest body" of Srila Prabhupada?

I think ISKCON is what it is "a cart with rolling wheels. I am who I am on this cart "I think that too.

"respectful, but open and frank," the GBC chairman said, regarding how they assessed their members. I want to be open on the inside track, writing out my Krishna consciousness without cessation. I want to write openly, but not to assess others.

* * *

What about preaching? It's giving the word. From a decent life. Some of the stuff that goes under the name of preaching is too much for me.

Preaching: I tell you something about Krishna, and you're supposed to trust me.

* * *

Preach, preach. We sat in rows and heard him say we are the *Siksa-gurus* for the others *if* they want us. Could they be *Siksa-gurus* for us? Next life?

We must all sign an oath of allegiance and have it notarized. Crab your apples for winter.

You must be kidding.

* * *

Preach, mister. Tell us something we haven't heard before with your uniform straight and eyes right. And don't forget *sastra* or the Bengali *bhajana*.

What are we doing wrong that we remain attached to the honor due a preacher?

I think, someone says, that it's a romance gone to the head.

But there's a difference between wanting respect for a preaching style and wanting respect for being a preacher. I think it's plain likes and limits, self-discovery. Even in the higher states we discover our personal taste and enter Krishna's pastimes with that. Why not taste something earlier, if only by using our personal preaching style as part of our relationship with Krishna?

After all, I want to exclaim, this is who I am, so accept me
or don't

but Prabhupada knows I'm straight

and in his camp

but not exactly like the others.

* * *

We have to risk to preach.

Lawyers risk and so do preachers.

They risk their *sadhana*

but not really. They risk to hope

Krishna will give them the strength to

manage sixty city temples, or

like me, to shrink the field

to this one desk this

house

that now must contain

everything.

* * *

4:02 p.m.

Steady rain falling, but it's still light out. This house is empty. My eyes are stinging, as if there's smoke in the air. I see smoke outdoors, curling out from the chimney, so maybe some is escaping into this room.

Use your energy to serve Krishna. How to take in more Krishna consciousness? The book says to hear from and to serve pure devotees. I do this daily, and it maintains me in spiritual life. But I seek more. Enough duty and being told what to do and analyzing texts and organizing people. I feel I'd like some love. Oh, Hare Krishna.

* * *

Sampler's Poetry Hall #8

I turn away from my own stinging eyes. I don't want to write a poem. I don't know what I want. It is EkadaSi, so I shouldn't want much.

Those who have attained single-minded *prema* do not notice the pains and pleasures of body and mind. I still have my hand on the rudder of both, and I suffer. Why?

According to Ms. Sampler, "ars poetica" also means our relationship to the world, our attempt to change it for the better, and the refuge poets takes in forming words into poetry: to change things so that they can live until they see light at the end of the tunnel.

* * *

Not night he can't write that sort of
assonance. Golden guilders, paid-for
Receipts. A box of crayons. Fall back
on same old riff. Don't waste a moment
and taste *bhava*.

* * *

Improve your time. rhyme is a game.
He doesn't stop but half sleep walks
over frozen tundra about
to die if he were
to stop. He's got it easy.

* * *

Krishna conscious man seeks to advance
by constant ardent effort
which he hopes will attract
Krishna's mercy. You've got to
set it right on *siddhanta*.

* * *

It's all right if others don't understand
as long as I love and try and say, "Krishna,

Krishna." Take a moment to
feel, "Where am I?"
Think of chanting, of prayer.
Is that possible?

* * *

Krishna, Krishna, staying on course I continue
Round the globe by sea in this smallish
boat. I will cross the ocean and if not,
I pray to remember Krishna at the crashing
end. He is there, and I have
mistaken myself as important, as God.

* * *

6:12 p.m.

Looks like another two weeks before we can move into the house. I hardly leave the room here. Okay. Hare Krishna.

March 25, 12:02 a.m.

I have been waking up after three hours each night and not been able to get back to sleep. Last night I thought of how providence has shaped my life. What's it called? The sanction-giver. Time. The Shaper. God always knows what's best, and He places us in particular situations to move us through His desires for us. That's what it means when we say, "Man proposes and God disposes."

I am trying to be more patient with my life. So, it looks like I'll be in this house for another two weeks before I can move into the other. It also looks like the Irish government will grant me residence in their country, and the GBC will either allow me to live the way I'm living or will insist on something else. Against this background of events, none of which I seem able to orchestrate, I live with headaches. Beyond that is the exertion of my free will, which Krishna also permits.

We seem to struggle so ineffectually, like insects caught in a spider's web. What else can we do but call out to Lord Hari? Krishna is Providence, and a devotee trusts that fact, as well as the fact that He is benevolent as well as all-powerful. A devotee also must renounce the desire to be the Lord himself. rather, he should exert his free will (in action and restraint), knowing that's all he can do to show his sincerity. We read and chant. "Please see good in me." And dare we ask (as some GBC men do), "Please correct me?"

* * *

The Southern ocean "*rasa* and the waves of *vibhava*, *anubhava*, *sattvika-bhava*, *vyabhicari-bhava*, and *sthayi-bhava*. I think this time, with the help of *Waves of Devotion*, I'll get them straight. Old man with squeezed brain trying to memorize the various ecstasies. Rupa Gosvami in Vrndavana "perhaps I can just "memorize" him,

keep his picture in my mind. Rupa and Sanatana. Krishnadasa Kaviraja. (I used to have small pictures of them, but they kept falling over.)

O Krishna. An example of this and an example of that. My energy goes into analyzing, and I think, "What does it matter? I can't feel ecstasy in any case, even if I understand the difference between the object and the reservoir of love, and what Srila Prabhupada means when he defines the two kinds of *vibhava*, 'basic and impelling.'" *The Nectar of Devotion* reading can become bogged down in this way. Even if we rise to the occasion and study and grasp it, it can remain an academic exercise. I want simple feeling, deep and profound, if possible, to move me.

Okay, those are my complaints. Let's get on with it.

Krishna's pastimes and qualities are more important than the analysis of them "that's all I was trying to say. I read in order to appreciate, not necessarily to grasp facts. I don't need to equip myself for an exam or to give a seminar. Soon I will be reading about Krishna's sixty-four qualities, because they are the stimuli of a devotee's love. So let me appreciate Krishna when I hear them; let my love and faith grow. I already especially like Krishna's four superlative qualities: (61) wonderful unexcelled pastimes; (62) surrounded by devotees who express the most wonderful love (such as the *gopis*); (63) attracts all with His flute music; (64) unexcelled beauty.

Alambana, uddipana, visaya, aSraya "I'm not going to be able to memorize them *all*. It's like a foreign language "if you don't use it regularly, you lose your vocabulary. Although I have gone over these terms many, many times over the years, my memory is diminishing as I grow older. Now it seems simpler to refer to the terms as "the many terms denoting *rasa* with Krishna as described in *The Nectar of Devotion*." Or, if I must know them, to reach for the book and look them up. Not knowing them off the top of my head doesn't seem to put me at a serious disadvantage.

As I read and write, rain beats on the roof just as it did all last night. Let me be here now. I'm in a body, a mind "a soul. I'm trying to serve. After admitting my inability to read as a sharp NOD student, one would think the simpler practice of *japa* would appeal to me. It does. But I'll be defeated there too, I already know. Still, a devotee recalls how Krishna can do anything, and he is confident that the Lord's mercy will uplift him. Chant while the rain beats the rhythm of the name.

* * *

2:45 a.m.

Japa train: always offensive. This mad mind just can't conceive of God in His name. Drain out all else "I can't. Is there a secret I'll discover, a gestalt method to ease into what seems impossible but may actually be close? His mercy is required. O Nama Prabhu, You elude me. O river of Krishna's name chanted on beads, how else can I get?

* * *

4:37 a.m.

Finding fault with the guru is spiritual suicide. We must stop such mosquito-thoughts from biting. Or at least we should ignore them "don't give them energy. Hear from the guru with submission.

This morning I heard Prabhupada say the demons were increasing and the devotees being persecuted. Great devotees of the past were also persecuted by demons "devotees such as Prahlada and Devaki. A demon will kill anyone who blocks his sense gratification. The *devas* or devotees think twice before acting. Arjuna is the opposite of Kamsa. Srila Prabhupada told the devotees that although they have enemies, they shouldn't be afraid. Krishna will protect them. I listened to what he said. He added that great devotees may appear to transgress morality (the *gopis* left their husbands and Prahlada did not protest when his father was killed), but they are sinless because they are serving Krishna.

After listening to that lecture, I decided to bathe Radha-Govinda while listening to *Lalita-madhava*. Today I heard the section where Akrura takes Krishna to Mathura. radha feels so much grief that She tries to drown in the Yamuna, but the sun-god descends and takes Her to his abode. Lalita gives up her life by jumping from Govardhana Hill. I decided not to offer Them *cadars* to cover Their soft yellow dresses trimmed in peacock patterns. The rain continues to patter on the roof.

* * *

GBC resolution creates theology: Faith in one's initiating guru, in ISKCON, and in Srila Prabhupada as the preeminent *Siksa-guru* are three aspects of one faith. I wonder what the reality is for people who don't have equal faith in all three? It doesn't matter, because we have established our theology. Follow it or be deviant. If we doubt, go to a counselor and straighten it out. Do not challenge. If you want to please Prabhupada, then do as the GBC says.

He built a fire from wood he found, and it warmed him during the cold desert night. He huddled in his poncho under the cold stars and chanted the Hare Krishna mantra. That was preaching too. O mountain of destiny, now that you have taken Krishna away, we are downcast. The Ganges dried up upon seeing Radha's grief. NOD calls Her separation *Soka*, intense lamentation. We have heard how Raghunatha dasa Gosvami felt that same *Soka* upon reading *Lalita-madhava*, and Rupa Gosvami had to take it back. Instead, he gave Raghunatha the delightful *Dana-keli*, describing Krishna's taxing the *gopis* on Govardhana.

These days feel piecemeal. I think of forest rangers and past references, and the group of stalwart devotees who think only how to improve our ISKCON society. They want to improve the devotees' quality of life, and they each have their own area to control. Hare Krishna. A motorcycle bike and an envelope with lines for me written on it: "Dear Sats, you are an ex-GBC. You are no longer one from whom a great deal is demanded or expected. You are more like a retired cow who has gone out to pasture." Yes, so it seems.

* * *

Just reform

1

& Glad to be here free I want to till they
stop me.

Krishna I
want to be

Your man
but my man expresses
whatever's in his
pockets
and did you know,
there's no hardware in heaven.
They say gurus have to behave in certain ways
toward their spiritual children
follow a stalwart standard
have more Sastric content in their
speech.
Not only that, but he has to attend
all the company picnics.

* * *

And give out Krishna conscious hats
like a Mad Hatter
at a table or not
and take a bath quite regularly
be good on his birthday.

* * *

2
KC KC KC "
got banner and T-shirt?
We'll be happy to detox you
if you hang out with us
you prodigal son
on Imitrex
and deep-breathing therapy
but you're old, Sats,
one of the originals.

* * *

Times have changed, don't you know
and nowadays you have to get in line
if you want to be called a devotee.
Those in line get meals and refreshments
and we don't want much in return.

* * *

All tax-wax has to stop
if you want to play ball with us.
This movement is
Rigorous and you'll (wink) still

find time for fun to
frolic in the Ganga, for example,
with us of course,
and to help us rub out
our Parliamentary enemies
after we have forensic proof
so the juniors will
look up to us.

* * *

A guy like you could have
lots of *Sisyas*. Just reform and work harder
and renounce.

* * *

3
No, no, I refuse not to swing
on a star or renounce the spirit I
have worked so hard to find
to sing the music I have discovered
with friends who try to
be devotees when I apply
my ecumenical touch to their
Roughly sophisticated offerings.

* * *

The dialogue is underway
and the stakes are high
for all of us. We each want
to please the Swami but
not all of us can jump through
quite so many hoops
or see black
or only white.
And what is said
and lived
cannot be taken back.
May we each
be careful. "

* * *

8:17 a.m.

Lord Krishna's body is not flesh and bones like that of a conditioned soul in this world. Those who think, "He may be God, but he has taken a body made of the material modes," are *mudhas*.

Krishna is a wonderful linguist; He can even speak with cows and birds.

He is truthful. When He promises something, His word never fails. We can become attracted to Krishna when we appreciate His wonderful qualities. Krishna's sixty-four qualities are but a drop of the ocean of His qualities.

In addition to the sixty-four, *The Nectar of Devotion* mentions four traits of heroes and four qualities of magnanimous persons. Krishna is a pleasing talker (as in the time He spoke to the Kaliya serpent), a wonderful linguist, thoughtful and fluent. "The words of Krishna are so attractive that they can immediately solve all of the questions and problems of the world. Although He does not speak very long, each and every word from His mouth contains volumes of meaning. These speeches of Krishna are very pleasing to my heart." (NOD, p. 162)

One nice feature of *The Nectar of Devotion* is that it continually explains Lord Krishna in Vrndavana as the superior expression of Godhead. The overall topic of the book is *bhakti*, and it presents all *avatars* and expansions of Godhead as They reciprocate with their devotees. But *The Nectar of Devotion* leaves no doubt as to what form of the Lord is the most attractive: Sri Krishna in Vrndavana is the reservoir of all pleasure.

Lord Krishna is intelligent. Just see how He left the killing of the *yavana* king to Mucukunda. Krishna's genius is exhibited in His playful interpretation of Sanskrit words when He speaks to Srimati Radharani. He is artistic in His flute-playing, the way He dresses (including the garlands He wears), and in His dancing and funny words.

Krishna is so clever He can do many things at the same time. He is so expert that no task is too difficult for Him. For example, He counteracted all the enemies' weapons. He also expanded Himself so He could dance simultaneously with all the *gopis* in the *rasa* dance.

Is this so hard, this little review? Is it cracking my credulity? Is it causing a headache? No? Good. I know, I'm not feeling ecstasy because I am as restless as a bird on a post. Still, just think of Krishna's qualities. He is not the quality-less void. He has no material qualities, and He is not mythological. Srila Rupa Gosvami, with full conviction and eloquence, tells us who He is.

Lord Krishna is grateful, and therefore He won't forget us for our attempts to chant His holy names. ". . . anyone who addresses the Lord immediately attracts the attention of the Lord, who always remains obliged to him." (NOD, p. 166)

Lord Krishna showed His determination when He took the *parijata* flower from Indra's planet, just to satisfy Satyabhama.

By seeing that it was the full moon night of autumn in Vrndavana, and understanding that the *gopis* were the most beautiful girls in the universe, Lord Krishna decided to hold a *rasa* dance. Thus He showed Himself to be an expert judge of time and circumstance. He also displayed this quality when He appeared as Lord Caitanya during the worst age, when people are slow and misdirected, and gave them the dispensation of chanting Hare Krishna.

Lord Krishna can see everything, but to teach us He refers to scripture. This indicates that we should try to manifest that quality in ourselves when appropriate and to the

extent of our actual realization. Don't see with the naked eye; see by the authority of scripture.

Krishna is pure, and His association makes others pure. Devotional service is so pure that it requires no qualification before we can practice it. Whatever sinful acts we committed before coming to devotional service are cleansed by the *bhakti* process, just as the sun's rays can purify a filthy place. Krishna is powerfully pure, and He can drive away darkness.

Each of Krishna's queens thought Krishna was captivated by her beauty, but Krishna was actually self-controlled. When Krishna sought out Jambavan and fought with him, He displayed His steadfastness. He didn't become discouraged.

Now that's a quality I'd like to see me develop. Keep searching, keep fighting.

* * *

11:20 a.m.

Things I do:

- (1) Open the window and throw water out (Srila Prabhupada's bath water).
- (2) Think about Srila Prabhupada and my difficulties in listening to him and how I often overcome them. Seems to be some sort of harsh, mental austerity I'm going through.
- (3) Sit in easy chair as an alternative to sitting at desk chair.
- (4) Wash and wring out Srila Prabhupada's clothes; hang them to dry on the radiator (Irish radiators never get scorching hot).
- (5) Calculate Esgic usage.
- (6) Hear whatever sounds there are.
- (7) Lose grip on thoughts I have and let them return later.
- (8) Work throughout the day.
- (9) Continue writing in a volume of EJW until it's time to start another one. This one will end when I finish reading NOD.
- (10) Open a package and take out a book of Rilke's *Letters to Merline*. It helps me learn of the artist's dedication, even though I am different than Rilke "a celibate monk, not a passionate, fastidious poet searching for the muse's call and waiting a long time before writing. Maybe it's the search for pure expression in Krishna consciousness that demands solitude and peace in order for me to write.
- (11) Eat lunch, crunch, munch. Honor the Lord's offering.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

Krishna forgave SiSupala and allowed him to merge into His effulgence. He was grave after hearing Lord Brahma's prayers. He possesses all good qualities.

Srila Prabhupada said in a Bombay lecture that sometimes we experience inconvenience when we preach Krishna consciousness to Indians. They say, "We know all about Krishna! We have nothing to learn from these Americans and Europeans about Krishna." But to know Krishna in truth is not so easy; *vasudevah sarvam iti, sa mahatma su-durlabhah*. And so it is with me. I don't have access to Krishna in truth every time I read a few qualities in *The Nectar of Devotion*. My attitude is lacking.

God is a person, Krishna. I'm a person too, but the servant of His servant. The scriptures descend and we read them, but still, Krishna reveals Himself only to one who has complete faith. He talks to a worthy servant, but not to a nonsense. He is fully present in His name, *nama cintamani Krishnas*. Therefore, we must beg to receive Him there.

Lord Krishna is compassionate, but as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, He is difficult to approach. ". . . the devotees, taking advantage of His compassionate nature, which is represented by Radharani, always pray to Radharani for Krishna's compassion." (NOD, p. 176) Srimati Radharani is not easy to approach either, so we approach through our spiritual master, Her representative, and thus receive mercy.

"Instead of becoming disinterested in thinking of Krishna and in chanting His holy name, the devotees get newer and newer impetus to continue the process. Therefore, Krishna is ever-fresh." (NOD, p. 185)

* * *

Preaching and Poems #12
In Praise of Preaching
20 minutes

Preaching in a favorable place, spreading the word to the people, convincing people "they may have never have heard of Krishna or the *Bhagavad-gita*, but they come to accept it as scriptural truth. Krishna is no longer a "Hindu god" to them, so under that rubric, we can each preach.

* * *

Some places are risky "Jamaica, NYC, hell, and any illusion. Music match, firehouse, some places are *tres difficiles* to preach in. Such as intellectual and proud Navadvipa during Lord Caitanya's time. Therefore, He went south.

"But it is a brilliant field," Srila Prabhupada said, meaning the whole world, and he encouraged his followers even in his very last days to maintain what he had established.

