

ELECTRONIC BOOK

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Every Day, Just Write

Volume 26

Krishna is the Life Force of My Words

June 5 - 25, 1998

Also by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

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June 5, 1998,12:10 a.m.

"Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know My origin or opulences, for, in every respect, I am the source of the demigods and sages." (Bg. 10.2) Alas, my head is filled with yesterday's unfinished business correspondence. I want to hear Krishna's ambrosial words. Okay, try again. Krishna has told Arjuna that He will describe His specific opulence. Then Arjuna (and all of us) will be better able to follow Krishna's loving command at the end of the ninth chapter: "Always think of Me, become My devotee . . . "

Krishna's words seem to come to us from afar, but an avid reader of *Bhagavad-gita* hears them as if they were spoken directly to him, because the avid reader, the devotee, recognizes Krishna as the Supreme Lord, but also as his best friend and protector. A real devotee knows that the material world is a dangerous place; he knows he *needs* Krishna. The rest of us tend to be careless and rebellious, inexperienced in the world's pain and not aware just how much we need shelter from it. We're fools, too wrapped up in our bodily decay to pray purely to the Supreme Spirit.

God is not so easy to understand; even great sages and demigods can't know Him. They speculate, and some conclude that the Absolute is impersonal. But the devotees surrender to the Supreme through faith and devotion, "and out of the causeless mercy of Krishna they can understand Krishna. . . . So even great sages agree: What is *atma*, what is the Supreme? It is He whom we have to worship."

We *worship* God; we hear about Him from *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I just heard that when my disciple, Rupa-Sanatana, died a few days ago, his Christian wife and her friends burned his devotional paraphernalia, including his set of Srila Prabhupada's books and his *japa* beads, in his driveway. Fanatics do that. They'd smash "idols" if they could. Beware such hostility. I mention it to remind myself that I worship Krishna of my own free choice and that it's an intelligent decision. No one has coerced or forced me. I don't want materialism or hatred or even vague God consciousness. What is *atma*? What is spirit? The Supreme? "It is He whom we have to worship."

I write of nondevotee thoughts that pass through my mind and of my sense perceptions, because I want to be true to what's happening. But wouldn't it be nice (more desirable) if my attention were focused on Krishna? Then I could write of *that* and there would be nothing else. Just the flame of love.

"He who knows Me as the unborn, as the beginningless, as the Supreme Lord of all the worlds "he only, undeluded among men, is freed from all sins." (Bg. 10.3)

I still fritter away my time with doubts or disinterest in the Supreme. Then I shove that stuff aside and continue to hear statements like this one: "Sri Krishna is therefore different from everything that is created, and anyone who knows Him as such immediately becomes liberated from all sinful reactions." Only by devotional service.

My notes "as if they will turn me into a single-minded devotee. Hey, I wrote some notes while reading *Bhagavad-gita*. I must not be such a bad guy.

Different disciples on my mind. That's not a bad thing. I pray for their welfare "would like to do something to help them. Still, I need to remain a white cloud free of anxiety if I wish to do good for others. I'll tell them to turn to Krishna. If they ask me

whether *I* turn to Krishna, I will admit I do. Especially at midnight, when I read a little about Krishna, who sometimes seems far away, then think of them and wonder whether they are doing all right. I pray to Srila Prabhupada.

Pray?

Or maybe I don't. I mean, what *is* prayer, anyway? Prayer requires constancy and intensity. I may not actually pray. I simply say I pray by convention. I did pray for the soul of Rupa-Sanatana dasa.

* * *

4:38 a.m.

Tell us, quick, how this book is different from the last.

It's not, really. It's more of the same. A slightly different variety.

But I will say this: we have to go all the way in devotional service if we want to reach the final goal. Hare Krishna, O Krishna. Trust the process, the Krishna conscious process. Just as I trust the writing process. Chanting produces chanting, and writing produces writing.

I saw both halves of a white eggshell on the boards of the *parikrama* path. I also saw something white and spattered. No sign of a bird, though. Perhaps a bird was born and then kicked the shell from the nest. May the bird live and not be eaten by a predator, although that hope may not be fulfilled. After all, one living being is food for another. Even larger nations eat up smaller nations. Cruel humans receive cruel punishments. The material world is set up for that. There is no happiness here. Hare Krishna. May the chanting deliver us.

Yes, I admit I have the same thing to say here that I said in the last book. It doesn't bore me. I am only worried that it will bore others. But that repetition "I hear it in my own spiritual master's speech, in his books, and even in the most substantial and deepest topics. The truth simply is the truth, and it doesn't require to be expressed in novel ways all day long. The ocean is deep, but it has sameness; the skies are high, but they have sameness. Within the sameness, however, there is variety. Variety and change are a part of reality, but novelty for novelty's sake is something cheap and it quickly jades the soul. Such novelty creates only a superficial mental agitation.

Jump in somewhere and speak. Leafy trees swaying back and forth at dawn. Discover a new career. Begin anew. You want to remember that morning in the Lucknow park after you retired from the GBC? You decided what you would do next "you would travel through the U.S. and write a travel book while seeing the good. You were carving out a post-GBC niche for yourself. You have moved even closer to what you want to do. Does it look good to others?

Ten minutes to 5. Nervous bear, hungry, music wraith tuba brushes past monkey's antlers.

"Don't bandy words with me," Archie warned Duffy over the phone, "I will not be beguiled."

Yes, we each must be satisfied with our lives. Be content with your own flowing river.

And when memories come, it's likely we'll see them with rosy glasses. Best to stay with present reality, stripping back your skin.

You are nervous about something. What is it?

Oh, you want immortality but can't get it? You don't know what will happen on the final exam? Only turn to Krishna and lay down your arms. Nothing else is required.

I am not writing everything that has come to mind just now. Inevitably, I have to choose my words. I tried to go for the concrete.

I realize now that Patty Berra (I knew her when I was eleven or twelve) didn't love me. The rumor that she liked me lasted only half a day. Therefore I am now free to chant the holy name "that most attractive form of Krishna "and I pray only to remember the name from one lifetime to the next.

* * *

Blossoms on a Cold Summer Morning

Be a little way

just tell us what's happening and I'll

be satisfied with that

just tell us what.

* * *

Krishna Krishna Krishna sky and moon

and blossoms full a cold

summer morn dark and blowy

you enter it and that's all.

* * *

Butting-head lambs and their

mothers looking savage

that would hurt if you bonked

your head against that other head

fat lamb's.

* * *

Lord Krishna is on top on top He's

in Goloka whorl of lotus

all here is His energy yet

He enters it in person too.

* * *

He'll give you the best if you ask
for it instead of that other thing

the best service
to Him to
have it come through me
and blossom "Lord Krishna the
birth of each tune
Hare Krishna mantras entered/ no taste
is better than me seeking
without God.

* * *

9:08 a.m.

I should write more, and it should be more honest and Krishna conscious and continuous. Okay, I'll try. My physical energies are low and my drive incomplete, and I need time to read *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, but I'll try.

Honesty requires the conviction that what you have to say is worth saying "I sometimes feel to be honest would be to write drivel "I honestly spent forty minutes on two sleepy rounds, for example. Life on the spinning wheel. To be honest.

Arjuna's military activities on the battlefield were his form of remembering and serving Krishna, because it was Krishna who requested him to work in that way. After Lord Krishna's departure, Arjuna seemed to forget both the Lord and his own mission in life. "But factually this was not the case, and again he became lord of his senses." (*Bhag.* 1.15.30) I remembered Srila Prabhupada when he was here, and I carried out his instructions and felt linked to Krishna. Those activities, despite their strain and imperfection, were mostly transcendental. Now in Prabhupada's absence, I may think I am on my own to figure out what I should do. But that's not the case. My service may take a shape different than what it once had, but it is still my link to Krishna. Here is the instruction: "One should, therefore, adjust the activities of life in pace with the mission of the Lord, and by doing this one is sure to return back home, back to Godhead. This is the highest perfection of life." (*Bhag.* 1.15.30, purport)

It is grossest ignorance to identify the body with the self. The *Bhagavad-gita* teaches that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna, is everything, including the self of one's self. Arjuna revived his awareness of this fact, then acted with the conviction that his friend, Lord Krishna, was still with him through His instructions and in all other manifestations, including His form and pastimes. I don't have to wait for my next life before I am with Srila Prabhupada and linked, through him, to Krishna. That perfection is here now. "By attainment of absolute knowledge, one can be in association with the Lord constantly, even in this present life, simply by hearing, chanting, thinking of and worshiping the Supreme Lord." (*Bhag.* 1.15.31, purport) This is called *advaya-jnana*, knowledge of the oneness of Krishna, His energies, and His representations (such as guru, Deities, *sastra*, service).

Sometimes we hear of absolute knowledge and it feels right. Sometimes it doesn't. Whatever happens, don't be skeptical and assume absolute knowledge is speculative theory or word jugglery.

Maharaja Yudhisthira, upon hearing of Lord Krishna's return to His abode, decided to go back to Godhead. This chapter has an intriguing title: "The Pandavas retire Timely." They didn't hang around until it was too late. They got the call and left. The words "retired" and "timely" make me think. In the Western, secular context, retirement means to stop work, receive a pension, and to try to enjoy the sunset years in leisurely sense gratification. Timely means opportune, appropriate, right. Neither before nor after. A devotee never retires into sense gratification. He doesn't give up his Krishna conscious practices. If in old age he is relieved from his material duties, he uses his time to engage fully in spiritual pursuits. Hey, man, this sounds like a BTG essay.

I'm just informing the folks.

What Maharaja Yudhisthira understood by this is not ordinary. He reflected on the nature of the Supreme Lord's appearance, disappearance, and eternal activities, and his own participation in them. He wanted to do what was best for his Krishna consciousness.

* * *

9:45 a.m.

I'm not going to write a series with a logo in this volume "at least I think I'm not. I'm simply going to write what comes. I can't make the pond so still that *nothing* comes. Whatever hermitage I enter would soon become a busy place. And if I'm going to publish books and guide disciples, I will be putting out plenty of communication. Still, despite the many ripples in this particular pond, I can still see my face if I look into its waters.

And a reflection of the changing sky. Krishna is not so easy to see.

Sastra . . . but these thoughts . . . what shall I write that brother in prison? And what is he trying to do there?

What was that sound? Who is that visitor at my gate?

