

# **Writing While Reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's Books**

**Part II**

**Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami**



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**Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami  
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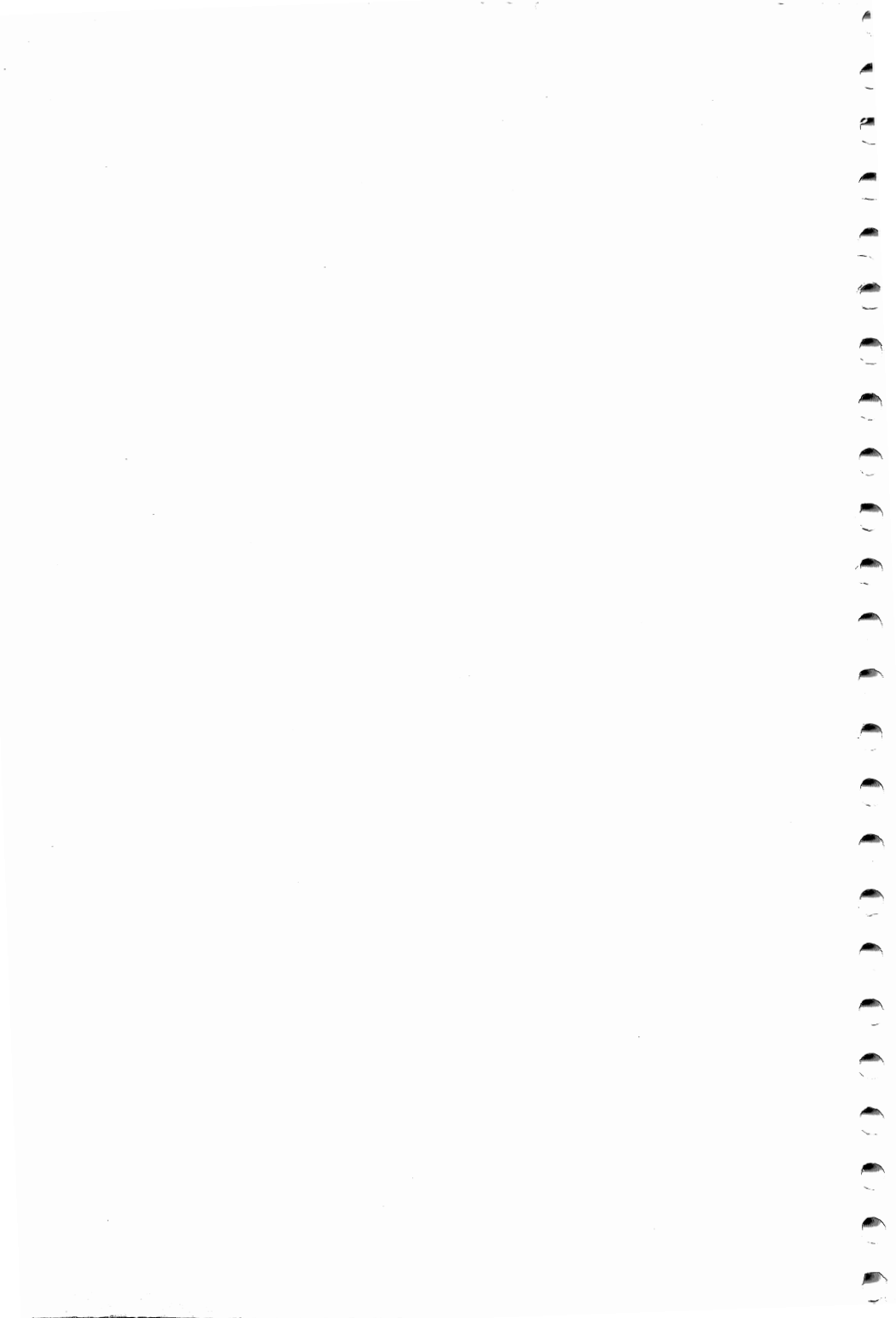
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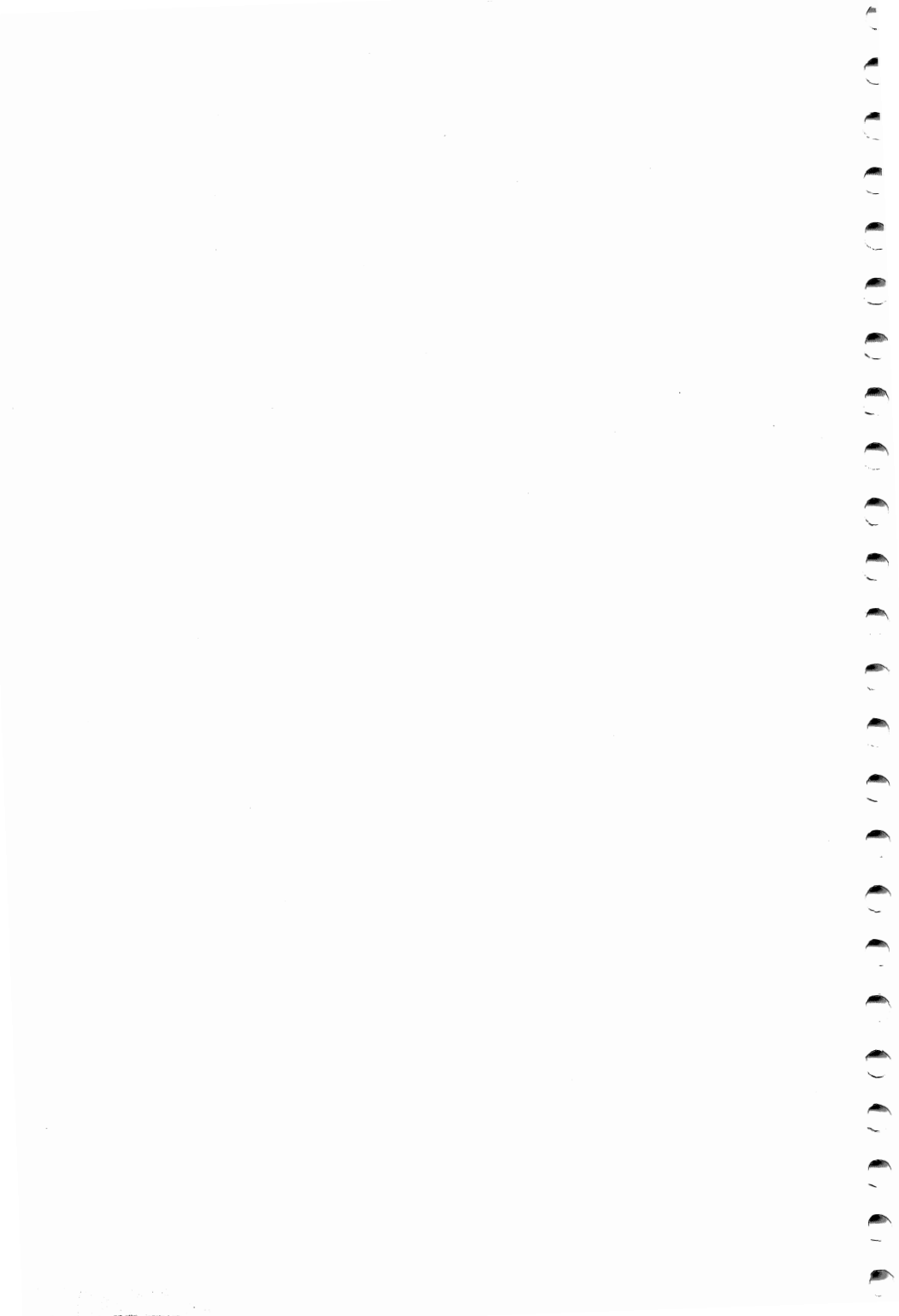
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**Wicklow**

**July 23–24 1994**



## Introduction

I am seeking indications from Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the heart and from Śrīla Prabhupāda for beginning a new project, *Writing While Reading*. This occurred to me suddenly today, July 23, 1994, while on the third full day of a planned four-week writing retreat. On this retreat I have already geared myself up to three separate one-hour timed Writing Sessions per day. But now it occurs to me that I could spend the same time more profitably by doing something like writing while reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Last December I did something like this for about a week, but then I had to break my practice and go off to other duties. I was never to resume it. I will give a few quotes here from last year's reading-writing, to help myself restart it:

This retreat—turn it into a reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* cum relaxed writing. Do them almost simultaneously. No need for performance in the writing, but truly whatever comes, either on the theme of the purports or anything that pops up.

The reading—stop and think to make it better. Try to pray and hear better—pray to enter it and be transformed, to retain it and to be able to repeat it as *kathā*.

I like the idea of read and writing in that way, hour after hour, with no quota, but going beyond the minimum.

I think that one quote sums up what I want to do again. When it popped up this morning during the

one-hour Writing Session, I had this to say: "You could make *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the anchor. . . . You can talk as freely as you like and then go back to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The project won't be audience-oriented at all. . . .

"It's a way to read and write  
with no other purpose really  
than to achieve Kṛṣṇa consciousness  
and allow for self-expression—

which are exactly the purposes of a Writing Session, right? It may be a more direct route to what you are trying for here."

This Introduction is not a cool assessment crafted after the work is done. It's a hope and a prayer. I'm attempting a serious shift of interests from my long-time, constant practice of Writing Sessions, where I "write what comes," and I'm asking myself to be satisfied with writing in between attempts for direct *darśana* with Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Will it work? Will I find it boring and peter out? When I visualize myself sticking to this writing while reading, it seems to be a good and desirable thing. But can I attain it?

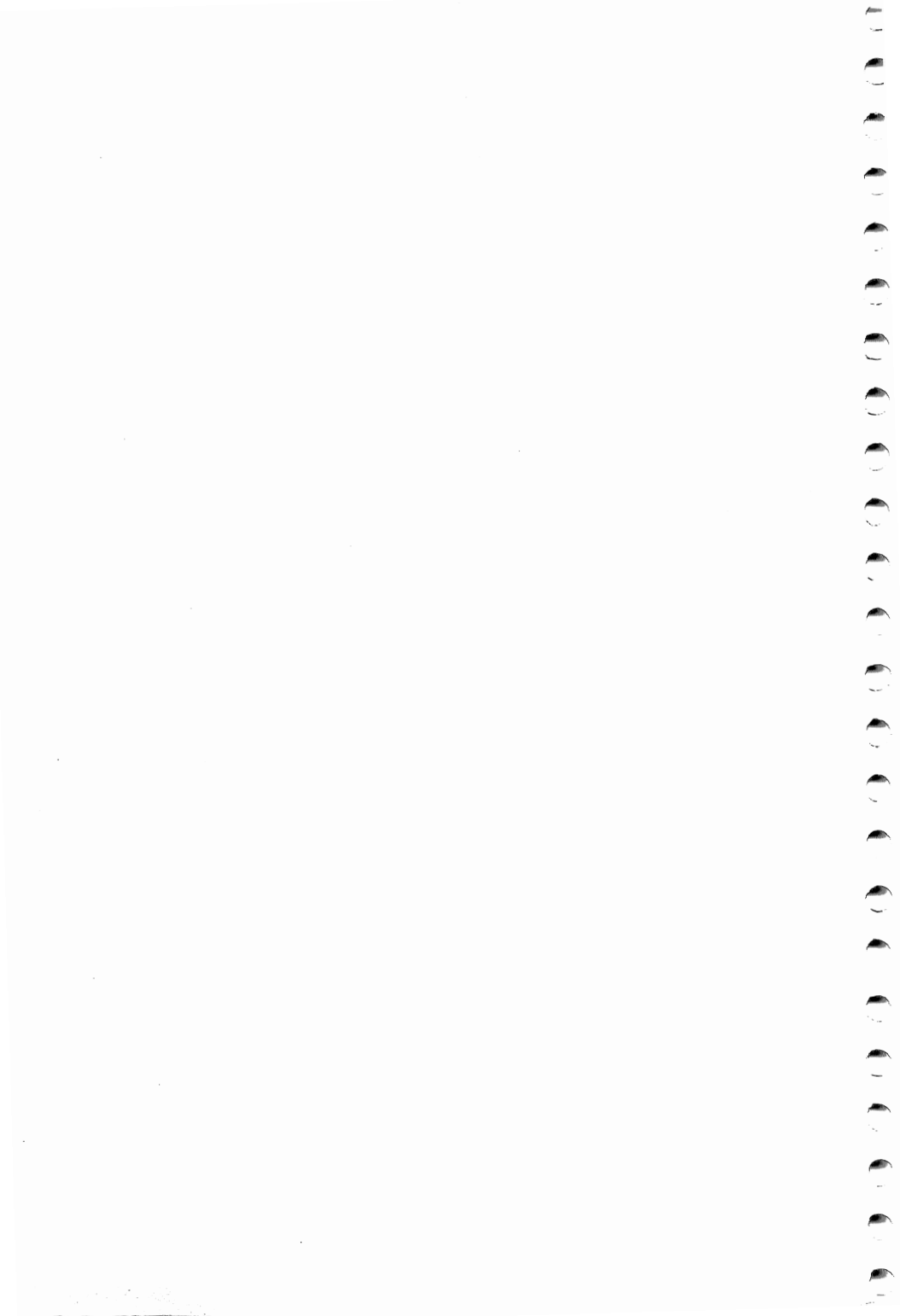
Therefore my Introduction is not so much an aid to readers as it is self-encouragement. If it's to work, I'll have to receive more of Kṛṣṇa's mercy to become a serious student of the *Bhāgavatam*.

I ask forgiveness for daring to put my own meandering words between the holy words of *śāstra*, but Kṛṣṇa in my heart is already well aware of my strong tendency to write whatever comes to mind, and many times in the past, in fear and trembling,

I've asked Him to accept this as a devotional offering. He already knows that my mind goes from the sublime (hearing scriptures) to the ridiculous (my unrehearsed mind) from moment to moment. He knows my strategy is to give the mind some rein and then pull it in and give it direct *kṛṣṇa-katha*. He knows I'm attempting more of the same here by this mixture of writing while reading. I pray that before too long, the mixture may transform into something more like Vaiṣṇava writing.

This writing is meant only for my own eyes. It is an individual offering to Kṛṣṇa in my attempt to surrender my whole self (body, mind, and words) to Śrīla Prabhupāda's direction. If anyone else chances to read this I ask them not to take offense. If the mixture is too jarring for you just put it aside and take it that you've stumbled on someone's private notebooks where he's working something out in private.

All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda. All glories to guru and Gaurāṅga. All glories to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and to the Lord's kind invitation that we be with Him by chanting, hearing, and remembering.





***Beginning Note, The Night Before Starting:***

If this is going to be successful and endure, I'll have to enter taste and attraction for reading the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—and the writing that goes with it. The Writing Sessions have allowed me to express myself, to be myself beyond the mere discipline of rules and regulations. I've needed it. I can't just give up a freedom like that unless I replace it with something equally satisfying. *That's* what we'll have to see. I'm willing to try—to gain immersion into *Bhāgavatam* as well as the personal freedom and cutting edge expression which I've enjoyed in Writing Sessions.



## Night Notes

Tomorrow I'm going to start a more serious life by switching from Writing Sessions to reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and making free notes ("making love," the nondevotees would say). I'll still allow myself to write what comes I say. But it's going to be a strange combination. Paragraphs next to each other—one on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* "Prayers of Residents of Jambudvīpa" and the other tied to my sense and desire to write (penchant for) free pop expression, contaminated and not really trying to shake it loose.

When I write like this, who I still am, regulative fellow, but with worldly impressions and not even ashamed of them—is it bad and wrong?

Anyway, tomorrow I'm going in that direction to make *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* my anchor. What are these notes? Taken after looking at some of *The Best of American Poetry, 1993*. Is it to be included? That's up to me (who me?). Do you want your "book" (oh, here we go again, he wants to write a book!) to be inclusive and possibly less readable so it gets you down when you read it later? How to divide it into units?

This could be "Night Notes" written each evening after you have done the three reading and writing sessions, my writing while reading. These will be relaxed, let-it-hang-out evening reflections, maybe say how you thought you did. As for *American Poetry*, that's an indulgence, but it can keep me

happy, Then all right, keep feeling you are pursuing your professional vocation, not playing it too safe within *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, but taking risks—"going to Harvard" as you like to say.

July 24, 1994

12:07 A.M.

We are continuing our reading in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Fifth Canto, Chapter Eighteen, verse 30.

Every transcendental form of the Supreme Lord is beautiful and youthful. We hear He is “Fish” or “Tortoise” and our minds boggle. We insist on superimposing our material concepts on the Supreme. He is actually *advaita*, *acutyam* . . . *navayauvanam*. Take your choice; be a devotee or a nondevotee. As a devotee you also make a choice and worship the form of the Supreme Lord that appeals to you most. “A certain form of the Lord is worshipped by a particular devotee because he loves to see that form of the Lord . . . Sincere servants of a particular form of the Lord always see that form as very beautiful, and thus they engage in constant devotional service to Him” (*Bhāg.* 18.29, purport).

The Supreme Lord in His original form never leaves Goloka Vṛndāvana, yet He is all-pervading, present in the heart of every *jīva*. *Īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṃ, hṛd-deśe* (*Bg.* 15.15). He cannot be seen with ordinary eyes. “As Aryama says, the Lord is *anupalaksita-sthana*: no one can locate Him. This is the greatest of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

Note: on your good behavior? Like to run and romp and splash the ink with innate humor, imp?

Got to slow down? We are not inviting you to up-stage *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* with your moment-to-moment report, dear mind, but we know you are there and we'll give you a chance to report.

You say, "But if I don't write on, there won't be many pages." We reply, just read a little, don't worry.

"Except for a devotee in transcendental consciousness, no one can perceive Your actual form. Therefore I offer my respectful obeisances unto You" (*Bhāg.* 5.18.31). By logic and argument we can explain (defend) the position of the devotee and the nature of the Supreme Lord. But actual *darśana* and reciprocation doesn't take place by intellectual debate.

Yet it's important that I, who am also a rational creature, can meditate with my intellectual faculties on the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His energies. "As summarized in the *Vedas*, *sarvam klav idam brahma*: 'Everything is in Brahman.' " I close my eyes and think of it, grasp it a moment. Whatever object you may consider, they're all energies of the Supreme Person. The temporary bodies come and go according to karma. The bodies are not false, they are within God's energies. "In other words, the energy of the Supreme Lord is as permanent as the Lord Himself, although His energy is sometimes manifest and sometimes not."

This is safety and not an ordinary fallible kind as can be opened by a security guard or nation's mili-

tary might. Think of God and His energies. Know your body is bound for destruction, as is the whole universe. But by thinking of the Supreme Being, you can save yourself from devastation, both now and later. This present safety for the body cannot last. But the permanent safety is profound and always protected.

What I'm asking you to do is contemplate as you read. It's not so difficult. It's rewarding. You have an immediate Kṛṣṇa conscious session.

"O Lord, we offer our respectful obeisances unto You as the gigantic person. Simply by chanting mantras, we shall be able to understand You fully." (So begin the prayers of the residents of the northern section of Jambudvīpa who worship the Supreme Lord as the Varāha incarnation)

Again and again they chant, "For the purpose of practice." Again and again I write my full-length Writing Session. I am restraining a bit now to hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. We will also have occasion to express ourselves and to write so that we can read it later.

"Because You are self-manifested, only when You see that a person is wholeheartedly engaged in searching for You do You reveal Yourself. Therefore I offer my respectful obeisances unto You" (*Bhāg.* 5.18.36).

This first session is going well, the time slipping by quickly. Is it an elaborate trick to get me to

study? If so, no harm. I do keep thinking, "What about the writing?" I'm so accustomed to be up early to splash ink and run quickly to spread the news of my existence and what I perceive. I want to write my truth and read it in print. It's not a bad thing. I have been infected by Kṛṣṇa conscious *śakti* by Śrīla Prabhupāda and the practices of *sādhana-bhakti*. As a result I am on fire. I want to blaze and report and outshine nondevotee reportage.

You had run on, face and admit who you are. I look now at a Writing Session from October 19, 1993 in Vṛndāvana. You questioned why you weren't writing for an audience: "Śrīla Prabhupada certainly wrote for an audience." You justified it. You kept going: "I want to do a selfless act, not for name and fame. I want to imbibe śāstric truths, want to be a person." Writing while reading is also a private form, but I also hope it will be readable. My editor commented on my Writing Sessions: "They seem concerned with honest, straight, true writing, and saying what you want to say. What more can a writer ask for from any form of writing, except that the readers see it too?"

Writing and reading. They're not contradictory acts. I go from one to another. Sometimes I pause in reading out of respect for *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and because I want to recall it, I write a note or a direct quote on the exalted, transcendental subject. Sometimes I pause in reading and switch to the thoughts and feelings that run through me in my actual stream of consciousness. These experi-



ences may be different than *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—they may be millions of miles away. But I express it a little, as if to say, “I am here. I’m alive.” Then I glide back to the sacred Sanskrit text, translated by His Divine Grace into my mother tongue. I read and write. It’s progressive; it can develop.

I may also sometimes move from *Bhāgavatam* reading to reading a previously written Writing Session.

] Why did God create the material world which is full of suffering? He did not create it just to inflict suffering on the living entities. “The Supreme Lord creates this world only because the conditioned souls wanted to enjoy it” (*Bhāg.* 5.18.38, purport).

Now I’m reading Chapter 19, “The Island of Jambudvīpa.” We hear first from the worshippers of Lord Rāmacandra. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes that His residence is Ayodhya “still existing in the district of Hyderabad, which is situated on the northern side of Uttara Pradesh.” My mind goes to the politics, the blowing up of the unused mosque, fanatical Hindu politicians, or are they not fanatical? I think of Advaita Ācārya dāsa, my disciple, who in poor health has had to leave America and his practice as a doctor and retire in his home village in Uttara Pradesh. How is he?

I’ve been reading an hour and now it requires more effort to pay attention to the language. Maybe I’m played-out and cannot go more. Or I might get a second wind. There’s a limit for me, physically also.

“Only in pure consciousness, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, can one perceive that transcendental form of the Lord” (5.19.4).

Three considerations for Lord Rāmacandra’s appearance, in particular, why He accepted the tribulations of being separated from His wife, Sītā, due to Ravaṇa’s kidnapping:

1) To teach moral beings that the material happiness of married life is the cause of many miseries;

2) To demonstrate the ideal behavior of a husband who endures all difficulties to provide protection for his wife; and,

3) Viṣvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains further that Lord Rāmacandra did not suffer material tribulations, but the transcendental bliss of *vipralambha*. “The emotions a lover and beloved feel when separated from one another are actually very blissful, although apparently painful.”

All right, so I’ve been reading and making a few notes. I like it. It’s good engagement. My writing voice is somewhat subdued, but I also had a chance to speak. Sublime thoughts and words are passing through me from the pages of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I doubt if I’ll be able to retain them. Nevertheless . . .

I’m leaving this reading session at the beginning of the prayers to Nara-Nārāyaṇa by the residents of Bharata-varṣa. Nara-Nārāyaṇa appears to demonstrate austerity as the means to achieve self-realization. In this age, austerity is hard for us, so

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu has bestowed upon us the easiest method of self-realization, cleaning the heart by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions that in this age, there are also different forms of speculative philosophies “and so-called advanced scientific knowledge, such as anthropology, Marxism, Freudianism, nationalism, and industrialism, but if we work hard under their guidance instead of adopting the process practiced by Nara-Nārāyaṇa, we shall waste our valuable form of life. Thus we shall certainly be cheated in this life” (*Bhāg.* 5.19.9, purport).