* * *

A newcomer: "Preaching means to increase the family members." The house filling up on Glenville Avenue "no, South Beacon Street "just filling up. We added more and more partitions, and one devotee played the trumpet at the Sunday feast. Guests didn't know that that man too was expressing Krishna consciousness.

Yeah, we'd seen before a man
juggling wooden pins but
didn't know you could row a boat
for Krishna or
be a clown. Didn't know a dog
could dance . . .

All right, don't get carried away. Boy, you can't even think straight.

But I mean, to take on a group who is not and will not become Krishna's devotees is daunting, and you build up your logical introduction until you reach the ancient Sanskrit chant. You have to lean toward some assumption they'll all share, like, "We all have faith

in something," or, "Everyone has to die," or, "We're ruining the planet by our materialism." You have to start somewhere, and usually that means from their ground "where they can hear.

Half of them leave. They draw a line: "You won't catch *me* in a *sari* and bangles, and I won't shave *my* head. I'm no Hindoo".

* * *

Does the preacher actually believe in Krishna? Why, then, is he still stuck in the basics of *Sravanam kirtanam* after so many years? From what reservoir does he draw his ability to lead and teach others? From what heart does he speak in order to touch others to really change their lives, to speak beyond theory? We have to ask ourselves these questions.

* * *

To change a life. I saw a *mataji*, after cooking lunch for her guru and cleaning the kitchen, walk out to the road with her beadbag. Hare Krishna women sometimes look like gypsies or some other kind of foreigner, and people must wonder what the Hare Krishna movement has brought to their shores. We are funny people, and funky. But the essence has nothing to do with Hindu piety or even Hindu kitchen odors. It has to do with the fact that Krishna is in His abode and that He loves us.

We chant and paint the world
white "blue-throated Siva and
Balarama's dress turned white
upon hearing sound the pure sound of
Lord Hari's *venu*
singing in moonlight.

* * *

Preaching sustains the devotees. We cheer the man who formed a committee and built it up, who erased debts and increased the staff, who bought office equipment and chased away blues, and who reinstated pizza on Friday nights to inspire his colleagues. To him, who has now passed away, we offer our thanks.

Preachers should never forget one another.

* * *

Krishna sonnet socks home
Gita truths en route
the Paris police stopped
harinama. Those who lost taste and
courage stopped chanting on the streets.
Others persisted.

Preaching is contagious. Be near a preacher and feel the kind, compassionate, divine spark.

This Prabhupada wanted for all of us.

* * *

4:30 p.m.

It's hard to read, it's hard to pray. I heard the mail fall into the chute and went downstairs. Among the many pieces was a pamphlet from the Divine Word Missionary. They had this little meditation, which I thought I could apply to my reading and *japa*:

The God-ward movement prayer means putting yourself near God, with God, in a time of quietness every day. You put yourself with Him just as you are, in the feebleness of your concentration, in your lack of warmth and desires "not trying to manufacture pious thoughts or phrases. You put yourself with God, empty perhaps but hungry and thirsty for Him; and if, in sincerity, you cannot say that you want God, you can perhaps tell Him that you want to want Him; and if you cannot say even that, perhaps you can say that you want to want to want Him! Thus you can be very near Him in your naked sincerity. You are with God not by achieving certain pious or devotional exercises in His presence but by daring to be yourself as you reach toward Him.

"Lord Ramsey, Late Archbishop of Canterbury

As I am. Pushing myself to finish the chapter on Krishna's qualities. Can't read with attention. What am I trying to accomplish in this way? O Krishna, do I dare to be with You, knowing that You know the foolish reluctance and disinterest of my outer covering? I am really Your loving servant, just like those about whom I am reading in NOD.

God has inconceivable energies, but He's still a person. He performs pastimes as if He were a human being. Although He is unlimited, He has become limited by the love of Mother Yashoda. Unborn and born, always living in Goloka Vrndavana yet present within every atom. It's no wonder we stumble. We tend to think it's make-believe or that Krishna is an ordinary hero "or we just don't know what to do with Him.

* * *

Sampler's Poetry Hall #9

Sampler's Poetry Hall "that's what the sign said outside the auditorium. I entered in my blue jeans, a saffron *dhoti* over them. They could see I was a Hare Krishna. Someone asked, "What do the Krishnas think about poetry?" Someone else thought I was there to learn a new way to push my propaganda. I did some low-level preaching. Then the bell rang, and I entered the auditorium with the other students. But there was no Ms. Sampler and no chalkboard. There was only a sign saying "AUM" hanging from the ceiling. At least it was something I could relate to, and I was grateful enough for that. I looked up at it regularly while I wrote my poem.

It was 5:30 p.m. and still raining. That hall let me forget the critics and editors for a while, and when I was done writing, I wasn't sure what I had done. As I left, I saluted Krishna in my mind. Then I returned to my apartment to chant a round on my beads.

* * *

Om and rain and that musician who recorded *Om*
although he didn't know that Krishna is
the source of *pranava*. *Om* is simply blankness
to them, not the sound

of God.

* * *

All day I strained to read a certain
number of pages and I forgot what is a poem
or a rutabaga. Saw an old pineapple slice
on a wet piece of *sandeSa* and thought
I shouldn't feed the gerbil
too much.

* * *

My friends want me to name the new house
as others have in the area "Pancavati
and Gaura-bhavan.
I thought and said, "How about
'My Old Flame'? Or like the frame over the
door: 'Pittsburgh Pirates'?"
No, I'm joking. They were looking for something
like "*Nirjana-bhajana Kutir*," or better yet
according to some
"retreat Center," so that others
could come and participate.
After all, this is a preaching movement.

* * *

Pro-active and pro-retroactive the committee said
for the first time in history a woman has been elected
to the GBC. They speak about the sensitive issue
of child abuse and the
earth shakes on.
I'm just a guy who insists on writing
scattered verses
and on wondering whether this
is the most responsible thing for me to do.
He thinks it is.

* * *

Hey, I'm into finding myself, so why not call the house
"My Krishna Place" "the place in which I'd like to
live but that's up to Krishna. It's my streetcar
named Desire
my attempt to find *laulyam*.
I know you're sorry you asked by now.

* * *

Night Notes, 5:24 p.m.

Can I say something wonderful to close out the day? Don't have to. Srila Prabhupada called me in to close his curtains for two nights in a row in Los Angeles. It was a sweet touch. Please don't forget me, Srila Prabhupada. I don't know if we can meet with our being who we are now, or whether things will revert to something previous. But I have had to change. I couldn't stay the same, except in my desire to serve you. I have learned to dare to come before you as I am now, pious or impious, dirty or clean. You must have been shocked when you first met me. Can I be any worse now?

March 26, 12 midnight

Dhirodatta, *dhira-lalita*, *dhira-praSanta*, and *dhiroddhata* (I know devotees by all those names, but I'll put that aside for now). Lord Krishna contains all these heroic traits. If we think, "But these are the worldly traits of a human hero," we should remember that everything originates in Krishna. He is the full person containing all traits. Any human trait is petty when compared to the transcendental expression of His personality.

Lord Indra praises Lord Krishna's noble behavior (*dhirodatta*) when He lifts Govardhana Hill. He teases Srimati Radharani in the company of the *gopis* (*dhira-lalita*). In His considerate dealings with the Pandavas, Lord Krishna exhibits the traits of a *dhira-praSanta*. In the way He challenges demons, Lord Krishna exhibits the *dhiroddhata* personality. "One should try to understand the traits of Krishna from authorities and try to understand how these characteristics are employed by the supreme will of the Lord." (NOD, p. 198)

Krishna is also *satsvarupa*, the inner form of truth (I know a devotee by that name too, but again, we won't go into that now). Let's continue to consider His transcendental qualities. Again, don't be startled to hear that Krishna has qualities associated with great human behavior. He is not a faceless patriarch. During the Govardhana *lila*, He both protects His friends and remains neutral (as opposed to vengeful) toward the offender, Indra. Lord Krishna enjoys Himself in Kamsa's wrestling arena. In His sweet and simple dealings with radha, such as when He makes Her a garland or glances at Her beauty, He is most pleasing. Lord Krishna is also dependable, so "all kinds of men, from the demigods down to the uncultured, can rely on the causeless mercy of the Supreme Lord." (NOD, p. 200)

Krishna is steady when He defeats Banasura, and He doesn't care about Lord Siva's anger. The impersonalists won't like this one, but we do: Krishna is a meticulous dresser. ". . . when He was preparing to kill demons like Aristasura, He would take care to arrange His belt very nicely." And so we may assist Lord Krishna and Srimati Radharani by meticulously dressing Them day and night.

Yesterday, I struggled to cross this chapter of NOD, and it appeared as harsh as a desert. Today I am relishing it. Who can understand? O Krishna, You really are the ocean of mercy.

The Nectar of Devotion next describes Lord Krishna's devotees, all of whom are classified either as *sadhakas* or as perfect devotees. From the description of the *sadhaka*, I think few of us would be able to count ourselves in that category. A *sadhaka* is already experiencing *bhava-bhakti*; he is quite close to achieving

perfection. Most of us are only aspiring to become devotees, and often we don't even seem to be doing that. Whatever we do "beating the *mrdanga*, lighting the yajnic fire, serving *prasadam* to the devotees, chanting the holy names on beads, lecturing, writing "we can do whatever we like, but we should never forget our lack of qualification. We can perfect ourselves by making gradual progress through the stages of *bhakti*, and in rare cases, by receiving the Lord's causeless mercy even without executing the details. The wives of the yajnic *brahmanas* were fortunate enough to have received Lord Krishna's causeless mercy, and their husbands praised them for this fortune.

"Anyone who becomes exhilarated by hearing of the pastimes of Lord Krishna when He was present on this earth with His associates is to be understood as *nitya-siddha*, eternally perfect." (NOD, p. 205) Lord Krishna acts as a personal friend with His *nitya-siddha* devotees. Such devotees are part of His eternal entourage.

"When a devotee is never tired of executing devotional service and is always engaged in Krishna conscious activities, constantly relishing the transcendental mellows in relationship with Krishna, he is called perfect." (NOD, p. 203)

Thank you, Krishna, for this morning's reading session. It's simple enough, this clarity and submission and eagerness to hear "the position of student "but I can't experience it whenever I will it. It is only by Your grace. You are in my heart, and You can manifest in my intelligence. It's unfortunate that I have so much misused my free will that I am now so covered. Please help me.

* * *

4:32 a.m.

Hearing *Lalita-madhava*. Krishna in Dvaraka is watching a drama in which He appears in Vrndavana with Radha. Dvaraka Krishna says He has suffered so much in separation, but the play fulfills His desire to be with Radha. In the play, Jatila is called a witch. Mukhara sits in the audience and runs forward when she sees Radha appear in the play. She thought Radha had gone to the sun planet. Krishna wants to embrace Radha. Uddhava reminds Him that these are Gandharva players in a drama, and the Lord regains His sobriety.

The prayers describing the spiritual master say that he is always thinking of radha-Madhava and serving Them. Their pastimes are matchless. Earlier, while in the bathroom, I heard Srila Prabhupada tell a Bombay audience that the Indians will walk down the whole road carrying a transistor radio, but they are ashamed to walk about with a beadbag. Becoming a devotee may mean tolerating the criticism of peers. This age is more liberal, not as cruel as the days in which Haridasa Thakura lived. He was beaten for chanting Hare Krishna. Still, people often criticize us for our attempts at devotion, and those who are weak in their devotional identity tend to give up their Krishna conscious practices to avoid the teasing. As he spoke, I thought about how brave Srila Prabhupada was. He was so devoted to Sri Krishna that people criticized *him*. He came to America with no compromise in *sannyasa* dress or habits. He never took up Western habits, but introduced Vedic habits on the Lower East Side.

Now let us herald the springtime by at least heading out into the backyard this afternoon. The longer walks seem to cause headaches.

* * *

Free-write for the sleepy. All the books said so, but I shove them away. The Lord says, "Surrender unto Me," and, "Let there be worship of one God, Krishna, in one land, Vrndavana." He also assures us that the *gopis* are the best devotees. These are the tenets of Lord Caitanya's teachings.

Springboard into the ocean of Krishna science. Something falls off the graceful swan. Krishna, the swan of my mind. The taxidermist, the dermatologist. The skin of a man and woman. We use the phrase, "skin-deep," and know we can't love God that way. We can love Him through our surrender, our service, and our eagerness to hear about Him from our spiritual master. One day we'll actually grow up in *bhakti*. Nothing can be forced. We can study the writings of Rupa Gosvami, but we cannot force the *Suddha-sattva* to descend. We once thought someone else would make it descend on our behalf as we heard, unprecedented, from someone who filled his talks with *rasika* content. But it doesn't work that way.

In the meantime, we can keep whatever foothold we have and try to climb from there. Be happy in this land of rainbows. Yesterday, the turf man arrived and dropped his load, and Madhu told me that the work is still going slowly. It may be two years until everything is finished. Murphy's law: What might go wrong will actually go wrong. You have to live through it anyway.

* * *

O Lord Krishna, You tell us to surrender to You. We can't surrender to Bob Larkin and call it surrender to Krishna. No. I feel like I'm stumbling toward the finish line. Some say we should keep talking about anything at all so we don't fall asleep, because if we fall asleep, we might die. Yes, we are like jockeys mounting the horse of time and whipping it to the finish line, praying not to hit any detours. I heard of a boy who was killed by a bulldozer, for example. Some people thought he went to heaven, and others thought he simply evaporated. O Krishna.

There are things even an ordinary *bhakta* avoids. An ordinary *bhakta* is not a *sadhaka*; he's not so perfect. He doesn't like tomatoes, and they aren't good for him anyway. He needs more vitamin B. In-the-clouds Krishna.

* * *

Click, Click Dandavats
& Well, it was a sunny-rainy day
the big speaker on the radio
was booming in my
alone-boy's room "1950s "but
not too loud.

* * *

Click click, little did I
know (not at all) that I'd become a *sadhu*
or at least an aspiring *sadhu*
with real

Resolve.

* * *

Didn't know the DeBoer
brothers would drown. Didn't
know I'd be lifted out.

* * *

I tell you this life has had
fascinatin' rhythm
but don't tap your foot.
Piece by piece it has been built
like boards creating an altar
and I have been happy
most of the time
to wait for it to be completed.

* * *

That's my refrain, and I
haven't wanted to be interrupted from
singing it.
Living with Providence
learning that to be alert
in the science of God you need emotions;
a hard heart won't work.

* * *

Jubilation is fine "one after
another we assert what sounds
like devotion and an artist's control.
Then date and sign it, each
spirit soul. We know Krishna
is ever-fresh never tired, always
above modes, filled with nectar,
and that Rupa wrote ecstatic from
his God-vision.

* * *

They never tire, never
quit, are considerate and
can get angry for Krishna "I'm
talking of *sadhus* with qualities
in part what
God has in full
(even God lacks four qualities
unique to Krishna).

* * *

And Krishna is subordinate to Radha.
Nectar ocean
desert heart
I offer my devotion
dandavats hundreds
of times a day. "

* * *

8:05 a.m.

Krishna becomes the impetus for attraction to Himself in ecstatic love. The *gopis* praise His beauty in his *kaiSora* age. Head down "mine "how'd it get there? I wake with eyes closed; think of Krishna in His beautiful youthful features. He's so attractive! I *like* the fact that He's attractive, that God is a young cowherd boy, and that everyone loves Him in the rural setting where He plays His flute and tends the cows. His beauty challenges the beauty of nature. Comparing Him to nature is an attempt to praise His bodily features.

He dresses His hair in different ways. "In Vrndavana, He used to put on reddish garments, with a golden shirt on His body and an orange-colored turban on His head." Different kinds of belts, His beautiful smiles, His flutes from short to long (*venu*, *murali*, and *vamSi*) "He increases the transcendental bliss of His associates.

* * *

9:52 a.m.

If I use the pen with the recessed point, it will stain my finger black. I don't want black fingers when I worship Srila Prabhupada. The front door squeaks like a child crying. During my first two days here, I thought that door squeak was Varsana crying.

Madhu couldn't sleep last night, because he was worrying about the mounting costs on the house and an altercation he had with one of the worker-devotees. M. told him to put a gate on in a certain way, but the devotee did it in his own way. I had nothing much to say about that, but we are investing quite a bit in living in that house. Ultimately, Krishna will decide whether we can actually stay, and if He allows it through the unrolling of Time, then it's up to me to use the place well. If Krishna sends us elsewhere, however, it's still up to me to use my life well.

By writing. One day, the old fans will turn out to see me, and a favorable reviewer will write, "He still has the right stuff and plays harder than he used to in his salad days." Unlikely. I could do a solo in a smaller venue, an underground act. After I'm gone, they can play it for laughs. It may seem deviant and volatile now, but later they'll see I was a loyal but comic social commentator. Even the GBC men will have a laugh as I hold the hand mirror up to our faces and our ISKCON psyche.

10:00 a.m. and it's another rainy day.

Friends . . . close friends
no fiends no storks
on muddy bank. Oh,

what's in the mail?
Oh, hell, my fingernails ain't
bitten at. I'm a good
reformed peacemaker.
Tell stories of no malice,
got genuine concern for the
mind at time of death and
yet an active use of *yukta-*
vairagya.

* * *

So I'll tell him no more golf
indoors or out, and no more
Jean Shepherd in print or
audio and "we haven't completed
our investigation yet. If you
are indulging in improvisation "
in poem or prose (I think that covers it
all past and present, night or
day, by no man-made or *deva-*
made weapons or devices): Cease it!

* * *

Then report to us in three months how you have complied. Because we mean business. The message was signed by a computer-scanned group signature, "The Highest and Wisest Ecclesiastical Body (including one woman)."

They watch from the fire watchtower and sound the alert if they spot a recluse. I see frowns deepening, but I put on my headache T-shirt, ditch my stashes of improvised poems, and make sure I'm seem standing prayerfully before my altar.

"Oh, *haribol* Prabhu. What brings you to this hinterland?"

"Is that a collection of Rilke's love letters to one of his ridiculous mistresses?"

"Where? Oh, that. No, that's the eternal Rilke who wrote the poems, *Stories of God*."

"Hmph."

"Are they gone? Now I can get back to reading NOD."

* * *

10:29 a.m.

Anubhava: the bodily symptoms of ecstasy. It includes dancing, rolling on the ground, and many others. Ever do any of that? *Anubhavas* relieve the pressure of *bhava*. They also express the devotee's divinely maddened attachment to Krishna and deepen his or her attachment to Him. Lord Siva broke into dance and played his *din-din* drum when he beheld Lord Krishna's face during the *rasa* dance. This is a section we read but don't try to apply.