If I were not distracted . . . an almost useless thought. I will be distracted, and even if I become perfectly quiet, I could not always think of Krishna. Krishna knowledge is specific, coming from *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and what the spiritual master says. By now, I'm able to think of Krishna when I'm not holding a book in my hand. I have assimilated something. But the mind is *cancala*.

Yesterday out my window I saw a man walking in the distant hills. He was carrying a walking stick, and had a black and white dog at his heels. Today I saw someone going down the hill in a motorized buggy.

No series, but I too can move through the hill with a walking stick (no dog behind me).

* * *

10:38 a.m.

If I could bless myself, it would be to remain here as long as possible and to leave here as little as possible. Once a week to Dublin is fine. As for my rocky head, the fog, vise, and sharp pain, I would prescribe the pill and alternately the philosophy of tolerance and acceptance.

* * *

2:42 p.m.

Ache-oh-ah-I. It is somehow good.

Rhetoric of the letter-answering man. There's a man on our roof right now applying some goo that will prevent the rain from leaking in. Clock staring at my back. Water on the bathroom floor. Man on our roof had a hose attached to the bathroom sink "his only source of water. The hose hung out the bathroom window and dripped. We housekeepers are always making repairs. The weatherman said showers tonight, and that's why they're applying that goo so diligently.

Srila Prabhupada speaks of the devotional service which "guarantees one a passport for going back to Godhead after quitting his material body." I wrote to a Godbrother that he and I were old students and should be aware that our final examination (another of Srila Prabhupada's metaphors) can't be far off. We should be preparing to write that final exam. Here he mentions passport, as if we'd have to show it on the way out. It's funny, because we think going back to Godhead would be the one destination where we wouldn't *need* a passport. In fact, I even asked Srila Prabhupada about that in jest once "would we need a passport, a visa, or ticket to go Goloka? No, he said (we were in an airport together, about to travel by plane from India to another country), we will go at once. No formalities. Here, however, he says we'll be guaranteed a passport.

I'm afraid of losing my faded American passport (it expires in the year 2000), but I ought to be more concerned with getting what I need for spiritual passage: that unalloyed loving service mood to guru and Krishna. I am not my body, so let me not seek another birth in this material world, even in a so-called privileged nation. Privilege or no privilege, material life is temporary and miserable.

Hearing that Yudhisthira was preparing to back to Godhead, Queen Kunti also prepared herself.

I have a tightening sensation in my head, making it hard to study how Lord Krishna relinquished the body which He manifested to diminish the burden of the earth.

* * *

3:20 p.m.

Dear sirs, enclosed please find five dollars. Please send me one Nippy King dog paddle with the magic ring that lights up in a dark closet or bathroom, revealing inner worlds of man and universe. I would like to see them. I also enclose the box tops from seventeen cartons of ralston cereal, which took a long time for my Mom and I to eat. We'd appreciate your quick dispatch of the above-mentioned magic ring to the following address.

Hang your head in shame. return it to an upright gaze. Sigh with relief that there will be no more military drills except in dreams, and that a dream's only a dream. In reality, you have that easy chair. You sure do.

I am a Krishna conscious product of the ISKCON class of '66. It hurts me to know that Christian fundamentalists hate us and would burn our paraphernalia and maybe us too, except there's a state law against it, thanks to our wonderful secular government.

The intellectuals predicted the fall of the secular state and the rise of the theocracies, but said that if one sect made it, they would burn all the others at the stake. So the tiny Hare Krishna movement seeks rapprochement with giant religions, and we call it deep interfaith dialogue.

So they don't burn us.

And we recognize them. At least I do. We don't want to burn them either, if we were to ever get the chance.

And I recognize the pain in my head and the need to smile even through wet eyes.

I am stretching this out to get twenty pages. This is a write-a-thon, where I have to keep the hand moving until I die to raise money for GNP. I write the same things over and over until something new occurs to me. The TV cameras show my haggard face but steady pen hand. I'm ever so Krishna conscious because of the training I have received.

Folks, this is great. So that TV viewers don't become bored watching him write, the write-a-thon producers have provided entertainment to distract them. They occasionally flash back to him writing, as they did when Florence Chadwick swam the English Channel just to prove that he hasn't actually stopped.

* * *

3:55 p.m.

I'd like to be more serious right now, but my head hurts too much. remember that book by Norman Cousins in which he said he had a terminal disease but cured himself by watching Marx Brothers movies and laughing?

Cured himself of what?

Of watching old comedy films!

Oh, boy. Listen, Sats, whatever you think of at the time of death will carry you to your next birth. If you think of a Jerry Lewis gag or even Mort Sahl, what do you think will happen to you in the next life?

I'll become a comic?

You may become the butt of the Supreme Lord's joke. He can out-joke them all. You'll have to keep laughing or else you'll cry. Krishna consciousness is grave, and I don't mean morbid, as in "in the grave." It's serious; light banter isn't appreciated.

But I heard that Krishna and the *gopis* engage in endless banter.

That's true, but they are liberated and their banter gives Krishna pleasure. Your jokes are old double entendres, mashed potatoes "get it? They are all in reference to the material world. Krishna's jokes are transcendental.

Mix, mix,
mash.

Okay, serious.

If only my head were clearer, it would be so much easier to be grave, especially grave enough to study *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

I'm on the verge of taking a pill.

So he said, then sauntered out to look at the cloudy sky. There was no one in sight except Madhu talking at the front gate and Leo on a ladder applying rain-proof goo. Sats said to himself, "If it weren't for this head wound, I'd go inside and answer a few more

letters. In fact, I would do a lot more than that." But the pain inhabits (I mean, inhibits) him from accomplishing his ends.

He sankirtana to the birds, sheep, and cattle.

* * *

4:40 p.m.

You don't look like a man in pain.

You look like a pan with main.

Whaddya mean? Talk straight.

I can't for fear of insulting someone. But I just mean that you look fine to me.

Are you insinuating that I am a malingerer?

Maybe the pain is a figment of your imagination.

Not true! I can certify that my doctors have diagnosed as a victim of spastic vasomotor ejaculatory headaches, a subdivision of migraine (without aura), and aligned with muscular tension and clusters.

Oh, all right. I was just trying to be helpful.

If you want to help, then soothe my ego. Encourage me to look forward to my early morning tomorrow, since this day's obviously shot.

June 6, 12:05 a.m.

We take birth and die due to material attachment. It hurts to write, to live. My head is still stuffed, the vise still turned a few notches. "*Engage* your mind in always thinking of Me."

Why does he have to say "engage"? Why the same old English? The mind rebels. Therefore I'm unhappy. I wake up and know I'll have to die someday. *Bhagavad-gita* and the purports contain all necessary information and instruction. Why, then, am I out of sorts? If you cater to your mind, you'll never be happy or God conscious. A faithless person cannot be happy in this life or the next. And without happiness, how can there be peace?

I've given up Duffy's Tavern. I've given up searching . . . I've just given up. But I still have to beat my donkey mind. And think of all those poor donkeys out there in the world. Spirit souls, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!

Don't (I'm telling you) think of Krishna as a human being; that's foolish. "A man who is not foolish, who is intelligent enough to understand the constitutional position of the Godhead, is always free from all sinful reactions." (Bg. 10.3, purport)

The mind! The last resort of what we call freedom is to allow the mind to go where it wills. This is what we don't want to relinquish. We'll agree to chant Hare Krishna for two hours straight, but only on the condition that the mind be allowed to wander. We endure headaches or other pains, but only so the mind can relax and move freely. We don't want to fence that mind in.

Still, we've come to Krishna consciousness. "Srila Prabhupada is a hugely important person in my life," said a fairly new *bhaktin*, who has never met him. He changes our lives. One of the main directors of the *bhakti-vrksa* program saw my statement that

preaching has been abused, and he agreed. He wrote me that the most important thing is not to push devotees to go out and preach but to take care of them so that they will be happy. If people have bad experiences in ISKCON, what then will they preach? More likely they will regurgitate their anguish. If we make devotees happy, it will be easy to ask them to preach. Actually, we won't have to ask them. They will tell other people of their happiness in spiritual life, just as people tell others about their favorite books or recordings.

Do people preach their desperation? I guess we all do that to some extent. Kafka said he wanted to break up the frozen sea of misery in his readers and awaken them to their existential unhappiness. Spread the bad news by telling the truth. They say facing misery is good news because it frees you of the misconception that happiness exists. Live real. It's better for you.

Some of that can be used in Krishna consciousness. Smash the false. But not *always*. Preach your anguish? Okay, but make sure that anguish is wholly spiritual: "Who am I? Why don't I know? Why can't I control my mind so that I can taste the nectar of the holy name?" Make your lament heartfelt.

And we try for that. We whine, we appeal, we sing crazy, off-tune songs we call "our truth." I don't advocate that we should quit ISKCON, and I certainly don't have the perfect step-by-step formula for its reform, but I try to turn my restlessness into spiritual aspiration. I do advocate that we do that. Move through pain and dry tears, and look day and night to be delivered. O Krishna.

Lord Krishna lists some of the qualities of living beings, then states that they are "created by Me alone." Do I accept that? rebellion from truth is always ineffectual. Everyone follows His will, voluntarily or not.

Our teachers instruct us on exactly what to do. Follow them and be happy. Do only those things that are favorable to Krishna consciousness, and avoid all those things that are not.

Too stiff, the mind says. I've done enough. Now I need to relax. The muscles or arteries in my head can't take it "any rigid way of thinking. Or so the mind says.

But that rebellion quickly wears off "there's no pleasure in it. Gradually, a devotee's mind crawls back to the narrow holy strait and begs for nectar. It's what the mind really wants "uninterrupted pleasure. We simply have to train the mind in where it is to be found.

But first we have to abandon what we have come to recognize as certitude. Happy or not, we know the material energy and the results of contacting it quite well. We don't know spirit.

Big deal "we live in the twenty-first century. We are up-to-date slobs. Let us not also be faithless. Propped by pills and pillows, a man watches TV, is ordinary, a bozo, and aren't we all? Will we too collapse at the end, defeated, only to resurface in another species? If we are born low enough, we won't have to worry about misusing our freedom. We will be able to do only what we are told.

Lord, this unredeemed man places his case before You. I don't want to be punished. I don't beg to be beaten or forced through some ordeal just so I come out fit to love You. I can't seem to ask for that. But You know what is best. You also know how much I must

forget. Becoming a devotee isn't easy. It requires so much change. But may I come to know You in love.