It is good to read verses and purports on transcendental subjects, such as the nature of the Supreme Lord in His many expansions. He doesn't suffer from hunger or fatigue, disease or old age and death. Yet He is a person with a form. His form is *sac-cid-ānanda vigraha*. He creates everything, but is not attached to it. Unlike us, He doesn't become attracted by sex desire for a beautiful person. “He's not afflicted with faulty vision.”

I wish to continue to hear these. And you can write as you please. Attend the *Bhāgavatam* classes (by reading) and then, school boy that you are, take recess and go kick up dirt with your classmates in the school yard. There are other recesses and lunch breaks, so enjoy yourself. But it's in your interest to be studious and become a lover of the texts and tidings of the Supreme Lord and His devotees. Become devoted to your teacher and his purports. Then you will dream of seeing him and

you'll get the full chance to do so. Then when you meet people, you'll have so much to give them.

Comment after this morning's reading-writing session:

I think of two things we try to achieve in writing:

1) You purify yourself by writing as honestly as possible, cut through expression, not calculated for an audience; and,

2) Communication for the audience, to create a book of instructional and inspirational value is preaching.

I have apparently been willing to forego that to write without making it communicative in the usual sense, in a structured book. Writing Sessions are more for the first point mentioned, yet I "secretly" think that if I write honestly for myself, it will be the best way to preach.

Now I'm not even pursuing the first reason for writing. Writing is taking a back seat to reading. Whatever I do here is like a concession to my writing desires without giving them full attention. By the theory that we have within us different subpersons, he who is called "the writer" within me is being subdued by this method of "writing while reading."

The gain is worth it. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is eternal good. In the Writing Sessions I was not giving the *Bhāgavatam* the first and direct importance. Therefore for this book, which I hope will last at least twenty more days, I will ask the writer to be a *śāstra* student, a scribe. In limited time, he can also

be whatever he likes. You could say then if I were really intent on developing my *Bhāgavatam* reading, then I could dispense entirely with writing. But no, let's have this combination. I'm not trying to make it the most efficient and readable "book" or the place for fullest writing practice. I hope it will be a record of a time well spent and therefore interesting to look at later.

2:10 P.M. "The only purpose of life is to be fully absorbed in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa and His form, pastimes, activities and qualities" (*Bhāg.* 5.19.13).

Always think of Kṛṣṇa and if you do so at the time of death, you will certainly go back to Godhead without a doubt. This is a reason to read and write like this. I say this after lunch and rest, in a not very inspired state. I also talked myself out this morning in a meeting with the Wicklow devotees. I made personal disclosures to them. Madhu hinted to me later that it was a departure from my usual formal talks. He said he feels strongly that honesty doesn't mean we have to speak everything in our mind and heart. I didn't go too far, I think, but I did tell them that I underwent a change last Kārttika in Vṛndāvana. I said in recent years I've been reading books about Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, the intimate works of the six Gosvāmīs, but I am now concentrating exclusively on Śrīla Prabhupada's books. Somehow the result of that talk—or is it the result of a lunch or the nap?—is to leave me feeling flattened like a

balloon with the air let out. (and now my pen ran out, I removed the empty cartridge and a big drop of jet black ink fell, leaving a perfect circle on my *kūrta*. Got up and ran down to the bathroom thinking maybe if I acted at once with soap and water I could remove it, as when you wash a blood stain right away. But no, the circle will remain).

O aching foot,

O misery I don't have—these exclamations quick from the pen like ink stains and hand-stands, want to proclaim that I can still write whatever I damn please. Madhu may say total honesty is not desirable; we should not disclose things, for example, that would cause a crisis of doubt in the minds of our subordinates—and I do avoid that sort of thing. But darn it, “you” ought to know, I ought to be able to say I don't feel great, am groping for the earlier inspiration to take on this new project of *Writing While Reading*.

I want to read my master's books. Not be turned off by looks

of a critic or a censor and freedom to move with pen as part of it. Not that in the name of better reading habits I squelch my free-write and creative drives forever.

But you can't expect your every word to come out amounting to a collection that is readable, tight reading in a book of chapters.

Let's get back to reading. I do resent a little the fact that my inner mood was diverted by speaking to a room full of devotees today. Okay, but it was

good to do so, good for my relationship with them. Let's recoup, minimize our losses by going ahead and not losing heart in this proposed venture for the next twenty days. Yes, I agree. It is a place where I can write as I like and that has still to be negotiated, worked out by me as to how this writing and reading take place.

I didn't want to squelch you.

I do want you to be better spiritually, so you can think of Kṛṣṇa at the time of death—or else what's the use of all the writing and publishing in the name of *br̥hat-mṛdaṅga*? Play a right drum, to Kṛṣṇa conscious *kīrtana*.

Now here's a coincidence. As I wrote the above, it occurred to me that there is a *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse with a similar point. I turned back to reading and here it is, the very verse before me: "If a person engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, however, is also afraid of giving up his body [like the materialists mention in the first half of the verse, attached to body, comforts, wives, wealth, etc.], what is the use of his having labored to study the *śāstras*? It was simply a waste of time" (*Bhāg.* 5.19.14).

Don't be materially attached. Make some actual progress by your Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I'm going ahead now, my motorboat throttle is fully opened and the wake is churning and disappearing behind me, this morning's spendage is gone but I'm not defeated and depleted. All opportunity to read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is with me still.

And it doesn't matter (in a bad sense) that I write ramblingly. It is interesting to me and that's all that counts. Whatever benefit is gained by freeest—out of control—expression, that's still with me.

The residents of Bharata-varṣa are very fortunate. The land is connected with many holy rivers. "Sometimes they chant the names of these rivers as mantras, and sometimes they go directly to the rivers to touch them and bathe in them" (*Bhāg.* 5.19.18). Bhurijana gave me two little tubes of water, one from the source of the Ganges and one from the source of the Yamunā, at Badarikāśrama in the Himalayas. He personally gathered them a few months ago. I received them and put them aside almost as a botheration, two more items to account for. But let me think now, where are they? Maybe they're in the van. Want to make a wild rush out there and see? Then you can be fortunate like the residents of Bharata-varṣa. Have a little faith and take the water to your head. Don't be stingy. Give M. a drop too. Then come back here quickly. Yes, I know, bathing in the Ganges takes a long time and repeated efforts before it cleanses from sin, whereas the holy name and pure devotee's association acts quickly. But it seems that you could use all the help you can get. And it may be only a minute away.

Okay I did it.

Feel different?

A little wild and unhinged and on the verge of words or action I might resent. But I took the water



on my head and gave to M. (he was greedy and took a big drop).

“After many, many births, when the results of one’s pious activities mature, one gets an opportunity to associate with pure devotees” (*Bhāg.* 5.19.20). Then as a result, one gradually renders service to Vāsudeva. Service we have gained. We have been able to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda. Great fortune indeed that in youth and middle age he kept us busy sincerely in his service. Now let’s continue it to the end. Don’t act rashly and spoil it. You may not be able to make that great breakthrough for pure chanting, tears in the eyes, etc. You may not achieve the state of pleasing the Lord and his pure devotee, Prabhupāda. Pity if you fall short after so much opportunity and leniency on their part. But at any rate, don’t ruin what you have achieved. Go quietly and preserve the holy remnants. Touch the Vṛndāvana leaf and Yamunā-Gaṅga water to your head. Chant and follow four rules.

And if you must write “what comes,” then at least anchor it to the *Bhāgavatam*.

Stop and write a sentence down. It slows the feverish mind. It gives you a better opportunity to focus. It is a prayer. “When one is attracted by the beauty of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and his mind is always engaged in the Lord’s lotus feet, he is no longer interested in subjects that do not help him in self-realization. In other words, he loses all attraction for material activities.”

This could happen. Reading is a main way to help.

Attic room heating up.

Sunlight through skylight. Some passionate edge in you, anxious about lost time. Śaunaka said if you try to bring back even one moment by paying “millions of dollars” you can’t recover it. Life is so precious.

And you ate three *laḍḍus* (*laḍḍu sādhu*) even while hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda define *atyahara* as over-eating. He said you can eat whatever you need, so many kilos if required, but not one grain extra beyond what you can nicely digest. Right in the face of your spiritual master you ate a little more. Okay, no big deal, I know. It’s all triviality and small time anyway, whatever I do. People will be amused. I am that way. Rev up the engine to this Chris Craft, move on, move on through hot afternoon and get somewhere by tonight.

Every word in the purports is perfect. It’s almost too much. So much wealth and you don’t know how to handle it. You pass over some of it quickly, as if it makes no sense or doesn’t apply to you, but that’s not the case. You go through it looking for what? Each sentence is worth your full attention. But you think you ought to keep moving so you can say to yourself, I read another chapter. However it may be damaging to read like that, not honoring sentences, as if they were platitudes and truisms.

Sometimes the sentence is a bit long. My short-tempered mind can’t slow down to process it all.

Take this one, for example: "A living entity becomes established in spiritual blissful life when he fully understands that his happiness depends on spiritual self-realization, which is the basic principle of *ānanda* (bliss), and when he is eternally situated in the service of the Lord, who has no lord above Him" (*Bhāg.* 5.19.20, purport). See what I mean? Did you slow down and read that just now? Go back and read it again?

The sentence makes good sense. I agree with it. Happiness comes in spiritual self-realization and in service to the Lord. One point is most of us need some active service, not just sitting and reading all day (even writing is something extra to reading—and that's why you need to do it. You are restless or you are active).

You can contemplate the sentence. But you want to do something also. Maybe you should just calm down now. Lie on your back on the floor. I don't think you are capable of processing sentence after sentence in your brain in a sattvic state. You are too passionate or lonely or something like craving right now. Cool it. You've got a thing in hitching up to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, but it should be done temperately, a little at a time.

While lying on back see through  
patch of skylight, the  
beautiful blue sky and moving across  
from right to left, white clouds and  
gray clouds, the three immense  
movements, sky, cloud and gray clouds

in the immense distance see  
your own vision of it,  
... this too is Kṛṣṇa consciousness and I  
can't deny it.

While lying down it also occurred to me my agitated state may be due to something I said in this morning's meeting. I confessed I'd been reading *rasika* books. (Madhu thought maybe I didn't have to disclose that, but he said they would probably hear about it eventually and so I've equipped them to handle it).

I said now I am reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's books exclusively. One of the devotees said he looks up to me for my adeptness in reading, studying, etc. He said he thinks I could handle reading about Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* without being adversely effected. He said the members of the Caitanya Math (active in Dublin) sometimes criticize ISKCON for not knowing of higher *rasas*. I replied, "Yes, I agree we should be interested in the highest parts of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teachings, in Goloka Vṛndāvana, not 'merely' Vaikuṇṭha—but the way to achieve it is best done by reading only Śrīla Prabhupāda's books." I said that this was my contribution. Others may read advanced books and contribute their knowledge to ISKCON but I'll assert that I can find everything in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.

But it occurred to me—by force of reason—as I spoke at the meeting and just now too, that I'm making a bold assertion when I say that. Can I state for sure that I will be satisfied my whole life just re-

reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's books? Am I saying, at least by my action, that it's better not to read *Sat-sandarbha* or the more *rasika* texts? Will I change again as years go by?

I don't know. I can't predict the future. Maybe I should be careful what I announce and claim: "I am reading Prabhupāda's books exclusively. That's all we need." Do it while you can. Don't advocate claim, or assert your way. Just do it, little foolish son.

Bless me, father, for I have sinned. It has been two weeks since my last Confession. These are my sins:

Omission of truth, five and a half times.

Sassed my mother and sister.

Stubbed my toe and cried "Goddamn."

Wrote crazy stuff then said I'll stop it, then felt the rush in my veins, and wanted to do it again. Did it.

Brought into close proximity, *śāstras'* holy words with my zany woe-will.

Did the poo-poo.

Accidentally dropped an ink circle on my *kūrta*.

Wanted to write immortal prose and poetry without considering its effect on my next life.

Gambled.

Gambled.

Read and got tired.

Talked too much and maybe too confessionally.

But I tried, Lord, and I do wish to be Yours.

Please accept this beastly fellow who writes day and night.

"I firmly resolve, with the help of thy Grace, to sin no more and to avoid any occasions of sin. I do fear the loss of heaven and the pains of hell. Amen."

For your penance say two extra rounds of *japa*.

Oh no, really? When? By the altar? In front of the golden Eucharist? Alas, old Catholic memories on the brain, wooden kneelers, pews squeaking as parishioners enter and sit down . . .

\*

*4:25 P.M. began reading*

Some well-known, special verses in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.19 tell of the fortune of being born in Bharata-varṣa. I read them, then close my eyes and try to think. So far away from desirable, prayerful consciousness. Could a Christian book on prayer help me? Should I be out doing something more active? Why don't Kṛṣṇa's words and Kṛṣṇa consciousness strike me and move me? Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Always think of me . . . this is very easy, even for a child. Why not take this path? One should try to follow the instructions of Kṛṣṇa exactly and become fully eligible to be promoted to the kingdom of God . . . One should go directly to Kṛṣṇa and engage in His service."

I took a break and went to discuss with M. about where to stay on a retreat and which plane to take to India.

“This is the best opportunity offered to the inhabitants of Bharata-varṣa. One who is fit to return home, back to Godhead, is no long liable to the results of karma, good or bad.”

Often the same thing is repeated in the purports. Those born in India should perfect their lives by taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then spread it to others. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, in this spirit, is opening centers all over the world “so that people may associate with the pure devotees of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, understand the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and ultimately go back home, back to Godhead” (*Bhāg.* 5.19.28, purport).

I fall at the feet of guru and Kṛṣṇa. The repetition is not a fault. Let me not take it that way. I need to hear with refreshed consciousness in the mood of surrender.



### *Night Notes*

Disrupted by the morning meeting, I say. Wrote some of my agitation. Now still choked and blocked. Got no inspiration from *The Best American Poetry of 1993*. This is for me, this is for thee.

I'm hoping tomorrow will be better and I'll sustain three regular reading and writing sessions. I'm sorry this is falling into a daily diary pattern. Can't seem to escape it. At least I have the anchor hope of reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and my spontaneous

desire to write out some sentences from its *ślokas* and my spiritual master's purports.

Don't minimize the importance of Writing Session style, writing to deal with the cutting edge of my life. There should be no question that it is a serious attempt to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I know that it is. My inner critics don't know. And most people in my life (ISKCON brothers) don't have the time to consider it, nor would you trust them with it. The *Bhāgavatam* anchor is good, but be careful with it.

I'm sorry I didn't read more feelingly and prayerfully. But that's not a reason to quit entirely. You have to accept reading sessions in which you comprehend on a certain level, "go through" a section or a chapter, but not at a deeper level. Lord Kṛṣṇa knows. When He sees I am sufficiently earnest in my attempts, He'll reciprocate. Don't be sullen or sulky about the nice reciprocation already going on.

Take heart. You're on a retreat. Make the most of it. What you'll produce will be a rambling book, of interest mostly to yourself. A diary of your attempts to read. Be careful you don't fall into the trap of making some literary story out of your life. That's the benefit of naked writing on the spot. Sometimes I think maybe I shouldn't have quit from the classic Writing Sessions I started here, but it's okay, This *Bhāgavatam* reading trick I played on myself is good. It elevates my consciousness and my writing. How can it be harmful?

I beg Lord Kṛṣṇa not to be offended by my mixing sublime and holy with my ridiculous self. Better (I



(7.7.29). It promotes *rati*. Kṛṣṇa says surrender to Him so we needn't worry. He says don't fear, He will remove our sinful reactions.

Prahlāda gives the secret of success as *guruśruśaya*, serving the bona fide spiritual master. Then in the company of devotees, worship the Lord, hear His glories with faith etc. (7.7.31)

The pure devotee who serves the spiritual master and controls his senses becomes liberated and manifests *anubhāva* symptoms.

Prahlāda taught that going back to Godhead is easy but to go to hell requires endeavor. Kṛṣṇa's like the sky, vast but within reach of everyone. "To go back to Godhead one may live alone anywhere, in any condition, and simply sit down, meditate upon the Supersoul and hear about the Lord" (7.7.38, purport).

### September 24

"Since the opportunity of human life is temporary (and flickering) what benefit can the material opulences give to a sensible man who has understood himself to be eternal?" (7.7.39).

Prahlāda is teaching the futility of karmic acts (economic development, hard labor to enjoy sexual pleasure etc.) which result in one suffering body after another. Why be interested in this? Be interested in the life of the soul which is *ānanda*.

I can't read for very long. I fidget. I think "I cannot take much more of this" and look at the clock. Yet at the same time I siphon it in through a thin straw and I know "this is very good tasting and very nour-

controller, and the living entities are subcontrollers.” Understand Supreme Personality of Godhead with one’s intelligence.

On tape and in books too, listen to the *tone* of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s voice. Savor his compassion; his personalness, his relaxation with devotees, humanness, the mood of being his disciple then and now.

It’s not just the philosophy but how he presents it. That way you will not think that his presentation is too basic. Get beyond the words as well as enter them. I need the philosophy and *from him*.

The soul is above the activities of the body. He observes those activities. “The activities of the body are not the activities of the soul.” I write so much of myself and observe my actions, but I don’t even know myself. I know the body and mind. If you could actually know yourself, by direct perception that would be different than your self as revealed in Writing Sessions.

Dreaming is the unreal self. Waking is also an unreal self in material life. As long as we stay in this unreal identification we have to keep taking bodies in transmigration.

“The spirit soul, however, does not need to enter such temporary bodies.” If we understand Kṛṣṇa we can go back to Godhead.”

Of processes for disentanglement, yoga is best. But best of all is “the one personally explained and accepted by the Supreme Personality of Godhead”

solace in the holy name and transcendental instructions. I cannot help them legally, financially, or even as a marriage counselor or a psychologist. But I can advise them in spiritual practices. To do this honestly and with potency I need to be absorbed in these practices myself. Convey to them what Prahlaḍa conveys to his schoolmates.

“The spirit soul possesses the body and is within the body. This is the real analysis.” He never mixes with matter, he’s pure.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote on my letter to him, “You are pure. May Kṛṣṇa protect you from calamities.”

I write for self-expression and self-help, self-knowledge and self-examination. But is that the real self I speak of? Prahlaḍa is discussing the *ātmā* as eternal individual soul. I tend to speak of the person I am in this body with his clinging memories of childhood and youth and his struggle to find his place in ISKCON. A pure soul is distinct from this matter.

“Sober and expert persons should search from the spirit soul . . .” He is present in the body and is beyond the body. “The body exists because of the presence of the Supreme Lord and the *jīva*, which is a part of the Lord” (7.7.24, purport).

By the direction of the Supreme Person we can understand the three states of activity (awake, dreaming and deep sleep). I understand my own dreams; some say we produce our dreams but “the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the supreme

All principles are yet unrealized by me. For example, *vasudeva sarva mati*. Also the principle that you follow the *ācārya* and he will reveal knowledge to you. *Yasya deve para . . .* you trust him and by serving him and hearing from him you will learn. You “know” these theoretically. Repeated hearing will help you to realize them as *vijñāna*.

Geology example: geologists can detect gold in ore, nonexpert cannot. Similarly, one who is trained by a bona fide spiritual master can know the presence of the soul in the body, others cannot (7.7.21).

When you sit to give a *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture and focus on one verse and purport, then you are keen as to what śāstric reference Śrīla Prabhupāda gives and what points he makes. So you should read like that, not in a slothly manner, sloffing off the points. Here he quotes the familiar *Bhagavad-gītā*, 7.4, *bhūmir āpo 'nalo vāyuh*. But why?

Sometimes *śāstra* describes the soul as “conditioned by the material elements” and sometimes he is “the master of the individual combination of material energy.” which is he? He is the observer. In illusion only, “according to his activities he is subjected to different types of pains and pleasures.” Know the soul a subordinate part of the Supreme Soul, *vasudeva sar mati*.

People, even devotees in ISKCON, sometimes suffer and are entangled in material situations. Help them by telling them to depend on Kṛṣṇa, take

"The relationship between the living entities and the Supreme Personality of Godhead is always a fact, and therefore there is no difficulty in pleasing the Lord" (7.6.19).

"The simple endeavor involved in the devotional service of *śravaṇaṁ-kīrtanaṁ viṣṇu . . .* can make one successful in pleasing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has therefore bestowed His blessings by saying *param vijayate . . .*" (7.6.19, purport).

Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes the same key verses. This is your opportunity for reading in *lectio divina* spirit. It is not just for quick recognition—"Oh yeah that verse again, *vasudeve bhagavati . . .* I don't have to read it or stop for it . . ." No, stop and consider it in the context of this purport and now—in your life.

Prahlāda is explaining the existence of the soul as unchanging while the body undergoes six kinds of changes. There is the Supreme Soul and the individual soul. This is very important and I wish to understand it, realize it. The soul! The temporary body which has to die. The Supreme Lord. Hear it and hear it well.

*September 23, 1:13 A.M.*

"The *ātmā* refers to the Supreme Lord or the living entities—both of them are spiritual, free from birth and death, free from deterioration and free from material contamination . . ." Give up illusory conception. "I am this material body . . ." (7.7.20).

September 22, 1:16 A.M.

See the book, Seventh Canto, sitting there. It's a great treat and you know your spiritual master's pleased to see your reading it. Approach it humbly and with delight. Leave the material world behind. Pray to be able to enter *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. When you finish reading it, go back to the beginning, First Canto.

In Prahllāda's instructions to his schoolmates he is pointing out how the materialist wastes his life but "he is not intelligent enough to cease" that way of life.

Thoughts pass—why don't you read *rasika* literature, of the *gopīs* and Kṛṣṇa in the *kuñja*, their joking and flirting? Want to go after the mercy of the *rasika* guru who can make this *rāgānugā* possible? Why you stuck back in Prahllāda's teachings? Don't deny yourself. I respond that I have come to this point with a great amount of thought and prayer and experience. I will go forward with it—sticking faithfully and lovingly to Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and confident he will lead this small child through all stages to the ultimate. My taste is in whatever food he gives me. I pray for it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda and Prahllāda frankly say that householders are more or less in *māyā* and wasting the great opportunity of human life—"At a certain point one must give up family life and take to the renounced order of life to cultivate spiritual knowledge and thus become liberated."

"Our eternal relationship with God can be revived in the human form of life, that should be the goal of education. Indeed, that is the perfection of life . . . "

People are wasting time, don't know the real problem of life. The same point is being stated in different ways. It is a heavy and profound point. I read a purport and then forget what I read. Go back and see it again; for the duration you read it, you keep it in your mind, then it goes. Conclusion, again: keep reading.

Once you get freed of family life and attachment to the senses, to eating sleeping mating and defending and fearing.

I have run down at the end of day.

Read, however. I am easily swayed. I don't know for certain what is best for me. I lack decisiveness, courage, confidence—and the reality of Kṛṣṇa in my life is not strong.

"Our only business in the human form of life should be to revive our relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead and thus become qualified to return home, back to Godhead" (7.6.3). So-called happiness and distress come automatically as a result of karma. So don't bother to endeavor for them. Endeavor to revive our relationship with the Supreme Lord. Therefore, read.