Singing loudly. Stretching the body. Yawning. *I yawn*, but only when I'm tired or bored. I've seen devotees manifest the symptom, "Neglecting the presence of others."

They chant or receive their guru in public, bow down on cement sidewalks, smile openly, give garlands, etc., without caring about the outsiders. I'm always aware of the unfriendly or neutral presence of outsiders, and try not to provoke it or allow them to see our inner *bhava*.

* * *

12 noon

Slight twinge; I can't read now. Canceled watching the video the devotees took showing the St. Paddy's Day parade. M. gave me an update on the progress of the house. Then I turned over my little stash of Ben Franklins. Hope to have lunch early; perhaps it will help me recover without the pill. These are beautiful days, and I want to take them one at a time as the gift of the Supreme Lord.

Raise your hand if you know what "Newk's Time" means.

No response.

Raise your hand if you can say the difference between *anubhava* and *sattvika-bhava*.

Two hands.

* * *

2:04 p.m.

These terms are too technical to use in lecturing "*mukhya-snigdha-sattvika-bhava* (direct moist existential ecstatic love), *gauna-snigdha-sattvika-bhava* (indirect moist . . .), burnt, dried out . . . For me, it's best when I read the example as a pastime, as *Krishna-katha*, and don't try to analyze it too much. I like to hear that Srimati Radharani was making a garland, and when She heard Krishna's flute, She became stunned. It's not actually so important to me to know that "This is an example of direct moistened existential ecstatic love." (NOD, p. 223) I can imagine my getting this wrong on an exam, confusing it with some other *uddipana* or *anubhava*, or whatever. I would thereby fail to obtain my diploma at the *bhakti-vaibhava* level. Still, like the illiterate *brahmanain* the Rangaksetra temple, I can recall fondly the image of the Lord reciprocating with His pure devotees. This doesn't mean that study is unimportant. I just mean that my inability to assimilate all these terms is yet another example of my inability to enter the ocean, either to participate in ecstasy or as a scholar of *rasa*.

At midnight today when I read of Krishna as *dhirodatta*, *dhira-lalita*, etc., I relished both the *lilas* and His wonderful, contradictory traits one after another. The sections read like succinct *darSanas*. The exact context, the point that Rupa Gosvami was making, was not so crucial to me. Maybe one day or in a future lifetime I'll be able to enjoy on more levels. Such study can deepen ecstasy and conviction.

Just see how strong are the emotions. Serving Krishna intently and intimately is not complacent. We feel the same symptoms now in relation to our own bodies, but a pure devotee is devastated by his exchange with Krishna. Just by seeing a peacock feather or hearing Krishna's flute, tears pour from the eyes. The more we hear of these things, the more we realize that ecstasy is an authentic expression of love of God.

* * *

Preaching and Poems #13

Confessions of a Slouch

1

There now, you can go easy and still preach something, stunned; they were stunned
I said I don't want pain
or paint "paint the walls.
We want to witness . . . when we are
with good preachers they will
inspire
and I hope not intimidate
so we choose to
go home.

* * *

Gosh, God, sure we'd like to go back to Godhead as a reward for great preaching, but
we don't like to proselytize or push ourselves out
idle, "*Santa-rasa*" guy sits back,
doesn't want to go out . . .

* * *

Not that. Better he puts himself out works
to be a good guy. Get the cake, the award. Bring out your *sankirtana* stories galore.
That takes *courage*!

* * *

2

Man, I was drinking water when the idea came to me to make a multi-media
preaching machine with floppy-eared elephants filled with helium for kids. They could
climb on them and psychologists would find that appealing. They could add it to their
indexed photos on "Hare Krishna, Cult."

My preaching idea "even the idea was a form of preaching.
But years ago, when there was less technology,
devotees preached while walking "no
megaphones.
People still hooted and hollered
as they do today.

* * *

Dovetailed his preaching with income
selling trinkets "but don't put him down.
What are *you* doing?
To preach . . .
I feel pain. That's what I'm doing. Do I deserve a medal
for services hoped for?
I'm not finished,
not yet,

just delayed and worse,
each one more pain
but then
no one has had it easy
in this life, have they?
We live with Hare Krishna on tap
presenting the message until our teeth fall out
hoping the pain earns us credit
because we are suffering for Lord Caitanya.

* * *

3

Nameless preacher tells a story then
paints it in soft
ice-cream colors
even *sells* it
the most popular event at the preaching festival
country
Ratha-yatra.

Cripes, I mean, jeepers, this course will be delayed until I get my notes together. I'm done with extemporaneous speaking.

O preacher, our Prabhupada will never lag. You don't have to listen to those arrogant or even obnoxious people who compare one another to them and their armies. It just doesn't inspire enough, and anyway, we've said enough on *that* theme. Let's sing, knowing we have to follow our master, who was a real preacher, a real devotee, and full of compassion.

* * *

4

Swami, I'm happy in your service
waiting for mail, for hail
for praise
but all I get is blame
and life deals
four- and three-fold blows.
Christ, this body aches and people
seem to want to torture it because they just
don't know

* * *

I'm worn out and hurt.
Still, I want to be true to you
to offer praise
to preach

I really do
want to do that.

* * *

#5

The sad part is we all want to be devotees. The world *needs* devotees
and where else will they come from?
More preachers are dug out by compassionate men
and women who knock on their doors
speak with embarrassment
from crippled notes
and who ask them to give money
to help the cause.
That's where more preachers come from.

* * *

Sampler's Poetry Hall #10

On entering the hall we saw a sign posted:

Break into small groups of three and four and discuss among yourselves before
writing. Consider this: All artists sacrifice personal happiness in pursuit of something
that will live beyond their earthly sufferings.

I didn't want to meet with any group, but others came forward "a dog, a woman, and
one other man, and we formed a group. We sat at a picnic table under a eucalyptus tree
outside. I had a bit of a headache, which I hadn't been able to chase away with a pill.
Then we each introduced ourselves by name and whatever else seemed relevant.

"I cannot write," said the man, "unless I have the perfect conjunction of isolation and
serenity."

"I can't write," the woman said, "until I do at least nine drafts."

We took turns petting the dog. It didn't write. I mentioned something I'd read in
William Stafford about it being easy to write, that we ought to forgive each other.

"Is that also your religious belief?" the man asked. We took more turns petting the
dog.

"No," I said. "Anyway . . . shall we write on that theme of suffering and how your
work outlives it?"

"Sounds like a tall order," the woman mumbled. "It would take me ten years just to
think about it."

"How about ten minutes?" I asked. We agreed and wrote while the dog wandered off
to find himself a tree, then disappeared from my life forever.

* * *

"I am the taste in water" "picture
of Prabhupada, hands in prayer
standing before the altar at Krishna-Balaram,
India. These sights surround me.

* * *

Why talk of suffering and the attempt
to outlive it? Just write while you're here
while you may in
March at a picnic table
with a man and
woman, fellow sufferers,
and a missing dog.

* * *

That I suffer doesn't mean I have
the right to cheat or kill or even
call myself an artist. It gives me only
the right, as spirit soul, to cry to Krishna
to praise what *He* does
in my life and aside
from it,
to see my struggle
to attain Him.
Whether that will live after me others
can decide. I worry only about where *I*
will go. One of two dogs in Switzerland?
To write of the soul's journey
for the present and
for posterity.

* * *

Yes, live for that. The wind is blowing up
and it will probably rain. I have no other
topic. But still, I must fill this page
forward and sideways
while pain subsides in me
and perhaps increases
in you
and we both live on
O art O
poem, and after
we're gone, it only matters
whether God was pleased.
Otherwise, what is the use of being
installed in an alabaster hall of fame
winner of the National Book Award for 1933.
Just forgive
and forget

and chant Hare Krishna.

* * *

6:05 p.m.

Get into bed, you cur, with no mistress. Beg for sanity, no overnight stroke, and an ability and willingness to rise at midnight for reading and writing. And when I talk to myself, may I also speak for others.

"Here's that rainy day again." I said that to Madhava on my imaginary cell phone. And until I'm gone, please bring the *tulasi*, Hare Krishna dasi, and a few daffodils in vases, for Radha-Govinda. I'm content here.

March 27, 12:09 a.m.

We used to joke and say we were manifesting ecstatic symptoms. For example, the hiccups we had because we had overeaten, or our "devastation." "Sometimes, while participating in ceremonies celebrating Krishna's pastimes, or in the society of devotees, there is dancing ecstasy. Such sentiments are called blazing.

"None of the above symptoms can be manifested without the basic principle of strong attachment for Krishna." (NOD, p. 229)

Oh, I dreamt I fell for someone and was devastated, my head wheeling. I shed tears and my hair stood on end (it did that again when an enemy wound up to hit me in the face with his big fist). Yeah, I was ready to go for it "all symptoms of ecstasy present "but before acting, I took a walk to think it over. I befriended each dog that approached me. Halfway through the walk, I decided to renounce this passion, then realized I was only dreaming anyway. I felt light enough to sing.

That's a story someone could write, but it has nothing to do with *sattvika-bhava*, except perhaps that he was happy that Krishna had again saved his neck.

Yes, it's nice to know the language of ecstasy. If we could only relish such concepts in Krishna consciousness "these little descriptions of pure devotees experiencing transcendental bliss. "For example, one of Krishna's friends told Him, 'My dear friend, as soon as I heard the sound of Your flute from within the forest, my hands became almost motionless, and the eyes became full of tears "so much so, in fact, that I could not recognize Your peacock feather. My thighs became almost stunned so that I could not move even an inch. Therefore, my dear friend, I must acknowledge the wonderful vibration of Your transcendental flute.'" (NOD, p. 230)

"When similar symptoms were manifest in the body of Srimati Radharani, some of Her friends criticized Her: 'Dear friend, You are blaming the aroma of the flowers for the tears in Your eyes. You are rebuking the air for the standing of the hairs on Your body. And You are cursing Your walking in the forest for Your thighs being stunned. But Your faltering voice reveals the cause to be different: it is just Your attachment for Krishna!'" (NOD, p. 230)

We read in *Caitanya-caritamrta* how Lord Caitanya's body was like a battlefield of conflicting ecstatic emotions felt in *maha-bhava*.

* * *

Well, I'm up somehow, but I didn't sleep much. M. didn't come back until 9 p.m. Then he went right out again to join in at a local festival of Irish traditional musicians. I was sitting in bed, stunned with the pseudo, non-existent, ecstatic symptoms of headache, indigestion, and sleeplessness caused by the uncertainty of whether anyone was in the house. I got up and looked at the sky through the skylight. I saw stars, which I usually don't see much of because I go to bed so early. I thought maybe I could write something . . . about stars? Then back to bed, sleepless. The room felt too warm. I worried that if these non-ecstatic symptoms persisted, I wouldn't be able to rise at midnight to read more *Nectar of Devotion*. I did want this session very much, and my early-morning *japa* session too. Anyway, here I am, and so far, so good, although I'm always spiritually asleep, even when I appear to be awake. To discuss my condition as spiritual, after reading of the blazing *sattvika-bhavas*, seems too ludicrous.

Now we will cover the thirty-three *vyabhicari-bhavas*, each supported by a Sastric example. Rupa Gosvami made it clear in the previous chapter that devotional service is so powerful that even fools, nondevotees, Mayavadis, and emotionally-prone people may cry or tremble, when they contact Krishna in some way. In those cases, and also in the case of a theatrical performer, the symptoms are not genuine ecstasies. We shouldn't be confused by such displays. Therefore we read about the symptoms and jest. What else can we say? Our jesting seems more natural than making any strange claims for ourselves.

"When one is forced to act in a way which is forbidden, or to refrain from acting in a way which is proper, he becomes regretful and thinks himself dishonored. At that time there is a sense of disappointment. In this kind of disappointment one becomes full of anxiety, sheds tears, changes bodily color, feels humility and breathes heavily." (NOD, p. 233)

* * *

6:47 a.m.

Japa "gone now a minute ago. The rubber band snaps back to no chanting. It was living in me, percolating through the layers. Hare Krishna. Make sure you say that last syllable. What to say of it as you look back except, "I chanted"? Say scriptural things? My actual rumbling? I didn't want to be interrupted, I kept the pace.

Japa express count

red beads

please Prabhupada

because he asked me

and therefore I chant

to put Lord Hari into my blood and pulse and mind and affections.

* * *

4:40 a.m.

Hearing *Lalita-madhava*: Rukmini is going to commit suicide because she thinks Krishna has forgotten Her. Then He arrives at Her place and saves Her, kidnapping Her from SiSupala's hands. Krishna also promises to marry Radha, but . . . The play's action will unfold further.

A poetry book by Robert Service just arrived "from the sublime to the ridiculous. He writes with rhyme and rhythm, and defends his work. What else? I want to tell Madhu to give me a lighter breakfast. A manuscript arrived in the mail for me to read for correction, my old *Progresso* written when I was less free. "Damn the critics," I said. Make peace and mix for Krishna. Tell the true story of your life. I became more permissive after *Progresso*. One thing I remember from those days is that I used dynamite to write through blocks. I don't seem to possess much TNT anymore. Instead, I have a steady flow here "not so many dry seasons. Here, it always rains, and streams are always gurgling even though they may not have big mountain peaks or waterfalls. Strong torrents course through the Wicklow forests.

Back later.

* * *

Progresso

& I said I didn't want to be sorry
I missed the KC boat to Goloka "I
said that on March 27.

* * *

They didn't kill any of my friends yesterday,
not that I know of. I looked out the window
at night when I couldn't sleep and saw lights on
in several houses in this valley.

* * *

Krishna is real He interrupted the marriage plans
of SiSupala and
saved Rukmini, accepting Her as His wife.
O Grand Canyon, my
old auntie
you are what you seem.

* * *

The people in my life that count are dear
to me. I love to write them notes
and move together through the progressive
flow of production
my eyeglasses falling down the front of
my nose "herald to
old-age shrinking.

* * *

But I don't need a shrink to figure
out why I almost died and at least fried
in ISKCON in the 1970 - 80 - 90s.
It's just the nature of the animal
that we wee-weed and forgot "
Krishna? Now if I were a member
of a Hare Krishna band I'd
quote Krishna lyrics and
supply *katha*,
speak of *avatars*, *Sastras*,
gurus, karma, *bhakti*, *prema* "
and this new arsenal "
vyabhicari and *anubhava*
until they got
sick of me, this
devotee in anguish . . . "

* * *

8:35 a.m.

Fatigue, guilt, lamentation, and shyness can all be forms of ecstatic devotion. It's ecstatic to be proud when in the shelter of Krishna's lotus feet.

Little Jayananda was sent by his parents to live at the *gurukula* in Wicklow. On his first day here, he was happy to wear his yellow *dhoti* uniform, but when his mother left, he began to cry. He told the *aSrama* teacher, "I love my mommy and daddy." Maybe he'll have to return to them where he can vent his rage, stick out his tongue at his mother, grab a snack from the fridge whenever he wants, where his dad will be his only teacher, and he won't wear a yellow *dhoti*.

It's hard for me right now to read of the examples under each of the thirty-three *vyabhicari-bhavas*, because each is so nice and deserves attention. I just can't seem to slow down enough to hear them properly. Better I leave them and return later. Mother Yashoda was afraid for Krishna when she heard the jackals howling in the Vrndavana night. The wives of the yajnic *brahmanas* became intensely emotional when they heard that Krishna was nearby and that they would have the opportunity to meet Him. It's wonderful how the Vrajavasis express their emotion for Krishna "His safety, His pleasure. The *gopis* inquired from the trees and the sky when they were searching for Krishna during the *rasa* dance pastime. "This is an instance of ecstatic madness on the part of devotees." (NOD, p. 244)

Sometimes devotees appear diseased, such as when they were afflicted by separation when Krishna went to Mathura. When Maharaja Pariksit asked Sukadeva Gosvami about Lord Ananta, Sukadeva showed symptoms of collapse, but he checked himself and replied in a mild voice. "This collapsing condition is described as a feverish state resulting from ecstatic pleasure." (NOD, p. 245)

* * *

11:45 a.m.

Clear day, and I am eating up my time with things to do. I read the entire *Progresso* manuscript, and that made me happy. Another book about to be published. Krishna is kind to me, although it seems I have to pay certain dues.

Just about to watch the video of the devotees at the St. Paddy's Day parade. Used hot and cold water to shock my body during my noon bath. I didn't put on fresh *tilaka*, because I need to keep my forehead free to splash water at it if the pain comes up.

Gayatri. Srila Prabhupada provides his followers with enthusiasm, so may we reciprocate, praying to remain enthusiastic in his service.

* * *

2:20 p.m.

More *vyabhicari-bhavas*. Srimati Radharani became confused when she visited places of Her pastimes with Krishna. She was attacked by feelings of separation and became overcome by dizziness.

Even when meeting death, devotees experience an ecstasy of remembrance of Krishna. "Even at the time of death, when all the functions of the body become dislocated, the devotee can remember Krishna in his innermost consciousness, and this saves him from falling down in material existence . . . Krishna consciousness immediately takes one from the material platform to the spiritual world." (NOD, pp. 247 - 48)

Sometimes devotees become inert due to the ecstasy of serving Krishna or hearing His flute. Sometimes devotees bow their heads in bashfulness before Krishna. The *gopis* conceal their love from Krishna by speaking as if they were angry with Him. When pure devotees see something that reminds them of Krishna, they experience an ecstasy of remembrance. This happened to Radharani when She saw a bluish cloud. Anxieties can be ecstatic flair-ups of love for Krishna. A pure devotee can also endure anything for Krishna. "In other words, when one is in ecstatic love with the Personality of Godhead, he can endure any kind of disadvantages calculated under the material concept of life." (NOD, p. 254)

Sometimes pure devotees insult Krishna out of ecstatic love. They become dizzy, they talk in their sleep, they become alert, all in relation with Krishna.

* * *

Preaching and Poems #14
Asking Him To Do Better

1

Krishna, this afternoon I am dedicating myself to You. For so long I have been outside Your embrace. How can I hope to return to it now?

Krishna, there appears to be no real finality on this path. We can only keep going, wanting to love You more and more.

O Krishna, may I serve You more? May I be better at Krishna consciousness? May I try to please You as more than routine? I used to visit ten cities at a time, and now I look for quality. A devotee should always be increasing his or her service attitude, always

longing to see You, always eager to cry hot and cold tears, to defeat Your enemies, to tell others about You, to establish Krishna consciousness in his or her own heart and the hearts of others. But each of us seems so limited.

* * *

2

There was once a festival in which each devotee worked so hard, then went out to meet the folks. They put *gopi* dots on people's foreheads, and sang in the all-women's *bhajana* band. The men lifted Jagannatha onto the cart and away they all went "a trip to Tip.