I'm scheduled to give a lecture tomorrow. At that time I will control my mind and speak the party line: Always think of Krishna. I will betray the confidence of the rascal mind and say it's *he* who tells us not to surrender to Krishna. Let us listen to God instead of the mind. Let us listen to guru. Yes, brother mind, I'm going to say that. You may want to avenge yourself afterwards, but I will not let you dominate me.

* * *

4:36 a.m.

Storming out there. While I was in the bathroom, the power suddenly went off. That meant the lights went out and the electric heater stopped humming. But the portable tape recorder continued with Srila Prabhupada's lecture in Bombay. I guess the batteries were still good. I can't remember now what he was saying, but I was glad to hear him in the dark. I lit two candles I found in the kitchen and finished my ablutions.

Upstairs I began the Deity worship by candlelight. I saw occasional lightning flash outside, and the rain was beating heavily. At about 4:30, the lights came on again, although they keep flickering on and off. More thunder. Without electricity we have no heat. It's dawn, but the sky is still dark. A natural variety on a morning when I've been feeling everything as tasteless.

Radha and Govinda are wearing Their royal purple dress with white and silver trim. Even though they cover Krishna's lotus feet, I like these regal outfits. I offered Them black *cadars*, and Krishna carries His silver flute and stick. I found a purple *candrika* for Radharani. None of this is tasteless. Except that I am mortal and know I don't possess the treasure of love for Radha-Govinda.

Maybe I feel everything as tasteless because I have been trying to relish mundane tastes, and this has lessened my original taste for loving service to Radha-Krishna. At least let me not envy my Godbrothers their strong health and ability to travel and preach with enthusiasm. They gather disciples and get credit for pleasing Srila Prabhupada. Just accept what I have decided to do, what I feel my health has forced me to do.

Now I remember: when I was in the bathroom listening to Srila Prabhupada's lecture, he said that Krishna asks us to surrender to Him (*sarva dharman parityajya*). He added, "Krishna doesn't touch our free will." He's all-powerful, and He could force us to surrender, but He doesn't. rather, He asks us to decide whether to become His loving devotees. It's good for us to surrender to Him. Even if we serve only out of sentiment the way a child would do, Krishna appreciates our effort so much that He doesn't forget it. Gradually, our taste for serving Him will develop, and before we know it we will be coming to play with Krishna in Goloka.

Rain. Did anyone bring me a gift, a novelty, from Dublin? Did they buy prunes? A book from the bookstore? Is there any mail here that I haven't seen? *Something* to open and look at? I sense my craving for novelty. I have always been like that. remember Cracker Jacks? Each box had a surprise inside. The little toys were incredibly cheap, but they were new. I also liked new places to go. Why aren't I content with the simple and

the few? Lacking a deeper taste, I seek newness in matter. It's that mind again, looking for quick gratification or just something to do while the century goes out. Hare Krishna.

What happened next in *Lalita-madhava*? I can't remember all the plot's turns, but Radha gave up Her life after Krishna left for Mathura. The sun-god brought Her to his planet. Then She reappeared as Satyabhama when Krishna was kidnapping Rukmini (Candravali) from Bhismaka's palace before she could be married off to Jarasandha. Krishna, Balarama, and Their armies killed the demons who tried to stop Them.

Free-wheelin' Bob Dylan about to die. I heard his first record around 1960 on the Saratoga. Thank You, Lord, for freeing me from that imprisonment, as well as from the sadness and wrongs I encountered while living on the Lower East Side.

Astaratha Prabhu wrote his poems in a house in Umbria while looking out his open window. He too is approaching old age, and thus he has narrowed his lifetime's pursuit to the essentials. In his poetry, he watched and listened to what was going on around him in nature and in the quiet village. Time is rushing by for all of us. That's the message he received from a heavy rain shower.

* * *

Chanting in the rain
& Well, it was raining like hell
on me and I was all right
dry toes in boots and walking
in rain gear, umbrella
Round and around the
house.

* * *

Chanting on beads in soaking
beadbag, chanting
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna and
you know the rest,
in my head the *maha-mantra*.

* * *

Saw on
hill gray cloud half
down the hill a
fat tornado
darker than sky "what
a sight!

* * *

A walk like this

sets a man apart
and awake, wind blowing on him
as he looks at neighbors and
thinks he won't do ill. "

* * *

Fictive Lie
& Back into the house
it's late, pants slick wet
boots shiny
I climbed the stairs

* * *

Reviewing comedy lines
and how I'd like Bala to hear
them "his style of looking
at life is spoof and biff
word jugglery.

* * *

Saw a floating thing in
a puddle. Now candlelight and
lights-out fiction
on. Two men entered
and gave me the Nobel Prize for
1998 I said
oh boy this
will please my master for sure
now Krishna is in lit ensconced.

* * *

Then two men tried to harm
me but I out-wrestled them
Rain beating hard I
opened the window and saw the Pope
fly by he said, "We'll do
all *we* can to help ISKCON." "

* * *

8:38 a.m.

The Supreme Lord has eternal, transcendental forms. This concept is repugnant to the modern mentality. Even if someone were to recognize the Spirit or call it (Him/ Her) God, they would never be able to accept the Vedic version of the Fish, Boar, and Tortoise incarnations of Visnu, or that all Visnus come from Vraja-Krishna. That would be too much! So we part company with them. Their company isn't that important to us. Better we are with Krishna and the "*daSavataras*," the scholars and *acaryas*, the devotees who uphold the truth. We don't have to explain *why* we have chosen this path. It's obvious that once we become committed to Krishna consciousness, we have to exclude versions which contradict or deny it. The *Brhad-Vaisnava Tantra* says we shouldn't even see the faces of those who consider the forms of Lord Krishna to be made of material energy.

"In the *Padma-Purana* it is said that those who are envious and always angry at the Lord are unfit to know the actual and eternal form of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 1.15.35, purport) There are so many books of spirituality, Jungian psychology, etc., but none dare to speak seriously of God as the Supreme Person, and none give importance to God as a person with whom we may interact except in the most "mystical" way. No book describes what He looks like, what He does, and what He says.

This topic comes up when we hear how Krishna left the earth. That's when Kali-yuga entered fully and inauspiciously, and here we are now in 1998. Maharaja Yudhisthira did not want to linger in the bad age, so he left his earthly kingdom. Thus he set an ideal example of retiring for spiritual development.

* * *

9:09 a.m.

No stimulation or special subject needed. Just float with or without a topic. Banish Archie the bartender. Banish plump Jack and all the world. Do you think because *you* are virtuous that there will be no more cakes and ale for anyone else? And if you're not touching these things, then let's hear your superior song. Don't be stupefied between two worlds.

He can't say nothin', he jes keeps rollin' . . . Noisy roadside stream from this morning's downpour. I can hear the gushing water when I'm in the bedroom.

"Made by devotees" "a large piece of plaster suddenly falls off the wall. Ain't gonna live here forever.

* * *

9:53 a.m.

Tell M., "Hey, I'm game for a video session." We sit in his cold room on stiff-backed chairs. We have some new "Abhay" films, but we'll first finish what we were already watching.

It's a gray day. Mist moves over the hill and gradually blots the landscape from my vision. But not entirely. I can't see exactly where the mist begins or ends, but it is advancing in tendrils wet and cold.

Atma-nivedanam. Give a little. Abhay gave all.

What do you mean?

Lord Krishna too. He gives all, yet it does not subtract from His powers. He is always perfectly complete. *Om purnam adah purnam idam*. When will I learn more of Him? When He desires to reveal Himself to me.

We have the video, "Images of Prabhupada." I wasn't present in many of the snippets. We each served in separation. At least I didn't bloop. Someone wrote to me, "At a home program, X. Maharaja said you were the most prolific writer in ISKCON."

That doesn't say much; I might still be a nuisance "the guy who writes his head off and whom we don't read.

Prolific "sex maniac has twenty-four children. McCallum Funeral Home "prolific what?

There was . . . (McGowan, that's it), a Great Kills fireman contemporary of my father who had twenty-four children from one wife. They appeared on TV and received donations. Some of the kids seemed retarded. They were probably pumping too many out.

Prolific ISKCON dementia "proud Schwartz and that Guarino "I knew him *when*.

M.'s melodeon keeps breaking its springs and he keeps getting it repaired. Me, I sprung a creak in my sacroiliac. Five actors assaulted. Don't read the newspapers. Irish voted YES, but both sides still reserve their enmity. Jimmy Thomson wrote me. Said he played clarinet at a *nama-hatta* meeting. He apologized that he doesn't speak out against the Christians at his poetry club. Why should he think he has to do *that*? He says he reminisces a lot in letters with old artists. He's a few years older than me. But I'm a big shot in ISKCON because I got in on the ground floor long, long ago.

Next life, it's back to the beginning.

* * *

11:46 a.m.

That cold, gray mist. If you have ever lived in Ireland, you would know what it's like. But it's a grand show.

I read the volume of EJW called "Field Work." It continued into the next volume. It was a good thing, but now I am without it. Living more hand to mouth "nothing beyond the subjective range of what flows. Does it hurt? Does it mean enough?

What is enough? I am only who I am.

But we should always strive. I told that to the devotee who said he wanted to take the gradual path and not follow the rules and regs. But do I tell myself to strive and strain? What does it mean to do so? We can't always add more rounds into our lives or read more pages in Prabhupada's books. That doesn't seem to be the way to strive. Look for the poverty of spirit, yet do things for Krishna's pleasure too.

And count on the channel of mercy descending. Astaratha Prabhu's poems "or anyone's "go over the same themes. We live with sameness in this movement. The subtle varieties in devotional life are felt only when we go deeper as lovers. Otherwise, we become tired of what we are doing and simply note its sameness in a way that drags us down. This could lead use into trouble. But we may have to go through that trouble to understand what's on the other side.

Krishna is supreme. We read how His form is transcendental and never deteriorates. He leaves one world and enters another in one of many forms, all flowing from His original beauty. He has no origin but Himself. He is eternal, as is the soul. If we don't accept this information, we'll accept some other equally mystifying information. For example, if you say that the universe began at point 0 and then grew from a chemical reaction, that is mystifying, isn't it? It's some kind of explanation according to the material scientists, but it isn't very clear. If we say that existence has no meaning and that we don't have to seek one, that is almost a theological statement. Why should someone believe it just because it has been said? It's axiomatic. Those who propound it have faith in mathematicians and speculators. It's simply an explanation that suits their particular mindset. Krishna is unknowable, and He is surrounded by mystery.