The householder is like a silk worm who weaves a cocoon in which he becomes imprisoned. For the sake of the genitals and tongue one is bound in material condition.

*September 21, 1:21 A.M.*

These notes, what for? Is it like “Killroy was here?”, just a little doodle to indicate I was reading a certain section of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* at a certain time?

The three verses spoken by Prahlaḍa Mahārāja (7.5.30–32) are important. You could give a seminar on them. Many seminars. One also on the nine principles of *bhakti*. Selections from the teachings of Prahlaḍa Mahārāja. Key verses from all the chapters. Easy to pick seven of them and lecture on important points.

In this set of three verses, the first two state the negative—people who cannot become Kṛṣṇa conscious. The third verse, *naisam matis tavad* states a way. Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Only one who has surrender to a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa and taken the dust of his lotus feet can understand Kṛṣṇa.”

*September 21, 5:06 P.M.*

Prabhupāda describes the unfortunate state of Kali-yuga where humans grow up “educated only for sense gratification.” Having no idea of the perfection of life, they prepare themselves for transmigration in lower species of life. “The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is anxious to serve human society by teaching people to perform devotional service, which can save a human being from being degraded again to animal life” (7.6.2, purport).

I am reading, feeling lonely, feeling unsure of myself and my place. Keep reading.



bhupāda and his “silent” voice as he writes in the purports.

So with the history of Prahāda Mahārāja the first thing is to accept it as not make believe stories.

Prahāda Mahārāja taught that “everyone of us is an eternal servant of God, and therefore we are not different from one another.”

In Vṛndāvana, everyone is attracted to Kṛṣṇa. In the material world one is attracted to *māyā*.

Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for writing these purports. After initial difficulty I read okay this morning, 37 minutes.

### *September 20*

Nine-fold process of *bhakti*. The wonderful purport on *kīrtanām*. It mentions chanting always and also overcoming offenses. Don't stop. Ask forgiveness of the holy name.

*Matir na kṛṣṇe* (7.5.30) You read it with some eye pain. You can't hear quietly and patiently enough. The thought passes through your mind that you already know what is being said here, it's repetitious and not profitable. But the fact is there is much to gain on a new reading. You have to approach it carefully, with concentration and devotion. Desire to receive it deeper. If you do so, it won't be “same thing.” It is not chewing the chewed. But can you rise to the occasion? Maybe not tonight.

*September 16, 1:20 A.M.*

Reading and appreciating the unusual *vātsalya bhāvas* of Prahlēda Mahārāja, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.4.37–42. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes “One must go further and further into spiritual understanding.” He cried when he felt Kṛṣṇa was not present the way a child cries for his mother (Śrīla Prabhupāda also said that about chanting). Then when he “sees Kṛṣṇa has returned to take care of him” he laughs and he becomes jubilant. He begins to dance and he imitates the pastimes of the Lord. Tears flow from his eyes incessantly. (Oh wouldn’t you like that?) *Cekṣuṣa parisaye tam*

He wasn’t disturbed by the tortures of his father but converted those who saw him such as his child friends. “Bestowed upon them transcendental blessings.”

Please, mind, read these pastimes of Prahlēda with his father and with his friends. Don’t take it as “only stories” or else you are a Māyāvādī or atheist. Don’t be that. Dear mind, approach it fresh, you have much to learn and gain in this way. Dear mind, you are not the all-in-all. You will be happy only if you serve as an instrument to the intelligence and the spirit soul. Don’t rage away. You won’t be happy that way. Calm down and re-read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Prahlēda’s activities. Don’t rush through it.

*September 18, 1:18 A.M.*

The whole thing is quality. Starts with *śraddhā*. I pray for that. Stay in here at the feet of Śrīla Pra-

We say a devotee has no enemies. But it appear he does have. What's the meaning? Śrīla Prabhupāda: "A devotee does not create enmity with anyone, but if someone becomes his enemy, that person will be vanquished by the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

One verse describe Prahlāda acting modestly like a *madhyama-adhikārī*. He is subservient to seniors, friend to poor and deals with equals as friend. A great devotee doesn't defy the standards or think that he's great and above them, above all people. He doesn't demand respect.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam lecture 1.3.1–3, 1968, notes continued, 10:04 A.M.*

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the *puruṣas*. Then he says creation takes place from Karnadakṣayī Viṣṇu. "Material nature has no power to create without the power of the *puruṣa*." Rejects scientists' proposal of no creation.

God existed before material creation and therefore He has a spiritual body. He accepts food we offer to Him and He eats it spiritually.

Viṣṇujana asks after the lecture about "the rose-colored light that we see around the food when it's being offered up. Is this how He eats?" Śrīla Prabhupāda paused and said "He eats." You will understand when you advance. Because in *Bhagavad-gītā* He says He eats, therefore we take it.

When He exhales that's the duration of the *brah-manda*, universe and when He inhales they're all vanquished. That Mahā-Viṣṇu "is also part and parcel of Govinda, kṛṣṇa. Just try to understand what is Kṛṣṇa."

I am stuck in the sleep groove. Can't get out. Up to here the reading was okay, better quit.

*September 16, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1:15 A.M.*

Hiranyakaśipu, despite having all dear sense gratification, was dissatisfied. That's typical of asuric humankind at any time.

Demigods sought shelter of the Supreme Lord against the oppression of Hiranyakaśipu. Śrīla Prabhupāda states "If from the beginning we take shelter of our best friend, there will be no danger in any circumstances."

The Supreme Lord then spoke to the *devas* and said "Become My devotee by hearing and chanting about me and offering Me prayers . . . " Any one of the nine *bhakti* approaches is Absolute. Only by *bhakti* can He be known.

Each time he writes, Śrīla Prabhupāda goes to the heart of some vital issue in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The things we need to know, to practice or avoid. Therefore his way best promotes us to *gopī-bhāva*—not by going into the details of how *sakhīs* act (*Ujjvala-nīlamanī*) but to the heart of basic practices, which even *sakhīs* conform to. In the purport to 7.4.29 he describes the danger of *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*. You see what I mean?

Hiraṇyakaśipu's prayer to Lord Brahmā does not recognize Lord Viṣṇu. He's only not even a worshiper of Lord Brahmā but a competitor.

Here are Hiraṇyakaśipu's foolish prayers, "Grant me that I may not die within any residence . . . " etc., trying to attain immortality in a roundabout way. We read it in the sacred pages of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as an example of most foolish request by a demoniac demigod worshiper.

Lord Brahmā granted Hiraṇyakaśipu the benedictions he requested. "The word *durlabham* indicates that one should not take benedictions one cannot enjoy peacefully."

Hiraṇyakaśipu got a strong body with all opulences. He remained envious of Lord Viṣṇu and wanted revenge for the killing of his brother.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam lectures, (Bhāg. 1.3.1-3)*

*San Francisco, March '68*

*9:57 A.M.*

Śrīla Prabhupāda says the three *puruṣa* Viṣṇus "these are little technical." Karana Viṣṇu exhales bubbles, "and these bubbles are manifested as universes." (The simple way we accepted this when we first heard it from Swamiji. It was like *tabula rasa*. We came to him with what Zen teachers ask of disciples, an empty mind. Is it now more cluttered, less pure? Has our acceptance of Vedic axioms solidified into something not vitally alive? Or is it okay and just going forward gradually? At any rate, when I think of him speaking in 1968 saying I am reminded of the simple faith in him.)

the *Bhāgavatam* is dismissed as mythology by the scientists. Just accept it straight, somehow, in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* terms, terms that you don't always comprehend and that do not reckon with experience by material observation. The fire from Hiranyakaśipu's head encompassed the upper and lower planets "which all became extremely hot." Why not?

Nowadays the representative of Hiranyakaśipu are on the ascent and "the influence of Lord Brahmā has decreased considerably." So there is no protection of brahminical culture and cows. A dangerous age.

Hiranyakaśipu was living even though his body was mostly consumed by ants as he stood in one place for one hundred celestial years. His austerity was demoniac, intended for his sense gratification.

*September 15, 1:15 A.M. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

"Since Viṣṇu is the Supreme, by worshiping Viṣṇu one can fulfill all one's desires. There is no need to direct one's attention to any demigod" (7.3.24).

One may think Viṣṇu's part is sectarian. Cure this by more study of *śāstra* and by praying to Him for deliverance from all doubts. Damn Māyāvādīs and *śakti* worshipers, including their Western counterparts, they do confuse us. But we needn't be confused by them and their *aparādhās*. Just follow Lord Caitanya.

*sanātana* living entities should meet and serve the *sanātana* Lord in the *sanātana-dhāma*. That is *sanātana-dharma*.

*Sanātana-dharma* is not for Hindus only. *Dharma* doesn't mean faith but eternal constitutional nature.

We are eternally servants. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement teaches that instead of serving the three modes of nature one should serve Kṛṣṇa. That is our original position and it's full of bliss. "Oh, one who has got brain, he catches Caitanya Mahāprabhu. *Kṛṣṇa varnam* . . . and simply worship by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa."

The lecture is simple and basic—well ordered. One may ask, he spoke in Vṛndāvana so why didn't he talk of *gopīs*? Or "What he spoke in 1972 is all right but now we deserve something better." No, I say stick with these. You can expand them but don't look down upon them. They are as relevant as ever. Scientists adamantly deny what *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and Śrīla Prabhupāda say here. So we need to defy them. The creation comes from the Supreme Person. The universe is also developed by His will, but there is a *sanātana-dhāma*, *sanātana-dharma*. Keep with this and remember it.

### 6 P.M., *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Seventh Canto

Descriptions of the effects of Hiraṇyakaśipu's austerities seem incredible. Sadaputa tries to show how it makes sense, is consistent with the Vedic view. That is helpful but sometimes I want to bypass his expressions and his droll remarks how

Can I catch on to these valuable thoughts as I read them? I hold them a moment in the mind and then let go and move on to the next. The notes preserve them to look at later. But even that, in the writing or reading later (is a holding on to and then a letting go. That's how you live and breathe, not just by holding one good breath or freezing up in one physical position. You flow and change. So do it always in Kṛṣṇa consciousness one after another.

The duty of an advanced human being is to study the position of the eternal soul in the perishable body. But in ignorance people remain absorbed in caring for the material body which is sure to change (die and give one up for another).

Save yourself. "Self-preservation is the first law of nature." Do it by not getting caught up in attachment to the world of "enormous arrangements for huge roads, houses, mills and factories . . ." We will get kicked out of this world. Our duty is to understand the soul within the body.

### *10:01 A.M. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam lecture 1.3.1*

As the life of the body begins because the soul enters matter, so with the universe, the elements develop into creation because the Supreme Being, Karaṇadakṣaya Viṣṇu, creates seed-like universes. And as the individual body is annihilated after a certain duration, so is the universe. The theory that it is all impersonal, Big Bang etc. is false.

*Bhut va bhut va praliya te*, again and again creation is followed by annihilation and then again creation. But there is another world, *sanātana*. The



This instead of concentrating on the text. Come on, don't waste precious time.)

The Supersoul directs the soul

I really need to direct my attention to topics of Lord Hari. Consider building up your capacity to do this. When you cannot actually hear and help yourself in some way to come to that stage.

*September 14, 1:18 A.M.*

Reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. We have free will to take certain types of bodies by associating with the modes or by our higher intelligence we can receive superior knowledge from the *ācārya*—"He can give up his conditional life in the material life and return home, back to Godhead" (*Bhāg.* 7.2.46, purport).

"Because possessing a subtle body we are bound to material energy . . . and must accordingly suffer material conditions and reversals, continually, life after life" (7.2.47, purport). That's what I want to get out of. Don't deride it as "salvationism." Work to save yourself from *māyā*. Surrender to Kṛṣṇa. So Śrīla Prabhupāda says if we engage ourselves in Lord Kṛṣṇa's loving service our mind (subtle body) won't degrade us especially at the time of death.

"When the mind is engaged at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, the intelligence is purified, and the intelligence gets inspiration from the Supersoul."

Our happiness and distress in material life is imaginary. Real blissful life comes when the mind is engaged in the service of the Lord, Hṛṣīkeṣa.

6:25 P.M., *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* reading

“The Lord is always ready to give direction.” We are getting results for our karma. We are so dumb we don’t know what life is. We are like animals.

“We should have firm faith that the Lord is Supreme and that if we surrender to Him, He will take charge of us and indicate how we can get out of material life and return home, back to Godhead” (*Bhāg.* 7.2.41, purport).

Write down and pay attention. You are like a student in school learning your lessons. Pay attention. I want to be in this classroom hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda. As one builds up his muscles by weight-lifting (which is hard at first) so I can build up my taste and capacity for reading with attention in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books and taking notes.

Hiraṇyakaśipu is telling them the soul always remains as he is. The body comes and goes.

“Consequently, even though we now seem neglected by the Lord, He is actually always alert to our activities. Under all circumstances, therefore, we should simply depend on the supremacy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and thus revive our intimate relationship with Him” (7.2.43, purport)

The real person within the body is never seen. Even a common man realizes this when he witnesses someone’s death—“The person within the body, who is hearing and replying is now gone.”

(Thinking of photos of Audrey Hepburn which I looked at for my research in pictorial biography.

Incarnations come in all species of life just to deliver the fallen souls.

I am underlining the obvious points that connect the main thoughts and jotting down notes here. (but my mind is thinking of German Shepherd dogs and how they are trained to become seeing eye dogs. I think of this because there is a black and white collie mongrel in the front yard of the house where I'm reading. I too am blind spiritually and I need to depend on guru or a white stick and the guru's instructions. Now read or hear his words as the representative of Kṛṣṇa)

Sanātana inquired from Lord Caitanya about the Kali-yuga *avatāra* but Lord Caitanya avoided him. Lord Kṛṣṇa is accepted by all *mahājanas* as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Many *śāstras* declare Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Person but rascals will not accept. There are many quote also to support that Lord Caitanya is the Supreme Lord.

So that's it. It took me twenty-seven minutes, twice as long because I am taking notes as I read. But I stayed awake. Śrīla Prabhupāda lectured on basic points—Lord Kṛṣṇa has many forms as incarnations of God. He comes to this world to rescue *jīvas* from birth and death. Rascals don't accept Him. But they claim to be God. We should never accept bogus incarnations but accept Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya as Supreme on the basis of *śāstra*. Hear from right authorities.

head, our only duty is to surrender unto Him and seek His protection" (7.2.40, purport).

10:10 A.M.

Now I'm reading a *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda, given November 1972 in Vṛndāvana. Usually it takes around thirteen minutes to read it quickly. If I take some notes it will take longer. Let me not be hung up with the timing. Main thing is quality reading.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse 1.2.34 uses the word *līlā-avatāra*. "Because we have forgotten our relationship with Kṛṣṇa, He is always anxious to get us back to home, back to Godhead."

I read with faith and ask for much deeper faith. Reading *more* will help? Shouldn't you take it very seriously? How to improve?

The Lord is always God. A man can't become God. God has *ananta-rūpam*.

Vedic knowledge teaches this. People nowadays are not interested in spiritual life. When King Daśarātha met the *brāhmaṇa* Viśvamitra and when the king asked "How are you doing in your progress for overcoming birth and death?" *that* is advancement, but people don't know it nowadays. Śrīla Prabhupāda always pointed out this ignorance as a tremendous defect of modern civilization. "That is our lamentation, that what is this education?"

Just to inform these rascals that "I am" Kṛṣṇa comes canvassing. "My dear sons . . . I can see that you are suffering." The rascals say "Why is He demanding so much?"

and become a realistic follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Don't make it harder for the people by breaking their faith.

But anyway, the philosophy—even as enunciated by Hiraṇyakaśipu—is potent to break up misconceptions which cause enmity among people in the name of ethnic and communal, religious or national disputes. It's all *māyā*. We are not these bodies.

Hiraṇyakaśipu told the story about Yamarāja. Once Yamarāja appeared in the form of a young boy and spoke Vedic philosophy to the lamenting wives of a king who had just died. Don't lament for the death of the temporary body. The boy said that the death of the king happened by the will of the Supreme Lord and His plan is not subject to judgment by the living entities.

So there are reasons for death, such as transmigration and karma, reasons not to lament over our friend's departure or our own loss when he dies. But aside from this, God gives and takes away, creates and annihilates and no one can question Him. "If He were answerable to us concerning why He does something and why He does not, His supremacy would be curtailed" (7.2.32, purport).

Whatever the Supreme Lord thinks of doing, that actually happens. You may try to save your money but it is stolen. Or you may lose it on the street and then recover it. "Everyone has had such practical experiences . . . since everything is dependent on the free will of the Supreme Personality of God-

Today, September 13, 1994 I'm recommencing my *Writing While Reading*. So here goes continuing the attempt to make myself a lover of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in the footsteps of Mahārāja Parīkṣit.

*September 13, 1994, near Kenmare, Ireland*

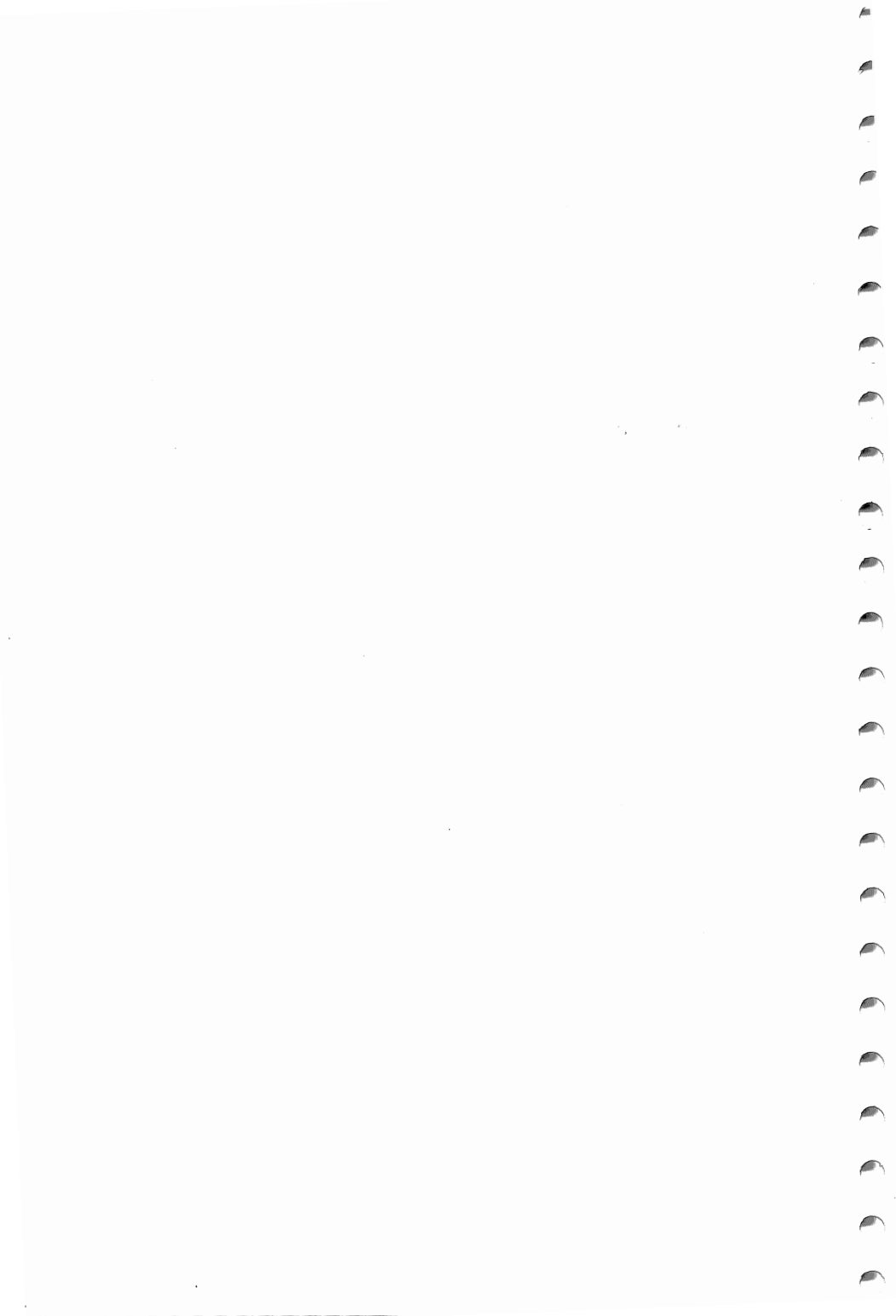
Continue in the *Writing While Reading* spirit

The *jīva*—he's fixed yet he gets carried away. Even while being carried away or covered—"The living entity does not take birth or accept death but because of the transient subtle and gross bodies, the living entity appears to move from one place to another or be dead and gone forever" (7.2.23, purport).

Hiraṇyakaśipu is preaching to his relatives not to be aggrieved over the death of "the great soul of Hiraṇyākṣa, who had already attained his next destination."

The living entity is actually free from all the "different phases of subtle and gross bodies, (but he) thinks that he has changed from one condition to another" (7.2.24).

I see how the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness removes all misconceptions. But when we try to impress people to follow it . . . or to join our movement, so few take to it. That is due to their ignorance. It may also be that our movement is not exemplary enough to attract people. You have to be very sincere to get past all the shortcomings of ISKCON and the counter-propaganda of ISKCON schisms and anti-cultists, Western prejudices etc.,



Reading  
*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*  
Near Kenmare

September–October





say) that I mix rather than go on without the presence of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I mean no harm, no decadent attitude towards *śāstra*.

Wish me smooth sailing tomorrow.

ishing.” These attitudes seem contradictory. Maybe just indicates my low capacity and it can be increased by regular practice.

What we call the basic questions or topics in Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy are such because they are so important and deserve to be faced and considered—and returned to—again and again. We also admit that we haven’t mastered these basic teachings. The *jīva* should not have taken a material body which is temporary and full of suffering. His liberation is not gained by more fruitive acts or by mental speculation. He should follow the instructions of the spiritual master. I don’t want to be restless or bored by facing these issues. I want to feel them personally and be able to preach on them with strong and intelligent conviction—and with comparison—just as Prah̥lāda spoke to his school-mates.

Don’t forget to look at the synonyms. There are gems of Prabhupāda-isms there and direct *vijñāna* to the verse.

*September 25, 1:15 A.M.*

Hiraṇyakaśipu asked Prah̥lāda “By whose power” are you fearless? *Bala*—the strength. Prah̥lāda said all strength comes from one source, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. *Mūḍhās* don’t know this and don’t surrender under the supreme strength, the Supreme Person. Prah̥lāda surrendered and was confident of protection by the Lord.

I will tell devotees of *bhāva*. Do I know it myself? What can you preach? Only what you read and realize in your life. *Bala* comes from Kṛṣṇa. We discussed this also on Lord Balarāma's Appearance Day—He is the source of strength which comes through the spiritual master. It's not physical strength. Strength to combat *māyā*'s various forms and obstacles in our path. How to gain that strength?

Prahlāda was not a simpleton. He knew that by glorifying Lord Viṣṇu he was enraging his father. Still he did it. As his father said, Prahlāda was like a dog's curly tail that cannot be straightened. He would always praise Lord Viṣṇu and not be afraid. He wanted to do Hiranyakaśipu some good so he honestly told him the best thing is to practice *bhakti* unto Govinda. His replies are not merely to enrage the *asura*, but are honest and inspired.