What is my point? Well, I suppose I don't have *that* much to say about this festival, or about the topic, "Asking Him to Do Better," so let us intone the Lord's holy name. In the holy name "a *vaidhi-bhakta* speaks from force, fear, righteousness, but not spontaneous love or a specific awareness of his relationship with Krishna "

he's on the trail and promises to pace the room or take a walk

use vowels and consonants

dentals and labials

pure sound to evoke

the most beautiful flower.

He's no eunuch lover "empty of substance "when he chants.

He simply has to bring it out

his love

I mean.

* * *

3

This rambling fellow can't get to the point because he doesn't know what that is.

Because he's frittering his life away without a refrain. It will show even more in the future. "But just wait," he says. "In the future I'm going to do something so good, so to the point, so well constructed, so renounced, so scholarly, that you will say ""

"It was worth waiting for. He's redeemed himself, thank God."

Then you can ask, "How many books

dollars

members

properties

did you bag for Krishna and

into ISKCON's coffers?

* * *

Sober one belies promise made. That's the bottom line: act properly and tell others about Krishna. Exult Krishna consciousness without condemning other religions. Stick to your "four books are enough" and your one society, one *dharma*, and live in truth.

* * *

4:53 p.m.

I walked on the gravel in the backyard. Saw a newborn calf so awkward on its feet that it couldn't get at his mother's fat udder. When I returned to the house, I headed for NOD, but before I could begin, a man delivered a package from Airborne. It's the forwarded mail. read the articles in *Hare Krishna World*, and something about the Women's Ministry. Quiet now. Opened a letter or two.

* * *

5:05 p.m.

Hare Krishna World is, of course, filled with ads, meeting notices, and current events. I can really see how more and more devotees are communicating and accomplishing things by using computers. I looked at the paper, then put it away, then took it out and looked at it some more. Why? Because it confirms something for me.

A devotee wrote me a letter stating, "E-mail is part of my life now, but there are times when it feels like everything has sped up. I sometimes feel the stress of the accelerating change. I'm happy that there are those, like you who have decided not to join the World Wide Web." Another devotee writes from India to ask, "By the way, do you have e-mail? Nowadays it is easier to communicate through e-mail." And another: "If I am not mistaken, the message I keep getting from my Inner Being is to spend more time with myself. All the time I spend in the outer world, distracted and thinking about superficialities, the more wounded that Inner Being remains."

* * *

6:15 p.m.

The best *kirtana* ever. The most important meeting of the decade. Low prices. New . . . bad news coming. Predictions. Vedic system.

Man to restrict cow. Man happy hoopie. New CD features hip-hop, jazz, pop, and rock, all with the Vedic message. All proceeds go to Divine Farm, Heruba, New Mexico. SDG classics on sale, reduced prices.

Man to reduce. Offal. New lady grown old. Shaved man says, "Women are great. Just when we were getting sick of positions in management and guruship, they want them. Let them have them. They took care of us when we were babies, now let them manage the movement. We men owe a debt to women. I promise (if I'm elected) I'll do all in my power to see that women get on the GBC, and not just in token numbers."

Men reduced to smirks and grimaces. Judge tells lawyers to cut it out. Talk serious. Hare Krishna set available for the first time. There is for sale, in the ads section, thirty volumes of Srila Prabhupada's *Srimad-Bhagavatam* in the edition that I want, but the guy probably wants an arm and a leg for it. I'll try to get it some other way.

So, folks, as dusk descends upon these hills, I plan (if I'm elected) to live another day to read NOD at midnight. I'll try not to smirk or even grimace when I hear, "This meeting was the most important of the decade." What about when I met with some gorse last week?

March 28, 12:00 a.m.

Sometimes there are conjunctions of various symptoms of ecstatic love. Never before have the spiritual world or symptoms of ecstasy been described so minutely and scientifically. When feelings of conjunction arise, an eternal devotee, such as Mother Yashoda, will sometimes feel happiness for Krishna while simultaneously fearing for His safety. Srimati Radharani experienced external dissatisfaction when Krishna attacked Her at the Yamuna, while "within Herself She was smiling and feeling great satisfaction. . . . In this mood Radharani looked very beautiful, and Srila Rupa Gosvami glorifies Her beauty." (NOD, p. 267) A devotee exhibits various feelings in ecstatic love, yet the cause is only one: Krishna. Pure devotees, whether their hearts be grave or soft, cannot check the movements of their internal emotions for Krishna.

By contrast, some people have emotions which contain no love for Krishna. The self-disparagement of the yajnic *brahmanas* is like that. I suppose my feelings are also almost like that. How would an expert in *rasa* analyze me? What is the use of emotions not connected to Krishna?

Still, I can't deny that I do have at least a trace of affection for Krishna, and I do attempt to place Him at the center of my life. Therefore, when I hear about emotions like helplessness, etc., I think I may qualify in that regard. Or perhaps I am excluded from this whole field of *vyabhicari-bhava* and its reflections.

One area of study is to see how one can imagine ecstasy in a person who doesn't possess it. For example, a devotee might project his feelings of separation from Krishna onto a *kadamba* tree and imagine that the tree feels as he does. An ecstatic devotee passes through one emotion after another; the center is always Krishna. Even the despair of a pure devotee is ecstatic despair because it is so perfectly fixed on Krishna. Later, such a devotee is guaranteed satisfaction in Krishna consciousness. Thus we hear, "Disappointment gives rise to the greatest satisfaction."

The next topic is *sthayi-bhava*, or a discussion of one's eternal disposition to love Krishna in a particular way (*Santa, dasya, sakhya, vatsalya, or madhurya*).

Read and feel excluded; read and become included. We may not know our *sthayi-bhava*, but at least we know such a state exists. Most people in the world know nothing about this at all. They are *duskrtina*; their intelligence has been stolen by *maya*.

The mellow of conjugal love is most superior. rupa Gosvami leads us forward to favor this mellow, although we know so little about it. An ISKCON devotee once told me he wanted to cultivate *madhurya* topics because he has always wanted the best thing or the top position. Of course, this sentiment is not synonymous with spiritual greed for the *madhurya-bhava*, and when the perception of our eternal relationship with Krishna finally manifests in our hearts, we will be satisfied only with that relationship, no matter what it is. But if that hasn't happened, "An attraction for Krishna by the people in general or by children cannot take any specific or satisfactory position." (NOD, p. 271)

The Nectar of Devotion also mentions that sometimes the devotee who doesn't know his eternal relationship with Krishna reflects certain *rasas* according to his association with various devotees.

* * *

4:34 a.m.

Stuffy head and brain. Should I go back to sleep? What good will *that* do me? Can I not write through it? I could answer letters and give my energy to that, but the blur is too much for me. If I can just get through breakfast and onto my business meeting with Madhu, that will be an achievement.

One devotee wrote me about the typical politics he went through to survive as temple president. Inadvertently, he confirmed for me that my life is right the way it is. I will just have to take the little events in my life as significant. At least in this little world I am creating for myself.

Anyway, right now there's too much surface stuff in me, so maybe I should just take a walk.

But before I do, let me sankirtana was picked up by TV crews and broadcast around the world. Announcer comment: "The Hare Krishnas never miss a good party." Yes, we crash other people's events and sing our song. It's pushy, even presumptuous, in one sense, but we do it because we believe God's names should not be omitted from any party. Since we are so rarely invited to events in the world, we have no choice but to crash them.

I have to admit, however, that our collective aggression embarrasses me. Still, I admire the faith that motivates devotees. Srila Prabhupada liked us to go everywhere to chant, and it gives the devotees such happiness to glorify God in His holy name. Even when the reception is cold, devotees go on chanting and dancing, knowing that others are also receiving benefit by this activity.

* * *

Wrote to a devotee here and told her to protect her space. Her apartment was being overrun by devotees who were using it as a base to collect funds for their guru's festival. Yeah, I told her that because I'm a good guy. It's noble that she wants to preach and to associate with devotees, but she has to take care of herself too.

Yeah, I'm a good guy. I dress Radha and Govinda, and devotees write to me about their temple Deity worship and how they collect crores of dollars. I think my small Deities are just as important. Puffed up? No, I told you, I'm a good guy. I talk to one person, and they talk to fifty thousand. I collect twenty dollars, and they collect thirty-five crores. That's okay, because small is also beautiful.

A devotee writes, "As you must know," then goes on to tell me of an accident in the temple where the *murti* was broken. I didn't know. Someone else asks why I refuse to exchange personal writings with her by e-mail. First of all, I don't use e-mail, and second of all, I don't show my writings until I'm ready to publish. Not only that, but I've been wounded and I'm challenging the heavy-weight champ. I am down below the earth hiding in a Krishna conscious dream. I need to be quiet so as not to disturb it.

* * *

He Can't Wait

& Dragging you out there to sing in the streets.

You don't wanna? "Golden Nuggets" a

top band in Ghana (complete with

congkas) allowed the Hare Krishnas to share

the stage to
jam Hare Krishna

* * *

and they were all really blowing
but not like horns or
baritone saxes, tenors
and were they dying
in ecstasy?
Not one of them
wanted to come back.

* * *

Well, for that they would have to be
strict-rigid-stalwart
so centered on Krishna
you can't think of anything else.
You need a Krishna-guide
to inspire you and
to kick out all else.

* * *

You could ask your guru if ItMs are okay
and all he'd have to do is frown or turn
aside and you'd be willing to
hear that.
But who is there who can lead like that?

* * *

Someone told me he had fantasized that
he had met me in '71
but the man in the moon has too
new a tune for me to explain it.
"I'm lonely," another wrote, and I hoped
she would find a roommate.
Lonely "bare and inadequate
it is to say I prefer to
be alone with only a small back-
up team I can see briefly
and who mostly leave me alone to
Range around in trust.
Notes from under stars
over attic roof
he writes poems
as a happy

devotee. "

* * *

8:34 a.m.

I'm not sure I can burst mightily into *The Nectar of Devotion* right now. You know why I hesitate to put out the energy. It's for the same reason I don't go out, don't take on burdens. I have a mixed blessing and a curse. Without expending that energy, however, I won't be able to taste transcendental emotion. Simply quoting scripture does not make one eligible to taste its contents. And if we don't "get" it? Prabhupada assures us, "One should simply try to understand that on the spiritual platform there are many varieties of reciprocal love." (NOD, p. 279)

"Actually, the transactions of the spiritual world are inconceivable to us in our present state of life. . . . Understanding . . . is possible only when one is actually in touch with the pleasure potency of the Supreme Lord." (NOD, p. 279)

"Only persons who have dedicated their lives unto the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead can relish the real nectar of devotion." (NOD, p. 281)

Next we will hear about the five ways of devotional service on the western side of the ocean. The first is neutrality, which I sometimes joke and call my own tendency. I joke because I wouldn't want this lowest *rasa*.

* * *

10:10 a.m.

I want the reader to know that I am facing the fact that I am not an ideal devotee. Therefore, I don't pretend to speak as a perfect, *vyasasana* lecturer. Neither do I lament artificially about this shortcoming. If I feel lamentation, I express it, but otherwise I speak in the voice I find, sometimes Krishna conscious, sometimes not quite but aiming for it. We each have subtleties and varieties in our expression, but we should use our expression to at least point us back toward Krishna. Otherwise, how will we be able to return to the spiritual world? Sometimes, we are not looking for spiritual advancement, but peace and relaxation. Sometimes we indulge in foolishness. Sometimes we have a sudden fit of honesty, which is not always spiritual either. And sometimes, we get tired of all of it, feel the relative nature of almost everything we think and say, and crawl back to the training Srila Prabhupada gave us. O Krishna.

Then sometimes we write poems and preach, reach for the effects contained in words and music, try to praise God, and at last, pray.

* * *

11:50 a.m.

"A saintly person thinks like this: 'When shall I be able to live alone in the caves of the mountains? . . . When will it be possible for me to think always of the lotus feet of Mukunda? . . . When . . . shall I fully understand my days and nights to be insignificant moments in eternal time?'" (NOD, p. 288)

The *Santa-bhakta* sage mentioned in NOD laments that even though Lord Krishna was in Dvaraka at the time, he was unable to see Him because of his meditation. But

when a *Santa-bhakta* hears of the transcendental pastimes of Lord Krishna, he may shiver in ecstasy.

* * *

Question: If we don't know our particular *rasa* with Krishna, then what is the value of studying this information about the *rasas*?

Answer: We ought to know the goal of our lives, even if we can only understand it theoretically. Even the realizations "I'm not this body," "Krishna is God," "Surrender to Krishna is the goal of religion," "Chanting Hare Krishna is the only way to achieve Krishna in this age because Krishna is nondifferent from His holy names" "all these may remain theoretical only because we have not realized them fully. But we do need to study them. If we think it is useless to study *rasa* because we haven't yet realized it, then we are foolish. We may be capable only of general appreciation of Krishna at present, but our devotional lives have to start somewhere. Through hearing, small children may develop the desire to emulate a hero. We are like such children struggling to grow up and to live our ideals.

* * *

2:55 p.m.

Reading of the eternal servants of the Lord in *dasya-rasa*: ". . . those who are actually engaged in the service of the Lord, are always very cautious and are never overly proud of their service." (NOD, p. 299) There are many different categories of devotees in *dasya-rasa*. Some consider other personal servitors to be worshipable and worthy of receiving service. The *dasya* devotees are fully confident of Krishna's protection.

* * *

Preaching and Poems #15
Qualities and Varieties of Preachers

#1

I heard you say you don't want to talk so much about preaching "just *do* it. Then let's talk about what it means to be a servant. When the *gosvamis* went to Vrndavana, they were servants, and they preached through everything they did.

Servants are cautious; they don't give only lip service but actually follow the *parampara*. They never become overfamiliar with Krishna "they love Him too much for that.

For example, Uddhava, Krishna's friend from Dvaraka used everything he had for Krishna's pleasure; He never used anything for Himself. Servants take what they have in this world and offer it back to the Source of all.

In that sense, a servant is a medium between this world and the next. Is that an arrogant claim? I mean, when a nondevotee renders his art, can we take it and say, "Here, Lord, this was imperfectly composed by someone who didn't really know You, but it's beautiful, and I would like You to have it"? Are we allowed to hear the imperfect quality in a nondevotee's art, to witness their sincerity and drive, whatever little genius to

create Krishna has given them, and, although they so obviously missed the target, offer it to Krishna on their behalf? And can servants offer their own small or large offerings along with it?

* * *

Well, servants don't and shouldn't judge one another, because who can understand what it means to love?

Krishna, I love You

and that's why I chanted those extra rounds today

even while the clock rolled forward

and it's already late March

and the *sastras* were ready to be unrolled on my desk.

You will decide what value my love has, but I do know that each day, You continue to care for me and I'm satisfied with that despite my inability to reciprocate.

I'm aware of all this, but I can't seem to change anything.

Preaching? It's witnessing,

and it's walking into the English Lit. class, getting an "A" while others are impressed, "A devotee did that!?"

That's not preaching per se

not really pure chanting either necessarily

but it's like the waaill of a train whistle. It carries a distance and people may look up and wonder, "What's all that Krishna stuff about?"

* * *

I don't say that only swingers

kirtana drummers and singers

who bunch up together and sweat

and exchange glances while the outer circle atrophies "

are the only ones preaching up a storm

just because they've got rhythm and a surging chorus

and know how to dance while skimming the ground.

* * *

Preaching means knocking on the door of the soul

and teaching others (and ourselves) to transfer attention to Krishna in divine sound.

It is He who created all universes/ sat them on Ananta's hoods/ who is so great while we/ are small.

And after preachers have knocked on the door of the soul, they should never forget to teach about servants

and service

because that

completes

the task.

* * *

#2

Preaching to those
whose message is pointed:
"No more swastikas," or "Heel!"

* * *

Some brainwash, some teach hate, some are against cultists. Should we preach to *them*? They think all cultists commit mass suicide, or throw gas into subways and kill people. They think the Hare Krishnas, the Moonies, the Scientologists "they're all pretty much the same.

* * *

But still we preach.

At the last engagement, I spoke until everyone was weary of my voice. Then another preacher took over, but they got tired of him too. Short attention spans. Are they envious?

Don't dilute the original message of Krishna consciousness. An empowered preacher never does. For that reason, Prabhupada's message will always be safe, as long as we follow him sincerely.

* * *

Preaching: suspenders and turtlenecks are okay, pants instead of *dhotis*, and the haircut doesn't *always* matter. Just give the people Krishna. Don't be stiff.

* * *

4:45 p.m.

Figure it's really 5:45 p.m. I'll put the Deities to rest in half an hour. If I'm going to go to the poetry hall today, I had better get there soon. Even while there, however, I won't have time to wait for a poem like the golden goose farmer waits for the golden egg. A poet had one poem in ten years, then a whole bunch came at once, "Merline, I'm saved!" And he was saved, literally, after all that delay, because among those poems was some of the most important poetry of the twentieth century (although he almost had a nervous breakdown trying to get it written).

* * *

Sampler's Poetry Hall #11

Okay, so he went into the hall. This could be the best part. Art posters: "What's wrong with this picture?" He looked around for Sampler's clue, or at least a notice announcing a Hare Krishna feast and transcendental lecture to be held somewhere on campus. He knew many of the old-days' Swamis, whereas most people know nothing about Krishna consciousness except some silly fragment of personal experience "a brief meeting with a devotee. But there was no notice. Dizzy from searching, he entered the hall. All he knew by now was that he didn't want to be born again and have to grow up and go to a free

college, the child of poor parents. He wouldn't even want to take birth again and have to strive to be the best in this world "to compete with others who are also trying to be the best. Now, can his poem-making be free of such competition? Write for Krishna. That's the only way out.

Then he saw the poster: "As Alice said, 'Begin at the beginning and go on until you come to the end.'"

* * *

Anon water, O pen, don't end until I end this refrain. Krishna consciousness is good for you and so is drinking water.

Walter Pater was a doctor. I met him in Guyana at end (Krishna) of last year. He recommended I drink eight big glasses of water a day, even if I have to guzzle them.

* * *

Ireland's skies are mostly gray. Now: Krishna science is excellent. You sit and study books and chant on beads, and when you meet devotees, they may demand more and more and more of your time especially if you really want them to like you.

* * *

Just words, really. Poets use them all the time and then take off their shoes. Devotee poets give up mundane aesthetics and creeds to satisfy their real intention which is to glorify God. They are simply always waiting for the right moment.

And here it is.

Krishna science is about emotion released toward God, who is our light, a person with Radha and His *gopas*, not to be captured by faithless poetry experts or slobs.

Krishna science is a secret.

* * *

We each have to die and life is but a tiny moment in eternity. Please help yourself.

Please.