A Gaudiya Vaisnava likes to be specific about Krishna. We are on the Vraja path, and we leave all others behind.

But who are we, a product of those other ideas? Astaratha Prabhu doesn't mention anything that personal in his poems "what it meant to grow up in Germany or to join ISKCON, what he went through. His poetry consists of reflections of a person who has gone deep, who has left everything else behind.

I seem to need to call each of those things I am leaving behind "and I *am* leaving them behind "by name, I take delight in that. That's how I want to write, to flesh out the truth of experience with anecdote and incident. I want to tell what hurts me, what pleases me, and describe my aspirations. I don't want to separate it into little closed compartments, as if only certain experiences are important.

Krishna, Krishna, and I count pages, fingers, hours, June days moving swiftly along. I know I need to tend to those things that are absolute in my life without getting lost in pettiness, but I can't deny that pettiness exists and that it has had a place in my life and even in my Krishna consciousness. That pettiness drives me to Krishna and does not leave me bogged down in empty, time-frittering superficiality.

* * *

2:35 p.m.

Fresh strawberries and ice cream on *nirjala* EkadaSi. Feel guilty? Radha and Krishna ate it, and Srila Prabhupada. It will be deducted at the end, or is it something I will have to suffer for later? Dessert instead of paradise? Well, I was never told that those were the terms. But I know in general that suffering means reducing sinful reactions while enjoyment means spending pious assets.

But I thought *prasadam* was different, like duty-free?

It depends.

The pure devotee doesn't want to do anything unless it's meant to please Krishna's senses.

I need to shave. I'm an ambassador, so I'll shave Sunday morning before I go to Dublin.

* * *

3:50 p.m.

Took an Esgic at 3:25 p.m. No euphoria, but I'm hoping it will push down the right-eye pain.

I'm so far ahead of the typist . . .

I lie on my back in bed and hear M. tell me the news of the latest phone call. This is my life, I'm sorry, man, but that's it. How can a person write otherwise? Am I supposed to write of Nimai and Gurudeva going to Hollywood? To heaven (Goloka)? To Vrndavana ISKCON or some other Vrndavana? Stories with a message, with devotion. A la Chekov. No, no.

* * *

No Series

No series

World Series

sneeze.

Remember how you did PMrB? Well, those days are over. Now we just write as it occurs, *neti, neti*. I got relief this afternoon, so how am I spending my time? Being calm.

I have nothing much to say (I fear) to the folks tomorrow, but when they have gathered for my lecture, I know I'll get conservative and let it out "whatever it is. My starting point: Krishna says the material world is both miserable and temporary, and we should always think of Him instead of indulging in mundane sense gratification. The only problem is that we don't take His statements seriously. Examine why not. I may even ask the devotees to say why, then respond "try to help. And I'll keep writing too. This. My *oeuvre*.

Don't get hung-up. I'm doing all right. I don't need a series. Just stay cool and move it along. Let the pressure build.

I see in the meadow over the wall how the lambs still suck their mothers' milk bags, although they are almost grown. That is especially evident because the lambs are fat and woolly, and the mothers thin and shorn. At any odd hour "no regulation here "whenever those lambs think they can get some milk, they duck under and suck and wag their tails. The mothers tolerate. I wonder if they enjoy it. I don't know.

Let me take that as a metaphor in this series-less writing: I also let my milk down during the day without ceremony and with no intervening milkmen trying to control it. I don't have to have a logo announcing, "Here comes a milkshake!" I just give.

And give.

Throughout the day.

I want it to be Krishna milk mixed with the milk of human kindness. Then it will be offerable. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. Because milk is manufactured from one's blood.

Looking out the window, it became suddenly clear to me why I can't and don't live in ISKCON Vrndavana. It's an extremely intense place, where people gather with their specialized interests. Too many hundreds of pounds of pressure per square inch for me. Neither can I seem to hang out long-term outside the *aSrama* walls like an

unshaven *sadhu*. I saw truly why I am here and why that Godbrother wrote his alone poems in Italy. Now may I accept my lot with gratitude.

* * *

6:20 p.m., Night Notes

Day ending in peace. Sunrise already set for tomorrow, but first may I rest. Hare Krishna. Is Prabhupada pleased with me? Do I still allow him to disassemble me with a glance? It's odd how I've grown up, or at least older. I'm an old man now, no longer the boy he knew. Has he grown even older? No, he no longer has that body. I cherish his memory even while I am unsure of the nature of our future relationship. All I know is that we are eternally linked.

June 7, 12:10 a.m.

Lectio divina means you use a predetermined place in the *Bhagavad-gita*, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, etc., and read until a line attracts your attention. Then you stay with it awhile, perhaps write what comes after reading it. Pray to Krishna through it. I've heard incidents of great *acaryas* who would be stunned into ecstasy or roaring and dancing by hearing certain lines of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I don't want to exaggerate or indulge in emotions, or even look for that. But I do look for attention and the sort of *daršana* for which I may be eligible. "Go fishing" and see if the Lord will give me a nibble. (Sorry for the ghastly metaphor; I mean no actual harm to fish.)

I mean to turn myself toward God. He is in me, He placed Himself in the *sastra* just so I'd have light in the darkness and devotion where there was none manifest. He wants me to come alive and to leave my petty self.

"One who factually convinced of this opulence and mystic power of Mine engages in unalloyed devotional service; of this there is no doubt." (Bg. 10.7) Yes, I want to hear of Krishna's opulence.

Please, may I always accept my spiritual master's presentation. Don't ever think it is mistaken or inadequate. Whatever he says is good for us. It may sometimes differ from the Sanskrit in the verse he is translating or summarizing or writing a purport on. Allow him the right to meditate or expand where and how he likes. Don't ask him to be a different guru. Respond to what you can. Amen.

Here, the word *vibhutam* means "opulence". This reminds me that a Godbrother wrote me that he tried the prayerful reading approach with *Krishna* book, and Srila Prabhupada described the word "opulence" in an unusual way. It's at the end of Chapter Thirty-one: "When Lord Krishna finally reappeared and assembled with the *gopis*, He looked very beautiful, just befitting a person with all kinds of opulences. In the *Brahma-samhita*, it is stated, *ananda-cin-maya-rasa-pratibhavitabh*: Krishna alone is not particularly beautiful, but when His energy "especially His pleasure energy, represented by Radharani "expands, He looks very magnificent." Now *there* is opulence! We usually think of Krishna's opulence in terms of His *yoga-aiSvarya*, whereby He expands throughout the universe, yet remains an individual person ""Behold My mystic opulence!" Or someone might even say the *viSvarupa* is His opulence. But here the

opulence is Srimati Radharani. Sweetness is also an opulence. My brother wrote, "What a nice thought, how opulence enhances beauty. Whatever opulence we have by Krishna's grace, when used in His service, decorates us too and makes us beautiful."

I'm writing this quickly, pushing to reach my quota. I woke to the alarm clock at midnight. This is the morning I'm supposed to go to Dublin. Take a pill if need be. Get the body carried into town. Sit before them with the opulence of representing Prabhupada's and Krishna's words. Be a magnificent puppet, a Paul Winchell/ Jerry Mahony of the spiritual movement. They . . . think *I'm* speaking, and in a sense I am. I want to repeat the teachings in my own words. But it's an Edgar Bergan/ Charlie McCarthy act. I only appear not to be sitting on my master's lap. It's his lips that are actually moving.

Oh, and what about Krishna's opulence? "If one knows factually how God is great, then naturally he becomes a surrendered soul and engages himself in the devotional service of the Lord." Of course, *vibhuti* also means a bit of God's opulence appearing in a *jiva* "see this too as God's presence, and springboard into appreciation of the source of the opulence. As when you see and hear a musician give his heart to make that sound that touches us.

God is great. Here are some fragmentary details; Srimati Radharani is His chief opulence. His being inclined to His devotees (*bhakta-vatsalya*) is a chief glory. "All this particular knowledge is required in order to increase one's interest in the loving devotional service of the Lord. One should not neglect to understand fully how great Krishna is, for by knowing the greatness of Krishna one will be able to be fixed in sincere devotional service." (Bg. 10.7, purport)

Now move on to *japa*. Don't deride your own attempt. Krishna may not give you the ability to pay attention "or, let's lay the blame on you. But let's see the good in the act of sacrifice we make when we chant.

O Krishna, but I am entirely helpless. I feel it. Please help me. And let me chant.

* * *

4:35 a.m.

Jaya jagadiSa hare. The Lord has many forms. I hear a coo-coo at this time of the morning. In Sweden, the sun must still be shining as they go to the temple for *mangala-arati*. The hay in the grass reflects sunlight. Ireland is cloudy, and right now the sky is covered by a curtain of mist. It advances over the low mountain range.

I feel joy this morning. I just heard *Lalita-madhava*. radha came under Rukmini's care, but we know that She is the origin of all of Krishna's *sakhis* and queens. This is one of Krishna's pastimes. Hear it, fortunate, greedy ear. Hear it.

The leaves tremble on the branches like they did that morning in the Lucknow park when I began to envision my new future. Today I face another new future. I do that every morning. So be awake and grateful, and do your duty until the end. Alas, if only I could be graced with the stuff it takes to go back to Godhead. Well, it's another morning, anyway.

This morning I go to Dublin. I will read to the gathered devotees and try to make them feel a little bad that they do not think always of Krishna. I already feel bad. We

know we don't do it, but we usually don't care much. It takes humility to care, to face the fact that we live without spontaneous love of God. I hope to awaken the desire to think of Krishna the way a spontaneous lover does. Our love is dormant, but we can practice to bring it out. We understand that we are spirit souls; now we simply have to increase our *bhakti*. That's what I will assert. All lectures end in the assertion that *bhakti* is the best process. My ability to say that doesn't depend upon my having fully realized *bhava-bhakti*. We are all simply trying.

Coo-coo "the sound punctuates what I write. The air must be fresh out there, so perhaps I will join that bird and make my own coo-coo sounds by chanting a few rounds.

Queen Rukmini saw that the new arrival, Satyabhama, was overwhelmingly beautiful. She feared Krishna would be affected by Her beauty. Radha said, "Please, I don't want to see or hear the name of any man." Rukmini and Her assistant, Madhavi, were pleased to hear that. They arranged for Radha to live like an ascetic in Nava-Vrindavana, under Nava-Vrnda-devi's care.