The Supreme Lord maintains all, time, our senses, mind and body. Yes even what seems to be quite under our power is actually coming from the power of God.

Prahlāda tried again and asked his father "Just give up your demoniac tendency."

Hiranyakaśipu couldn't receive the good instructions of Prahlāda. If you instruct a fool he only becomes more angry.

Where is your God? The demon challenges. "If He is everywhere, then why is He not present before me in this pillar?"

How wonderful (*adbhuta*)  
and no joke—the Lord's

appearing as half man-half lion  
to confront and kill the powerful  
*asura*. I read it again and  
appreciate the uncanny  
choice of Bhagavān and  
His ability to do it—

“Hiranyakaśipu could not understand  
whether the great giant was a  
lion or a human being.”

(We are preparing for our death by reading. The power of peaceful reading is not with you for all time. Do take advantage of your power to read and the prayer and the book and the desk lamp and your attention. To pray to make it not just an ordinary act. Bring your devotion and submission. O Lord Hari, O Lord Hari, the prostitute chanted in the presence of Haridāsa Ṭhākura. I too chant Lord Hari, knowingly or unknowingly. I read)

“Just to see the fun,” Lord Nṛsimha allowed Hiranyakaśipu to slip from Him grasp. The deluded *asura* thought Lord Nṛsimha was afraid of him. He rushed into battle with the Lord in fighting his quick death. *Jaya Nṛsimha!*

*5:25 P.M.*

Lord Nṛsimha sat on the throne of Hiranyakaśipu after killing him. The demigods, led by Lord Brahmā, came forward to offer prayers to the angry Lord, Narahari.

I like reading the prayers of the *devas* and *bhaktas*, one after another, to praise and pacify

Lord Nṛsiṁha. So what if I cannot enter deeply, still I read, I comprehend . . . I want to be in the *acyuta-gotra*, I want to be a faithful hearer and teacher (spreader) of *Bhāgavatam*.

All the *devas* felt relieved to return to their routines. Then often pray that they get back their material powers and well being.

People nowadays are harassed by governments operating on the principle of *Hiraṇyakaśipu*.

Readings the summary at the beginning of 7.9 I find the statement that a pure devotee doesn't live in a solitary place and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. That is for a very advanced person. "There are many who like to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra in a silent, solitary place, but if one is not interested in preaching, talking constantly to the nondevotees, the influence of the modes of nature is very difficult to surpass. Therefore unless one is extremely advanced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one should not imitate Haridāsa Ṭhākura . . ." (7.9.46).

How to take this? I'm already so committed to this life. I've seen these statements before. I wrestle with them. I say I am preaching in meetings and seminars. Maybe 50% of the time I go apart for remedial work in writing. I need it, I love it, I get headaches when I mix with others. Much of what we call preaching is socializing, politics of ISKCON . . . as for a preaching program . . . As I say I have been through this before and right now I'm not up to writing about it here.

*September 26, 1:15 A.M.*

No one could pacify the Lord in His anger. But He was very affectionate to Prahlāda Mahārāja, so the *devas* pushed Prahlāda Mahārāja forward to pacify Him.

When He saw Prahlāda prostrated at His feet, Lord Nṛsimha become “most ecstatic in affection. He placed His hand on Prahlāda’s head to create fearlessness in His devotee. Śrīla Prabhupāda says “Our only hope of becoming fearless is to chant the holy name of Lord Nṛsimha.” Wherever we go, think of Lord Nṛsimha and then there will be no fear.

He began his prayer in *samādhi*. I wish I could also have fixed attention. Perhaps I will love these prayers and be inspired to present them in a seminar.

A Vaiṣṇava is qualified to serve the Lord, but thinks himself extremely low while offering prayers to the Lord.

Prahlāda Mahārāja is aware that no material qualification can please the Supreme Lord only devotional service.

*September 27, 1:14 A.M.*

Lord Nṛsimhadeva’s fearful appearance. Does it turn you away? It’s not your *rasa*? But a pure devotee loves all the forms of the Lord. He sees, my Lord Śyāma has taken this *ugra* form which is actually very beautiful. In this form He protects Prahlāda and kills the demon. In the world, to be free of fear and demons’ attack, we call upon His name, Lord Narahari.

“The devotee always takes pleasure in worshipping the Lord and glorifying Him in any form, either pleasing or fierce” (7.9.15, purport).

Prahlāda prayed I have been put into association with demons by my own karma and therefore I am afraid. “When will that moment come when You will call me to the shelter of Your lotus feet, which are the ultimate goal for liberation from conditioned life?” (7.9.16).

We suffer in the world. Materialistic efforts don’t help. Only by surrender to Kṛṣṇa.

Study the words. Feel it. You can retain some. Act accordingly. Come back for more. So many sublime prayers in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, not enough time in the day to savor or sing them all, think of ways to teach them in classes, recite on walks, write in your own words . . . no time to waste. *Nivṛta tara sera* . . . always hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Only *bhakti* frees us from the material world—and *bhakti* begins with *śravaṇam*. “I shall chant Your glories, following exactly in the footsteps of Lord Brahmā and his disciplic succession. In this way I shall undoubtedly be able to cross the ocean of nescience” (7.9.18).

“As soon as a devotee can chant the holy name and glories of the Supreme Lord, he certainly comes to the liberated position . . . one associates with the *hamsas*.”



“As for me, however, I am being crushed by the wheel of time, and therefore I surrender fully unto You. Now kindly take me under the protection of Your lotus feet” (7.9.22).

Prahlāda’s are prayers made by one in the material condition, aware of the dangers and sufferings. A devotee is attracted to the Lord’s glories and yet he is still in the place of demons. He praises Kṛṣṇa, makes right estimation of a cosmic and comic situation according to *paramparā*, follows the *ācārya* and hearing about Bhagavān and *bhakti*—Prah-lāda’s prayers are therefore apt for us. He is from a family of demons and in the material world, afraid of the *kala-cakra*, and a preacher—all relevant for us. So adopt his prayers.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says our material condition of suffering has been allotted to us by the Supreme Personality of Godhead and so “we must appeal to the same controller.” Read over what you read. There is always more that you missed on previous look-through.

5 P.M.

Prahlāda said it was Lord Nṛsiṃha who vanquished the powerful demon father. Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions big leaders of the world who are also vanquished in time. The Supreme Lord is the greatest.

Prahlāda saw, and we all should know, that material opulence is vanquished. Our bodies will perish (at any time) but soul is never vanquished.

*Nahanyate* . . . so we should work for the happiness of the soul and not the body.

Don't try to possess *bhukti*, *mukti*, or *siddhi*. "My dear Lord, I request You to place me in touch with Your pure devotee and let me serve him as a sincere servant" (7.9.24).

All our plans are annihilated in time.

I come to a famous verse, ". . . I was gradually falling into a blind well full of snakes . . . But Your servant Nārada Muni kindly accepted me as his disciple . . . Therefore, my first duty is to serve him. How could I leave his service?" (7.9.28). At first I skimmed over it with little attention. Our mind cheats us that way in so-called reading. We tell our sleepy or preoccupied intelligence, "I read that verse. You can move on to the next one. This is the well known verse. Move on to the next." But wait a minute. I didn't even read it or consider it! So I have written it in these notes to look at a minute longer. You can look at it more and more and start to feel it in your life.

*September 28, 1:14 A.M.*

Prahlāda praises the Lord as one with the cosmos (*acintya-bhedābheda*) and as in *yoga-nidrā*. Śrīla Prabhupāda says the practice of yoga is similar to Lord Viṣṇu's *yoga-nidrā*.

I have a deep or at least persistently deep-rooted prejudice (skepticism) about the Vedic description of the creation by the *puruṣa-avatāras*, egg-like

clusters of universes from the pores of Mahā-Viṣṇu, lotus stem from Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu from which all the planets come forth . . . I have no argument against it, just a gut reaction, "Oh it's too much to believe there actually were such gigantic forms. Isn't this just India's version of what took place? Other religions have a different version." I am writing this down here as an inimical thought. At least you know it's in you. It doesn't stop me from reading and worshiping the Viṣṇus and Kṛṣṇa, the source of the Viṣṇus. Maybe some *Brahma-saṁhitā* recitation would help.

Prahlāda Mahārāja asked how his sinful mind can stay fixed in hearing the Lord's activities. Śrīla Prabhupāda says by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra (as taught by the *cana*, covered, *avatāra*).

*September 29, 1:11 A.M.*

I like the poetry of these lines: "My dear Lord, You are always transcendently situated on the other side of the river of death . . . but we, because of our karma, are suffering on this side. . . . Now kindly look upon us—not only upon me but also all others who are suffering—and by Your causeless mercy and compassion, deliver us and maintain us" (7.9.41).

When we go alone, the active preachers should not criticize us and call us bad names, "*bābājī*," "*bhajanānandī*." We are doing it because we need repair, we need solace and taste of nectar. We are weak and need to simply live in the *dhāma* sometimes and soak it up and be alone away from pres-

sure and *pray for our own souls*. And get contact and seek . . . then rest assured, we will share it. ISKCON means sharing, among its members and with newcomers.

Preaching is an art not completed just by giving out a book. It has many phases and departments. And one of them is to study the books, speak in temples. And sometimes the preacher needs to go alone and he enjoys seeking God and listening for His direction.

“One should become a guru and spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world, simply by preaching the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā*.”

Prahlāda Mahārāja frankly asked the Lord to show mercy and deliver the *jīvas*.

“What is the difficulty for You, who manage the affairs of the universe, and delivering the fallen souls engaged in Your devotional service?”

O brave Prahlāda, well prayed,  
may you live forever and  
inspire us. May I teach your teachings  
to the devotees and glorify you who  
appeared as a young boy and was  
always peaceful and protected by  
Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa who came as  
Narahari to kill that demon  
who harassed you.

Think how to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If you teach the verses, it would be a nice way to talk of preaching. You can do it in your own way

encouraging each devotee to do this. May I gain the conviction for it myself.

Help the disciples. Help those who seek help from you. Make something of the relationships . . . help. (I need help but they need help even more desperately. So preach to them. Don't wait forever to do so.) Or see in your own life even without making big changes, how you may spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Then there is the famous verse where Prahlāda Mahārāja says he doesn't want to go back to Godhead alone but wants to bring all the misguided souls under the shelter of the Supreme Lord. Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport is strong—no forest solitary meditation but “every member of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is interested in going door to door to try to convince people about the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, the teachings of Lord Caitanya. . . . The members of the KC movement must be fully convinced that without Kṛṣṇa one cannot be happy” (7.9.44, purport).

Make your response. There are different way of going door to door. You can do it by T.V., by Food for Life . . . by actually walking into neighborhoods and knocking on their doors . . . take it as a figure of speech or literally . . . build yourself to go door to door, to be concerned for others, starting with your own conviction that without Kṛṣṇa one cannot be happy.

The sailors on liberty and  
Newport Rhode Island, seeing

us college students with the arm patch  
(Reserve Officer Candidate)  
said sarcastically, "If you like  
the Navy, why don't you join?"  
Am I like that now,  
reserve officer,  
lone road walker praying and  
wincing to think that the hardened sailor-  
preacher going door to door sees me  
and says out of the corner of their mouths,  
"If he likes praying to Kṛṣṇa, why  
doesn't he join us and preach  
by distributing his spiritual  
master's books?"

And I reply they don't understand,  
and I reply . . . let me read  
leave me alone.  
I reply a reserve officer also gets his  
chance. As long as he sticks with it.

**5 P.M.**

Prahlāda Mahārāja finishes his prayers glorifying *bhakti* under the Supreme Lord as the only necessary process. The ten items practiced for *mukti*, including *mauna*, *tapasya* and solitude, etc. cannot bring you to perfection in themselves.

Lord Nṛsimhadeva was pleased with Prahlāda and asked him to ask for a benediction.

September 30, 1 A.M.

Nice verse, 7.10.6, Prahlaḍa says "You are naturally my master, and I am naturally Your servant. We have no other relationship." Śrīla Prabhupāda says, What's the difficulty? Why do we doubt it? Accept *Bhagavad-gītā's* words that Lord Kṛṣṇa is Supreme and surrender to Him. Śrīla Prabhupāda is super-excellent to coax and convince us to do this.

5 P.M.

Just as Prahlaḍa Mahārāja does, so we should accept only Lord Kṛṣṇa and His incarnations as God and refuse to accept rascals who pretend to be God.

October 1, 5 P.M.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 7.11 (Yudiṣṭhira Mahārāja inquires from Nārada on *varṇāśrama-dharma* within *sanātana-dharma*, for attaining pure devotional service.

(I am reading silently and he's chanting his extra Ekādaśī *japa* downstairs, shoes squeaking on the linoleum as he walks back and forth. It's not a bad sound, so let it be background only, as I try to concentrate a little longer on the words of Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport.)

Nārada lists thirty items for general saintly behavior, as should be followed by everyone.

A wife should be chaste and follow her husband's vow. But she is not obliged to follow a husband who is fallen. He is fallen if he is addicted to the four sinful activities and is not a devotee of the Lord. As I

read, I make little pencil marks and prepare my favorite and significant selections from Prabhupāda's purports to share with the devotees.

*October 2, 1:12 A.M.*

The Canto 7 Chapter 12 summary repeats the word "should" many times regarding a *brahmacārī's* behavior. So the description is ideal. We ask, what can one actually do? But Śrīla Prabhupāda has to present what *śāstra* says, the ideal. Then we can talk of adjusting it to time and place. Follow the spirit of Nārada's teachings and don't resent them. Yes, there will be differences as we apply it nowadays. We have to use our intelligence and be guided by guru and Supersoul—and *śāstra*.

Avoid association of women. Don't imagine you are perfect and so there's no harm in being with women. No, in the liberated stage one sees all as spirit soul, but as long as this knowledge is still theoretical, don't indulge in mixing with women. In any case, it's not civilized and it's forbidden for a *sannyāsī* and *brahmacārī*.

The *grhastha* also is restricted and follows the orders of the spiritual master.

(Read a little then close your eyes and review it in your mind. Can you make a prayer? For what? To retain what you are reading, to follow, to not fall down in illicit sex, to go on reading and living in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, to please your spiritual master . . . )



October 3, 1:15 A.M.

Prahlāda Mahārāja met and inquired from a fat “python” *paramahansa*. The saints don’t usually speak to ordinary persons, but he spoke to Prahlāda Mahārāja in *paramparā*.

Best reading advice: stop and feel and pray. If you’re lucky, make resolution to act on what you read. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes on transmigration. Our actions in this life may lead to higher or lower forms in next life. Read it and let it sink into you. “Specifically, our energy to act should be engaged in the service of the Lord, for then materialistic activities will automatically stop” (*Bhāg. 7.13.24*, purport).

The saintly person said he experienced (personally and in general) that sex and sensual pleasure, so dearly engaged in by all conditioned souls, is simply imagination and causes distress. “Therefore, I have ceased from all material activities.” Śrīla Prabhupāda points out that ceasing from material activities is not enough; we need to engage in spiritual activities.

Our natural state is happiness in affectionate relationship with Kṛṣṇa. But because we have forgotten our identity, we are affected by material miseries in bodily consciousness.

A deer cannot see water within a well covered by grass so he runs elsewhere searching. Similarly the *jīva* covered by the material body “does not see the happiness within himself, but runs after happiness in the material world” (7.13.29).

*October 4, 1:15 A.M.*

Material desires mislead us. "The result is that one again and again makes plans and is baffled, but as foolish as he is he cannot see the cause of his bafflement" (7.13.30, purport).

No one can escape the threefold miseries.

(Read in good time. Plan to do more of it. And some system, which will vary over the year of note taking, retrieving, reciting, praying, teaching in seminars, writing on it, etc.—which may stimulate your interest. Or your system may be no system at all and just reading unattached. But in any case, be attentive, loyal, respectful, intelligent—use all these as you read)

The *paramahansa* taught Prahlaḍa Mahārāja because he was self-realized. He knows the soul and the Supreme Soul.

Review in your mind what you just read. Hold it lovingly there immediately after a reading; worship it and then go on to read the next passages and then finally on to your other activities. That holding in the mind, loving review is simple and sublime. Don't forget to do it and tell others about it.

*October 5*

Last night I read fifteen minutes in not top condition. You read better when not so tired and when in a certain receptive mood. It does require a top shape condition. I hope, like an athlete, it's something I can build up to better. The most important capacity—capacity to hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* at length and frequently—so try for it.

Nārada is explaining the behavior of the ideal householder. He has many responsibilities. Don't accumulate money unrestrictedly or you'll be punished as a thief. Give to KC movement for temples and preaching. Don't kill animals but treat them as your own son. (That's hard for me in the case of mice and rats and mosquitoes!) Keep reading. You remember what he said and it guides you.

We are fortunate if we can leave out sex enjoyment and economic development as our pursuits. Then we have the responsibilities of the renunciant so we are not punishable as parasites and cheaters.

Don't earn a living by *ugra-karma*.

"Every husband is too much attached to his wife." These are instructions for *varṇāśrama*. Those in ISKCON who want to establish this social system may read these books and do it rightly. I may not be working directly a rural community, etc., but I cannot scorn development of *varṇāśrama* system in ISKCON. I'm also within it, I have *sannyāsī* duties. Repeatedly I've turned to this chapter for classes to *grhasthas*—how they should chant and hear, associate with devotees, give money to KC, not work at *ugra-karma*. I sometimes avoid the one on attachment to wife (it seems so touchy to tell them this: that it's in the books—wife's body must be transformed into insects, stool, or ashes)

When you skim or skip over a verse or purport, you should go back and read it with attention. In *japa* we don't go back and do a bead over again, we keep going. But in reading, we go back. The verses

and purports are fixed in print and they wait for us to read them. Submit to it and benefit.

Householders should perform *yajña*. Give money and intelligence for support of *saṅkīrtana* movement.

*October 8*

I haven't read in a few days, busy with headache and then answering mail. Return to your routine now. It's not prime time, 5 P.M., but you have some time, so do it. Instead of talking *about* Prabhupāda's books, read one.

"The Lord has provided for both the elephant and the ant." Which Lord is this? Lord Viṣṇu, *puruṣa*, Śyāma of Vraja, the Maintainer? Take it as Kṛṣṇa, as Prabhupāda tells us. It's all Kṛṣṇa. Govinda is the source of all. He plays as a child and yet He is God. He has *ananta-rūpam*. Don't create a duality. Yes as Kṛṣṇa He is best, far best. But Lord Viṣṇu in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in His many appearances . . . is an expansion of that one original *adi-puruṣam* Govinda. *Kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*.

Perform *yajña*. If you have some wealth and learning, use it in His service. Kṛṣṇa prefers, however, that you feed the *brāhmaṇas*. "This kind of sacrifice—chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and distribution of *prasāda*—is the most perfect and bona fide way of offering sacrifice for the pleasure of Yajña, or Viṣṇu" (*Bhāg.* 7.14.17, purport).

Nārada teaches Yudiṣṭhira the right time to perform *śrāddha* and other *yajñas*. (I close my eyes, not sleepily, but alertly, to see within and review a

consideration of the topic I have just read. Hold it a moment, like taking a snapshot)

*October 9, 1:14 A.M.*

Nārada describes the sacred places. The first point is, “Any place where a Vaiṣṇava is available is an excellent place”—so wherever I can read. Śrīla Prabhupāda also has a purport in *Bhagavad-gītā* that some say a holy town like Vṛndāvana is required but wherever there is a Vaiṣṇava, that is Vṛndāvana. “And the temple where the Deity is installed is a most sacred place.”

Here is a verse, 7.14.33, where it’s recommended to go to sacred places. *Yajñas* done there are a thousand times more effective than performed elsewhere. Śrīla Prabhupāda inserts the temples of ISKCON into the verses and not just temples in Māyāpur or Vṛndāvana but “big American cities like New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco, and European cities like London and Paris.”

But even a farm house where I have the “Deities” of Prabhupāda’s books and where I prepare myself to become more potent for going to see the devotees and new congregation persons.

*Saṅkīrtana* and especially book distribution is more powerful than Deity worship in this age.

(I plan to speak to audiences, using selections from *Bhāg.* verses and purports. Just noting that here. I sometimes doubt whether I can hold their attention. But I think it will go all right. Just get into the nectar. Read what you have and then speak further impromptu.)

9:50 A.M., Seventh Canto, Chapter Fifteen.

Regardless of birth, if one is engaged in pure devotional service, he is a *brāhmaṇa*, a *sādhū*, a Vaiṣṇava. One should, when holding religious ceremonies, distribute *prasādam*.

(When sleepy, stay awake, spray face with water, read passage over again)

2:51 P.M.

Seventh Canto, Chapter Fifteen, verse fifteen is a very challenging verse and purport. It states, “Even if a man is poor, he should not endeavor to improve his economic condition just to maintain his body and soul together . . . as the python gets its food without endeavor, so one who is desireless will also obtain his livelihood without endeavor. Just depend on Kṛṣṇa.” Śrīla Prabhupāda specifies “All the members of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, whether they be *grhasthas* or *sannyāsīs*, should try to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement with determination, and Kṛṣṇa will supply all necessities.”

I wrote it here not to discuss the difficulties of application but just so I can locate this verse later. One cannot dismiss challenges like this but we appear sometimes to have to act contrary to them. For example, we approve a householder’s getting a full-time job. The temple cannot support him; he needs a little private space to raise his family. What is to be done? One might say at least he shouldn’t over-endeavor for material standards and that will fulfill the spirit of this verse.

The *brāhmaṇas* will not enter someone's service to maintain himself. The *brāhmaṇa* won't. He'll be satisfied living only on water.

*October 10, 1:12 A.M.*

Get the book out. You may write what comes. We expect some block of pure gold *śāstra* also. Tell us what you are reading and how you feel as you do it.

Where are you? Ireland? Yes, okay. Then give us the stuff.

The spiritual master is not an ordinary person. He is *sevaka-bhagavān*. Supreme Lord is *sevyā-bhagavān*. He teaches the *Bhāgavatam*. So because of his worship of the Lord and representing His message, he is honored. "On the absolute platform, there is no difference between the spiritual master and the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

What about in ISKCON? Same truth applies.

But are there bona fide gurus? Doesn't he have to be very special even among devotees, a *mahā-bhāgavata*?

Become guru, Lord Caitanya says. If he can be a pure devotee of his spiritual master and follow strictly the rules and regulations and present the teachings without deviation . . . become guru on My order, all of you.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says yoga is for those not qualified (too materialistic) to approach the Supreme Lord in *bhakti-yoga*. The peace of mind in yoga is attained by understanding Lord Kṛṣṇa as in

5.29 *Bhagavad-gītā*. From devotional service one doesn't fall down.

A person who accepts *sannyāsa* order and then returns to material activities is called a *vāntāśī*, one who eats his own vomit. See purport to 7.15.36, Śrīla Prabhupāda advises *sannyāsīs* and *brahmācārīs* to “keep strictly aloof from the association of women.”

One who takes *sannyāsa* and then again gives importance to the body and glorifies it as the self, is “to be considered the greatest rascal.”

(I told you there might be nothing special about these notes. They may help move you along as you read the book; and as you look at the notes later, the personal reflections and asides and parentheses are a trick to keep you going through *śāstra*. Hear Nārada.)