* * *

Beeswax crayons are happy to become smaller in the service of free drawings that liberate the spirit and send it flying toward Krishna.

* * *

They worry because I keep talking of death and Krishna. I'm sorry. I feel His divine presence.

March 29, 12:15 a.m.

Impetuses for Krishna's service in *dasya* and other *rasas*: His causeless mercy, His flute, His smile, the fresh cloud of His beauty. Quick, now tell me the impetuses to your own service: my fear of displeasing guru and Krishna, my desire not to go to hell, my passion for writing and publishing, my desire to be recognized as a preacher, my passion to excel (developed that as a child growing up absurd in America, but somehow, *this*, this Hare Krishna life is the field of competition "I'll excel by becoming a decent devotee and bestowing Krishna consciousness upon others. They thought I was jerk? I'll show them!). That's my list.

I should add that I love Prabhupada's books, and I'm trying to love the holy name "the good feeling both those things give me "the hints of taste I experience, Sadaputa Prabhu's convincing presentation. *The Nectar of Devotion* states examples of devotees being aware that they were receiving Krishna's causeless mercy. Bhisma commented on how Krishna chose to appear before him just as he was preparing to die, even though Bhisma had fought against the Pandavas. "He is worshipable by all great sages, but still He is so merciful that He has come to see an abominable person like me." (NOD, p. 301) Yes, I'm receiving causeless mercy too. Example: I have overcome illicit sex and intoxication.

" . . . one becomes engaged exclusively in the service of the Lord, being attentive to carry out the orders of the Lord faithfully; one becomes undisturbed and non-envious in full transcendental loving service to the Lord; and one makes friendship with the devotees of the Lord who are situated in faithful service to Him. All these symptoms are called *anubhava*, ecstatic love." (NOD, p. 302)

Being engaged in a particular service: Daruka so much liked to fan Krishna that he disparaged his own bodily ecstasies because they disrupted his service. Me? I like to write, and disparage my headaches because they interfere with my service. For now, I serve without the benefit of the *sattvika-bhavas*. I don't need them; I don't have them. Krishna is encouraging us in other ways. And He provides us with little realizations that make us satisfied to remember Him.

Devotees in *dasya-rasa* feel joy in meeting Krishna and disappointment in separation from Him. Me? I feel hints of that. "When winter comes, can spring be far behind?" I don't like being separate from Krishna when I chant the holy name. I don't feel ecstasy, but a hint of separation. That hint and its precursor, nothing, are themselves impetuses to want Krishna. Still marching in the desert; I have no other choice.

BahulaSva bows down once to Krishna and experiences such feelings of love that "he forget his position and [can]not rise again." It's interesting to consider how we keep going without such experiences. If we were to depend on them, we could be guilty of wanting spiritual sense gratification. Therefore duty itself is an impetus, a kind of steady ecstasy. We should not waste our time but actually serve the Lord.

In separation from Krishna, depression and self-disparagement are ecstasies. They are not material emotions, because such feelings are caused by Krishna and separation from His service. Each morning we rise, determined to chant once again. Somehow there is impetus. Our attempts are not all couched in negativity. What can we do but become humble and maintain the position that "Krishna is my Lord and Srila Prabhupada my master"?

* * *

4:45 a.m.

Listening to *Lalita-madhava*. I heard how Jambavati used to worship a splendid pair of Radha-Krishna Deities. An old lady asked Jambavati's maid how Jambavati passed her days. The maid told the old lady that Jambavati worships the Deities all day and reminds Them of Their loving pastimes. Jambavati is Lalita. Hearing this I thought, "Yes, I too want to worship Radha-Krishna Deities." How nice to hear that Jambavati was doing such *puja*. She tasted her own *madhurya-bhava* while worshipping.

Then it occurred to me that I have a hard time remembering all the detailed pastimes recounted in *Lalita-madhava* because I am not qualified to understand them. I *can* tell how we were in Guyana but left early, how the devotees sankirtana movement, we meet Radha-Govinda, because by giving ourselves to the spiritual master's mission, we learn to love him, and through him, Krishna.

Things are moving forward now with the house, it seems. Maybe in a week or so we'll be able to move in. I am so patient about it because I have plenty to do here, and the days are flowing so peacefully at Daruka's. This simple life of reading and churning satisfies me. I feel I am preaching by pounding the *brhat-mrdanga*. Everything I read and hear in Krishna consciousness is absorbing gradually into my bloodstream, and that's a form of simplicity too. I don't strain my logical brain.

Today, Madhu will drive north to collect the rest of our belongings from Inis rath. Hare Krishna. I'll take the opportunity to make another tape for Madhava dasa. Please say Hare Krishnas aloud on the tape. Make it genuine service, impelled by your desire to share Krishna consciousness with the devotees.

It's not easy to work, either to write or to dig the earth. A man has to bend over and press his shovel down to cut through the layers, then lift them up and move them aside. Bhakta Leo wrote me that when he's at a construction site (he usually works for devotees "lately, at Govinda's restaurant and now at my house), he continues to ask himself why he is working so hard. His mind rebels. He says when he works, he tends to slag others. (*Slag*: an Irish and perhaps British term meaning "to talk roughly, usually with other men," and it has nothing to do with the gentle discourse of Vaisnavas.) They slag him back. He doesn't like it. He wants me to tell him how to overcome that tendency and how to become more peaceful. What can I say? Should I tell him to dovetail his *Sudra* labor in Krishna's service, to learn how to be a menial servant for guru and Krishna? I will tell him how his efforts are appreciated by guru and Krishna, even though that's hard for me to say sometimes because I become so aware that he is working on the house for me. Why should he do that, especially when he doesn't seem to want to?

Anyway, I was telling you about the progress on the house. They plastered the outside, built a wall around the yard, built a chimney (for which they used paid help). The devotees then sanded the floors and are preparing to paint.

I wrote a letter to Aniruddha dasa, who is also working on the house, and pointed out the place where Srila Prabhupada describes *nirjana-bhajana* favorably. Prabhupada said he wanted to live in solitude in order to complete his writing of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. He wanted his disciples to carry on the preaching while he remained alone in one place. It never happened. We didn't prove to him that we could do well enough without his personal and constant presence. Nevertheless, the record stands that he had wanted to live alone. Therefore, we don't *always* have to condemn the devotee who prefers solitude.

Aniruddha replied that I should name the house. Here is my attempt: "My Gambhira," "My Godruma," "Sats's resthouse," "Sats's Anchor." Or better, "The Ne'er-do-well's Home," "The *Sannyasi* Who Fled Paradise." Oh, don't make fun. All I know is that Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishnaloka.

Today I'll read more NOD, still about *dasya-rasa* and moving onto fraternal (*sakhya-rasa*) and I'll be happy. I will also chant the holy sounds contained in the *maha-mantra* and think about the deliverance of the world. Hare Krishna and Lord Caitanya's name can even redeem my sullen, foolish page.

* * *

Lord Krishna's Servants
& Man, I want release I
want to serve you, to be a boy
happy with his porridge
prasadam
although he knows
it's temporary.

* * *

Characters in fiction with
Krishna conscious grace. You know how
it goes
because you're an old-timer who doesn't give up
Reading the master's books, Krishna knows me
as such. Again that First Canto,
Bhagavad-gita "always fresh
I'll find eventually.

* * *

Every art and discipline repeats itself
and themes and new lights become old as
traditions are settled
in mind and heart.

* * *

So sing a freedom song
O Krishna my secret love felt in
this cold breast free from lust of
man for woman or cat for dog
the Ancient Mariner for creatures
in the sea,
alligators for their eggs "
perverted lust mirrored
in a creek.
May You grant me *prema*
although the focus must come through
gradual work.

* * *

Krishna, Krishna "I chant Your names
to play my best and to search
as March flows into April.
I'm not out there hunting flowers
but at a desk with transcendental books
searching through these last days
with retained eyesight.

* * *

The rhythm is building. In ten minutes
I can produce a hundred images
and for a hundred dollars I can analyze
any malady and
prescribe.

* * *

But give me love, writing, and
to be alert for my own death
the sudden jettisoning of soul from body
from this temporary place.

* * *

May I dive for the eternal
because my Swami accepted me
gave me a name
so I could be saved
at death. He will take me
forward for my next life
and I will pursue Krishna
like the Lord's servant. "

* * *

8:18 a.m.

"When will that glorious day in my life come when it will be possible for me to go to the bank of the Yamuna and see Sri Lord Krishna playing there as a cowherd boy?" (NOD, p. 303) The speaker has not yet attained his goal, but he yearns for it. Who among us can actually say we desire to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead more than anything else? The intense ecstasies of crying tears upon meeting and becoming stunned upon separation are manifest by devotees in the perfect stage. Such devotees serve Krishna in any condition, and they are always joyful. Everything about them is "Krishna." Thus devotees such as Arjuna and Draupadi are sometimes called "Krishna."

I'm reading of the rare states of *prema*, but I can't expect it to open up to me fully, or to open me up fully. So it's awkward to hear of such things. What do we do with this information about the stars in the *bhakti* sky?

It appears the Vrajavasis feel severe pain and are stunned, diseased, maddened, etc., when faced with separation from Krishna. *The Nectar of Devotion* describes these symptoms in detail and gives examples of persons who achieved them: Narada, Prahlada, and Uddhava.

* * *

Readiness and accessibility of emotion "don't blame *The Nectar of Devotion* for your distance from it. Don't blame the scholars for understanding the categories and contexts of the various *rasas*. Don't blame your mother or father or sister or the streets of Queens, or the meanies you've met in your life. You are who you are.

One difference between the lecturer and the private writer is that the lecturer cannot leave us with an open wound or an unredeemed state of mind when he speaks. If he speaks of an aspiring ISKCON devotee who doesn't love Krishna, whose heart is steel-framed when he chants, the lecturer has to give us the means by which we can rectify and the hope that such rectification is possible for us. The private writer, however, can confess his own fallen position and leave it, "To be continued . . ."

* * *

I don't have to stop and finish answering letters right now; let me write as I like for a little while longer. The too-expensive fountain pens are ornery. They stop working, then start again. The day is blowy, almost raining, so I'll stay indoors for now. I have been reading of the great devotees who are so mad after Krishna in *dasya-* or *sakhya-rasa* that they manifest symptoms of disease and almost die. "Actually, due to his excessive ecstatic love for Krishna, Uddhava became known in Dvaraka as crazy. To his great fortune, on that day Uddhava's reputation as a crazy fellow was firmly established. Uddhava's craziness was practically proved when he went to Raivataka Hill to minutely observe the congested black clouds. In his disturbed condition, he began to pray to these clouds, and he expressed his jubilation by bowing down before them." (NOD, p. 310)

* * *

10:40 a.m.

Wind. Sitting. The phone is ringing, but I'm ignoring it. A car just pulled up. Now it's driving away. The wind. I'm alone for a while. It will soon be time for Prabhupada's

bath, and I'll listen to him as I massage him. It's a simulation of what my life was actually like once. Now *this* is my actual experience "with the Srila Prabhupada *murti*.

Heard someone talking about wounds and woundedness. What did he mean, and what does it have to do with me? No treatment seems final in this world. My Krishna consciousness is also never final. I get what I think is an insight, then discover I'm fallen, materially attached, and have no love for Krishna. Then yes, I *do* love Krishna. Even at death it won't be over. Zen monks often speak of sudden enlightenment, like achieving liberation, but they don't really speak about what comes after "how we must each live out our degree of enlightenment. What does it mean to be perfect in this world anyway? Maybe such a person continues to act imperfectly on the outside, but inside he's in contact with the perfect Goloka world. I don't really know. I do know that such a perfect person would carry on the work of preaching Krishna consciousness.

* * *

Swami control those senses
and women keep afar.
Don't read nondevotee books.
Strive with your life's breath
for earnest service
to Krishna and master.

* * *

Swami, jerk that lurching
mind that carries you
a pampered fellow
nowhere good.
Better to write, but
don't ask, "Was I good?"
Write in process
and don't look back.

* * *

2:25 p.m.

We may hear of the Lord's eternal devotees but don't cheaply imagine that we know our own eternal relationship. The conjugal *rasa* is particularly confidential. Even Lord Krishna's direct sons in Dvaraka never discussed His pastimes in conjugal love.

Pradyumna once expressed to Samba his ecstatic love in disappointment. He said, "Dear Samba, once our Father picked you up even though your body was covered with dust from play, and still He took you on His lap. . . . I could never get such love from our Father!"

Perhaps we echo that sentiment: "Why doesn't Krishna love me more? Why doesn't He pick *me* up? But if we want to be treated like Pradyumna, consider his behavior: "Whenever he was ordered by his father to execute something, he would immediately execute the order, taking the task as nectar even though it may have been poison.

Similarly, whenever he would find something to be disapproved of his father, he would immediately reject it as poison, even though it may have been nectarean." (NOD, p. 318)

* * *

Preaching and Poems #16
Sunday Lecture and *Kirtana*
#1

Pradyumna and Krishna's other sons were submissive and reverent. They did whatever He asked. May we become like that with our spiritual father.

Sorry, I know I could be better today, but my head is forcing me to seek a mellower tone. So I sit in a chair and look out at the rain.

* * *

The sobbing of the *gopis* and *gopas* recalling Krishna's pastimes and wanting to be with Him again. When He did return to Dvaraka, His sons were so joyful that they made mistakes.

Ecstatic.

* * *

Preachers stand up to emote:

Brethren! Give up your sin!

Brethren! Be righteous.

Don't be nominal in your faith. Give your hard-earned money to keep our doors open and the faithful honored.

Each congregation hears it and digs into their pockets for that extra collection to keep the temple open. I'm advocating preaching, not haranguing.

I'm not advocating that.

* * *

Time and tide "the weather wavers, the rain soft-footed.

* * *

#2

Kirtana is quick-starting, with the lead man surprising us with his agile voice. They say he sings like a Gandharva. Doesn't stop. Gradually, the dancers remove sweaters, put beadbags aside.

Others celebrate in lonely attics, but
they do celebrate.

Srila Prabhupada approved our *kirtana*, despite our mistakes "a black, a white, and an Indian twirling around a portly fellow, everyone sweating wet. (Once a *bhakta* died like that, right in the middle of a *kirtana*).

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare "they repeat it, and this is its culmination.

We lecture, we feast, we watch Bharata-natyam dances, and we drop our inhibitions.

Kirtana-rasa is for anyone and everyone. It hooks us to the Lord in a moment of devotion, and let's us forget our funk and anxiety and how we overate at lunch or became too quickly angry (or lusty) or how we don't even like to be with these people, especially that *rtvik* guy and the followers of that guru. The feast was full of oil and . . .

Oh, fool, leave it all and put on the raiment of the holy name. Chant with such stamina that even a gray-haired man learns to swim "and don't ever stop.

Finally asked to.

* * *

5:15 p.m.

I'm close to turning in for the night. The family is downstairs; I hear the children bumping around.

I realize I have little to say when I meet people. I try to think up something good, a remark, but it doesn't come from my gut. O Krishna.

Bad day. Don't complain. I lack the energy to climb the hill of my mounting mail pile. Then consider Etty Hillesum and the millions of Jews who didn't keep diaries, all sealed in trains and sent to Poland for extermination. Talk about "wounds" and "trauma." O Krishna, save me from self-pity.

* * *

6:35 p.m.

Go to bed (to mattress on floor).

Be asleep in Lord's care. rise at midnight, if He wills. Hare Krishna.

March 30, 12:10 a.m.

When I started to read about the Pandavas' intimate friendship with Krishna, and then the *vayasyas* (Vraja-sakhas) in Vrndavana who "become greatly distressed when they cannot see Krishna even for moment," I thought how such intimacy is not possible for me now. Then I remembered Srila Prabhupada, and the nice dream I had of being his personal servant. That is the intimate relationship that is possible for me and that links me to Krishna. I can't know Krishna directly, but I can know the pure devotee who gave me His mercy. And Srila Prabhupada said that when we read *The Nectar of Devotion*, we are serving Srila Rupa Gosvami too.

Some of Krishna's friends are more prominent than the others. Those who are less prominent follow the chief friends without envy. Devotees should keep this in mind: don't try to be the chief among Krishna's servants, and don't be envious of those who are.

Sometimes I think I'm trying to assert myself as the best by staying alone. I mean, then there is no competition "I'm the chief in my little world. Again I remember Srila Prabhupada and feel humble. I was never the chief among his servants, and I am not now. It doesn't matter; I simply want to serve him.

The *priya-sakhas* sometimes embrace Krishna and thus please Him. Sridama is chief among that category of friends. Still more confidential are the *priya-narma* friends, including Subala and Ujjvala. When Subala speaks moral instruction, "all the other friends take the highest pleasure." (See? Non-envious toward the chief.) The talks between Krishna and Subala "were so confidential that no one else could understand what they were saying." (NOD, p. 326)

"Let us all worship Ujjvala, the most intimate friend of Krishna!" Ujjvala would canvass Srimati Radharani on Krishna's behalf, hoping to break Her *mana*. Srimati Radharani said, "His entreaties are so powerful that it is very difficult for a *gopi* to resist her love for Krishna . . ." (NOD, p. 326)

Krishna's various friends please Him in different ways "some by giving counsel, some by joking, and some by their simplicity. Others please Him by debating with Him, being gentle, and by speaking sweet words. "All of these friends are very intimate with Krishna, and they show expertise in their different activities, their aim always being to please Krishna." (NOD, p. 327)

* * *

I woke at 9:30 p.m. last night and felt a painful band over the top of my head. I didn't want to miss my midnight to 3 a.m. session, so I sprang into action and took an Esgic. Gradually the pain subsided. Someone suggested I try not to avoid pain "better to meditate upon it. Locate it and note how it moves. I prefer pain-free meditation over chanting and reading with so much pain I can't concentrate. Still, I can't abort headaches more than three times a week, so sometimes I'll just have to hang on for the ride.

* * *

Dreamt I was serving Srila Prabhupada "the kinds of service Hari Sauri used to do. He was there too. I asked, "Are you going to go down to the temple room with Prabhupada?" He was. Then he gave me a key to Prabhupada's room so that after the program, I could return. He said, "This key is more valuable than your life." I laughed, but agreed.

Then I sat with Prabhupada, and he began to talk about his health: "I have a cold; I can't sleep. Does that happen to you?" He knew I was sometimes ill. But I didn't have that particular problem. As I responded, he said something about *yogamaya*.

* * *

4:33 a.m.

I lose my sense of time and place when I listen to *Lalita-madhava* while dressing Radha-Govinda. I'm not qualified to hear these pastimes, yet I am greedy to listen. I don't listen and make mundane associations. That in itself is a wonderful blessing. And that I am eager to receive it is another blessing. Rupa Gosvami's rhetoric enters my own crude expressions. The sapphire Deity of Krishna enchants golden Radha. Then Krishna stands in place of the Deity. Radha had asked the Deity why He was so hard and cruel toward Her. Now Krishna will hear directly Her expressions of love from Her own lips as She speaks to what She thinks is His Deity form.