Radha-Govinda are dressed in light green with gold trim, and wear green *cadars*. My brother wrote to ask, "Do you feel love for your Radha-Krishna Deities?" He added, "I am not being sarcastic." I can't claim I know love. These Deities do please me and add wonderfully to my life, but I don't worship Them the way the *gosvamis* of Vrindavana worshiped their Deities "with heart and soul. Still, I never want to give up Their worship.

* * *

Oh, don't stop now. I know *you*. You are that rascal I saw in a dream. You are the one who ran away with the queen and was turned into a toad for your transgressions. You are the fellow who feels sorry for himself, afraid of your own future. You are the one who is not yet free of *kama*. You do not possess *prema*. I know you. I have seen you before. You are neither a friend nor brother. You distract yourself with interests outside of Krishna consciousness. You give lectures to the assembled devotees but don't tell the truth. You are the one who troubles so many typists with an overload of work. I have seen you before.

Other accusations: You divert attention from Krishna. You don't wholeheartedly believe in and worship your spiritual master in spontaneous joy. You don't serve him with full dedication, as he served Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura. You are short of the mark. You would like to be praised and given the ISKCON equivalent of the Nobel Prize for literature. You'd like to be toasted with sparkling grape juice in all the temple halls, and have a pizza dedicated to you one Saturday morning when the devotees sit in rows in Rome. I know you. You ate ice cream and strawberries on *nirjala-ekadaSi*.

I repeat, the worst is that you divert attention from Krishna. We want to hear about Him, but you tell us only of yourself. If someone listens to Krishna's pastimes, he will become free of birth and death, attachment, illusion, and fear. He will gain the right to eternal life. Hearing about Krishna is that important. *Na te vidhuh svartha-gatim hi visnum*. Anyone who diverts us from hearing about Krishna commits violence. Your lamb and sheep stories are violent. Stop it.

It's almost five minutes to 5. I don't really feel all these bad things I said about myself. I still think I'm an all-right fellow. I don't have that painful kind of humility. To pretend I

do would be artificial on my part. rather, I subscribe to the psychology that tells me not to be too hard on myself but to give myself love.

Madhu coming out of his room. He'll be up here in a minute and see the note I left him. I was suggesting that perhaps we could sit together for about seven minutes while I read him a poem describing how God is all. The poet worships Him and knows that all good comes from Him. He felt God saved him and placed him on the right path back in 1957. The poem's beat, however, does not sound like a Bengali *bhajana* but a sincere and otherworldly Western expression, because that's what the poet knew.

* * *

5:57 a.m.

M. says we won't have time for our meeting after breakfast. We'll have it in the van as we travel. He drives so fast, leaping, hurtling, jostling, and bouncing my bones. I sit strapped in for the first twisty mile, but when we come to the better road, I lie down in the middle of the van. That's my usual routine. Then I try to void out, or better say sleep, alive with devotional hope. The point is to transport this carcass to Dublin.

I have some good material picked out. From *The Way of the Pilgrim*, I have the section marked where he meets a priest who tells him that his confession is trivial and lacks actual repentance. He's then told his more serious sins: (1) you don't love God; (2) you don't love your neighbor; and (3) you don't believe in eternal reality (*Sastra*). We are all more or less guilty of these sins. The priest elaborates that if we did love God, our neighbor, and believe in scripture, we would act as pure devotees.

* * *

9:30 a.m.

Bhadra's house. Supposed to speak now. Pleasant drive here, sunny and fresh after a rain shower. I didn't lie down on the way after all, but did as soon as I got here. rehearsed the lecture in my mind. I can't expect them to actually feel emotions such as repentance, etc., as I speak, nor am I trying to evoke such emotions in them. We're speaking and hearing almost exclusively on the intellectual level. But I will prod them to change their lives a little, and me to change mine. "Born-again" preachers are expert in getting people to make a dramatic life change during the course of hearing a lecture. I'm not so ambitious. But give them genuine *Krishna-katha*. The house doesn't sound noisy. Maybe not so many people came.

Relax. Tell *them* to relax and pay attention. Take questions after forty minutes. Of course, my physical state is fragile. It's harder to reach a twenty-page quota on Sundays. I wasn't inclined to make travel notes en route just to maintain the quota.

* * *

2:27 p.m.

Safe back in Wicklow. Everything happens safely by Krishna's grace. We admitted we can't surrender fully immediately. That would require too many dramatic changes in our lives. I stressed that we are fine when we keep on the *vaidhi-marga*. My left hand

and arm jumped up and made a rough *jnana-mudra* several times. really slammed home my point about salvation and how pure love of God will be attained by following the instruction given in Bg. 12.9: if we can't always think of Krishna, then follow the regulative principles of *bhakti*, and you'll come to the stage of love. How? Easily. Because love is dormant within us. I said (I was witnessing) I could stand up for this. We don't claim we have attained pure love, but we do assert that such love is dormant within us. Srila Prabhupada assured us of that fact, and both *The Nectar of Devotion* and the *Bhagavad-gita* confirm it. Prosecute *bhakti* vigorously "chanting and hearing" and with the faith that pure love will come. We have no other choice because there is no other way. I stressed this point.

I also attempted to draw us into the valley of admitting we don't already love God, that we don't already have deep faith and can't radically change our impoverished positions. It's healthy to admit this. It's better than a careless, cold lack of repentance. We can, however, climb out of this hole.

Anyway, it was an exercise. We went through it together. I hope it took the audience on a quick trip from possible bland inattention to admitting real shortcomings to feeling hopeful of escape if we put more heart into our *sadhana*. Hare Krishna.

* * *

Waiting for them to bring my lunch. This preacher needs to eat. *Brahmana-bhojana* "feed him. He doesn't have a headache. Bathed hot and cold. Radha-Govinda and Srila Prabhupada's stainless steel *thalis* are waiting on the kitchen counter. My plate too. I is waiting. Meanwhile, I will hope to keep moving through the day.

Hear pots below. Go down. But don't forget to make a nice prayer. It's not just your feedbag.

* * *

2:47 p.m., No Series

Sigh. I don't feel so much like working hard during these last four hours of this day just to reach a quota. I'm lucky I made it as far as I did. This is not a diary undershirt.

M. was supposed to be gone all day, but he's back too. He missed his appointment with his fiddler. Or his fiddler missed him. He waited, but got tired and hungry, so he came home. The lunch *prasadam* is still warm and fresh from when I honored it at 12:30.

There are a few people who want to help me in my work, and I think of them. Otherwise, I'm on the free-write trail. Mentioned *The Way of the Pilgrim* in my lecture, so here's a picture of him, a peasant with leggings, a backpack, a beadbag, book in arm, a walking stick, and huts and the village church in the background. Walk on, pilgrim, and chant the holy names: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare.

As Uddhava drove into the country on the winding road from Dublin to Wicklow, I leaned forward a few times to ask him about his preaching, about the garden in my backyard, and how some of the controversies in recent weeks have blown over. Then I chanted a sixteenth round and listened to it, thinking, "Maybe Uddhava will think this round is well uttered by a religious man."

My talk "did it impress Manu? Will they talk about it afterwards? Will it make an impact? I said that a husband should not act as if he's Krishna toward his wife (I had a certain man in mind), and a guru should not act as if he is Krishna toward his disciples. Krishna is a person, as is the devotee. Then I answered questions while we continued to live in the realm of spirit a little longer.

The back copy on the Image *The Way of the Pilgrim* reads, "A journey into the realm of the spirit." Is that EJW? It is, provided I can keep moving. I don't walk, drive, or travel by plane much. I only move up and down the stairs in this house, and from desk chair to armchair. My journey *has* to be a journey of the spirit and of the body moving from youth to old age to death.

Aghasura wanted to kill all the children in Gokula, including Krishna and Balarama, because he considered children the life force of the parents. If the children were killed, the parents would naturally die of grief. But Aghasura himself was to die at Krishna's hands. It sounds like a myth, but I heard it again during lunch "how the top of his mouth reached the sky when he opened his jaws, how he resembled a statue, his insides like a highway. And why not? I asked myself *why* such a thing sounded so mythical, as if it couldn't really be true. Perhaps it's because of the simple, innocent way in which Srila Prabhupada relates the story. Like the children Krishna protected, I too must learn to appreciate Krishna's power, then forget that He is God. God stole the other boys' lunches. Children's play. Where is that intense love? Where is my understanding that these apparently mythical stories point the way to Krishna's greatest glory as He protects and loves His devotees?

* * *

Although I spoke with conviction today, pinning our hopes on the fact that *vaidhi-bhakti* is capable of awakening our love of God, I am aware that it's hard to change. We have been sold out to sense gratification for so long; sometimes we feel as if we are too far gone to be saved. But that's not true. Arjuna dasa laughed heartily when I said, "I won't leave you in this desperate hole. I'll pull you out." I think he believed I could do it. The answer? Love Krishna. It is possible even for us.

One devotee said that while he was fasting on *nirjala* EkadaSi, he prayed that Krishna would reveal Himself. Suddenly, the picture of Krishna dancing on Kaliya became a real presence. He said he then felt offensive toward Krishna. "Why are You only a boy?" I couldn't comment much. He said he prayed for Krishna but realized that he couldn't accept Him when He appeared. His concluded that he is afraid of an intimate relationship with God as a person. Yes, that is one of the diseases Prabhupada mentions in the *Bhagavad-gita*, along with attachment, fear, and anger. We're afraid that God may be a person because we have become so disgusted with people.

Review your lecture and its effect.

No, relax. No more lecturing for a week anyway.

I used to lecture every day. I prefer this once-a-week program.

Oh, last night I again dreamed that I had returned to the Navy. I remembered in the dream my former experience there. That Navy experience must have been such a trauma that it scarred my psyche. Or is this recurring dream revealing a metaphor for something

and I am missing the point? The Navy officers were giving me the runaround. They wouldn't explain my service, although I told them I was once the Saratoga's journalist "the now-dead Sara.

* * *

And about the lecture: today Bhadra said that the group in his house was "more realistic." He meant they behaved quieter so the neighbors wouldn't complain. It's Sunday morning, and they were all still sleeping when I arrived. The last time we were at his house, he said, the singing was "tumultuous." Today he announced that devotees could remain at his house after my lecture for as long as they liked, but they shouldn't hang around outside. Once they left, they should be quiet.

As he said this, however, I saw our Hare Krishna children (who, of course, don't attend my boring lecture) playing outside and yelling. The hazards of a home program, I guess. As I spoke, I glanced at my watch and became aware that I had a pill in my breast pocket. Once or twice I thought pain was building and that I'd have to take it, but nothing happened, I'm glad to say. There was a pillow in the bed in the house and a pillow in the back seat of the car. They treat me nicely.