“A *sannyāsī* must specifically remove himself from the urges of the tongue, belly and genitals, which disturb one as long as one is not fully aware that the body is separate from the soul” (7.15.40, purport).

9:45

Human life (like a chariot or car) can be used in two ways: “One may drive well, or whimsically, in which case it is quite possible that he may have an accident and fall into a ditch.”



Only by devotional service. "Thus one should accept the sword of knowledge from Kṛṣṇa and be strong with the mercy of Balarāma" (7.15.45, purport).

This is one of the selections for my compilation. By lecturing to devotees, one is forced to read with attention. You cut through the mental fog. Often that fog is persistent. Just as outdoors the fog comes at certain times of day, so it's true of reading also. This 10 A.M. type reading tends to be foggy.

One needs to take shelter of the lotus feet of Gaura-Nitāi (Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma) to get out of the dark well.

Those who go in next life to higher planets have to come down again, taking birth first as a plant, eaten by animals and humans, turned into semen. Injected into the female body, he takes birth.

*12: 50 noon*

*Dear Notes While Reading Prabhupāda's Books,*

I think I'm going to give you some favor in these last five days of this retreat. Or maybe I should say it's you who will give me the favor. I am asking you to work with me. I feel a little tired out from my head-on free-form WS twice a day. Seem to have exhausted preems. So when it is taught something new, thought of a "timed book" like *Progresso*. But then (while drying off after noon bath) I thought, why not give the extra time to this project?

When I read this later, it will look like more of the same except I'll invite myself to incorporate any free-writing I like into the expansion form of these notes.

I'll ask the "notes" to accommodate "us." Last week or so here the notes have been tight, keeping to paraphrases; śâstric quotes and reading aids. Also I haven't written much while reading. So I'll try to open up, more writing while reading, but overall (in twenty-four hours) there should be an increase in reading also.

One reason to do this is as a warm-up and a prelude of a later rendezvous—for December Alone. I plan to come back here to this farm house after our pilgrimage to Śrīdhāma Māyāpur. When we come back I want to emphasize reading. So why not make my soul writing expression at that time a mixture of writing while reading?

You give yourself permission to write what comes and then you return in the same session, to some sacred reading.

"But although He is everything, He is not present in everything. The Lord must be worshiped in His original form as Kṛṣṇa" (7.15.59, purport).

Maybe I can't let loose as I just said I would. Something incompatible about the reading *yajña* and the free-writing of whatever comes. Reading notes however, are welcome.

October 11, 1 A.M.

Okay, so we are keeping things separate, these notes and the free-writing book. Let us read in best time and give some jottings.

"The spiritual world is an eternal reality." In the purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes *Bhagavad-gītā* 8.19–21. What about the fact that the world, *New York Times*, etc., doesn't care for this and even if they mention it, it's a disparaging way putting it into sectarian pigeonhole?

Well, you have to reject them as *mūḍhas* who deride the Lord and the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

You have to "give up all the nonduality of philosophical life in the material world and come to the actual life of reality in the spiritual world in order to attain perfection."

There is oneness in Kṛṣṇa consciousness "There is no difference between chanting for Kṛṣṇa consciousness and working for Kṛṣṇa consciousness." But we must be guided by the spiritual master. Don't manufacture your own "all is one" philosophy.

"A pure devotee, without embarrassing himself by trying for elevation in so many ways, stays in the safest position as a servant of Kṛṣṇa, and thus his life is eternally safe without a doubt" (7.15.68, purport).

Danger always in this world. Pāṇḍavas were always protected by Kṛṣṇa.

Free association with women, as indulged in by Upabarhaṇa is very detrimental to spiritual life.

In his past life when he was a Gandharva, Nārada, then Upabarhaṇa, was cursed by sages while they were all attending a *hari-kīrtana* meeting. What was his offense? He went there in the company of lusty women and “he considered ordinary songs, like cinema songs and other such songs, to be equal to *saṅkīrtana*.”

(I'm thinking that between Śrīla Prabhupāda who is “without” as my eternal guru, and Kṛṣṇa who teaches from within—and from both of them from the books—I have more than sufficient guides. Don't need more persons as guides, but more surrender to Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa)

“Not only the Pāṇḍavas but everyone who sincerely accepts the instructions of Kṛṣṇa can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead as He is.”

9:50

After hearing the talks between Nārada and Yudiṣṭhira, “If one still has any doubts about Kṛṣṇa being the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one should immediately give them up.” People fail to do this even after hearing, but if you are fortunate, even though it may take many many births, you will come to this conclusion.

Thus ends Seventh Canto done by Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1976 at Hawaii.

Śrīla Prabhupāda begins the Eighth Canto praying to his spiritual master Bhaktisiddhānta Saras-

vati Ṭhākura “to give me strength to finish this work.” He says he’s not a great scholar or devotee but a humble servant of his spiritual master trying to please him by publishing these books “with the cooperation of my disciples in America.” Scholars are appreciating. (Library party *kī jaya*) “Let us cooperatively publish more and more volumes of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* just to please His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.”

Those were great days and may we remember them. And continue to work in various ways, by re-issuing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, distributing his books, and also writing and publishing new books in the *paramparā*.

The Supreme Lord creates. He is not created by anyone. This is a so-called stumbling block for the empirical philosophers. So one has to give up that method of understanding God, the infinite. You can’t make any progress that way, subjecting God to loss of man and matter claiming “He must be created by someone.” Accept by Vedic authority.

The Supreme Lord owns everything and we can take and use our God-given quotas.

**5:20 P.M.**

Wonderful statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda how to realize the presence of Kṛṣṇa at all times. He is the proprietor, so just consider that. All lands are His, stars, universe, so He’s always present. He is in our heart witnessing and allowing. So even if we can’t see Him, due to our darkness of ignorance, He sees us. Be active in Kṛṣṇa’s service, don’t sit idly.

October 12, 1 A.M.

Svâyambhuva Manu stood on one leg and spoke *ślokas* praising the Supreme Lord. He said the Lord in His incarnation acts to set an example. He teaches us (as Lord Rāma, Lord Kṛṣṇa, and Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu) “how to be happy by following the instructions of the Supreme Lord.”

“I’m here reading. It’s okay. Keep going. I’ll catch a few droplets of nectar here.”

(I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda explain in “*Vedas Personified*” in *Kṛṣṇa* book, that no sane man can blame the Supreme Lord for suffering in the world, or why one is put into species of life, why quarrels.)

*Rākṣasas* attacked Svâyambhuva Manu, but the Supreme Lord saved him. We create acts by our own misuse of free will. Karma acts. The Supreme Lord is aloof, just as rain pours on the land and is not responsible for the *varieties* of vegetables. You know that explanation?

So we have begun reading about Gajendra. It’s pitiful that one goes out to sport with girlfriends, one is the king, etc., enjoys, relieves fatigue in the water, drinks to satisfaction, labors to please one’s dependents—all the while not knowing that within a few moments the crocodile will strike. The danger of the croc was set by Providence.

9:30

Gajendra saw no one could help him. He feared death and called for rescue to the Supreme Being. Śrīla Prabhupāda says we are all in a similar posi-

tion. For a fully surrendered devotee, this is his last birth in the material world.

“Everyone should fear death because everyone is caught by the crocodile of eternal time and may die at any moment.” . . . seek shelter from Lord Kṛṣṇa to be saved from the struggle for existence in this world.

Gajendra prayed *samādhāya mano hṛdi*, “with mind in his heart” with perfect intelligence and chanted a mantra . . . which he remembered by the grace of Kṛṣṇa. (8.3.1)

Pray to the Supreme Person using a bona fide mantra. He must be a person therefore He is controlling all demigods.

Gajendra prays the Lord is the cause of all, is all-pervading, is all-existence, etc. and yet He cannot be known. I hear and pray. I do believe but need increase in my *śraddhā*. Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu—He is a person it all comes from Him. Faith in evidence of *Brahma-saṁhitā*, *īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ* . . . for the speculators He is impossible to understand. Don’t hear from them. “Therefore we must accept the statements given by the Supreme when He kindly incarnates to instruct us. We must simply accept the word of Lord Rāmacandra, Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and follow in Their footsteps” (8.3.8).

*Janma karma ca me divyam.*

5:30 P.M.

It's not enough to turn the pages for twenty pages or however long. Pause and take it in. The Lord comes as a person but He is not material. His name and form are transcendental. Take it in, at least a little, whatever you can.

Pray to contain your speculative or doubting nature. He must receive enlightenment from the Supreme, from *Bhagavad-gītā*.

He expands and yet He remains the same Supreme Personality of Godhead. Worship Govinda.

The Lord gives knowledge from within. That's the best education.

He is the shelter of Vedic knowledge contained in the *śāstras* which are His representation. He gives liberation. He appears in the pure minds of advanced souls. I offer my obeisances unto Him, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. (thus prayed Gajendra)

*October 13*

"Being extremely merciful, You incessantly tried to deliver me." Not only the king of elephants is attacked by crocodiles. We are beasts and bitten by the crocodile of material existence. Kṛṣṇa is in our heart and He is not inattentive.

Don't deride God when He comes to the world as a person. Don't doubt Him in His personal feature. You don't want to be a voidist or atheist, do you? Accept the teachings of the transcendental form of Kṛṣṇa.



Only the liberated person can constantly think of Kṛṣṇa. *Yoginām api sarveṣāṁ.*

Gajendra asks for “liberation from this present danger and from the materialistic way of life.”

The Supreme Lord “doesn’t disappoint anyone who takes shelter of His lotus feet.” Let me however not disappoint myself by asking for measly benefits. I will ask Him to give strength and purpose to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness as my spiritual master desires of me.

Pure devotees serve and surrender to the Lord, hear and chant and don’t ask Him for benedictions. But Gajendra felt compelled to ask relief from the jaws of the crocodile.

No happiness in the material world. Gajendra asks for liberation.

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme, the Supersoul . . . who is seen in the core of the heart by perfect mystics when they are completely purified . . . by *bhakti-yoga*” (8.3.27, purport).

10 A.M.

Gajendra prayed while in great pain, thankful that the opportunity inspired him to pray so fervently—“who anxiously prayed to the Lord and thus received an immediate change to return home, back to Godhead.” He prayed sincerely “with undiverted attention.”

A sage’s curse is often a benediction.

7 P.M.

I grasp some of it, then the mind wanders off. Stay a little longer, keep trying, but if you can't give it good quality then stop reading until tomorrow morning. I'm reading that the demons were attacking the demigods. (a flash of disbelief, "Is this a myth?" is like a wince or twitch, don't take it seriously).

Bad dreams are due to sinful acts.

So Durvāsā also cursed the demigods at this time and they were suffering heavy losses. So they gathered and went to Lord Brahmā. He advised them that they all go to Lord Viṣṇu.

(I improved in my attention and read for about half an hour winding up in good consciousness, reading about importance of the golden opportunity we have now to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in 10,000 years, and the special prayers and songs that we sing as *śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya* and Hare Kṛṣṇa. Other points also came nicely into the mind. Seek protection always in His transcendental realm and get out of this miserable world.)

October 14, 1 A.M.

Slow down enough and be attentive enough so it's not just rattling over the ground like in a bumpy car just to cover the miles. Go back again. You were reading Lord Brahmā's prayer on behalf of the *devas*. (*Bhāg*. 8.5) Śrīla Prabhupāda says the Lord is one and is eternal, unchanging. The *jīvas* have that quality too. Read and feel it.

He is *vibhu* and we are *anu*.

He is *ananta*, unlimited and  
all-pervading, the cause of everything.

He is in our hearts but that doesn't mean we are equal to Him. I want to perceive His presence and worship Him. (Don't be afraid of Him. Don't disdain Him or doubt Him)

He is *vipascitam*, one who knows everything.

The *jīva*'s body is compared to a wheel run by the material energy. Supersoul is the hub. " . . . the Supersoul is the true reality. Everyone of us should offer respectful obeisances to this central reality." Don't be misguided by material world and forget the central point, the Absolute Truth.

Quiet time to read is a great privilege. Sometimes you'll be in emergency condition and will not be able to sit with a book. Be grateful for peaceful reading time when you can imbibe the knowledge and then use it in your time of need.

No one can overcome the Lord's *māyā*,  
it bewilders everyone and they  
lose the sense  
to understand the aim of life.  
But He subdues that *māyā*,  
He rules everyone. We offer Him  
our respectful obeisances. (paraphrase  
of 8.5.30)

I'm attracted by what I read this morning, that the Supreme Lord is the center of our existence and we should worship Him as Supersoul in our hearts. He

is the central reality. How can we neglect Him? It happens when we are subdued by His powerful illusory energy (*māyā*) which makes us forget Kṛṣṇa. I pray to Him to be guided and know Him as my protector and maintainer, and as the protector and maintainer of everyone and all the universes.

Pray to Him as you read. And as you chant. May He be pleased with us. Please, O energy of the Lord, O Lord, engage me in Your service.

9:30

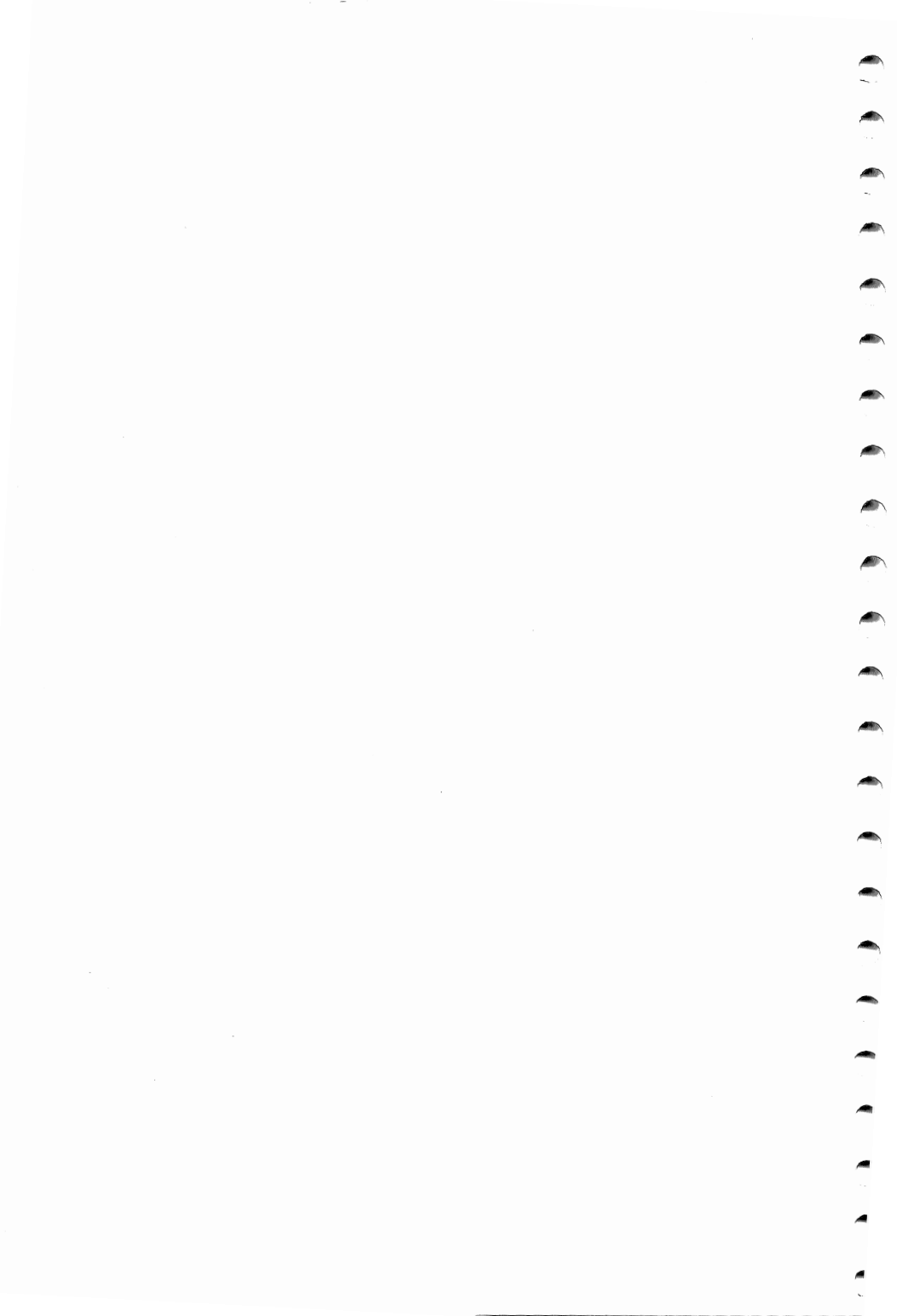
Lord Brahmā prays how the sun, moon, water, etc. come from parts of the body of the Supreme Lord. He says it's very difficult to understand the material world although we at least know that everything takes place systematically under the control of the Supreme Lord through His material nature. We also know that learned persons reject the material world as *dukalayam aśaśvatam*. We should follow their advice.

(Late morning, I'm blinking, rocking back and forth; losing consciousness and then telling myself yes, the Supreme Lord is the source of all, in the last verse He said they pray to see Him in His personal form, not the impersonal form. He has many incarnations, but a man can't claim, "I am an incarnation of God.")

Devotees should push on the spreading of the KC movement. Then even though four rules are not popular with *karmīs*, the movement will grow. "... devotees who have dedicated their lives to the ser-

vice of the Lord can achieve substantial results without working very hard. These results exceed the devotees' expectations" (8.5.47).

(I can apply this to my faulty reading. Although my "pistons aren't hitting on all eight," still I get great benefit. There is static and interruption in my radio receiver but this much message is coming through: devotees by little endeavor get great results . . . KC movement can't be checked if devotees try . . . chant Hare Kṛṣṇa at time of death and go back to Godhead . . . water the root . . . )



**Notes While Reading**  
***Teachings of***  
***Lord Caitanya***  
**India**

**October–November**





The idea of “notes while reading” is that it’s hard as hell sometimes to keep attentive. The journal will help me to do it and maybe it can record some peaks and satisfaction and yearning. Something to look at later. Something to help me now—to get through better reading sessions.

Of course, this is vintage Prabhupāda, 1967, and I personally typed. Read it now with some enthusiasm and freshness. Desire to know. Feel faith.

I had a good start in relishing his Preface. He sums up the teachings of Lord Caitanya with that *śloka, vraja vadhu* . . . Lord Caitanya teaches to control the mind and sense by Kṛṣṇa conscious activities.

But when I came to the *Śikṣāṣṭaka* prayers themselves, it was too much for me. Couldn’t pay attention, couldn’t be so deep right now. Try them later, again and again. I’m also saving Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s prologue for another occasion. Main thing is to stay encouraged and go on reading where there is not much resistance or inattention.

This morning I also skipped the Introduction.

### *Chapter One*

You noticed that it’s a kind of summary study, and highly selective. Don’t feel, “Oh, this isn’t the complete Cc. So much is missing here.” Rather, appreciate the personal treatment of Cc. by your spiritual master. I will again read Cc. But this book has its own merit. Notice the paraphrases of *ślokas* and the way of making points in descriptions. Be

submissive with your Swami and hear from him the teachings of Lord Caitanya.

Onboard the ferry to England, I'm reading *TLC*. Wrote two verses spoken by Rūpa Gosvāmī onto index cards for savoring later. Lord Caitanya delivers those souls who are immersed in ignorance and gives them the highest gift, love of Kṛṣṇa. Due to His inspiration, "I feel the desire within my heart to write something about devotional service."

It would be better to stay awake as much as possible and imbibe texts, *śloka*s, and pray to Lord Caitanya and Prabhupāda.

Good reading is bliss. You can't seem to retain it, the information and devotional feelings. But you *do* experience them as they pass in front of your attention. Therefore, why not read as much as possible and in that way you will often be enlightened. But it requires a good state of receptive reading. Pray for it and practice it. (Know that you need it in this fleeting, unhappy world. My only happiness is my connection with Kṛṣṇa consciousness—the picking up out of the earth of my devotional plant.)

Read several times the essence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is chanting and hearing. For example:

#1) "... it is necessary for the devotee ... to pour water on the plant by chanting and hearing. Unless one waters the plant by chanting and hearing, there is every chance that it will dry up" (p. 29).

#2) "Chanting the holy name is as good as associating with the Supreme Personality of Godhead" (p. 30).

#3) "By minimizing bodily necessities, one can primarily devote his time to cultivation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the chanting of the holy names of God" (p. 31).

The chapter of "Teachings to Rūpa Gosvāmī" becomes a synopsis of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Nectar of Devotion*. Everything is in brief and often the Sanskrit terms are not given or fully defined. Nowadays, one can find out more about these things. I had begun to memorize the terminology of *rāgā-nugā*, but now I don't. It seems to theoretical to me and not so useful. My fervent feelings are to attain desire to read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and to go on writing, to learn how to pray, and to surrender myself to preaching according to my capacity. I shall not be embarrassed if someone asks me a technical question about the higher stages of spontaneous love of Kṛṣṇa and I don't know the specific answer in technical language. Admit where I am at and what I'm striving for. But keep reading and know as far as possible where Śrīla Prabhupāda discusses these in his books.

(Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, my sticking to only your books is not an artificial act by me. Please help me discover the treasure you have left us. Let me be your follower, rejoice in it and satisfy you by my service.)

Reading in the back of van on ferry queue. Fifteen minutes and then stop. Soak it in. Consider what you reading. I agreed to come back to it later.

Even if you can only take sips, take them again and again. The *TLC* volume is like a flask of intoxicating drink. I uncap it, sip, then somehow I can't take much, so I put the cap on again. But I'll be back for more. Just finish the brief chapter on Lord Caitanya's teachings to Rūpa Gosvāmī.

"I've heard this many times before, beginning in 1966"—the teachings of Lord Caitanya to Sanātana. But hear it once more. You are still not liberated in devotional service. The threefold miseries still give you trouble. And can you honestly say that you know your constitutional position as pure spirit soul, eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa? Please read it nicely. You have your intention of what is nectar as you read. But don't confine it to certain moods and topics. To understand, for example, that the *jīva* is part and parcel of the blissful, eternal, spiritual energy of the Lord, but that he's now covered by ignorance in the material energy and so is in "false ego"—this is critical for me. It's the main meal, not the dessert. I need it to be fixed.

It is science. Accept it as such, not as religious faith of the Gauḍīya Hindus.

Our happiness in material life is compared by Lord Caitanya to the brief respite the criminal gets when they pull him from being dunked and almost drowned. They will then dunk him again underwater. (We practicing, aspiring devotees are in a different situation; even when we suffer it's part of our purification and eventual release. We are within Kṛṣṇa's spiritual, protecting energy; not the

punishing *mahā-māyā*. Pray we stay in that energy and take what reforms the Lord gives us.)

(Just read a half hour at a P-stop in van in France, October 1994. My reading capacity is best at small installments. But please do them. Treasure them. Share the treasure with devotees whenever you can, classes and writings. And live by it: your constitutional nature is spirit soul. Get free of suffering. But the goal of *bhakti* is beyond liberation—is in reciprocating with Lord Kṛṣṇa in loving service acts unto Him.)