My Govinda is golden "He is *Syama*, but somehow golden too. Dear Krishna, please accept my humble obeisances. I approach You with reverence, although Your *priyanarma-sakhas* and other friends approach You as an equal. I don't know anything. I wish to love You in any way I can. I want to know You are real, that You are tangible, and not a vague cloud in the sky. I love Your pastimes. I have been assured by my Srila Prabhupada that if I remain submissive to Vyasadeva and Sukadeva and rupa Gosvami and the other Gosvamis, and of course, to Srila Prabhupada himself, and hear from them about You and Your beloved radha, then I will come to understand You in the groves of Vrndavana. My dear Lord Krishna, I don't yet know the esoteric science of *bhakti*, and I seem to lack the necessary courage to engage in Your service with my entire heart. Still, last night I dreamt I was serving my spiritual master as personal servant and that he accepted me. It is by his grace that I have the desire to worship You.

And may I learn to serve purely. Srila Prabhupada said that when there are irregularities in service, the service becomes polluted. He mentioned this while commenting on the *Bhagavad-gita* verse where Krishna says He appears whenever there is a decline in religion. We should ask ourselves whether our service is beset with irregularities. Are we polluting our own offering?

* * *

Pause, blank. Then start up again, like a machine that has again been plugged in. Soon you are back in the groove, functioning honestly, praying to Krishna. A servitor functions by bowing down, by offering the Beloved what He wants. The *gopis* serve Radha by reminding Her constantly of Krishna. A *gopi* tells Radha, "Krishna of Dvaraka is the most handsome, and He is the Lord of the universe." Radha thinks the *gopi* is speaking of some emperor other than Krishna, and She says She is not interested in Him. She is interested only in the Prince of Vraja.

* * *

Krishna, I have run out of things to say or write. Kr writes me that he's afraid to take birth again because it means he will have to go through the same horrible teenage experiences he had in this lifetime. I'm afraid of that too. I told him to face it manfully and to accept the fact that it is very likely that we will be back. But he should also have faith in Krishna: He promises that our Krishna consciousness will not be lost. That means *we* will not be lost. In the meantime, he should work to focus his mind on Krishna as much as possible now. Otherwise, there is no meaning to the statement, "I don't want to take birth again." If you think it's so bad, do something to avoid it, even if you think living in this world requires so much compromise with matter.

* * *

9 a.m.

Devotees generally appreciate Krishna most in his *kaiSora* age. Krishna never ages beyond the appearance of a sixteen-year-old youth. At this age, Krishna dances and wrestles with His friends and sports with the *gopis*. His most intimate friends serve as messengers to and from the *gopis*. "In this way, sometimes supporting one side, sometimes the other, they would talk very privately, with much whispering in the ears,

although none of the business was very serious." (NOD, p. 333) Krishna's friends serve without reverence or selfish desire; they simply want to make Krishna happy. When Krishna goes to Mathura, the cowherd boys almost die from the separation.

The eternal devotees of Krishna in *vatsalya-rasa* feel they are maintaining Krishna. He reciprocates with them in that way, as a subordinate. Mother Yashoda and Nanda Maharaja are the topmost devotees in *vatsalya-rati*. I will not write out examples of their ecstatic exchanges "their joy in seeing Krishna in His babyhood. If you want to know more about it, you can read *The Nectar of Devotion*.

* * *

10:30 a.m.

They asked me what kind of a garden I wanted around the house "do I want vines climbing up the walls? Teaberries? I said only that whatever they plant, they shouldn't expect that I'll be here for decades to watch it grow.

* * *

11:50 a.m.

The front door here makes a soft cry when someone opens and closes it. Actually, two doors in this house do that. The one leading to the bathroom does it too. Lamenting doors, door spirits.

Just heard Daruka come in. I haven't seen him today. He accepts that. I appreciate that about him. Anyway, it's so hard to manufacture chatter. I am too serious for that, and so is he. I mean, our relationship is serious enough to sustain a little quiet. We have something substantial that doesn't depend on long talks all day. I suppose roommates in some circumstances also don't talk to one another all the time, and in some cases, they may not even be close. They come together simply to share the rent. They form and obey the house rules to make their co-existence sane, and beyond that, they live their own lives. We have much more than that though.

The next chapter I'll be reading in *The Nectar of Devotion* is about conjugal love. Actually, this chapter is the book's climax because it describes the most important *rati*. Yet Rupa Gosvami doesn't spell it out in such detail. rather, the topic is so important that he wrote about it in great detail in another book, *Ujjvala-nilamani*.

* * *

2:33 p.m.

In the distance I see the flash of a hare's white tail. Way over on that pastured hill, I see a tractor moving. I am indoors, but I can see these things through the window. I can hear quite a bit from here too; I think I have sharp ears, slowly becoming old-man senses.

Now I'm nearing the end of my flight over the ocean. Or was it the desert? Which is which? Sometimes a desert mirage appears like an ocean, and we have a hard time sorting it all out.

The sky is a bright blue, with puffs of white clouds floating by. Rupa Gosvami will describe the best only briefly. We know why "it's because we tend to pollute the spiritual conjugal *rasa* with our impressions of mundane sex.

* * *

"Conjugal love is divided into two portions: *vipralambha*, or conjugal love in separation, and *sambhoga*, or conjugal love in direct contact. *Vipralambha*, separation, has three divisions, known as (1) *purva-raga*, or preliminary attraction, (2) *mana*, or seeming anger, and (3) *pravaSa*, or separation by distance." (NOD, p. 355)

I seem to recall a library party experience, overhearing college students at Harvard University talking in the men's room in an academic way about rupa Gosvami's analysis. They knew it pretty well, about *madhurya-prema* upward to *sneha*, *pranaya*, *raga*. One of them asked the other a question, one that I myself could not answer, but neither of them believed this was something that should be accepted as the purest reality of the worshipable Divinity.

And remember the Harvard scholar asking Srila Prabhupada, after his lecture at the Divinity school, how a *brahmacari* could understand *Gita-Govinda*, since a *brahmacari* is ignorant of erotic love? Srila Prabhupada replied that unless we were *brahmacaris*, we could not understand *Gita-Govinda*. Our familiarity with mundane sex (as well as our academic approach to it) would disqualify us.

Rupa Gosvami describes *pravasa*, the seemingly painful feelings aroused in Radha and Krishna when They are separated by physical distance. Both cry tears. Radharani's face is always wet, and neither of Them can sleep. They think always of Their absent lover. When They come together and enjoy one another, however, there is a great festival of happiness. "Sri Rupa Gosvami thus ends the fifth wave of his Ocean of the Nectar of Devotion. He offers his respectful obeisances to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who appeared as Gopala, the eternal form of the Lord." (NOD, p. 357)

* * *

Preaching and Poems #17
Answering Pertinent Queries

#1

Remember when you used to go to the shed and you'd . . . write there a long AI, then send it to Miami via Pittsburgh "and in your mind you were a young man? remember when you walked the primrose path last spring?

Was it confusing when I was in that shed? I seem to recall reading of the artist who cut through all conventions, and said, "I have to keep wiping this mirror." Well, who wants to go with him?

I remember preaching and selling *Krishna* books, a small order, to a woman who knew something about Hinduism or English Lit., or who had some kind of tenuous connection. It didn't amount to much.

I seem to recall being afraid I would be interrupted while trying to work things out.

* * *

Someone wants to know, "Did you cultivate a paroxysm of rage and harsh scouring? Is that part of your divine quest and evocation? We thought a spiritual man was calm, having achieved grace."

Only if he's not distracted.

Krishna is never distracted from His thoughts of Srimati Radharani, no matter what confusing or contrary things are happening "the appearance of a demon or His older brother, or any of a number of other possible interruptions. He remains fixed.

* * *

#2

Another question: "You were speaking of preaching, but I thought heroes are all action and few words. They just get down to business."

Okay, here, take a book.

* * *

When you preach, you should always be aware of your audience. Best to be careful what you say. I spoke to over a hundred priests, nuns, and seminarians in Dublin once. I said, "We Krishnas follow Christ's beatitudes." That didn't go over well. A nun said, "You mean to say we *don't* follow them?" They all laughed, and I was the butt of her joke. "Oh, but I mean . . . oh people, I meant . . . we are better than you because we don't eat chicken . . ." That's all I meant.

* * *

#3

Question: "The nations are in trouble. If you were called in to help "since your Krishna conscious books say you can set the world right "what would you do? Would you help, or would you say, 'Go see one of my brothers'?"

* * *

#4

They were preaching, discussing Krishna's pastimes, then talking (get this) about how to prepare the movement to enter the new millennium. They wore Adidas sneakers and T-shirts that said "Excess: Be on Guard." A few wore T-shirts with smiling Jagannathas on them.

They were all engaged in the Lord's service. A devotee in the Navy told me she doesn't have enough storage space onboard to keep BTG back issues.

Then live in your limits.

God, let me serve

the preachers and

Read and chant.

I'm sorry I can't do more

than that.

* * *

6:47 p.m.

Goodnight. Be with Krishna. Any little world could explode. The whole planet is volatile, but Krishna is in full control, so latch onto His lotus feet, His holy name, your service connection through His pure devotee, Srila Prabhupada.

March 31, 12:10 a.m.

Don't think your own laughing, ghastriness, anger, etc., even among your devotee peers, constitutes indirect ecstasy in devotional service. First of all, one has to have the steady base of *sthayi-bhava*. That means he has to know his eternal *rati* with Krishna. For this one has to be pure and advanced up to . . . I forgot up to where. But you have to be in the ocean.

And not in *this* ocean "the material ocean of birth and death.

* * *

Laughing ecstasy comes and goes. Sometimes Krishna is the object of the laughter "He likes it when His pure devotees play jokes on Him. Just don't try if you're not a pure devotee. Jarati ran after Krishna when He stole butter from her house. The demigods smiled to see Krishna, in fear, taking shelter of Baladeva. The *gopis* smiled, their teeth partly visible, when Krishna impersonated Radharani's so-called husband and Jatila drove away the real Abhimanyu. The smiles get broader, uncontrollable. Tears come and the shoulders shake. That's called *apahasita*.

* * *

Well folks, dear diary, I got up on time, but felt pain here and there. The old chassis. M. suggested, "Why not grow apple trees in your new backyard "something useful?"

Whatever I grow, it shouldn't be something we have to wait twenty years for it to produce. M. smiled when I said that. I looked out again at the peaceful scenery "peaceful for us, but not for the sheep and cows "and felt all right at the end of a mostly pain-free day. In other words, I didn't know what I was talking about. I was thinking that in twenty years, I would be eighty. Who's to say I have that much time?

* * *

Astonishment. What will I read next? I have too many books. Me and my ID papers, worn out, wearing out, illusions I can't face or relinquish. What shrink could possibly understand what I've been through? He would have to be a monk himself, or a Hasidic Jew. "Yes, I know, we have it in our church too." Better to keep your dark angels, said Rilke. Live only with the light, and use your despair to impel you to search harder for Krishna.

* * *

4:30 a.m.

Candravali is Rukmini, and Radha appears as Satyabhama in *Lalita-madhava*. I am fortunate to know that, despite the abominable things my body has done in this lifetime. Srila Prabhupada assures me, however, that I can be cleansed by chanting Hare Krishna and hearing of Krishna's pastimes. Even a dog-eater can become fit to conduct Vedic sacrifices; he can even become guru. I know that's true because it is happening to me. May I remain merged in topics about Vraja-Krishna.

See, Krishna is tricky. He saw that His queen, rukmini, was maintaining jealous anger, so He pacified Her. Then He asked Her permission to see a certain ascetic girl living in "New Vrndavana." Rukmini gave Him permission. Thus He arranged for a rendezvous with Srimati Radharani. But Rukmini's loyal maidservant, Madhavi, was clever, and she tried to make Rukmini superior to Radha.

* * *

Poor poet climbs out of water into desert. The ocean is bordered by a beach, which is as sandy as a desert. The two are close. An aquatic doesn't just look at the ocean; it lives in it. I want that too.

The rhubarb in the pie was fresh from Praghosa's garden. JS said he was a radish addict. Why do people punish themselves? Why don't I go within and see what's wrong? I am a devotee: that is my career. Externally, I have a nice situation. They're even fixing up a house for my use and inviting me to live there without obligation. It's like a permanent vacation. They know I will not be idle but will use the facility to pursue my creative process along with my hearing and chanting. I want to live as a monk, alone, celibate, and simple, and they are providing me the opportunity. I pray never to abuse their trust.

But those things are all external; they are "modes of living." What about the internal? I chanted like a mechanical man this morning. I did my rounds quickly, without any real devotion or concentration. When will I ever overcome that? Do I still maintain so many material desires that I cannot fill my mind with Krishna?

What is mind and ego? What does the newspaper say? Tell me bad news about cults in the world, and I'll absorb it, but I will not be absorbed *in* it. I refuse to worry. I am too concerned about my own body. *Annamaya* "is that my happiness? Only to eat and stay alive? No, I'm sure I've made it at least to *jnana-maya*, where the intellect has been stimulated and one may attempt to cultivate spirit. Spirit is realized in the preliminary stage as impersonal Brahman. Then one goes on to realize and worship the Personality of Godhead. Finally, one comes to love Krishna with unalloyed devotion, simply because He is so wonderful.

* * *

8:50 a.m.

Devotees are astonished by directly perceiving and hearing about Krishna's wonderful activities. He expanded Himself into 16,108 Krishnas. Narada witnessed it. He defeated Narakasura's *aksauhini* divisions with only three arrows. Maharaja Pariksit heard about it from Sukadeva. And when he heard, he didn't disbelieve it like that *brahmana* who could not believe Lord Narayana was threading an elephant through the eye of needle.

It's not astonishing that I'm feeling a right-eye twinge right now or that the pain management doctors advise that I don't turn to barbiturates for help. Neither is it astonishing that I want my time, want to read *The Nectar of Devotion* and take notes, to not be sidelined by pain. But I can't believe those who say, "If you buy this program I teach, you will lose your pain forever and pain will no longer manage *you!*"

"The activities of a person, even if they are not very extraordinary, create an impression of wonder in the heart and mind of the person's friends. But even very

wonderful activities performed by a person who is not one's friend will not create any impression. It is because of love that one's wonderful activities create an impression in the mind." (NOD, p. 366)

Nice point. Srila Prabhupada gives the example that a magician or actor may wow an audience, but the appreciation felt by his dear friends is not based on awe but affection. "*My friend* is so wonderful! I'm glad for his success!" They love the person, not the tricks. Similarly, the Lord's devotees are certainly astonished by what He does (according to their *rati*), but the Vrajavasis are overwhelmed by pure love, not by the Lord's opulence. Therefore, Mother Yashoda's friend says it's astonishing that Krishna lifts Govardhana Hill *and* that He sucks His mother's breast. Elsewhere we read that parental devotees don't even believe it is Krishna lifting the hill; they think it must be his father or other elders. Somehow or other, all devotees are impressed by Krishna. They love Him. They cannot think of anyone else *but* Him.

* * *

11:50 a.m.

Right now I could be completing my sixteenth round, reading Thoreau, Rilke, the Gospel of Mark, NOD, but I'm doing none of the above. Better make this good. I could also be reading books on pain management. Okay. It hurts and I want ease. I write for ease. Others pet dogs, one book says.

Words surface. Rilke didn't have a good beard, he confessed. Waiting for M. to return. I'm clear enough to talk with him "I paid for that with my second Esgic of the week. That's the last one I can have this March.

* * *

12:35 p.m.

I want to bump out sensitive, thoughtful letters, good poems, and to keep living, in other words. I want to learn to pray, learn to manage pain, and become more and more aware of Krishna in my life. But where does the energy come from, and in whose service should it be used? Answer: Krishna, HrsikeSa.

* * *

2:20 p.m.

"When on account of love and devotional service for the Lord there is special valorous enthusiasm, the resultant activities are called chivalrous." (NOD, p. 366) Krishna likes it when His heroic friends challenge Him to a mock fight.

Another kind of hero gives in charity. "real love of Krishna becomes manifested when Krishna becomes the recipient of charity and the devotee becomes the giver." (NOD, p. 370)

Warm enough to open the skylight. Hear the sheep baa-ing? The wind? The birds chirping? The blue sky is feathered with clouds. Breathe easy for a few hours.

* * *

The Vrajavasis felt compassion for Krishna when they saw Him wrapped in Kaliya's coils. Such compassion comes only to devotees who love the Lord intensely.

Another indirect ecstasy is anger. The *gopis* sometimes become angry with Krishna. Mother Yashoda became angry when she thought that Krishna's cowherd boyfriends had sent Him alone into danger in the Talavana forest.

* * *

Preaching and Poems #18
Preachers Of A Sort

#1

I'm tired now, and you can't expect me to work hard preaching in a lecture hall or going out to meet people. I need to rest. Let me do some quiet preaching. I know we have tended to define preaching as chivalrous, valorous exertion, but I can assure you, there are other kinds. Preaching can be measured, like a lyrical piano piece, and it can praise Krishna's qualities heart-to heart on a softly lit, calm day. It can take into account the breath that flows through the nostrils and can concentrate on how each living entity actually belongs to God. By simply turning to Him of our own accord, then assuring others it can be done, we can preach.

We are little emperors in the domain of our free will. When we voluntarily surrender our will and give our attention to Krishna, just imagine how beautiful the self becomes, and how merciful.

* * *

Here's a potentially quiet scene: sheep in a pasture. After an English class where the teacher mocks a student, the boy runs to spend his money on a *maha*-hamburger at Wolfy's, a cafeteria rarely visited by students. Why am I telling you this? So we can hear how a preacher deals with an unusual circumstance.

Preachers deal with unusual circumstances all the time. They have to be prepared for such things. Now who will lead our boy from the hamburger shop to a better landscape?

* * *

A preacher has to have internalized (buried?) his guru's *vani* deep within his heart. Today he is wandering, then sitting down to rest.

Is that preaching?

I told you "we have to find the thread. I don't want to finish the story.

* * *

#2

A boy plays a toy piano, a small instrument with only a few keys. No, it isn't a boy but a man, and his composition is serious. He is preaching, although the audience doesn't know it. He is a devotee from the local Pittsburgh-Cleveland *nama-hatta* center, but he is wearing a tuxedo. There is a suspicious overgrowth of hair at the back of his head.