I was also aware that these devotees already know the philosophy. My job, then, is not simply to speak more philosophy but to discuss how it can be applied. I should say something both important and relevant. This morning's topic was vital, and the emphasis was not on my outlined progression of topics but on getting the devotees to feel remorse along with me. We admit we do not and cannot respond fully to Krishna's statement, "Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me . . ." but we *don't* usually admit this to ourselves.

When I asked devotees to tell why they fail to respond to Krishna's request, one said that we tend to mistake mechanical service for *bhakti*. We miss the point of devotion.

I volunteered doubts that (1) we don't believe Krishna can come through and protect us; and (2) even if He can protect us, we don't want to be slaves. I argued on Krishna's behalf, but felt I couldn't prove by my own example that persistence in *vaidhi-bhakti* takes us to the spontaneous stage. I acknowledged that *bhakti* is not achieved by hard work, but it showers down especially upon those who endeavor. It was the grace vs. work discussion "a perennial topic.

I'll admit I enjoyed the rapport that we all developed at the lecture. I felt myself drawn out into the group. By now, however, I have returned to my usual persona, "the hermit." In this way we pass our lives, trying to do something worthy for Krishna and hoping our devotional blossoms are nearing ripeness.

Prabhupada dasa, who lives in Dublin, wrote me a letter. He is a private math teacher, and his classes are ending for the summer. He said that since we live in the same weather, when he hears it raining he thinks of me. "Does he hear this rain? Is he writing of it?" He says he'll find out in the next book.

We have no phone, and no central heating. There will be a French bicycle race from Wicklow to Dublin and a golf tournament in July. This is the fun season. I saw a billboard that said "SHAME" in giant letters. It showed a grieving woman holding her head in her hands, and the tagline read, "120 people are arrested for drunken driving

every week by the Garda." right beside that poster was a poster advertising whiskey. Both posters appeared on the side of a pub. I noted that the pub had a large parking lot in back.

I saw the "SHAME" poster again in town, this time next to a poster that read, "New eyes, new nails, new lips." It was an ad for Mabelle cosmetics. The photo showed a young woman brandishing her makeup after having painted her face with it. She reminded me of someone I knew. New eyes? New lips? Yes, I would like to have that "eyes that could see better into Krishna consciousness, lips that could utter the holy name with devotion. Hare Krishna.

Okay, let me finish this page and call Madhu to discuss what he is going to do this afternoon. Maybe he could make a phone call. Although we have given up management, there are a few things we still have to say sometimes. I manage to clean this house, so when he comes up here, I will ask him to give me a bigger sponge for washing the bathroom floor. I will also point out that there is no sponge or mop with which to wash the kitchen floor. And who will be typing the next batch of tapes? What will happen if I'm alone when the government people come to install the meter, which will get our central heating going? Where is the dolphin of the heart? Where is the billboard that says, "read GNP books"? Where is the new law abolishing slaughter of sheep and cows? Where is the decent heart in this rotten country? Oh, be at peace, ye Hare Krishnas. I told Uddhava, "You can't expect the Hare Krishna institution to become a mass movement. We will have to be enthusiastic about cultivating even just a few people." He didn't respond, so I added, "Of course, we *could* be surprised." Again, he said nothing.

* * *

5:00 p.m.

Black and white pictures in PMrB. I wrote one volume while living in a cabin in the woods. Wrote my student's straight-preaching report, then had some fun with hand writ and lists and hidden songs. O Henry, O

Henry,
the ship
is lost.

Words popped out all over the place.

I was worrying about the black bears because it was the spring thaw. I'm settled in Ireland now, just writing all the time.

Hare Krishna is okay, but it's not for jerks, although even a jerk could take to Krishna consciousness if he got the mercy. After all, *we* came. *Akamah sarva-kamo va, moksa-kama udara-dhih.*

Since I mentioned lists, here's one. I'll call it "Bones and Contentions."

(1) The brother who left town.

(2) How to forgive. Say a prayer: "I release you from my resentment. I wish the best for you "happiness, health, and especially spiritual success. Please feel no curse or ill will from me." Then actually forgive. Don't get steamy when you hear that person's name. Go in peace.

(3) renounced: Duffy, Castle, Cassian, flat iron, Peg O' My Heart, all records, toenail polish, mags and zines, fines and girls and heartaches and vices. (One typist keeps making my vise headache into a vice headache. Maybe she's right.) Miami vice squad.

(4) European jaunts. Stay in one place. A mullah doesn't leave the mosque, a *pujari* doesn't desert the *mandira*, and a writer doesn't go far from his page.

(5) Pageboy-haircut movie stars from the 1940s. Or even today one could show up looking cute. If that happens, look the other way. Your eye glasses are not to help you increase lust.

(6) Don't eat after lunch until the next morning's breakfast. He tried to impress us by how well he fasted. But then he confessed he was offensive to God.

(7) race cars, handy bars, trad music enjoyed by most Irish people to one degree or another.

Okay, drop the numbers. Better I tell the truth I learned at the *Bhagavatam* school. Yes, I learned it from what my spiritual master wrote down "that special dispensation in this age of Kali. But don't expect me to be entirely Krishna conscious, or to even have a wealth of information on temples or families or the followers of Lord Caitanya in Bengal, or to know the philosophies of the other three Vaisnava *sampradayas*. Neither am I an expert on trivia.

The man leaned on the boat mast. He was well acquainted with the gospels but didn't hear the sheep's protest. Now friends are sitting down to honor the Sunday feast in a convivial atmosphere.

Krishna said He would leave this earth and He did, so the Pandavas retired timely. The women of the family too. They were all part of His eternal entourage, so when Krishna left, they left to join Him in His spiritual abode. Message? Don't fritter away your own time. Keep reading scripture, and let the greenery encroach on both sides of the road.

* * *

6:12 p.m.

Prabhupada Images

I have some little part in a dance.

Watching films of myself in a crowd of devotees
around Prabhupada thirty years ago "intense,

adoring, competitive "I watch now

with detachment, refrain from

faultfinding / don't take part

now I wouldn't want to go back

to who I was then but

who am I now? Who are you? What is true?

* * *

Soundless movie track, men who have since left
him, grown old, died, babies now young men
most chose to leave him/ beautiful young mothers,

now where? Bare arms of a *sannyasi* "
who cares for all this now?
Was it worth striving for such honor and place?
If I had known back then I should remain
alone "but I couldn't. I had to push forward
to be recognized
by guru.

* * *

I think of him so differently now, not as he seems
in these images.

June 8, 12:12 a.m.

"One who is factually convinced of this opulence and mystic power of Mine engages in unalloyed devotional service; of this there is no doubt." (Bg. 10.7)

Srila Prabhupada: "If one knows factually how God is great, then naturally he becomes a surrendered soul and engages himself in the devotional service of the Lord."

That's something I could have added yesterday when I said that we admit we don't love God. When He reveals Himself, the spirit soul is drawn to worship Him. Only a cruel and hard-hearted atheist would refuse. Thank You, Lord.

While reading and writing, a midge "this is the season for them "landed on my forehead. I felt its annoying presence and brushed that part of my head. The tiny creature fell injured onto the page. I shook him off, and now it's jumping elsewhere "onto page 515, where it says, "One should not neglect to understand fully how great Krishna is, for by knowing the greatness of Krishna one will be able to be fixed in sincere devotional service." No midge or elephant can understand God. Humans have the intellectual capacity; they should not neglect their birthright.

Next comes *Bhagavad-gita's catuh-Sloki*. First, Krishna summarizes His greatness and explains why we should become His devotees. *Aham sarvasya prabhavo, mattah sarvam pravartate*.

The midge is leaping around these very words even as I copy them out. Oh, it's no longer one midge but several. One wants to say that there is a vast difference between an insect and a scholar devotee, but I see I am just copying something out. What does *aham sarvasya prabhavo* mean to me?

For the insect, it's a fascinating place of white light and warmth. He might appreciate it more than I do! This one line could be an entry into prayer for a sincere soul. Here, Lord Krishna openly declares that He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Yesterday, when I asked the devotees why we fail to take Krishna seriously, someone said that we have allowed sense gratification to suck up our original Krishna consciousness, just as the bamboos suck up the water of a lake. It is too late to add as an afterthought, "Let me read what Krishna says and fall into *samadhi*, contemplating Him." Also, if we have been cynical and selfish, we cannot suddenly accept the Lord's statement and surrender. We will doubt how He can actually be God. That devotee said

the picture of Kaliya-Krishna became alive for him, but he rejected Krishna. He didn't fall at His feet in adoration.

These midges are symbols of doubt, those annoying critters that land on your nose while you read what Krishna says.

Here's what Krishna says after His last statement: "The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts."

The *sastras*, the ancient Sanskrit texts that were passed down orally from teacher to disciple, Srila Prabhupada gave them to us along with the live connection of pure devotee to conditioned soul. These are ancient, wise, God-loving texts.

The *acaryas* quote them in their commentaries to Bg. 10.8 to offer further evidence for Krishna's statement. In the beginning, before creation or the appearance of the demigods, Lord Narayana existed. To be able to make such a statement with authority!

The *Upanisads* and *Bhagavad-gita* knock us over and open our inner eye to God. real truth is self-evident, self-effulgent.

I tend to gulp the quotes down quickly or to rush by them in a speed-read. I have a mental cubbyhole all prepared for them: "Statements of *Upanisads* proving Narayana, who is Krishna."

"He can never be deviated by any nonsensical commentators or by fools." It would really be good for me to regularly visit the Vedic evidence, the beautiful, devotional, authoritative statements. May we decorate our lives with them. "From Narayana, Brahma is born, and from Narayana the patriarchs are also born." This is our rhythm and faith.

Our rhythm and faith, even if we are still simply copying clerks. One joins a large firm and starts out as a menial, low-paid clerk in the mailroom. I feel I'm still in that mailroom after thirty-two years. Why can't I appreciate more? Because I don't appreciate.

"The son of Devaki, Krishna, is the Supreme Person." Use the lines to fill this page. The lineaments of sentences, the ink flow, time flow, jazz beat, pulse. The heartbeat. I don't know any better. Before anything existed there was the Supreme God. This is *not* lost on me. I know it is valuable. I'll chant His holy name "the Supreme Lord who is the source of all. Midge, just hear.