Lord Caitanya explains to Sanātana that Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda Mahārāja, is the Absolute Supreme Truth, *sarva karana-karanam*. In Vraja, He is just like a young boy, but His form is *sat-cit-ānanda* and source of all, proprietor of all. As Lord Caitanya wanted Sanātana to know this, so Śrīla Prabhupāda wants us to think of Kṛṣṇa simultaneously as the dearest friend and child of Goloka and also the Supreme Personality of Godhead as maybe defined and realized in many ways. When he appears as Brahman or Paramātmā, that's also Him, Kṛṣṇa, in part. Don't think that He is *not* the Paramātmā, or rather think, "Yes, that too is Kṛṣṇa." See Kṛṣṇa in the heart. To prove this, Lord Caitanya quotes to Sanātana, Śukadeva Gosvāmī's reply when Mahārāja Parikṣit asked *How come the residents of Vṛndāvana were so much attached to Kṛṣṇa? Kṛṣṇam enam avehi tvam*, "Kṛṣṇa should be known as the soul of all souls, for He is the soul of all individual souls, and the soul of the localized Paramātmā as

well" (10.14.55). I like this verse because it defines Kṛṣṇa's "Godhood" as a reason that the Vrajavāsīs love Him, even thought, due to Yogamāyā, they may not see it that way. I am trying to pick up on the mood and emphasis that Śrīla Prabhupāda gives to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and how he wants us to approach Lord Kṛṣṇa. I think he is perfectly expert to guide me in this and I want to follow.

Read and worship, read as you worship. "The *avatāras*." The three Viṣṇus. You need to kick out *New York Times*, universities of this world, "independent" poets and writers, you have to hear from your Swami who teaches what Lord Caitanya teaches, who teaches "the *avatāras*" to Sanātana Gosvāmī.

Oh, but I was not born a Hindu.

So? Do you accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness as the Absolute Truth?

Yes, I do. I accept *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* as taught by our Śrīla Prabhupāda. His presentation of Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya. In that way, as *śiṣya* who admits he cannot know this universe or his soul, and who gives up the eclectic search and acceptance of a little from here and a little from there—I do want this *paramparā*. Maybe again (and again) I should kick out all elements, books, influences in my life that hinder me in any way from total, full-time hearing of the Vedic knowledge from Śrīla Prabhupāda and his books.

All *avatāras*, including *puruṣa* and *līlā* and *guṇa*, are expansions of Kṛṣṇa who is likened to the

original candle which lights all the rest. "Viṣṇu is a part, but Kṛṣṇa is the whole." This encourages me in my understanding that in His Goloka form and pastimes, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is simultaneously a child, the lover of the *gopīs*, and the supreme source of all. We don't want to forget or minimize His being the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is the exact way Śrīla Prabhupāda presents it. We know of course that in *yogamāyā*, the residents of Vṛndāvana don't think of Lord Kṛṣṇa as God, and if they do so, it disturbs their *rasa* with Kṛṣṇa, or it's merely an incidental occurrence. But for we who are in the material world, not liberated, still affected by tendencies for skepticism and impersonalism (voidism, etc.), it's important to always acknowledge and sincerely worship Govinda, *govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*.

The chapter "Opulences of Kṛṣṇa" takes this even further. Lord Brahmā saw all expansions coming from the body of original Kṛṣṇa. He concluded that no one could estimate the potencies of Kṛṣṇa. So the Lord is unknowable, but He is a person, Kṛṣṇa. His expansions, the Viṣṇus, live on Vaikuṇṭha planets, each of which is unlimited. This chapter is a wonderful mind stretcher and mind blower.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is the master of all Viṣṇus and universes.

In chapter ten, "The Beauty of Kṛṣṇa," Lord Caitanya gives unrestrained appreciations of the conjugal beauty of Kṛṣṇa's body. Only the *gopīs* in

Vṛndāvana can appreciate this and it is only in the Lord's original form that such beauty is seen.

### *October 24, Bombay*

Near end of day, I'm trying to read a few pages. In these notes I keep repeating statements about the struggle to keep attention. It's worth repeating, it's so important. And as it keeps occurring that I read but can't taste the nectar of *gaura-vāṇī*, Prabhupāda *upadeśa*, so it is also a fact that when I patiently persist, I am able to get through. I like to read about that good fight in these notes. "One who is constantly in the sunshine of Kṛṣṇa cannot possible be deluded by the darkness of material energy."

"No one should be depressed thinking that he will never be out of the clutches of matter, for there is every possibility of being rescued, exactly as it is possible for a log, which is floating down a river, to come to rest on the bank" (10.38.5, quoted on p. 115 of *TLC*).

I was just talking with a Godbrother and I was advocating reading Prabhupāda's book. But such talk is not as good as actually reading. It's almost like political talk. I feel exhausted from it and it hasn't advanced my actual cause. Read in quiet, alone. Don't talk about it so much; do it.

### *October 25*

"When devotional service is performed without present senses, it is called practical devotional service" (*TLC*, p. 124). When Śrīla Prabhupāda trans-



lates terms into specific English, I want to talk his English usage as important and worth using. Don't take it ever as a mistake or an insignificant or irrelevant choice. Do this not fanatically, yet with a simple faith. The spiritual master is not an ordinary man. If he chooses a certain word like "practical devotional service," then I may use it confident that it has meaning in tune with eternal Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *paramparā*.

" . . . One should be very eager to hear favorably about Kṛṣṇa . . . Hearing and chanting are the principle methods of devotional service" (*TLC*, p. 125).

Sometimes devotees say it's not enough to read books; we have to do active service. Granted. Even to assimilate the instruction in the books, we need the guru's mercy. Sanātana Gosvāmī heard from Lord Caitanya and then asked Him to bless him so he could assimilate the instructions and write effective books as ordered by Lord Caitanya.

"Instruction alone cannot make one an expert. Therefore, one should seek the mercy of the spiritual master so that the instructions of the spiritual master can develop within oneself" (*TLC*, p. 152).

Read anywhere and become solaced. Now in a Calcutta hotel, same *TLC* as held on the airplane, "It is when the devotee understands and becomes attracted by Kṛṣṇa's transcendental qualities that he wholeheartedly engages in devotional service" (*TLC*, p. 163).

A quiet life of reading, linking the moments, not getting radically diverted from that train of thought you followed when you last read, savoring, considering it deeply in your own life . . . That is ideal and I can't attain it now. But even these fifteen minutes make me not worry what people may think that I'm in a hotel. In fact, I'm not in a hotel. I'm in the chapter "Conclusions of Teachings to Sanātana Gosvāmī."

"The conclusion is that no one can attain a revolution in consciousness while engaging in devotional service to the Lord." So many meanings in the *ātmārāma* verse. All kinds of *munis* and even foolish creatures are ultimately attracted to Kṛṣṇa. I pray I may be also.

Beep beep, car horns of Calcutta evening. My eyes on the page of *TLC* but mind thinking . . .

Why don't you shift your own attention from hotel or ISKCON opinion, etc. to re-read that paragraph regarding another meaning of a word in the *ātmārāma* verse? Each five minutes you gain in attentive reading goes to your eternal benefit, and a minute lost can never be regained.

"Just try to understand the real nature of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the sound representation of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa: therefore *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is not different from Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is unlimited, and similarly, each word and letter of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has unlimited meanings. One can understand these meanings

through the association of devotees. Don't, then, say that *Bhāgavatam* is simply a collection of answers to questions" (TLC, p. 179).

Let us take this wonderful medicine in the measure prescribed by the transcendental physician, Śrīla Prabhupāda, as he emphasizes.

Nice to read TL of Lord Caitanya explaining to Prakaśānanda Sarasvatī why he chants and dances and does not formally study *Vedānta*. So many pleasing styles of writing by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his strict presentation of Vaiṣṇava classics in English through either summary study narrative or Bhakti-vedānta purport. "The Lord also wanted to teach that a serious student of transcendental science should follow the words of his spiritual master" (TLC, p. 198).

I will do as Lord Caitanya did by studying the books of my spiritual master. I need not read "*Vedānta*" as something more than what he presented to us. Let them think I am a fool or fanatic or sentimental. I can prove to them that everything is in Prabhupāda's books, just as Lord Caitanya approved that the goal of *Vedānta* is attained by one who chants constantly Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

The chanter of Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra doesn't have to separately study *Vedānta*. But we do study *Vedānta* with the Vaiṣṇava conclusion.

"Only when one can understand that there is no difference between the Supreme and His name,

can one be situated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness . . . one becomes more interested in petitioning the Lord: 'Hare Kṛṣṇa—O my Lord, O energy of the Lord, please engage me in Your service!'" (TLC, p. 201).

Wonderful, triumphant Chapter Eighteen of *TLC*—the glories of *harināma*. One who chants in ecstasy can become a spiritual master and encourage people all over the world to chant. Even if people oppose, he goes on chanting loudly. "By chanting and hearing the holy names of Kṛṣṇa, a person can remember the forms and qualities of Kṛṣṇa."

*Lectio divina* type reading, savoring a little at a time, is the key to a life-long reading plan "confined" to Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. When you realize you can go deeper and deeper into the infinite (Supreme Personality of Godhead) in his books, you needn't look for extra. Also, when you see that his books give you access to *rādhā-dasya*, then you will be satisfied. He gives me what I most need—of this I want to be convinced again and again.

I long for taste and security here—and newness and love and experience of transcendence (what I call the mystical dimension of reading).

When I read one of my own reading notes from nine months ago, I don't remember that I was reading and relishing that particular section of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. But I am pleased to notice that I *was* relishing and reading and I'm interested in the tid-

bit that I wrote down. It keeps flowing like the river. The experience is in the moment or the process of regular reading. The notes encourage me to go on with it and the little retaining of items is itself a kind of process connected to reading, all methods to help me stay close to his books, his Lord.

### *November 18*

For a month I haven't been able to do this kind of unmotivated reading at a good time of day. Take it up again with a prayer that I may be able to enter *TLC* without so much resistance. I want to be attentive. I will take some notes here about it.

Is there really special nectar in Prabhupāda's presentation, so that the combination of his presence and the Vaiṣṇava and the previous *ācāryas* satisfy us and we don't want to read anything else? I want to say, "Yes!" and mean it from my own experience. (You can tell others about this *if* you discover it, but don't make that your main business. Such flag-waving tends to sap away my integrity and taste.)

But it's a fight to actually reach that "Yes!" to Prabhupāda's books. I want to make this the main purpose of this retreat.

*Gopī-bhāva* is the sweetest taste in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but you need to be liberated to know it. Śrīla Prabhupāda has his method of bringing us to that stage. He stresses pure devotional service in all *rasa*. That will lead you to discover your own *rasa*. Many points like this I want to become more

and more aware of and appreciative of in his writings.

You may appreciate Prabhupāda out of duty and policy. That is also valid. I think of Sātī's praise of Lord Śiva which was both from duty and out of the fact that she was partial to him as his wife. But her praise of Lord Śiva was also objective.

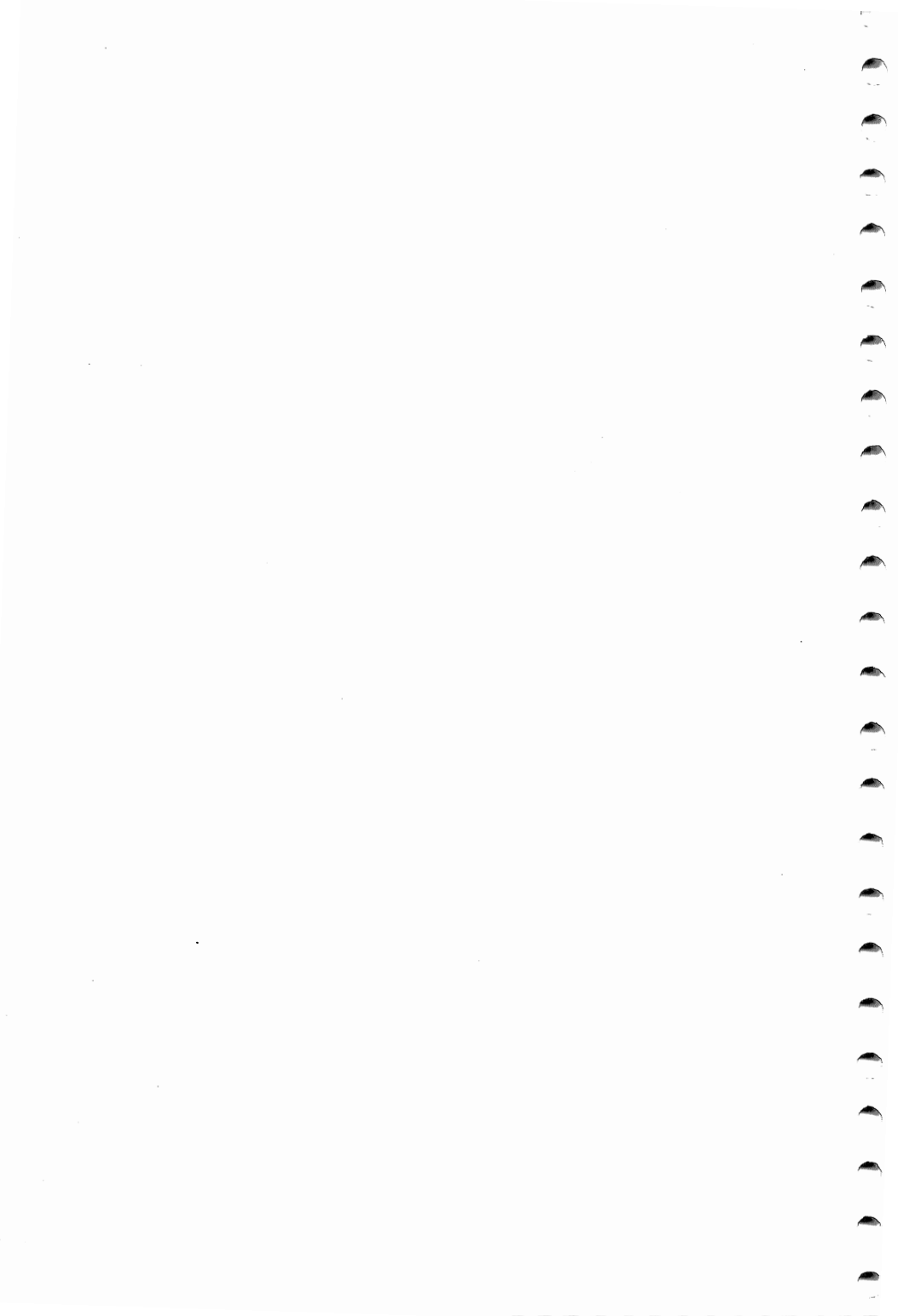
*TLC* tells us the purpose of life is to realize the form of Supreme Personality of Godhead and render loving service to Him. If you don't know His form, you can't attain love of God. You'll become an impersonalist. Stick to Kṛṣṇa consciousness or you will wind up reading and being influenced by impersonalists. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains evidence that the Absolute Truth is the Supreme Person. See, for example, his purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 1.1.1., which he repeats in *TLC*. He concludes that the evidence for a supreme person is reasonable but stubborn persons will not accept it.

Scientists and atheists "refute" *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and we refute them. Go on reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* defying that attitude which says there is no need of God for explaining existence. Defy the theory that creation takes place automatically. Use Prabhupāda's arguments. Go on reading (as I just did for almost an hour, no notes, no retaining perhaps, but doing it). I pray for more time, better attention, and more conviction. A life of lecturing or writing on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* topics will spring naturally, with no extraneous effort to "be a preacher."

Important points: when speaking to the converted Prakaśānanda, Lord Caitanya established the exclusive glories of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* over all *Purāṇas* and Vedic literatures (see *TLC* pp. 259 or 260).

When speaking to Sārvabhauma, Lord Caitanya established that *śabdha* is the prime means for gaining knowledge and Vedic sounds should be accepted as they are without unnecessary interpretation. These are beacon lights for guiding me.

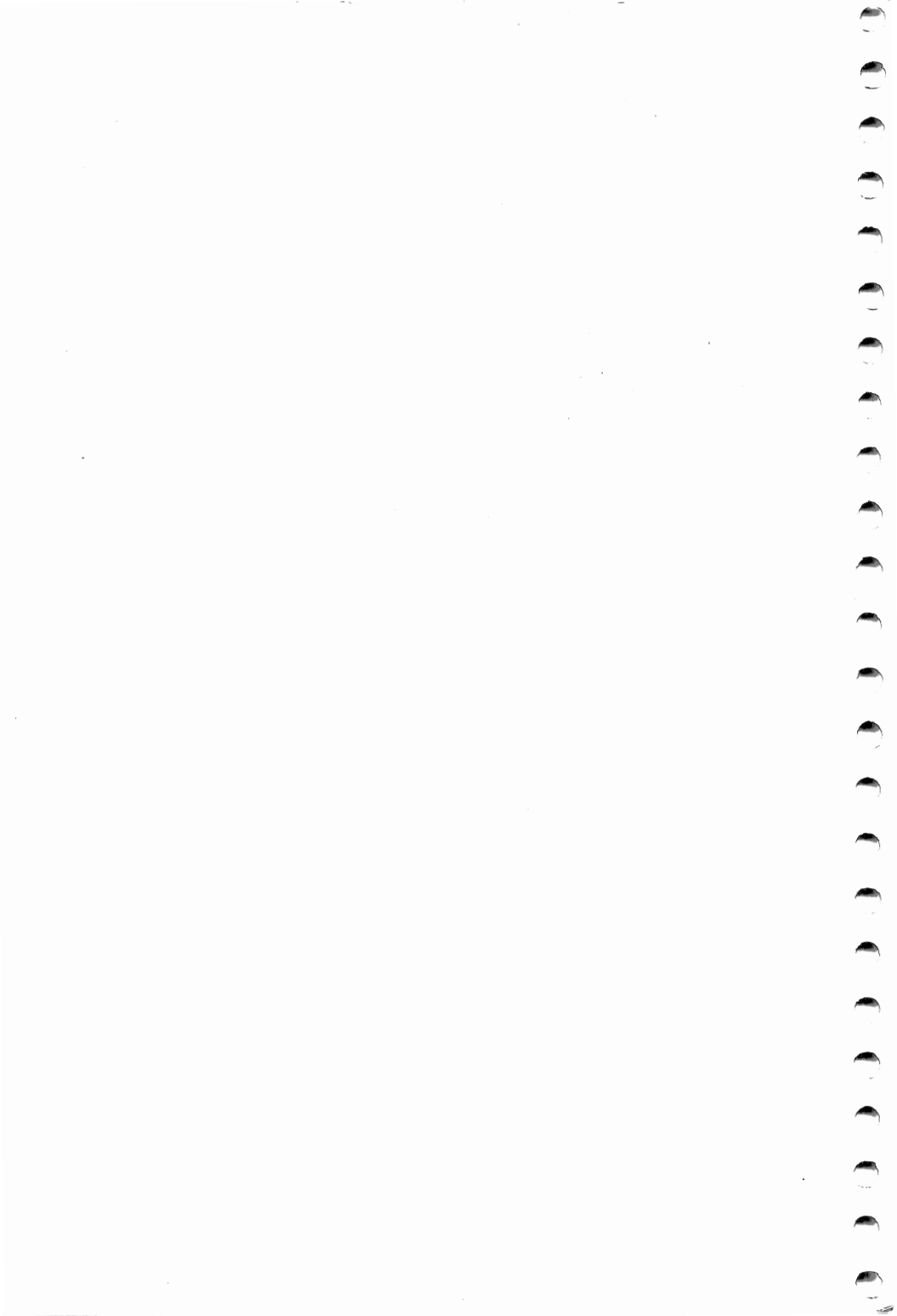
Just then, twenty-five minutes in *TLC*, finishing the conversion of Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya and beginning the section on Rāmānanda Raya. So many important passages to underline. You may speak on them later. Avoid Māyāvādī philosophy like the plague. If a preacher converts one person to a pure devotee, he's guaranteed to go back to Godhead. Lord Caitanya chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and Bhaṭṭācārya took it up also. All glories to the Lord of the universe who appeared as His own pure devotee, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.





Reading *Kṛṣṇa* book  
near Kenmare

November–December



### *Writing and Reading Plan*

1) Be patient. Do it not looking for a “high.” Just do it and you will like it.

2) I say read a paragraph as a unit. Don’t stop until you finish reading a paragraph. Then write.

3) As you read, underline what you want, what catches your eye.

4) Writing is free, whatever you want. Don’t think of it as a book, either for Gītā-nāgarī Press or even private edition. Just write and read for now as a very good way to spend 12–1 A.M.

5) My written text won’t include all of what I read, obviously. But you can “narrate” at least that I am reading in such-and-such chapter.

6) Not too many rules on this. Just go and do it as you like.

November 28, 1994, 12:10 A.M.

We are beginning with reading Chapter Eight of *Kṛṣṇa* book, "Vision of the Universal Form."

I know the criticism. It says, "This book is written for beginners. This is the story of Kṛṣṇa, told this to children. In fact, the story itself is somewhat child-like or only child-like person will accept. Imagine, a small boy, Kṛṣṇa, is Himself the Supreme Person from whom everything exists and upon whom everything is resting. Hardly believable for a modern, sophisticated person."

Let's pass over that. I could devastate it. I know what it takes to read this book. I want it. I read originally with submission and I can do it again.

As for "child-like," I can accept that word in a positive way. As Christ said, unless you become like children, you can't enter the kingdom of God. Adult means corrupt. "Generally householders think that their enjoyment in family affairs is their prime duty and that self-realization or enlightenment in spiritual knowledge is secondary. Out of compassion only, saintly persons and *brāhmaṇas* go to the householders' homes."

Great scholars like Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī uphold the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. You read them properly only after first assimilating the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā* and the first nine cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. You study and live with the spiritual master, as his menial servant. You practice austerity, avoiding four sinful acts and chanting sixteen rounds of Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra daily. Hear *Kṛṣṇa* book in that context.

It may be dangerous to see puppet shows of *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. You begin to think Nanda Mahārāja and Gargamuni are stuffed dolls. No harm, I suppose, for children. And so there *is* a child's version of *Kṛṣṇa* book. But the devotee-adult should not be corrupted by it. He should be aware what he's listening to is the last word in narratives on the Absolute Truth.

Gargamuni was a *brāhmaṇa*, expert in knowledge of the Supreme. In Vedic culture, the *brāhmaṇa* gives "reformatory facilities" (such as mantra and Vedic instructions) to the sub-castes. Nanda Mahārāja was playing the role of an unenlightened *vaiśya*. He offered his two sons, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, to be purified.

I've read it so many times but still get confused, whether Kṛṣṇa is the son of Vasudeva or Nanda. Ultimately, He is no one's son, and He comes to play His pastimes. You can say He accepted both Vasudeva and Nanda as fathers in His transcendental pastimes. Outwardly, it appeared that first Kṛṣṇa was born to Vasudeva and Devakī. He appeared to them as four-armed Viṣṇu and then as a human child. He advised them to transfer Him to Nanda and Yaśodā in Gokula so that Kāṁsa would not kill Him. Now Gargamuni has come to perform the purificatory ceremonies, but he is afraid that if Kāṁsa hears of it he will "come and kill this child. But I do not want to become responsible for all these future calamities."

Roll on, please, roll on. You don't have to confine yourself to reading only one paragraph. You don't need to analyze it forever. Flow with the river of *kṛṣṇa-līlā*.