A Sikha? A friend takes a photo of the event and sends it to *Hare Krishna*

World: "Devotee Plays Toy Piano in Emperor's Palace in Stuttgart Before Classical

Music Lovers." Although no one even knew he was a devotee, he was preaching. Or was he?

He blessed the refreshments. A devotee does things like that.

A preacher is grateful. Lack of gratitude is *not* preaching. Compassion can be, nonviolence, the artful avoidance of arrogance, and two baths a day (cleanliness) "if it is being offered to Krishna, it's preaching.

* * *

#3

As we have often said, there are many different ways to deliver Krishna consciousness. You'd be surprised.

* * *

#4

He was busy playing a kazoo. They were embarrassed, the more staid ones, but not him. He played it up, chanted "Krishnas" under his breath, and gave out books in the men's room in his dreams.

Nothing to regret. He kept his ISKCON wounds to himself. That was preaching too. He didn't want any ambitious person to write another book exposing or attacking his master's movement. He prefers to be a quieter witness, a preacher of a different sort. He'll send in his story, don't worry.

Now applaud the preacher.

* * *

Sampler's Poetry Hall #12

Pete had a headache, June had a backache. Fred had a jerk-ache. It's not funny. They were each victims of CPS (chronic pain syndrome). A tough doctor tried to get them to follow his breakthrough program, which included breathing from the diaphragm, positive thinking, and to live fully even through the pain. They tried, and thought writing poems might distract. That's why they entered the hall. Lo and behold, Ms. Sampler had left these instructions on the board: "Write despite your pain." Okay, go.

* * *

I drink water, one warm slug. At the
first sign of pain I don't catastrophize.
I'm following Dr. Marcus's orders,
but Oh, the pain! "No," he cajoles, "don't
feel it, and don't give in. Stand up straight."

* * *

So I tried a KC movie, thirty minutes.
Then went to bed. I'll make it, I know.
Each of us alone. The young children
in this house don't have aches,
but they don't know
what to make of life.

* * *

Hare Krishna. Pain enters the brain's
cortex and I'm sorry to report it,
although I'm trying to be detached.

* * *

But the fact is
I have given up on Dr. Marcus.
I've got my own idea how to
deal with pain: Don't try to cure it
but endure it and wait for it to go.

* * *

This poem is a crow or a cow in the
pasture, a sheep. Beep-beep the car
goes into town, and again it's quiet
enough to live through this
pain with grace.

* * *

8:04 p.m.

Up. Can't sleep. Noises "people talking downstairs. It will be nice to have my own house. M. is leaving again with the van.

* * *

Dread. remember this word from SK and existentialism. But this is ecstatic dread, a fear. Better read it tomorrow. Try something else right now. Even if I can't get my full rest, I'd like to rise at midnight. Sleep later.

April 1, 3:20 a.m.

Late start this morning. Don't worry. As long as the pen works, I'll be all right. Don't be silly, he said, be something else. During the night I thought, "Why don't I do as the pain book says and rise to the occasion *despite* the pain?" Chronic pain syndrome is garbage in the head, he says. Just go out and live your life. I could become a traveling preacher again. Don't stay in a house and whimper, and don't even speak of being in the penalty box. All that focusing on pain is not good for you.

But no. It's not actually true. And where would I go, and for what purpose? Just to make a show that I can move like a regular *sannyasi*? I can do better preaching by staying here.

* * *

4:30 a.m.

Lifted and brought to the best of all places, to Vrndavana and the *darSana* of Radha and Krishna. We hear Them conversing in the forest of Vrndavana in *Lalita-madhava*. Lalita and ViSakha are not there, and Radha longs to be reunited with Her friends. The reunion will come about through Rupa Gosvami's artistry because he sees

everything with his sublime vision. Thank you, Srila Rupa Gosvami, and thank you, Srila Prabhupada, for allowing me to hear the purest culture of Krishna consciousness as it is presented in this drama. I'm also hearing your *Nectar of Devotion*.

O *acaryas*, why is it that I must stray from the lotus flower of the best of *lilas* to descend into bodily consciousness? Why do I still possess a mind attracted to illusion and suffering, one which feels envy and finds fault with Vaisnavas? Whatever my *anartha*, it seems more powerful than I am. I cannot seem to renounce it just by wishing myself into the topmost abode of Krishna's pastimes. Please help me.

Fortunately by hearing *Lalita-madhava* and performing the *arca-vigraha* duties, I can at least report with my senses the splendid transcendental nectar. (There I go, floating off into fragrant, poetic language. Is it really you adorning your sentences like that?)

Me? Who am I? Am I always to speak as hard-boiled as possible? Where is my heart, and what's in there?

* * *

A little life story: Once a person was chilly but resolved not to betray his Krishna consciousness training and upbringing. He therefore wrote Hare Krishna mantras in a notebook and congratulated the devotee who opened a Hare Krishna restaurant in the city.

* * *

Although Radha is most blissful to be with Krishna in New Vrndavana, She laments that ViSakha is not there. Nor does She know of her whereabouts. Krishna then tells Her that He has found ViSakha performing severe austerities in the forest. He revived her and brought her to Dvaraka. Radha wants to see her as soon as possible. There is some condition "something about the Sankhachuda jewel. So much intrigue, all of which will be happily resolved. When the happy ending finally occurs, I will move back to hearing *Vidagdha-madhava*.

O Krishna, Your *acaryas* have left us such sweet literature. The best I can do is hear and recall it. Then I will become purified and honest, and whoever hears me will also receive the benefit.

* * *

We will sing and sing, and the forest will prevail. When the sun comes up, or at least when the sky lightens, although it may be cloudy we will be able to see the long sloping hills, the Wicklow Mountains. We will not merge our thoughts into Celtic admiration but remain alert for the opportunity to take part in Krishna consciousness. O April fool, the joke is on you if you miss this chance. Otherwise, the only joke is that you live in a material body despite the fact that you are a free soul. It is an ironic, tragic jest, and you have played that cruel joke on yourself. Oh, you have been a fool.

* * *

April Fool
& The man emerged from the woods with his
April voice, trying to reach

Original Sound. Ach!
He wants to return to Radha and Krishna
and be free of this dross.

* * *

April fool mismatch "a
twisted hand. Whatever
happiness we feel vaporizes
like mist. "If you miss this chance,"
Srla Prabhupada said
to ten thousand people or at least one thousand
in Golden Gate Park, among cheering
worshiping disciples . . .
But those followers withered
some of them
and now represent only ten percent
or less.

* * *

Breaking cliches the man goes to his room
in Vrndavana, rests under a quilt
and listens to the banging and voices of
the Guesthouse. The lights dim "brown-out "
but it's Vrndavana.

* * *

Sorry I couldn't make a song
but I long
for the day when I'll be qualified
to sing the good stuff.
I'll be with Prabhupada then
awake and watching the fire
in my heart blaze.
Krishna conscious poet pots plants
and waters and remembers
holy master. "

* * *

Why No One Writes Me From Mayapur
& We beat a drum "geez, a fellow's got to
Run. He was happy to see me eating a
muffin with honey on it
and I told him to chant "good *gayatris*,"
although I never do.

* * *

Dew on grass "the cows'
quiet tragedies. I live
near them and it's
doom, doom "a cow's life
in the West.

* * *

They don't write me from Mayapur.
They do write me from New York
because I told them that
Krishna stole butter and here's
where I got initiated. The Swami received
toilet paper from a bum in this spot
and I didn't let Eliot into the storefront.
Mukunda went
back and forth from California
and Hayagriva had a beard and finger
cymbals. Our buildings even then
were full of broken windows
and broken promises.

* * *

Here's the original brick, and here in this
box we keep the Swami's things "a mosquito
coil dispersed mosquitoes
clearing the air. We
were each given a *vani* that is never lost.
And these *pujaris* are the best group,
faithful.

* * *

No one writes me from Mayapur anymore
because I'm too mundane and splayed
out in my own head whereas
Mayapur is full of holy saints living with "Gaura"
and "Mahaprabhu," best friends "the
contrast is too striking
and the skies different. Here I read Rilke
and there they read skies
go to Ekacakra, chant *hari-nama*
and don't write a pooper like me.

* * *

But even though they don't write
I won't forget what is worshipable

and I plan to break open old truths
until one day my madness will be so Krishna-centered
that when morning happens
and the day goes past
I will be forever playing. "

* * *

Dreamt that devotees were forced to live in a maze. Whoever it was packed many devotees into some small cubby holes. They were allowing us to keep only one of Srila Prabhupada's books as personal property. I saw that Jayadvaita Maharaja had a small *Bhagavad-gita*. I thought *The Nectar of Devotion* would be the one book I'd want to keep.

* * *

8:00 a.m.

In the ecstasy of fear, either the devotee is afraid of Krishna or is afraid some harm will come to Krishna. Jambavan was afraid of Krishna; Mother Yashoda was afraid the KeSi demon might harm Krishna.

I'm afraid of death and accidents. Alas, my fears are not ecstatic dread. If I had more fear of falling into *maya*, that might be good for me.

When a developed devotee feels disgust for his past sinful activities, this may produce ghastly ecstasy. "From the indication of his face, I would think that now he hates sex life." (NOD, p. 381)

Sometimes children pray in the womb before they are born. A person in hell may remember His holy names.

* * *

The mixing of *rasas* may be compatible or incompatible. Svarupa Damodara only presents to Lord Caitanya the poetry by writers whose poems contain compatible mixtures. "The topic of incompatibility is a very important one, and those who are pure devotees always expect to find perfect compatibility in descriptions of the different relationships with the Personality of Godhead." (NOD, p. 385)

Both *dasya*- and *Santa-rasas* may be mixed, as in a prayer where the devotee expresses overwhelming awe before the Almighty (*Santa-rasa*) but hopes to someday be engaged in his service (*dasya*). When *Santa-rasa* is predominant, the devotee hesitates to step forward for actual service.

I felt this in my relationship with Srila Prabhupada during his last days, yet I did step forward sometimes to climb under the mosquito net and massage his back. Sometimes I held back not because I was experiencing *Santa*, but because I was unwilling to perform the extreme physical austerities of menial servant. I am still ashamed about that, but there's nothing I can do about it now.

I have only ten more pages left to read in *The Nectar of Devotion*. I cannot claim I am making a triumphant finish, I'm simply winding down. The technical sections, especially this one on how the *rasas* mix properly and improperly, don't catch my interest much. The examples are interesting, but I can't always get into the actual explanations.

Anyway, there are simple yet profound devotees who may not study books, but who feel great love for Govinda. They *manifest* the ecstasies, even if they don't know the Sanskrit terms to define them, or cannot talk about them to students. They are fortunate.

I'm in the desert. I have found a small oasis here in NOD, and I take shelter under its palm trees. It seems I'm not even willing to cross the desert and experience the mystic's aridity. Not really dreaming enough of the ocean. I could fly there if a giant bird carried me.

As I write this, one of Daruka's little daughters is making a pouting protest. Maybe she doesn't want to go to school.

* * *

April 2,
Le Nectar, Nectaire
Le Nectaro
The Drink of Devotion
the Ocean of Doubt
Dob
The Dob of Delight

* * *

By Srila roopa Gosvami

* * *

The Nectarino Ocean
The True *Sindhu* of
Bhakti.

The complete science of Karandhara, typed by Purusottama dasa. read by me in library at MIT before it was published. But I had no comments; it wasn't "mine" like *Krishna* book or *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I needed devotion before I could enter Prabhupada's books. No orange peels merely, no quick sense grat on the street. For this I had to work.

* * *

12:10 p.m.

Srila Prabhupada sankirtana. Then he lectured on the Six Gosvamis.

Hare Krishna. Go deeper. Don't just rest all day; it's not good. At least do your physical exercises, despite pain, and don't accept defeat. And don't blame others. Just take back your life. It can't be the way it was before this chronic pain began, but it doesn't have to be a sinking defeat into sitting stunned with pain and feeling self-pity. I'm not *that* low.

* * *

Preaching and Poems #19
Offering

#1

Is selling paintings preaching?

No.

Is talking to a *grhastha* who has just come back from days of selling paintings to support his family "preaching?"

What did you say to him?

He confessed that the work is not good for him, or at least he shouldn't go out alone. The temptation of staying alone in the B&B at night . . . he watches television. I told him he shouldn't put himself in situations that may harm his Krishna consciousness. I thought of saying some more, but didn't want to get too preachy.

When we help someone who is committed to Srila Prabhupada, that's preaching to devotees. When they are not devotees . . . Oh, there I go, defining everything again.

* * *

Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. For sure.

* * *

Relax "if you can. This won't hurt a bit. It's only a shock treatment for angels and devils.

If I get the treatment to cure me of worms, is that preaching?

If I drink water, is that leaching?

When I pray alone, is that prayer?

When I chant my seventh round? When I eat? When I meet . . .

It depends on your frame of mind. One thing for sure, Srila Prabhupada wanted his followers to preach. It's a big world, and we're a relatively small band assigned to save it. Don't quibble about what is the best kind of preaching, or even about how many kinds of preaching are valid. Find something to do and do it.

* * *

#2

Don't bother me. Let me get this down. A person demands a little attention when he or she has worked so hard for years just preparing the *offering*.

The offering is not only that simple and mechanical act you do the same way every day. That's there, but the offering is the part where you give of yourself. That often means first finding out who you are "and dealing with pain and blocks. It may not *look* like the neatest offering, beribboned and gift-wrapped "it may even be a bit messy (not on purpose, of course, but it's hard to make it look like it didn't cost you anything) "and anyway, I think you know what I mean.

* * *

The offering is sincere praise of God and gratitude for His mercy. It includes self-searching, because the offering has to both be going to a person and coming from a person. For that we have to ask how best to attain Krishna's lotus feet. Then when we know, we can give the best that we have.

Of course, some may object, not recognizing our offering as valuable, but we each have to decide its value for ourselves.

* * *

Some offerings are made in the kitchen while battling vermin. The cooks brave the pots, the heat, the cold, and the fact that there is never enough money.

But was the offering on time?

Pretty punctual. We know that's important, and we tried to be clean. Srila Prabhupada said we should make our offerings as opulent as possible (spend money, get materials), but that assumes our devotion is in order.

* * *

O Krishna, Supreme God, You appeared in Vrndavana. I seek You out. Dear Lord, I offer You this day, and my sweetest expression and hard work. I offer it to You through my guru, confident that that is the only way I can please You. Because when our service is given to a devotee, that devotee will make it increase and unfold, and before we know it, it will have turned into more service and more love. And that's preaching.

* * *

3:45 p.m.

Mixed *rasas*: combinations of neutrality and conjugal love are incompatible.

"Sometimes it is found in places like Vrndavana that a person with a slight devotional attitude of neutral love for Krishna may immediately and artificially try to attain to the platform of conjugal love. But because of the incompatibility of neutrality and conjugal love, the person is found to fall from the standard of devotional service." (NOD, p. 391) That sounds like a veiled warning by Srila Prabhupada to his own followers.

We are intimate with Krishna either as parent or lover "and qualified for it "or we are not. Don't mix neutral with intimate. "Srila Rupa Gosvami warns devotees to not commit such incompatibilities in their writings or in their dealings. The presence of such contradictory feelings is called *rasabhasa*. When there is *rasabhasa* in any book of Krishna consciousness, no learned scholar or devotee will accept it." (NOD, p. 392)

Sometimes there are contradictory feelings, but the moods are not incompatible overall because of the supremacy of one of the humors. For example, a great devotee's conjugal mood overrides neutral metaphors of expression. Here's an example of mixtures free of incompatibility from *Lalita-madhava*, where the author blesses all the readers: "Although the Supreme Personality of Godhead is able to lift a mountain with a finger of His left hand, He is always humble and meek. He is always very kind to His loving devotees. He has frustrated Indra's attempt at vengeance by refusing him the sacrifice of Indra-*yajna*. He is the cause of all pleasure to all young girls. May He be ever compassionate upon you all!" (NOD, p. 395)

* * *

Sampler's Poetry Hall #13

A-ten-*shun*! right face! Forward march! 1 - 2 - 3 - 4, 1 - 2 - 3 - 4. right oblique, *march*! Straighten out! We were going around under the command of gym teacher Bernie Atkinson in his purple and white "1948 Almost Champions of New York" button-down sweater. This thought on my mind as I enter the swinging, squeaking doors and into the light green auditorium: It's Friday and it doesn't matter. Heard rumors that

the Sampler's Poetry Hall course will soon be over. The last scheduled meeting will be a party, which I won't attend.

"No obscure poetry, please." someone whispers, and the man behind me sneezes.
I remember Kirt.

Do you mean Kirk? Kirk Douglas?

Cover those memories "they're too sensitive.

You know, these people all accept that I'm a Hare Krishna devotee, as long as I basically act like everyone else. They have also accepted my point that I want to write all my poems for God. No harm in that, although most of the people in the room ignore my poems. So if I thought I was going to do some important preaching in this auditorium, I was wrong. Better I go back to giving classes to the devotees. We can start our own literary magazine, and if the nondevotees are curious, they can read it.

Okay, here goes. The fanzine personified steps out from the wings, cups her hands (is that the expression?) and shouts, "run for cover! No, I'm kidding. Today's assignment is gerrymandering, and if you don't like it, then make up your own."

That's all? No, I don't see the sense in attending this group anymore.

* * *

April fool. Three pieces of mail hit the floor from the chute at 2:45 p.m., right on time, just as I was coming out of the bathroom.

* * *

They were all addressed to me, and I suppose it's no one's business who they were from. Although I'll tell you that a man said he must come to Eire to speak with me even if I said "No time." And that's exactly what I will say. I am too busy writing poems, bathing Srila Prabhupada and drying his clothes on the radiator. I can't see anyone. I'm embarked on a talking journal and think I'll reread *The Dark Cloud of Unknowing*. I have to keep quiet in this house as I'm only a guest and never know when someone is home or about to enter just when I'm about to stomp the Sampan Blues upstairs.

* * *

These are reasons why people shouldn't come:
I'm not on my knees in prayer all day (that is, when I'm not sitting in a half-lotus chanting *japa*, or breathing from the diaphragm or

watching Krishna conscious movies
to distract myself from pain).

* * *

I am reading my master's books. I don't see
others in the tradition of Zen hermits. "Don't
try for it, madam," said Samuel Johnson, because
an author isn't worth seeing; just read
his books.

* * *

So to Hall inmates I say *adieu*
in case there's no time to say it later. May you
each discover happiness in God, serve
Him, and know the soul's eternal *dharma*.
This is not a poem but a wish. It
could prove to be the best thing you were
ever given.

* * *

Night Notes, 6:40 p.m.

The most expensive pen is the least reliable, it seems. Okay, goodnight. I'm not much
on fire. That's who I am. My peak is easily scaled.

April 2, 12:05 a.m.