* * *

4:31 a.m.

Tired. Does it mean I'm tired of writing? Then what else could I do? I could sleep. But Prabhupada says a devotee hates to sleep; he sees it as a waste of time. Then I could read a book. Yes, but that requires energy. I think I will write.

We are hearing how radha is forlorn in Nava-Vrndavana without Krishna. They tell Her She could be introduced to the wonderfully handsome Emperor of Dvaraka. Radha doesn't know that the emperor is actually Her Vraja-Krishna. She says She doesn't want to see the emperor, but that She will always remain faithful to peacock-feather-crowned Vrajanandana. She says it is difficult to live without Him and Her two dear friends, ViSakha and Lalita. She asks Bakula in Nava-Vrndavana to bring Her the Deity of the

Divine Couple She used to worship in Vrndavana. The plot is being woven, the loose strands tightened.

Yesterday while riding to Dublin, we saw a person walking two greyhounds with muzzles. Madhu said that greyhounds are high-strung and will bite anything they see, so by law they must be muzzled. People keep them for racing. Another weird sport to both gamble and torture animals.

Some lines in the descriptions of Radha-Krishna's pastimes are too intimate for me, but they pass over me like waves that make me swallow water. I recover and go on listening.

Hare Krishna. I was loping while chanting, but then I had to stop. It was time to go and do something else. A man sees a horse ahead and races toward it. Then his gallop is over. The boys grow up and go to *gurukula*. They are the life force of their parents. Sometimes the children throw tantrums or scream at their parents, "Get off the telephone right now!" The *gurukula* burns down, the teacher elopes with a lope, the llamas jump the fence, the sheep finance a trip to Hawaii. A man steals their tickets. The pilgrim met a young man in the forest who was praying and chanting. He told the pilgrim his story. Some people dedicate their entire lives to prayer. He said that although prayer is sometimes dry, he will never give it up. The pilgrim assured him by quoting St. John Chrysostom, acknowledging that prayer can be done with or without consolation from God. In either case, it is beneficial. Yes, but what if you don't pay attention? At least you should desire it "desire to be a better chanter.

The Pope roped turtles. He studied for God. He was Christiological.

Krsniological

Krishnaized

Krishna-saturated.

We don't break forest paths or the yokes of eggs, and we don't break our preaching engagements. A Vaisnava scholar breaks the teeth of Mayavadi arguments. That's why the Mayavadis are called *vedanta*, "without teeth."

* * *

Aimless, I can wander out and walk in the cool air of this second week of June. I can request Tulasi-devi to come and live in this room, despite the fact that my desire to serve her is so weak. I tend to think caring for her might be too much for me. radha and Govinda look attractive in Their deep pink dress with white trim. I must thank Them for coming to me in this form. Krishna, Krishna.

I know heaven is in a bucket. I know the delirious student had a fever. The butcher is condemned "better he neither live nor die. The angels were locked out of their house when they lost their keys. Sats got a T-shirt from the National Headache Foundation. It showed a man with a split in his head and a downturned mouth.

What else? I know a penny isn't worth much. I used to put them on railroad tracks so that passing trains would flatten them. remember?

Another memory: sat on a roof of a little house near the railroad tracks and sang, imitating Johnnie ray, "The Little White Cloud That Cried." Saw him on TV with his false tears "anything for a buck.

Then? Then?

Then Krishna related how He took the Syamantaka jewel from Jambavan after fighting with him. The jewel was being worshiped with great love by Jambavan's daughter, Jambavati. That's a secret. Even if you hear it, you won't understand its import until you understand *rasa*.

Tell me more that I know.

Apples are good food when not rotten.

I saw something like a papaya or mango in the kitchen. Don't think about it. Think of Madhavendra Puri thinking of the sweet rice he wanted to offer to his Deity.

The Deity, the sweatshirt, its hood, the wild ink colorings I did this morning at 3:00 a.m. Move rapidly without care. Go ahead, let yourself. It is difficult to explain, and in the end, I don't know if you'll understand it any better. For those who like things neat, I could die at the end of the year or at any auspicious time in Mayapur or Vrndavana.

* * *

5:20 a.m.

Tiny white blossoms on the rocky lane leading from our house down to the road. It seems greener now out here, a heavier growth of weeds on both sides of the road. And the white blossoms fade as we move through June. The Irish version of summer. Coo-coo cries. Heavy mist lies like a scarf on top of the hill. Peace and quiet.

* * *

I Hear Him in the Bird
& My aches I am picked
up by music
I walk I
said peace and be
quiet.

* * *

You you and where was your
Lord? I heard Him talked
about in Rupa's play
I
heard Him in the sound
of a bird He came through vibrant.

* * *

Man I am for you chew me I am
hungry I am diverse I am for You
Krishna please try me as servitor
to write pages and

pages with
boots off
and nothing much to say.

* * *

2
Krishna You knew me when
You said You're always with me have
you heard? She said God is
always with her and either it's very
easy and obvious or I missed
how.

* * *

Because I didn't see Him. He
didn't talk with *me* so how
could He be with her?

* * *

The cowherd lady called Krishna
naughty and
I fell asleep on my feet
pig's feet
angel feathers
jacket no fleece.

* * *

I tripped, I bumped my head and
chin and asked for a passport and
whatever Krishna would do and prayed
for that to love Him better than
anything else. Listen because
it isn't true I move too fast. "

* * *

8:13 a.m.

Leave family life. Maharaja Yudhisthira became "like an inert mad urchin," fearless,
"to devote himself completely to the thought of the Supreme Personality of Godhead."
Would you like to see Godbrothers your age do as you're doing (living mostly alone in a
house with no active institutional involvement)? So that your doing it wouldn't seem so

strange? Yes, I guess so. But I don't need it. I can do it. But I have to make it another valid expression of Krishna consciousness.

"Sometimes retired men are bewildered about how to engage themselves for the last days of life." (*Bhag.* 1.15.45, purport) Each of the Pandavas followed Maharaja Yudhisthira's example and left their worldly duties to cultivate the ultimate goal. "They all had performed all the principles of religion and as a result rightfully decided that the lotus feet of Lord Sri Krishna are the supreme goal of all. Therefore they meditated upon His feet without interruption." (*Bhag.* 1.15.46)

* * *

No Series, 9:24 a.m.

No peeing in the tent, and no women. This is your park to enjoy, but no non-Aryans, dogs without leashes, hungry men, or pirates with cutlasses allowed.

Oh, I'd like to forbid sin too, but they'll do it anyway.

No series football "this game is without rules. No readers, no charlie horses, no worries, no drafts or checks.

Who is talking? Is this a list of desirables or undesirables? Is this the government (impersonal) or my inner self (debunked by some who say the inner self is the soul and no more, no less)?

No fun. "No hilarity on these premises." I wrote that on a sign in the office once, daring the officers, but they took it okay. They were kind of amused by me, a weak yet spunky enlisted man with a college education from NYC.

Watch out. That's a tender memory.

And so we swim forward.

More letters. I'll answer them at leisure.

Hare Krishna fence prevents rodents. In a.m., tons of insects outside struggle to get to my light inside. One large moth spent the early morning beating its wings against my window like a miniature bat. Hare Krishna. rain tinkling, running over the skylight. No aerobics or Nature Cure or strict regimens except whatever I desire. No rude voices, no bosses moving around, no sight of them.

But Radha-Govinda are present "love in heart. O Lord. No expletives, explosives, exclamation points, heart attacks, and this is Ireland, so don't expect express.

No, no, Nanette. I am prepared to meet
no one.

Just put it in the mail.

No structure. Just this.

* * *

10:30 a.m.

I received a message about book production and became excited to consider it. Write a message back. Then run around the house answering local letters. Say something cute in each? Or not cute, but heartfelt.

Was playing hooky from the page earlier. Who wants to pound out writing all day like a slave to a quota? Who wants to be an author-less diarist and Playboy groundhog?

Anyway, it's raining and cold, and the trees are out there swaying away while the sheep huddle against the walls. At least the midges are calmer in this weather. Mist obscuring my view of the hills. Now, perhaps, Krishna will be revealed to us.

The Lord appears in the form of the spiritual master. Not that the spiritual master says he is God; he is the mercy representative of God. He teaches and reveals God to us. He convinces us of God's presence and of the need to serve Him. He assures us that devotional service is full of pleasure and release. Hare Krishna. Therefore, I am looking forward to massaging Srila Prabhupada and hearing his *Krishna* book at the same time.

Don't be angry with yourself for not getting so much accomplished. Write for yourself. You are no entertainer. I am not sore in spirit right now, but happy with the course of events in my life. All due to Krishna. When (and if) my life gets harder, I hope to see it as God's will, which cannot be changed, and which is for my own good. At that time, I will have to listen to Narada Muni. I can see myself crying, or at least wondering why whatever it is has happened to me. Why couldn't it have continued in that pleasant way with the hot meals and attractive children playing and nobody getting hurt or even killed (in my group), and a reasonable increase of preaching and money-making fortunes? No volcanoes, no earthquakes, no cities being washed out to sea "why did that change?"

Srila Prabhupada mentioned that in a lecture I heard this morning: at any moment, Bombay could be washed out to sea. At times like that, we need Narada Muni and Srila Prabhupada, and to cling to the belief that whatever the disaster, it had to be. Krishna will break each of us from our easy, pious lives of pleasantries and relative bliss and put us through that wringer that will bring out our love of God. Therefore, even for the devotees the world must have its miseries.

In the meantime, however, we are free to go on with the present progression of days, watching the sun rise and set and stocking up eternal credits by hearing and chanting. O days ahead, O Lord of might and tenderness, You will move us as You will. You ask only that we take shelter of You.

As for me, I pray to be strong so that I will set a good example when my turn comes. I can't expect to anesthetize away all pain. right now I live with an acceptable pain threshold, but the rules of pain management could be changed at any moment. Don't doubt it.

Etty Hillesum said that all she needed was a little patch of sky overhead and the ability to fold her hands in prayer. She said, "Dear God, just let me remember a Sastric line now and then." That God will protect us, that we are eternally related, that *matrasparshas tu kaunteya* "it will all come and go. We must simply tolerate the pain while we feel the intimacy grow between ourselves and Krishna. When there is nothing to cling to but His grace, and when we do that with the undying faith the spiritual master has invoked in us, even the mosquitoes of faultfinding will be washed away and we will no longer cling to our pride but to Krishna. Hare Krishna. Because life is full of zeroes. One day, we'll have to add the One.