(What is there to say by me compared to Prabhupāda's telling of the Tenth Canto? It shows that I want to talk, chatterbox. Remember the *Kṛṣṇa* book course I gave? I encouraged the readers to say how they feel when they heard a passage being read. We tried to improve our hearing by noting with our senses what was being described. We put ourselves into the scene. Shared with others our realizations. We began to trust our minds and words—that we could decently hear and recount something from the *Kṛṣṇa* book. We also sorted out our doubts and misgivings and corrected them. Preserved our appreciations and let them grow. Shared in this way with a few other devotees. Want to do some of that?)

My writing here also exposes that I want to say something. Do I think I am so important? I want to live and that means I don't want to remain quiet. As I breathe, I also speak. Better you speak of *Kṛṣṇa* than practice *mauna*. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that sometimes a spiritual master will tell a nonsense disciple, "You remain silent for twelve years," but, he says, "One who is a devotee, why he will not speak? He'll talk about *Kṛṣṇa* . . . If he remains silent, then people will not get the benefit. Let him speak always of *Kṛṣṇa*."

Who will read what I write? Am I writing in a way that will benefit others?

Here I am writing to keep myself alert as I read and to deepen the experience. I'm also like Bāṇāsura with a thousand arms? I have to use them. But let me not use my arms (or writing) to go against Kṛṣṇa. I'm the servant of His servant.

I may be able to help others devotees in their reading practices.

It's not easy to preach. You can't find ideal audiences. You have to use your time to travel, maintain a car or collect funds. If you develop your preaching and rent a house, then tenants may complain of the *kīrtanas*. Demons come to disrupt. Rather than face all this botheration, one may give it up. Those who persist in maintaining the preaching center or the big temple often fall into quarrels among themselves. They seek to improve this various communications skill.

I am a traveling *sannyāsī*. My job is to keep myself aloof from politics and sense gratification. Wander from place to place, mostly from temple to temple, and speak to devotees about Kṛṣṇa. You add something to the life of these communities. That's your humble task.

And now for almost seventeen years, you have been acting as spiritual master, initiating disciples and relating to them in the guru-disciple way. So many imperfections you feel. Let's look again at the book, read and speak if you like. "You become guru. So why will guru stop speaking? Guru will speak.

But what kind of speaking? What Kṛṣṇa has spoken. Not nonsense.”

“Some people will call Him Kṛṣṇa and some will call him Vāsudeva. But one thing you must know: This son has had many, many other names and activities due to His different pastimes.” What Gargamuni said was important for understanding Kṛṣṇa. Nanda would later refer to these words (in the chapter, “Wonderful Kṛṣṇa”) when the cowherdmen asked him to explain the marvelous acts of child Kṛṣṇa.

“Because of His presence, you will overcome all kinds of material calamities, despite opposing elements.”

It’s going well, this first hour of reading and writing. If I can keep my mind clear . . . Don’t demand that these notes have to serve a certain purpose or take a certain shape.

“Upon seeing these childhood pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa (His playing in the clay and cow dung, catching the tail of a calf and being dragged over the ground), the *gopīs* would be merged in transcendental bliss. In their enjoyment they would laugh very loudly.”

Let me also laugh and enjoy. Not with doubt. Don’t analyze.

Nanda Mahārāja was warned by Gargamuni that many demons would come to attack the child. “Because of His presence, you will overcome all kinds



of material calamities, despite opposing elements.” He told Nanda to protect Kṛṣṇa, “so that He may grow without disturbance.” It occurs to me that Nanda Mahārāja accepted a life of anxiety on behalf of Kṛṣṇa. That’s part of *vātsalya-rasa*. But Nanda Mahārāja wasn’t neurotic or fearful about it. “Nanda Mahārāja began to think of himself as the most fortunate person.” You could call it transcendental anxiety. The fathers and the mothers did their best to protect Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. “Always being anxious to protect children and to execute their duties, they were not very tranquil.” This may relate to what I said about the anxiety and burden of maintaining a Kṛṣṇa conscious preaching center or temple. If you take on loving service, you take on transcendental anxiety. Don’t try to exempt yourself.

I said I’m a *sannyāsī* and want to be peaceful so I can read and chant. I get headaches. But still, your main aim is not *śanti*, *śanti* for yourself, but to be absorbed in chanting and hearing and to share it with others. I am anxious why I can’t believe better, taste Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and so on. Another kind of anxiety. Be free and peaceful.

But I want to write a good kind of book. I can’t elevate myself enough. I practice writing what comes. It seems good but then I wonder if I can do something better.

Take the anxiety, protect Kṛṣṇa, protect your own Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Go into the world, into the ISKCON world and accept opposition—for Kṛṣṇa’s

sake. Think of Nanda Mahārāja who got the most intimate service. He was not afraid to take it even though it created obstacles and disturbances. “He was very satisfied to be benedicted in this way.”

*November 29, 12:09 A.M.*

This is the scene where the motherly *gopīs* are going to Mother Yaśodā to lodge complaints against “the naughty childish activities of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma in Vṛndāvana.” You have to pure hearted to hear this. I just dreamt of devotees putting on a drama in which they were rather inept and I was bored and critical. So my tendency is to think that *Kṛṣṇa* book narrative is more of the same. You glide over it restlessly and wonder (or part of you does) if you couldn’t be reading something more profitable or absorbing. You know that this *Kṛṣṇa* book is actually liberated reading. Don’t so quickly disqualify yourself.

Picture the scene. So much of good reading is in attaining the right mental state. Hear this as a narrative of the Absolute Truth.

It is similar to the verse *itthaṁ satāṁ brahma-sukhānubhūtyā*, that different kinds of persons, those who are *brahmāvādīs*, those who worship God as Supreme Masters, as well as ordinary people, all see Lord Kṛṣṇa in different ways. But the cowherd boys have passed through many lives of austerities and devotional service (*krta-puṇya-puñjāḥ*) in order to be able to play with Kṛṣṇa as intimate cowherd friends in His *vṛndāvana-līlā*.

These are not ordinary mothers gossiping. It is not an inept drama played by amateurs on a stage. Somehow, the original Kṛṣṇa does like to play as a baby and child. Many of His pure devotees like to care for Him when He is in that mood and sometimes they have to mildly chastise Him—for His own good and protection—when He misbehaves. It is all transcendental *līlā*.

As the list of so-called grievances begin, we are impressed that Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma have indeed been naughty. They let loose the calves who then ran and drank all the milk from the cows' udders. "So when we go to milk the cows, we find no milk." The serious charge against Them, and that's just the beginning.

But we are amused. We sit in judgment with the *gopīs* and hear the complaints. And yet we know that Kṛṣṇa means no harm. Kṛṣṇa is worshipped by them in this way.

They steal yogurt and butter from the homes and distribute it to the monkeys. When They are caught, They deny it and say, "Do you think yogurt and butter are in scarcity in our house?" These are raids on the neighbors' houses. He is the neighborhood, village butter thief. So He is called Makancora. Many paintings and songs and poems portray Him as the butter thief. We know the householders who are complaining actually love it when Kṛṣṇa comes to their house. They long for Him to come again. They think of Him very fondly. But by *yogamāyā*, they appear cross and chase Him away, maybe with a stick. Or they go complain to His mother.

The nondevotees can't see it or hear it; it is not for them. But it's for me. I may be included in the company of those who relish the Lord's *līlā* as a child. Doesn't matter what my *rasa* is (which I don't know now). Don't judge, "Oh, this is merely *vātsalya*. *Mādhurya* is the best, when Kṛṣṇa is a little more grown up." Please don't disqualify yourself from what is being given.

When the monkeys are well fed and won't take any more yogurt and butter, the boys child, "This milk and butter and yogurt are useless—even the monkeys won't take it." (a famous line which I recited in Prabhupāda's presence, before an audience in the Allston storefront temple. He smiled and they smiled.)

If the *gopīs* hide the yogurt in a dark place, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma find it by the effulgence from their jewels. If They can't find it, They pinch the household babies and make them cry. If the yogurt is kept high near the ceiling on ropes, the boys pile up wooden crates to reach it or They make a hole in the pot.

"Just see your boy now—He is hearing this complaint. All day They simply make arrangements to steal our butter and yogurt, and now They are sitting just like very silent good boys. Just see His face." "When Mother Yaśodā thought to chastise her boy after hearing all the complaints, she saw His pitiable face and smiling, she did not chastise Him."

Of course, another time she did chastise Him and tied Him with ropes. Mother Yaśodā loves her

children Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. The *gopīs* also love Them. They are complaining “in order to enjoy further transcendental bliss.”

I'm glad at least that I am writing this out, call it an exercise. But a tiny particle of the bliss may fall on me. Not an actual particle, or else I'd be overcome in bliss myself, like drowning in an ocean. (See the “Dāmodarāṣṭakam) But a shadow of the bliss, perhaps. At least I've briefly brought my attention to this *līlā*. I respect it and know it is nectar and gives relief from all worldly sorrow, illusion, and anxiety. “Just see His face.”

“Another day, when Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were playing with Their friends, all the boys joined Balarāma and told Mother Yaśodā that Kṛṣṇa had eaten clay.” So begins another immortal *līlā*. These pastimes are happening eternally throughout the universes of the material world and then Goloka, the spiritual world. They occur with variety and infinite taste, ever-fresh. We have only a brief version of it.

Sit up straight, compose your body and mind, and read it as nicely as possible.

I just read it once, but too quickly. My mind was somewhere else. (I was thinking that when I bathe I use such extreme of hot and then cold water that it may cause too much shock for the body. Maybe I should mix the water less hot as well as less cold. Yesterday at noon I felt something a little unpleasant as if I might injure myself. I'm always thinking that bath twice a day in an unheated room in winter and I might catch a cold. Right now my nose is

stuffed. Yesterday, I shaved my head and that may make me more vulnerable.) So while I read the passage, I didn't actually hear it. I heard other thoughts in my head. What was it Kṛṣṇa did? What did His mother say? What are the levels of meaning and the "pastimeous" bliss?

"All right, if You have actually not taken any clay, then just open Your mouth. I shall see."

The books are not just for selling or for new devotees to read for the first or second time. You say you want to be faithful and it's better to read Prabhupāda's books. So now you are doing it. This is a good place to be. You'll be able to sincerely relate it, even to an audience of long-time devotees. But that's not the main reason to read, to prepare yourself for lectures. No, the main reason is to approach Lord Kṛṣṇa, to be with Him and His pure devotees, to increase your attraction.

Slow it down so it doesn't go past too quickly and unfelt. When He opened His mouth, Mother Yaśodā saw the whole opulence of the cosmic creation. "She saw the entire out space in all directions . . . ." This takes place because that small child is actually the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is a moment when the child-like appearance of Kṛṣṇa confluxed with the *aiśvarya* yogum facts of His supremacy of all that be. What is this? Is Mother Yaśodā imagining it?

We also ask, "Is it a story only? What am I to make of it? How do I actually see it?"

The devotees, especially those realized in this *rasa*, “drown in pools of ecstasy” when they contemplate Kṛṣṇa in His childhood features. And we all honor the wonder of His opening His mouth and revealing but the entire cosmos is to be seen by looking into His mouth. How is it so? Because He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the source of all—*aḥaṁ sarvasya prabhavo* . . .

“I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts” (Bg. 10.8).

One might say that Mother Yaśodā doesn’t realize this. Yes, she’s on an even higher platform than Bhagavān realization. By *yogamāyā*, her love for Kṛṣṇa as her child overwhelms her vision of Him in His universal form. He showed her this cosmic form but she preferred to see Him as her child and to protect Him.

“Upon seeing all this, she became struck with awe and began to wonder whether she were dreaming or actually seeing something extraordinary.” Mother Yaśodā began to think in a “high philosophical way” that she was really in illusion to think she was Kṛṣṇa’s mother and that the household was hers. She began to offer her obeisances to the Supreme Personality of Godhead who produced such an illusion to give her false ego. “The *Kṛṣṇa* book narrative doesn’t say she identified Kṛṣṇa as the source of all, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” But then Kṛṣṇa

“expanded His internal energy just to bewilder her with material affection . . . She took Him on her lap and became overwhelmed with material affection.”

This Chapter Eight of the Tenth Canto closes with an explanation of how Mother Yaśodā and Nanda Mahārāja got to serve Kṛṣṇa in this way so that they could behold His childhood pastimes every moment of every day. In their former lives, they were “the best of the Vasus,” Droṇa and his wife Dharā. They prayed to Lord Brahmā that in a future life, “the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa in His most attractive feature of childhood would absorb their whole attention. Their dealings with Kṛṣṇa would be so powerful that simply by hearing of Kṛṣṇa’s childhood activities with them, anyone could very easily cross over the nescience of birth and death.”

We are thankful to Yaśodā and Nanda Mahārāja and to all the residents of Vṛndāvana who make these childhood pastimes of Kṛṣṇa possible. We are thankful to Lord Kṛṣṇa and to our spiritual master. “Thus ends the Bhaktivedanta purport of the Eighth Chapter of *Kṛṣṇa*, ‘Vision of the Universal Form.’”

Shivering in the room on the left side of my body while the right side is warmed by the gas heater. If you are so cold, you could put on your coat in addition to the four layers you know wear on top and the two on bottom.

That’s all for now. Soon start your *japa*. You could go back to sleep, but Prabhupāda says that’s a



waste of time. Gaining sleep is not an achievement. Staying awake in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the desirable asset.

*December 2, 12:10 A.M.*

Due to headaches, I missed two days of this new reading practice. To remind myself, this is the method for reading and writing in *Kṛṣṇa* book:

- 1) Read at least one paragraph at a time before you write.
- 2) Mark anything you like as you read in the book.
- 3) Stop to write when you feel like it.
- 4) Go for an hour.
- 5) Don't push for a certain quota of either pages read or pages written. (but I have been averaging seven written pages in an hour)
- 6) I hope it will divert my attention from myself (impure) to Lord Kṛṣṇa.
- 7) Help me pay attention and read submissively and appreciatively.

First impressions while reading Chapter Ten: It is all very ordinary. I've also read it many times. Doesn't seem I can study each paragraph minutely. And yet the *ācāryas* do. This is a picture of Yaśodā which is adored for meditation by those who worship in *vātsalya-rasa*. I tend to become embarrassed, just as if I saw a woman going to breastfeed her child, I wouldn't stare at the scene.

Okay. These are some causes for being turned away here. But they are superficial. You have to go back to it and continue in a transcendental way. I

am not adept at any *rasa*, that I should prefer one over another. I am reading Prabhupāda's *Kṛṣṇa* book, so let me take it as a great opportunity.

He is a child who sucks His mother's breast. We are up to that early stage of His life in Chapter Nine of Tenth Canto. The Supreme Lord has become a small child. Queen Kuntī says this is inconceivable but she worships the relationship of Kṛṣṇa and Yaśodā.

(Thank God I am writing of Kṛṣṇa and not just myself.)

*Ācāryas* have commented about Mother Yaśodā's putting Kṛṣṇa down from her lap and going to take boiling milk from the stove. She did it to serve her son. By giving Him her breast milk she served Him, and she also wanted to serve Him by saving the milk which was burning. From that milk, she intended to make sweets and other preparations for her son. It was not a neglect of duty or failure of love on her part. It was an arrangement of *Yoga-māyā* so Kṛṣṇa could show more pastimes with her.

You don't have to doubt at every moment, "How could God play as a child and be afraid of His mother while He does naughty tricks? Why would He want to do such a thing?" You can accept the principle that He can do whatever He likes and does like to reciprocate with His pure devotee who wants to love Him in various ways. Remember, Droṇa and Dharā, the best of the Vasus, asked a benediction from Lord Brahmā, "that when they would take birth again within the universe—the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa in His most attractive feature

of childhood would absorb their whole attention. Their dealings with Kṛṣṇa would be so powerful that simply by hearing of Kṛṣṇa's childhood activities with them, anyone could very easily cross over the nescience of birth and death."

So this is it. Enter it. It is a spirit of fun and motherly love . . . the mischief of the little boy and our knowledge, although theoretical, that this is Bhagavān, whom *yogīs* cannot catch, but He is playing like a child for Mother Yaśodā. You can enjoy it. It's not dry speculation. But be worshipful, not off-hand and clownish. Be like a mother or father or devotee who likes Kṛṣṇa's *līlās* and who likes the way Śrīla Prabhupāda presents them.

"Being the topmost well-wisher of her child, Mother Yaśodā began to think, 'If the child is too fearful of me, I don't know what will happen to Him.'"

I was thinking it would be nice to read *Kṛṣṇa* book in connection with study of the same chapters in his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* translations of Tenth Canto. But I don't have that book here with me. However, *Kṛṣṇa* book may be read by itself. I do aspire to be able to read it always again and again. One can always find new things, reflections expressed by Śrīla Prabhupāda. Also it is easy and pleasant reading. But it takes a certain frame of mind.

Remember when we used to gather and drink milk in the evening and hear a reading of *Kṛṣṇa* book? I remember we were attentive. Maybe I can do it again with my disciples when we hold

meetings. "Live in such a way/that you can read the *Kṛṣṇa* book."

From the Preface: "One will find that by reading one page after another, an immense treasure of knowledge in art, science, literature, philosophy and religion will be revealed, and ultimately, by reading this one book, *Kṛṣṇa*, love of Godhead will fructify."

From the Introduction: "The purpose of presenting this book is primarily to induce people to understand *Kṛṣṇa* or *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, because thereby they can become freed from material bondage."

It's not just for selling in airports and college campuses to people who have never heard of *Kṛṣṇa*. It's not only for giving to Hindus who have already heard the stories but need to know that Lord *Kṛṣṇa* is indeed the source of all the gods, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It's for me, a practitioner of thirty, forty years, a former Westerner who needs to calm his mind and bathe his self in the nectar of *kṛṣṇa-kathā*—in all of *Kṛṣṇa*'s dealings, while in *Vṛndāvana*, *Mathurā*, and *Dvārakā*. It's for me who claims that he wants to be with his spiritual master in the best way.

And when I become immersed in it, I will be naturally be able to give to others. These pastimes purify whoever hears them or speaks them. "These pastimes are just like the Ganges water which flows from the toe of Lord *Viṣṇu*: they purify the three worlds, the upper, middle and lower planetary systems."

*Kṛṣṇa* book is very liberal. It's a nice way to im-  
bibe Tenth Canto which is the epitome of *Śrīmad-  
Bhāgavatam*. It's liberal because we get to hear of  
relationships with Kṛṣṇa, such as Mother Yaśodā's,  
which are never available to *yogīs* or speculators.  
That doesn't mean that a hard-headed person like  
me immediately becomes as good as Mother  
Yaśodā. Of course not. Maybe I can begin to appre-  
ciate her and other devotees of the Lord. I can stop  
being an impersonalist. See how the Lord is easily  
available through His devotees.

Some points:

He becomes angry when she left Him and inter-  
rupted His sucking milk from her breast.

That anger was a *rasa*, not that He was dis-  
pleased with His devotee. It's a way the child and  
mother exchange. (I've heard a long story from  
*Gopāla-campu* how Mother Yaśodā had to go  
through much suffering when it appeared that  
Kṛṣṇa retained a fearful grudge against her for tying  
Him up. But that too leads to their fuller intensi-  
fication of loving exchange.)

She ran after Him for His own good. No spite or  
anger in her heart. She is the topmost well-wisher  
of her child. When He broke the pot, naturally she  
sought Him out and naturally she ran after Him  
when she saw Him. He was her life and soul.

He allowed her to catch Him. He allowed her to  
bind Him with ropes but not before He showed her  
His mystic potency. Mother, you can bind Me, but  
only if I permit.

Then, when He as tied up and left by His mother, He decided to do something even more mischievous. That also was His selected pastime, not a traumatic reaction by an abused or neglected child.

This benediction was never given even to Lord Brahmā or Lord Śiva. "But He is easily available to His devotees . . . Nor is He appreciated as the supreme reservoir of pleasure by the *yogīs* and speculators."

*December 3, 12:10 A.M.*

Usually I would write a WS at this time. Now I am coming from dreams and with issues in my mind and trying to put them aside, to read the *Kṛṣṇa* book. I remember the old objection (to reading *Kṛṣṇa* book), "What does this have to do with my life?" But maybe it's time to put aside what seems to be your life and instead hear the life of Kṛṣṇa.

These far-away "stories" may become the truth you can immerse yourself into. Do immerse yourself, your mind, and your being as far as possible, in this. And when you come up from it, your other troubles may seem insignificant.

Visualizing can be helpful. I heard in Chapter Forty-seven how Uddhava asked the *gopīs* to close their eyes and visualize the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa while he recited them. Now I'm visualizing in Chapter Ten. These big handsome demigods, Nalakūvera and Manigrīva are naked in the Mandākinī Ganges along with beautiful women. In the distance, we see Nārada Muni approaching. He's walking along a

path, on the bank of the Ganges that leads him to the spot where the demigods are. He's wearing saffron. The ladies see him and begin to cover themselves. The men are staggering in an intoxicated state, singing drunkenly and groping with the ladies and they "were too intoxicated and could not even see that he was passing." It's an abominable situation that the two demigods are in (considering their high birth and supposed culture), and Nārada decides to exhibit "his causeless mercy upon them by cursing them."

Nārada—and Prabhupāda—then discourse on the mentality of the degraded and intoxicated persons in this world. Especially those who become materially opulent are prone to spend their fortune in intoxication, sex, and gambling. They kill animals. "And they think that they themselves will never die."

(It's significant that when he saw them, Nārada wanted to do them good. The way he acted is extraordinary and can't be imitated—cursing them so they eventually would become humble and see Kṛṣṇa face to face. One thinks also of Lord Nityānanda and Haridāsa Ṭhākura wanting to do good to Jāgai and Mādhāi. A Kṛṣṇa conscious preacher is compassionate. Prabhupāda also wanted this and therefore he conducted the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. And me?)

To whom does the body belong? This is an interesting argument and one you're not likely to hear from any materialistic philosopher. Remember it for discussion. Repeat it. Live by it.

Another point: a poverty stricken man is better situated. One could offer various counter-arguments and doubts to this. Mean poverty seems to produce vice and squalor at least on a level with the degradation that occur to rich men's sons. But let us hear openly what Nārada says and try to accept it wholeheartedly. It may be there are factors of time, place, and person that would change this "poverty as virtuous" description that he gives. But it is possible and does occur. One evidence is that traditionally in all cultures, certain *sādhus* take vows of poverty and find it congenial for a life of sense control, humility, and depending on God. It also helps them to be compassionate to others, which is one of the points Nārada makes. "A poor man often does not wish to inflict injuries to other bodies because he can understand more readily that when he himself is injured he feels pain."

"In short, a compassionate poor man may consider others' pains and pleasures with empathy." The poor man is less likely to have false prestige. "False prestige due to advancement of material prosperity is a great impediment for spiritual emancipation." That is a significant line and rings true.

Lord Kṛṣṇa has always many purposes to fulfill and He doesn't forget them. Here He was, fully immersed in childhood *līlā* with Mother Yaśodā, but He remembered Nārada's benediction on the two souls who were in the shape of *arjuna* trees in



Nanda's courtyard. So now was the time to save them by pulling down the trees.

I wanted to finish the chapter in my one hour reading session. So I read their prayers quickly. They glorify Kṛṣṇa, they have some realization of His position by association with the curse and their association with Nārada. We don't have to hear the details of their learning and education. Lord Kṛṣṇa refers to it by saying they were fortunate to meet Nārada and that he is like the sun—in his presence there can be no visionary impediment. He not only cured them by enlightened them.