We are so used to seeing perfect prayers printed in Srila Prabhupada's books, and we
often take them for granted. In the chapter on "Perverted Expressions of Mellows," we
see prayers containing serious mistakes. This is to enable us to distinguish the true from
the false. Svarupa Damodara became angry when he saw such mistaken prayers. (Would
he be angry with mine?) On the other hand, when ISvara Puri apologized in advance for
mistakes in his writing, Lord Caitanya told him there could be no mistakes because
ISvara Puri was a devotee of Krishna. In other words, grammatical and rhetorical
mistakes are unimportant and should be overlooked. What counts is the mood. If we
don't understand the intricacies of *rasa*, then we are bound to make mistakes, but if we
remain as humble and sincere as possible in our expressions, and follow the actual
teachings we have received from Srila Prabhupada, we will be safe.

The first mistake Srila Rupa Gosvami offers in his *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* is to mix
personalism with impersonalism. And there are many more.

* * *

In his "Concluding Words" at the end of *The Nectar of Devotion*, Srila Prabhupada
mentions that Srila Rupa Gosvami's *bhajana-kutir* and *samadhi-mandira* are both
located in the courtyard of Vrndavana's Radha-Damodara temple. "Behind this very
tomb I have my place of *bhajana*, but since 1965 I have been away. The place, however,

is being taken care of by my disciples. By Krishna's will, I am now residing at the Los Angeles temple of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. This purport is finished today, the 30th of June, 1969."

Do we hear in these words Srila Prabhupada yearning for Vrndavana? He refers to his rooms at Radha-Damodara as "my place," and reminds his disciples to care for those rooms in his absence. It is obvious that he has not left Vrndavana for his own sense gratification, but is living in Los Angeles, composing *The Nectar of Devotion*, in remembrance of his relationship with Srila Rupa Gosvami. And although Srila Prabhupada was not in Vrndavana as he wrote these words, we do not hear him express regret that Krishna has sent him to Los Angeles. Actually, he never resided in that mundane smog-and-sin city. He did reside in the Los Angeles temple, which he named New Dvaraka. For Krishna's purpose, Srila Prabhupada (or his followers) may reside anywhere in the world, and by executing Krishna consciousness, they remain free of contamination.

Devotees often consider why they don't themselves live in Vrndavana. The only reason to reside anywhere else in the world is based on whether our service can be executed best in that place. Therefore, the spiritual master assigns *prabhu-datta-deSa*.

* * *

So, I have completed my re-reading of *The Nectar of Devotion*. I still don't know Krishna, and I still don't know the science of *bhakti*. Therefore, I cannot enter the ocean of devotion. If I can simply remain some kind of disciple of His Divine Grace, that's all I can aspire for. *Yasya deve para bhaktir, yatah deve tatha gurau/ tasyaiti kati tasyarta, prakaSante mahatmana*: "Only unto those persons who have implicit faith both in the guru and Krishna are the truths of the *Vedas* revealed." I count on Srila Prabhupada's mercy and liberality.

* * *

4:36 a.m.

Jaya Nrsimhadeva. I forgot what I was going to say. Lord Nrsimha took away my memory. Srila Prabhupada said, "In Hawaii, when we walked on the beach, the crabs ran away from us and took shelter of the Pacific Ocean. They have the *Sakti* to be secure in the ocean, whereas a man cannot."

The Nectar of Devotion points out impure mixtures. We shouldn't be proud of anything we can do. We really don't know very well how to serve Krishna purely. No unpalatable mixtures allowed. Like, don't mix *Santa* with *madhurya*. A materialistic girl in bodily consciousness might say she wants to embrace Krishna, but what is that? An impersonalist may pray to the Lord's effulgence thinking that the effulgence is as good as the Lord Himself, but he is mistaken. My mixtures don't claim to know *rasa*. I mix the ideals of pure Krishna consciousness with the actual state of my mind. Is that an unholy combination? But it's not that I want these two things to remain together. I just want to find the real path to purity. I can't do that without acknowledging both material and spiritual side by side.

The *ISopanisad* tells us to learn spiritual knowledge and nescience side by side. Why? So we can learn to avoid nescience and to favor the eternal pure. Still, I should not be

impudent and indulge in mixes, thinking I am now privileged enough to break with what is usual for an aspiring Vaisnava. That would be decadence. Face the dangerous threat that I may be doing something wrong, but beg the Lord to see the good in it, to direct me, and to see me as sincere. I pray to Him to purify my zigzag path.

* * *

Radha and Krishna are in the cave in New Vrndavana with Madhumangala and one of radha's maidservants named Sukanti. They are looking at paintings of Krishna's pastimes on the cave walls. Wonderful to hear them reminisce about their childhood in Vrndavana.

* * *

Dear rukmini, dear Madhavi, dear Candravali, dear Satyabhama, dear Madhumangala "tell us more of the pastimes recorded by Srila Rupa Gosvami. He was told by Satyabhama at Satyabhama-pura, to write a separate drama for her and not to try to take Krishna out of Vrndavana. Srila Prabhupada made prayers to Krishna in order to know how to carry out his mission. He prayed on the Boston pier, "O Lord, I am simply praying for Your mercy so that I will be able to convince them about Your message." That is a wonderful and sincere prayer by a person who described himself as a useless, insignificant beggar. He was apparently an old man with no money, and he couldn't speak the language well. Who could understand that he would start a great spiritual movement? I became caught up in his mercy, and I am incredibly grateful. I am still living the implications of the gift of life he gave me.

I tend to build a persona and legend about myself. One aspect of that is that I was unhappy and in great danger before I met Prabhupada; now I am a much better person, by his grace, bound to go back to Godhead at some point. Is that true? Do I feel it, or do I simply accept it as a legend? When do I even think about such things? The story of my life. We use that phrase when we talk to others: "Let me tell you the story of my life." Some things *are* stories. To the degree that they are true, we have to believe them and constantly breathe life into them. It is those stories that give us direction, that remind us that we actually do aspire to become pure devotees because we *were* unhappy and in great danger before we met him. We each wear the cloth of Hare Krishna people and remain as true as we can over the years. We each also feel the guru's help, his mercy "and not just directed toward us, but directed toward hundreds of devotees. This is a true movement, despite our mistakes, and we really have committed ourselves to it. Can we find that truth alive in our hearts?

An older devotee leaned forward, and his picture was taken at the conference for the equality of ISKCON women. They talked up a storm at their meeting and won the right for women to become top managers. They think they want that, and it's just what we need "more managers, more GBC members, more temple presidents, more gurus.

Prabhupada prayed on the Boston pier. He believed in God and had come simply to spread His message. He turned to Krishna for empowerment. I pray for the same, although I do not deserve it. I want to become empowered to glorify Krishna in my own words, based on *sastra*, and with humility, never thinking I'm doing great work. Let me be enthusiastic for this work.

* * *

Cowherd Boys Break Loose

& You can make mistakes, you know. You're not above that. "You're impertinent," a brother told me when I mailed out *Guru reform Notebook*.

* * *

Please, sir, we expected a song not
a comment on our
wrongs. We expected a *song*
from a bright
Krishna conscious face.

* * *

We expected.
I eschewed a dream and offered the porridge
even if it was salty
to the Lord but didn't know for
sure what was what.

* * *

Krishna and Madhumangala Krishna and His
parents "we sing with *those* words we
persons of flesh and body and gas and
electrical neurons. Oh, please be
true. Krishna sported with boys
who loved Him, and even a funny
brahmana would somersault with Him.
They joked at the girls' purity and at all the
strictures "those cowherd boys.

* * *

Krishna clear of nescience. My favorite T.P. stands
to make a stately announcement:
No *sannyasis* can park
their rVs under the trees near the church.
The neighbors object. This day is short
and God is *iSvara* is
fact. Don't imitate the pure devotees
or pollute yourself or others.
Simply be who you are and follow your
guru. Serve Krishna with heart
and purify whatever you have
through love and
His help. "

* * *

8:40 a.m.

Please, Krishna, please let me be with You while I read selections from his books.

* * *

9:35 a.m.

Couldn't get started on a new re-reading. What to do? So many are forced to act. They can't ask, "What will I do today? What will I do right now?" That decision has already been made, by someone else, by their previous activities, by the modes of nature. Even a retired person lives a life of limits. He sets up his routine, and accepts whatever freedom he can find amid the restrictions of body, mind, and society. Often he doesn't really want his freedom, or he's dissatisfied with the routine. No satisfaction anywhere for the *atma*. Only in Krishna consciousness, they say. Krishna's *parisads*. Those who attain perfection through *sadhana* have to go through great austerities, eating leaves that fall to the ground, etc. Not for me. Then accept your routine.

But maybe I can go beyond it, or at least vary it. Or maybe I can just surrender to my routine just as a *karmi* surrenders to his work week.

For now I'll resort to penmanship. Can't push uphill; everything is too low gear. We all have our ups and downs, and therapists have figured out that people with chronic pain should learn how long they can stay in "up gear" before exhaustion sets in.

A patch of sunlight has fallen into a corner of this room. If the sun stays out, that path will move. Stay active, the pain-management specialists tell us. Don't sink into all-day rest. The body loses energy and strength that way.

So many possible attitudes in life. The friendly health director says she has met thousands of people like me; she knows what's inside my head.

The chant from emptiness "does she know that? The ocean-desert metaphor? What I did and didn't achieve?"

Well, know this: I didn't fly over the ocean. I decided . . . I don't know.

I have *heard* of an ocean of devotion to Krishna, and I believe it exists. I also believe there are a few rare souls playing in that ocean. I have even occasionally felt a drop of ocean spray, carried to me on a breeze. But I'm landlocked. Unfortunately, I'm not so landlocked as to be a desert prayer-making ascetic. I don't do nothing if it's hard.

What have I accomplished? I've managed to talk about the ocean and the desert. I have managed to like hearing about Krishna. Now I simply have to decide what to read next. That's it, my little life.

Sun patch. Radha-Krishna in handsome copper, His turban golden. Hare Krishna.

* * *

12:02 p.m.

Krishna conscious award: We award faith to this man, *nistha*, so that no matter what anti-siddhantic nonsense he may hear, he'll remain steady. He'll be Krishnaite forever.

We each whittle down our plans from the grandiose dreams we had of what we might do. At least let us accept the process fully. And may whatever happens to us between now and death serve only to enhance our prayer.

* * *

3:05 p.m.

I should someday return to Vrndavana and the medieval, *older* atmosphere mixed as is it now with videos for sale and motorcycles, blaring cassette players, hundreds and hundreds of pilgrims, and what I claim I resist "ISKCON politics and ISKCON pressure within the walls of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. Maybe if I stayed for two weeks at Baladeva's house, it would not be so bad. It's impressive how the ISKCON devotees continue to make their pilgrimages there and to feel the *dhama's* significance, even if they visit only for a few weeks. Monkeys, mice, the meanness of its surface. But the underneath is sweet and difficult to detect in some ways. "Here is where Krishna held His *rasa* dance; here is where He stopped the *gopis* and demanded a tax for their milk products; here is where He bathed" " and we stand before an old *pukkir*, its walls covered in green slime, hogs and dogs and beggars and our own egos clashing, bodies aching, faultfinding minds, hearing from devotees who know the lore and who are at home there. Despite all this, we can't find out here what we can discover there, because the secret is contained in Vrndavana itself.

* * *

Preaching and Poems #20

Two Moods

#1

Preaching definitely means going out there and shouting your soul out. You witness courageously: "O Lord, please let this guy take a book." You are fearless in countering the opposition.

The counter of the bar
the man wild-playing cymbals
kirtana beat fired up
devotees stomping
God's glory isn't for quiet
souls or meditation but
a blasting get-together crashing
down rhythms of conch
and cymbals and heavy drums
expert Bengali-mixed rock beat
from Poland and hand-clapping
smiles, sweating in the group of inner dancers
women and children and cooling-down
sorts standing at the edges of the
outer circle "

* * *

get that spark in your soul
before it's too late. rev it hype it,
although some say it's outward

that expenditure of
energy that jumping thing
something in the blood.

* * *

Still, the spirit of courage
and virtue in another
way and don't put down this front-line
Row of charge and shout . . .

* * *

Religion means good dancin' for God in the
Road and even on the bus to Mathura or
walking around Govardhana we might be
going down the street with a big *kirtana*
party and no one complaining because it's India (or
Poland, New York.) No
one drops out because of their courage
and anyway, if police or hooligans come
we can get arrested sometimes.

* * *

2

But Krishna consciousness also includes time for reflection
the mood of the quieter soul, just as after
I went in to see my spiritual master and
he was alone with only a small
desk lamp at night or in the pre-dawn
that's only a memory now
and barely that . . .
but something way inside me
Remembers it and
keeps me going
although it doesn't seem like
much.

* * *

We might call it sad
when we want the essence that brought us
a lost lad to his storefront
his feet not wanting to lose what he was giving,
even when we look back
over decades
at our own mistakes
and the mistakes of others. Could we

have *not* made those mistakes?
I just don't know and
don't know where I am now
or what will happen
how something was lost
but not the essence. Still,
that "good devotee" tag they gave me
and I sit here with my
cynicism,
alone.

* * *

What have we got? Where is that Swamiji
and where are his men? Why separate him from his
leading followers and his mission in
this institutional form? Is it *I* who am
separated? Did it happen? If
they say, "It doesn't happen to
true men," are they right?
Troublemakers, schisms, lawyers "the whole
crunch of a little person lost
and while lost feeling
that that too is another
way to be with the Swami
in a slower time
the music of memory and forgotten
hope "we are linked to his divine message
and presence "to his preaching
too.

* * *

3
The door latch rattles but
I think it's only the wind. I'm alone
in the house
and I bought these hours
by taking a pill. Tomorrow
it may not be so easy.
Bow, therefore, down at the
feet of holy practices,
write if only in homely,
slightly mad and twisted lines,
that you don't want any religion
but the Vaisnava way,
yet you want to see the whole world "or

at least some of it "
as held in Krishna's hands, part of His domain.
That vision of Krishna.

* * *

Sampler's Poetry Hall #14

Ms. Sampler wanted to see me, so I went to her office. She said she liked my poems and that she wanted to know something about Krishna consciousness. I managed to preach to her.

She spoke about her own spiritual life, how she dislikes organized religion, yet wants to meditate and attain higher states of consciousness. She said most poets are arrogant and have bought into the reductionistic concept of reality. I hesitated. Would one of Srila Prabhupada's books be too much for her? Since she mentioned *Bhagavad-gita*, however, I gave her Prabhupada's edition. We parted on friendly terms after I invited her to write to me with her questions if she wished. Was I proud? No, I told her to write, as if I'm such an authority, because I didn't know how else to personally cultivate her interest in Krishna consciousness if she decided she wanted to go further. I did tell her the whereabouts of the devotees on campus. I also told her I wouldn't be attending the last meeting of the Poetry Hall (the social event), but I would try to write a poem and send it in. As we parted she said, "Hare Krishna."

* * *

Wind messages. A poet. The spurt of ink from
a peaceful pen "*Santa-rasa*. I finished
Reading NOD and my attendance at
the Poetry Hall and
the series called
"Preachers I Have Known." I am satisfied
to start anew.

* * *

Thank you, Ms. Sampler, and poets in the green
hall, for allowing a Krishna devotee to join you.
I wish I could have sung wonderful songs
of *Krishna-bhakti*
to sweep you into the current of
love of God. I have no metaphysical argument
or desire to convert you
to a movement filled with similar
souls. I wanted to give you
the nectar of
devotion.

* * *

But I could not do so in a way that would have

overwhelmed your poetry-hungry hearts and
minds. I'm not so skilled. But the
word "Krishna" has appeared in this hall.
What love drives you on? May it turn to love for the Lord
and wherever you go
may God's name come to you at the end.

* * *

6:02 p.m.

Madhu is over at the house. Today he's hired two workers to build the chimney. Aniruddha likes to do the work that appeals to him, so he's building a wall around the house. Anyway, it's taking longer than we thought to move in. The inside of the house is damp, and as of yet there's no heating system. The walls have to be painted, and the plastering is not finished. As soon as I got here, I wondered if we had made a mistake to come here so soon. But it wasn't a mistake, because Madhu has to be near the house so he can work.

What to do with me in the meantime? Live and work. The past twenty days have passed happily enough for me, absorbed in reading *The Nectar of Devotion* and writing with it. Now that's over. It could be another two weeks before we move in. Starting tomorrow I'll begin a new volume of my EJW and stay cool. And I'll go back to *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (Eighth Canto).

Looking out the window here is not as easy as it is in Geaglum. At Geaglum I don't have to crane my neck or get up from my seat; I can just sit at the desk and look out. Still, it's worth the effort to see the beautiful sloping Wicklow mountains, and how the plentiful wind stirs things up. Sheep dot the pasture below. All this allows me to keep track of my own soul.

* * *

Night Notes, 6:30 p.m.

Farewell. If I have to limp through tomorrow or the next day, take it manfully, spiritually, and hear the wind of rathdangan.

Now bed down and hope to be up for a new approach to *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and Manu's prayers. Then take the opportunity "even if you blow it" to chant on beads. We never *completely* blow it. Krishna always seems to give us another chance to try and exert our small free will simply to hear His name. The cloud of unknowing is stark *hari-nama*. When will I and my mind be inclined to hear *only His names*?

Appendix

Tips For reading *The Nectar of Devotion*

Don't read to get through it or simply to refresh yourself of the facts. Slow down and read prayerfully; NOD is scripture. Stay with the sentences until you feel, with faith, that they are coming from Srila Prabhupada to you.

* * *

Write notes to look at later. The notes can face problems in understanding or encourage whatever kind of reading is actually possible for you. *Bhakti-rasa* is ever fresh; remember that.

* * *

Be grateful for any reading you can do, but work to improve *attention*, *faith*, and *devotion*. Write on these themes "and the obstacles to them "as you attempt to read. It doesn't matter if you repeat yourself. This is the good fight.

* * *

Face it starkly if the book doesn't come alive in your hands. If you fail to read with faith, you will not be able to enter the scripture. Therefore, read repeatedly throughout the day if possible.

* * *

Reading at midnight tends to go well. At that time, I accept a decent, attentive reading of a few pages, and visit familiar but dear expressions and topics. From your present moment and time, elaborate on what you read, or at least feel it as deeply as possible "as Srila Prabhupada did when he spoke on NOD in Vrndavana in 1972.

You do not always have to note your lack of devotion. You have a right to feel love of God; you belong by virtue of your connection to Srila Prabhupada and your willingness to serve him. Look at the ocean that is opening up before you in the book.

* * *

A simple, stark formula: read a few sentences, or even one, then express yourself about what you read. You may also mix in other things from the conscious or unconscious flow, but return to reading.