So the two beautiful men came out of the trees and they made their prayers. These prayers may not be the most literary or significant in all of the *Bhāgavatam* prayers. But for those two gods, their prayers were very important—to make acceptable prayers before the Supreme Lord was their perfection. Prayers are like that. Lord Kṛṣṇa accepted them and said they would go back to Godhead after the duration of their present life which He know requested them to take up again as sons of Kuvera in the heavenly planets. They would engage themselves in devotional service now and go back to Godhead at the end of their lives.

*December 4, 12:09 A.M.*

Of course you know you should read and it's good for you. When a dream has no Kṛṣṇa conscious content, is bizarre, or your waking thoughts are also like that—or as you think, "What

about at death?"—you know you should read *Kṛṣṇa* book. So the practice is worth getting up at midnight for and praying you'll be able to do it with good quality, submissive, intelligent, avert.

Are we like the children who are witnesses to the miracle of Kṛṣṇa pulling down the twin *arjuna* trees and speaking with the prayerful demigods who emerged from those trees? They asserted to their doubtful parents that this was what happened—Kṛṣṇa pulled down the trees when the mortar to which he was tied got stuck between the two trees. Most of the parents couldn't believe that and insisted there must be another version of the truth. We too, like the children, saw it through the eyes of scripture. So let me assert it. At least be like those elders who said to Nanda Mahārāja, "Your child is different from all other children. He just might have done it." Don't be like those who said they could not believe such things were possible.

Hare Kṛṣṇa. I write it down now. I accompany myself through the reading. Who am I? Am I made up of various subpersons, some of whom believe while others disbelieve the *Kṛṣṇa* book? Now is not the time to explore my subpersons for a *Satsvarūpa vox populi* poll. Just lead "them" back to *Kṛṣṇa* book. This is our prime hour for that.

Nanda Mahārāja smiled. He went forward and untied the knot and released child Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa. See Him between the trees, a frightening sight because the trunks just missed smashing Him. But He was safe once again, as

when they found Him on the ground on top of the Tr̥ṇāvarta demon who had fallen from the sky with Kṛṣṇa around his neck, or when they found baby Kṛṣṇa on the body of the dead giantess, Pūtanā. He was safe again, escaped calamity where it almost occurred.

Prabhupāda liked that painting by Parīkṣit dāsa of Kṛṣṇa carrying Nanda Mahārāja's wooden slippers on His head while His father and mother looked on approvingly. He wanted to show the great philosophers and sages that God is controller by His devotees' love.

Let me also exert some control—that the writer accompany me through the reading of the book. You seem to want to keep asking, “Is this is all I am to do in writing? Just to comment favorably and express some ascent or conquer doubt—just serve you in your reading? Why do you call such a talented author for this menial task at such an early hour of the morning-night?” But what do you want that's better than this? To act independently is illusion. Serve the devotees and yourself—go ahead if you can, make it nice and to the point, a haiku, a prose vignette—but keep it Kṛṣṇa conscious and don't divert us. Don't keep us from reading on.

The fruit vendor serve Kṛṣṇa and gave Him extra fruits even though He wasn't able to carry much for bartering in His little hands. By contrast, Pūtanā tried to cheat the baby, acting as a nurse in order to poison Him. Kṛṣṇa rewarded the fruit vendor with jewels with millions the fruits in his basket. And

Pūtanā lost her life. Please deal carefully with this child and with the narrations of His childhood *līlā*.

Visualize, and use your pen. The cowherd boys are playing on the bank of the Yamunā (where children play even today). Mother Yaśodā's voice can be heard and they see her standing and calling them from a distance. Kṛṣṇa may be inclined to go to her, but His friends tell Him, "Don't leave our play just now. Don't go or else we won't play with You again." Imagine, but don't compare it to painful anxieties of your own childhood when children were malicious and parents too, although seeming to be your beloved protectors, could not love you as Mother Yaśodā loved her child. "O dear, the glory of your family," she called to Balarāma, "Please come back with Your younger brother Kṛṣṇa immediately." We can speak this to devotees in the course of a *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture. But let it not come too glibly. Stop to pray, speak with conviction. Conquer your doubt if it arises, overcome over self-conscious conditions and speak Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*. But do it with care, as you would on speaking some intricate philosophical point, to make sure you get it right. The mother, Yaśodā, called her children home. Filled with love and her breasts filled with milk, in the *samādhi* of yoga for Kṛṣṇa, she called. And when He started to come but then returned to play because His friends threatened to not play with Him anymore, she scolded, "My dear Kṛṣṇa, do You think that You are a street boy? You have no home?" (such cutting words) "Please come back

to Your home!” If He didn’t eat, if He played too long, if He didn’t clean His body, Mother Yaśodā worried. She cared for Him and maintained Him in the spell of Yogamāyā.

In the next scene, Upananda, at a meeting with the cowherd men, suggested that they should all move to a safer neighborhood. Reading of the journey to Vṛndāvana, my mind wanders off to violence . . . I read in the *New York Times* about violence in prison. I fantasize about a prison riot . . . come back to this narration. There were demons but Kṛṣṇa killed them. The cowherd men carried bows and arrows to protect the villagers while they moved to Vṛndāvana. Yes, violence and attack do occur in the material world, but Kṛṣṇa protects His devotees. It’s another outcome of faithful reading . . . that you rely on it and remember it during your own times of trouble. Whatever happens in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* is an example, not that you can exactly follow it or imitate it—but you turn to it for solace, inspiration, instruction, remembrance.

Things happen quickly in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* and you need to be alert to the details and to the general movements. They moved to Vṛndāvana. Soon after that Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were given charge of the calves for pasturing and herding. All the children went out daily with the herd of cows and calves and during that time they also played. Into this setting one day, a demon came disguised as a calf. Kṛṣṇa detected him and sneaked up on him along with Balarāma. Kṛṣṇa grabbed the demon-calf and

whipped him around forcibly and threw him up onto a tree. "The demon lost his life and fell down from the top of the tree to the ground." All the playmates of Kṛṣṇa congratulated Him, "Well done, well done."

So I have spent another hour with a few pages in *Kṛṣṇa* book, accompanying myself with notes. Well done, well done. Your attention did flicker, but you stayed with it. I congratulate you and await your return to read and write.

*December 5, 12:08 A.M.*

Time to read. Try to put aside other thoughts. Let feelings—even those of mortality—merge into positive feeling that I fulfill needs best by this reading practice. Also be ready to accept even the low level of receptivity and attention. I mean, I'm not satisfied or delighted with myself about it, but don't knock what positive spirit you do have. Theophan says, "Grieve over the faintness of the echo of God's warmth in your heart."

The duck-demon Bakhāsura was as big-looking as a hill. He quickly swallowed Kṛṣṇa. That sort of thing may not tally with material experience. But even on that score, there are large, vicious beasts that would attack on sight and which can swallow a human. But the extraordinary nature of demons, shapes, and gods-human-like yet miraculous *līlās* must be taken as they are. That's all there is to it. As Prabhupāda taught us, we accept what *śāstra* says in total and we are ready to totally reject

“science” if it tells us not to believe in Kṛṣṇa or that *sāstra* is myth.

For me, I’m not a scientist; I’m some kind of skeptic, or what? Come on, don’t ruin it, just read it. Don’t be like Vatsāsura entering the pastimes in disguise of a calf. Kṛṣṇa won’t let you enter at all, or if you enter with a ruining mentality, He might kill you or you will die from offenses. Even if subtly, partiality, you harbor doubt, you’ll ruin your chance—even if others don’t detect it in you. “Those who are not faithful in this devotional service cannot attain Me, O conqueror of enemies. Therefore they return to the path of birth and death in this material world” (Bg. 9.3).

The duck came to attack Kṛṣṇa. He did swallow the boy but had to throw Him up because he felt a fiery sensation in his throat due to the glowing effulgence of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa quickly broke the duck’s beaks and killed him. From the sky, cameli flowers . . . the boys heartily embraced Kṛṣṇa. On return home, the boys began to speak of what had happened. (Fortunately, I can read this also in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* version. And I can re-read this *Kṛṣṇa* book section. I told you, and I will tell you again, I’d like to read some *Kṛṣṇa* book every day, not only right now.)

This book especially should be read without judgment and even without ordinary study analysis. Just hear and appreciate in natural way. Be with Kṛṣṇa, be with the boys and the scene described, be like the residents of Vṛndāvana, “always so much in

those talks that they forgot the threefold miseries of this material existence.”

This is real Vṛndāvana. Even if I can't go there for the time being, in India—go in your mind via these pastimes. Be convinced this is Vṛndāvana. Take part in these scenes. And when Kṛṣṇa leaves Vṛndāvana in *Kṛṣṇa* book—well, He doesn't leave, I know, but we will go wherever He goes. That's the point. Don't minimize His cowherd boy activities just because you have heard *mādhurya* is the highest. And be with Him when He speaks with Mucukunda in the cave outside Mathurā city.

“Lord Kṛṣṇa, who awards the impersonal Brahman realization by His bodily effulgence, also gives pleasure to the devotees as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Regarding the *gopas*, “They were personally visualizing the Supreme Personality of Godhead, face to face, He who many *yogīs* cannot find even after undergoing severe austerities, although He is sitting within the heart.” The boys are so fortunate. I feel a need to simultaneously feel that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the human like child of Nanda Mahārāja and is yet the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I feel strengthened by descriptions like those in *Brahma-saṁhitā* —but Kṛṣṇa is God. (Lord Caitanya highly recommended *Brahma-saṁhitā* and also the *Kṛṣṇa-karnāmṛta* where Lord Kṛṣṇa is the object of appreciation of the *gopīs*.) I need that combination. But the *gopas* “could not understand that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but they were



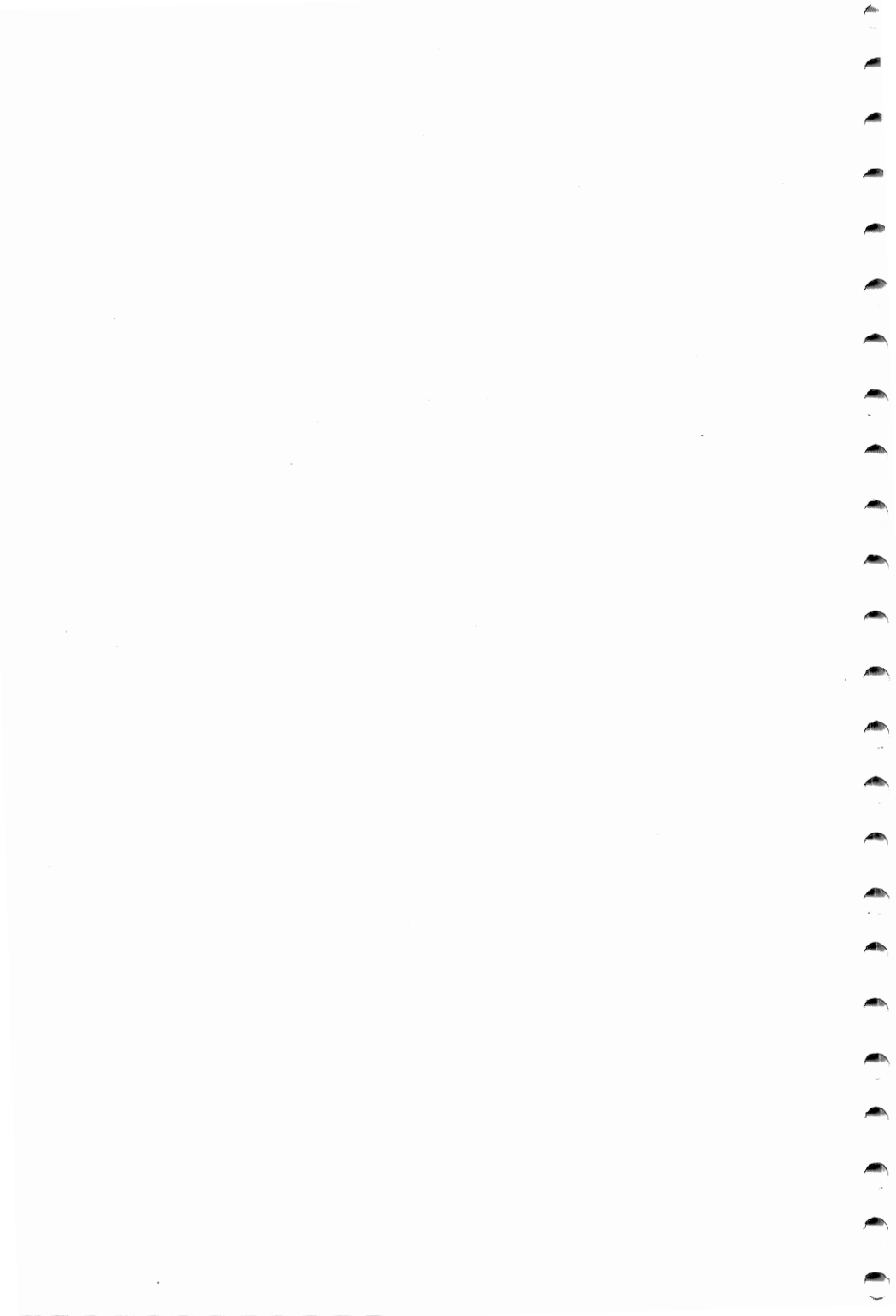
playing as intimate friends with intense love for Him.”

Aghāsura caused fear to the demigods even though they daily drank *amṛta* to prolong their lives. “Any material arrangement for protecting oneself from death is always unsure, but if one is in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then immortality is confidently assured.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda didn’t seem to mind amateurish theater productions of *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. I’m thinking of his appreciation for little skit of Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva in Bombay and one of Lord Caitanya and the Kazi in Atlanta and Kṛṣṇa kidnapping Rukmiṇī in the Brooklyn temple—as long as they were sincerely done, seriously by his disciples. He knew it wasn’t perfect, but it didn’t mock the *līlās*. It didn’t disturb the sense of the reality of these pastimes. In a similar way, he could look at Brijibasi prints (San Francisco 1967) like the one of Kṛṣṇa playing his flute at Vraṇsī-vata. It served to remind you, better than void or pictures of something else.

*Yogīs* can expand. This relieves my doubts and helps me understand how so many things are possible which I read in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. It’s not that only Lord Kṛṣṇa can do these things, but even *yogīs*. It’s no longer seen in Kali-yuga, but that doesn’t disprove it. There are many things we no longer see due to the reducing nature of this age.

“This figure appears to be a great animal and he is sitting in such a posture just to swallow us all.”



I push these aside. I re-read. And make gains. I seek the Lord's grace for a better reading, but I have to take whatever I can get.

Aghāsura's position was greater than the ordinary devotees' or *yogīs*'. They keep the form of the Lord in their minds, but Kṛṣṇa personally entered into the body of Agha. Of course, Agha's intention was not to render devotional service but to kill Kṛṣṇa and His *gopas*. Instead, Kṛṣṇa killed him—and awarded him a form of liberation.

*Kṣatriyas* generally are too busy to hear the transcendental activities of Lord Kṛṣṇa. So Mahārāja Parikṣit considered himself very fortunate to hear from Śukadeva Gosvāmī, the greatest authority on the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

The next chapter begins with a wonderful statement on the nature of hearing *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. Śukadeva Gosvāmī was pleased with Mahārāja Parikṣit's enthusiasm for hearing. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "It is the nature of a devotee to constantly apply his mind, energy, and words, ears, etc. in hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa. This is called Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and for one who is wrapped in hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa, the subject matter never becomes hackneyed or overt."

Visualize the spot on the sandy bank of the Yamunā where Lord Kṛṣṇa led His friends, cows, and calves. It's idyllic because Kṛṣṇa was there and chose the spot. All nature reciprocated with Him and Yogamāyā made everything in Vṛndāvana beautiful. Even today in Vṛndāvana in India, you can

find nice places in the forest and on the Yamunā bank. Soft sands, lotus flowers in the water, their sweet scent, the chirping of the birds and peacocks, the whispering of the leaves of the trees . . . So nature appreciation can be dovetailed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The scene is because Kṛṣṇa was there. Otherwise, you hear of His pure devotee is in presence or there's no *kṛṣṇa-smaranam*, then the beautiful nature spot is void. Even a place that's not externally so beautiful can be transformed if you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

I have to read almost everything twice. A reading is often interrupted by another train of thought. One purpose of the notes may be to dump the other thoughts here. But that may not make for edifying reading. As I read the famous, immortal scene where Lord Kṛṣṇa is seated in the middle and the boys in rows, surrounding Him like lotus petals around the whorl of a lotus, I thought of a time when Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja took us to a place in Bhadravana in Vṛndāvana and we sat under a tree and he spoke of scenes in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* such as this one. The memory is disconcerting for various reasons.

Bring the mind back. It also wanders off now to a time when I read the section in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and looked upon the painting of it, while in Pittsburgh going to visit Kīrtanānanda Swami in the hospital.

Eating lunch in the company of Kṛṣṇa. That's what's so nice about this. Let your imagination feel it and enter it, by yourself there in a wishful way.

Wherever the mind goes due to its flickering nature, bring it back under the control of the higher self. This is certainly a kind of yoga practice for me. Isn't trying to fix my mind on the words and sentences I'm reading, on the scene being described and the ideas conveyed. My mind flits off somewhere. I try to bring it back by re-reading and forcing it gently, asking it, coaxing it—pray, dear mind, why don't you stay here and listen?

The Supreme Personality of Godhead was laughing and enjoying lunch with His friends in Vṛndāvana. Demigods were observing from heaven. "As for the boys, they were simply enjoying transcendental bliss in the company of the Supreme Personality of Godhead." The cows, unnoticed, wandered off seeking new grasses. Lord Kṛṣṇa told His friends not to interrupt their lunch but He would personally go and bring the calves back. While he was away, Lord Brahmā came and stole the boys and cows. Thus Lord Kṛṣṇa expanded Himself into a new set of boys and calves. All these boys are expansions of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, so it's not so wonderful for Him to expand into a certain set of boys and cows. Thus He did it to satisfy the mothers and cows and to teach a lesson to Lord Brahmā.

When Kṛṣṇa returned to Vṛndāvana village with the newly expanded entourage, the mothers of the boys and cows of the calves received their

offspring with great affection. Their love was increased causelessly because they were now loving Kṛṣṇa and giving Him their breast milk which they had formerly given to their own children.

That's why Kṛṣṇa did this, to give those mothers a chance to become the mother of Kṛṣṇa, a position usually enjoyed only by Mother Yaśodā.

The cows and cowherd men were on the top of Govardhana Hill. The calves (the one who were actually Kṛṣṇa in expanded form) were down in the valley with the boys (who were now direct expansions of Kṛṣṇa).

Seeing their calves, the cows raced down the hill. The men ran after them trying to stop them. When they all joined the men, they felt great, uncontrollable affection for their boys and the cows felt the same for their calves. You have read all this before. You read it, however, as something precious and desirable to hear. Don't analyze it or preach on it for now. But I wanted to note it down.

My scheduled time is up. I have another reading to go to. More later. Yes, by his grace, I manage to overcome much of the initial disturbances to the mind which I experienced at the beginning of this reading. Practice daily and you'll get better at it, more used to hearing Kṛṣṇa book without going through mental trips and opposition to a natural concentration in hearing.

## Kṛṣṇa Book

Reading Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Chapter Six,  
December 20

Demon from outer space. The incredulous from standpoint of modern world. God and religion. Eschew the whole viewpoint of material world. Read the books and pray to enter. You yourself not someone else. Guard your mind and read. What you need.

Go ahead, read of the witch Pūtānā. These notes, not to detain you but help you along.

The *rakṣāsī* entered Gokula. Empirical knowledge is such a hang-up? If a *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* account doesn't tally with science? Sadāputa demonstrates they are on shaky ground. Just learn from right authorities, and yes, accept whatever they say. Please, we've got a lot further to go than doubts about whether a witch can fly.

Pray as you read, for faith. Come closer to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as presented by Vyāsa, Śukadeva, the *ācāryas*, all from Prabhupāda and his purports. You come closer and partake. Build your devotional fire by gaining attention. I write this note to help.

December 21

Begin a reading session telling yourself, "Now I'm being nourished." No harm in deliberately sending yourself that message. Prime the self, go ahead, take in full faith and reject whatever is detrimental.

December 27, 12:09 A.M.

When I first woke, I thought I didn't feel like coming here to read the *Kṛṣṇa* book. But what is the

alternative? Sleep and dreams. The unreal, the mode of ignorance, and now you face the mind that objects. Despite these, I'm going forward.

Balarāma understood—when He saw men run down after the cows and the scene of loving exchange between cows and calves and fathers and their sons—that this must be Kṛṣṇa Himself playing with His expansions (—"The extraordinary show of affection was something mystical," He concluded.) But He had to ask Kṛṣṇa why He was doing this. So on the one hand, this shows that nothing is hidden from Balarāma, but it also shows that Kṛṣṇa does some things without telling Balarāma.

There are techniques for good reading. Don't go too fast. Follow your eye as it goes from left to read by guiding it with your finger. They recommend you read out loud or at least murmur or mouth the words. What's the big rush? I want to be there in the reading, the description. These notes are just to help me.

Kṛṣṇa, just to show Brahmā what he had done, transformed each of the boys and cows into Viṣṇu forms which Brahmā could perceive. Each Viṣṇu form was marked with all the symbols of Viṣṇu, was all-beautiful, and possessed all the infinite powers of Lord Viṣṇu. And each form was worshipped by demigods and lower beings who danced to music. These were not displays of Viṣṇu energy; each form was Viṣṇu Himself.

Lord Brahmā became perplexed to see it. He couldn't understand it. So to prevent further confu-



sion, Lord Kṛṣṇa drew the curtain of *yogamāyā* over the scene. ("The energy which partially manifests the Supreme Personality of Godhead and partially does not allow one to see is called *yogamāyā*.")

Lord Brahmā began his prayers. He sees the form of the Lord now as a small cowherd boy. But he realizes he cannot understand the potency of this child. He can't know His pastimes or the potency of His form. (Each limb can perform all the functions of the others, etc.) So the best way to understand Kṛṣṇa is to give up the speculative process and hear about Him from the authorized authors in *paramparā*, *jñāne preyas*.

"One should therefore engage himself in Your devotional service even in his worldly activities and one should always keep himself near You by the process of hearing and chanting Your transcendental glories. Simply by being attracted to hearing and chanting your glories, one can attain the highest perfectional stage and enter into your kingdom."

Lord Brahmā admits that the mind functions to wander over objects of sense gratification. But if you can control your senses by engaging them in devotional service, you can fix your mind at the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord. This is called *samādhi*. "Until one reaches the stage of *samādhi* or trance, one cannot understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

(How valuable these words are. I cannot fully appreciate. But I'm grateful to be up early and using my best concentration for this purpose. Don't

doubt it. Don't think, "I'm not doing something. This reading isn't producing a particular project." It's the main activity of the human life and other things are subsidiary. For example, as I read this morning, my gas heater konked out. Now I have to wake up M. to get a replacement. But that bodily maintenance is only the background. The hearing is first, the attempt to keep in touch with Lord Kṛṣṇa by the devotional service of hearing His pastimes in *Kṛṣṇa* book. I pray to return to this every day and gradually become addicted so that I must always hear of Kṛṣṇa and cannot bear the material world just by itself.)