* * *

3:04 p.m.

The *Bhagavatam* states that the Pandavas meditated on the Supreme Lord without deviation and thus attained Goloka Vrndavana without changing their bodies. Vidura also left his body and returned to his post as Yamaraja, and Draupadi and Subhadra returned to the spiritual world. Each of us has to cross the ocean of birth and death alone after we have taken advantage of the training available from our spiritual masters.

The *Bhagavatam* assures us that whoever hears of the Pandavas' departure with faith will attain the highest goal. Hearing the *Bhagavatam* is an end in itself.

As Suta Gosvami begins to describe Maharaja Pariksit's activities, Saunaka Rsi makes specific inquiries, then says, "Please describe all these incidents if they relate to the topics of Lord Krishna." (*Bhag.* 1.16.5) Everything in the material world is impure. Krishna is the purifying agent.

"Our duration of life is not very long, and there is no certainty of when we shall be ordered to leave everything for the next stage. Thus it is our duty to see that not a moment of our life is wasted in topics which are not related with Lord Krishna. Any topic, however pleasant, is not worth hearing if it is devoid of its relation to Krishna." (*Bhag.* 1.16.6, purport)

Earlier today I heard Srila Prabhupada say that if a person's God consciousness is lacking information of Krishna, it is incomplete.

One might wonder, then, why we bother to dovetail material things in Krishna's service. Wouldn't it be better to stay on a very straight and narrow path with *only* Krishna topics, completely avoiding the material energy? Yes, but inevitably, most of us must contact the material world to face our past karma, our present desires, or even to teach Krishna consciousness to others. So hold onto the principle: don't do anything, don't go anywhere, don't see anyone unless it has a favorable effect on your Krishna consciousness.

* * *

4:15 p.m.

We are mixed in this world, but we are aspiring devotees. Let us tell the world what it has forgotten.

Which is?

That God exists and that we're here, alive to serve Him.

I watched "Abhay" right after lunch. It's a hundred percent Indian, and I can see the fictive touches. But I liked it. Prabhupada was someone . . .

Movies change us; we become different people after watching them. The mood lingers, and we feel the emotions it engendered. Sometimes we even hear ourselves speaking the polite language spoken in a film like "Abhay."

Anyway, let me rest now. Hare Krishna. Stay tuned for decorations and sweet-man blues.

I heard a devotee won the hundred-yard swim competition. He has been a devotee for a long time, and he now strikes me as elderly, a worn tree with arms upraised, or an old dancer.

What does it mean that the Pandavas returned to the spiritual world in their self-same bodies? Don't ask. It means they didn't have to be reborn in this world "that much we know. They are Krishna's eternal associates, and they left this planet to be with Him again.

A few extra rounds. I wasn't arrested for carousing or drunken driving. No sir, not me. I kept moving along. That's the point. O Krishna, forgive us, the fallen. And forgive all those who guard against frauds.

I pray for the very sick and for those who survive after a beloved dies.

Breathe in and out like a bellows. Do the village pigs and dogs not pass semen? Do the trees not live? Then . . .

What?

Then why praise those men who resemble dogs, asses, cows, and pigs, and those who never praise Lord Hari? read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and wait for something to touch you, to make you different, make you part of *that* world, free of this relative, rickety, judging, and condemning dissatisfied place.

Saunaka says, "We will have to die, but if we call Yamaraja to our *Bhagavatam* class, then he can't take us away." Clever. Keep hearing the *Bhagavatam* and death won't come. Or if it does, you will be so busy hearing in faith that you will be blessed. Such a rare death. Pumpnickel world, good-bye.

I need to write two more pages.

No, I don't. I don't have to do *anything*. I can simply cruise. I can walk on the wooden floorboards. I'm free "within limits. Hare, Hare. He said if I wanted to hear Irish music, I should . . . if I want, I can take a walk in the yard (as other yard birds do) and half-close my eyes like a *yogi*. But can I concentrate on Lord Hari as a real *bhakta* does? I can write. That's all. I mean well.

The free-write match is on: match your wits against us. The demon will be defeated by the devotee. God's will triumphs always. We turn our backs on asuric propaganda, including the learned treatise by *Sunyavadi*, *Mayavadi*, and *nirviSesyavadi* philosophers. Please, mister, string that *bhakti* garland. Here place a rose, there six marigolds, here a store-bought, artificially color-sprayed geranium (no, not geranium, that other crummy one). Finally, my garland for the Lord.

Krishna, Krishna. A man wanted to polish the altar brass, then sweep the temple floor, mop it, and dry it. Afterwards, he wanted to clean the Deity kitchen. While doing all that, he planned to listen to a Krishna conscious lecture on tape, and figure he was doing just about the best he could to pass an afternoon. He is a quiet and domesticated temple inmate.

If it stops raining, perhaps he could go out and stop people on the street, asking each to take a book. If it doesn't, he can bake a pie for the evening program. It's good for a writer to mention what others are doing and to offer them praise if they are Vaisnavas. It's his delicate, fluttering pulse "becomes his autogenic heartbeat.

Someone said, "She couldn't forgive me because I couldn't forgive her." release the world from your resentment. That's my advice. Try to chant "unstick your mouth, your

hard heart, your self-pity. Don't interfere with the world. Like those spiders that marched by this morning. They went their way without my help or interference. Hare Krishna.

* * *

6:20 p.m.

Still tired, so I will rest. My saying "no theme, no series," etc., may seem writer's shop talk, but it's important to me because it indicates the way of life I am attempting to pursue. I don't always speak of the larger meaning on these pages, so readers may get the wrong impression and think it's only a writerly consideration.

Now give me one more short paragraph to get to the bottom of the page. Celibate? Yes. Control thoughts. Put Radha-Govinda to bed. Be a short-order cook and waiter and diner and writer of it all, but no meat, fish, or eggs. Be a singing waiter. I wish to be pure.

June 9, 12:08 a.m.

A learned person who has studied the *Vedas* and "has information from authorities like Lord Caitanya and who knows how to apply these teachings can understand that Krishna is the origin of everything . . . he becomes firmly fixed in the devotional service of the Supreme Lord." (Bg. 10.8, purport) Such a person is never deviated by others.

Me?

Maybe not quite. But I'm holding onto whatever faith I do have, not allowing it to deteriorate, and maintaining my practice of hearing about Krishna.

Sometimes devotees worry more about setting an example for others than in developing honest faith. It is obviously less than sincere "or should I say, true to oneself "to behave in some way simply so others may have a standard to follow. It is important to set a good example, because many householders (and others) in this movement don't read or chant their *japa* at the best time of day. I want to set a better example than that. Because I am a *sannyasi* and a spiritual master. But that shouldn't be the most personal reason to follow regulated *sadhana*.

I'm afraid of death because it's the final gateway to "what? The atheists say it's extinction. I have been taught that one personal life ends and a new one begins. Thus I don't want to misspend this life by not progressively working for a more spiritual next life. That's one reason I practice regulated *sadhana*. By regulated I don't mean that I force myself to read for long, timed periods (my physical and mental powers are too diminished for that), but I chant at least my prescribed rounds and read whenever I get the chance "a half hour here, fifteen minutes there, twenty minutes there. I try to focus my mind on Krishna while doing these things. The main thing is to return to the book or the beads "those direct links to our remembrance of Krishna "before too long.

There is no other way to understand the importance of statements like, "Before anything was created, Lord Narayana existed," and, "Lord Krishna is the origin of Lord Narayana."

"The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are fully devoted to My service, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss from always enlightening one another and conversing about Me." (Bg. 10.9)

"Devotees of the Supreme Lord are twenty-four hours daily engaged in glorifying the qualities and pastimes of the Supreme Lord. Their hearts and souls are constantly submerged in Krishna, and they take pleasure in discussing Him with other devotees."

Srila Prabhupada defined twenty-four-hour glorification of Krishna not just as constant sitting with a book or musical *kirtana* party but also by working in various ways for Krishna's mission of reclaiming fallen souls. Krishna included the struggle and "fight."

"In the preliminary stage of devotional service they relish the transcendental pleasure from the service itself, and in the mature stage they are actually situated in love of God."

I find this statement attractive. It leaves me hoping that our meditation on Krishna will always increase as our affection for Him increases. Our meditation is not contingent on how much work we do as we grow older but on the feelings that that dedicated work begins to engender. As we perform concentrated devotional service, our dedication will move from love of the service activity itself to love of God. The Lord Himself will become the center of our existence. Our prescribed work should be moving us toward that goal.

So let me ask, "Is this my reality? Is this why I live through this succession of quiet days? Am I making progress? Am I setting a good example?" If anyone knows about us, it is ourselves, but only if we practice self-examination. Whether we live apart and alone or in the midst of many devotees, we must set aside time to look at ourselves objectively. Social life can distract us from our inner purposes, so we must take time to retreat into ourselves and have an honest look.

* * *

I dreamt I won a championship fight on two successive nights, because the opponents weren't aggressive. On the third night, I told my opponent that I had no more fight in me. I wanted to do something else now. I wanted to be more creative.

* * *

4:29 a.m.

Nihil obstat. These words appeared in a dream. I thought they were Latin. They were in my own writing. I took them to mean "no objection." Does this mean the Lord offers no objection to my method of writing? What is that methodless method? It is to write what I can, to enter the water of writing each time with no plans. I don't even want to call it improvisation. I call it writing by writing. Call it worship of Krishna by writing, my main method of service. The writing needs no other form. It tries to speak, it tries to rise out of the water and fly like a swan. *Nihil obstat*, there are no obstacles. I can go ahead; I have the green light.

Obstat looks like "obstacle," *nihil* like "annihilate." We say no to obstacles; we annihilate them. Because we have taken Krishna's permission. Krishna has given each of us free will. It is eternal, just as we are eternal. We have often misused that free will, but

now Srila Prabhupada has taught us how to use it properly. I am beginning to use it more and more spontaneously.

No obstacle. I have been granted a year's residence in this country. I don't have to leave. Go on writing. Go on living this way. No one has stopped me. Krishna says to go ahead. Therefore, write better and more. How? Will Sarasvati, the goddess of learning, teach me some art I don't yet know? Or will I just go along like this? Will Krishna let me be a writer of something more wonderful? Or does He think I would become proud if I received more power? He will do what is best for me. I trust Him like that. That means He will bring me by the quickest and safest route to His lotus feet, under Srila Prabhupada's guidance. Yes, Lord, from my tiny free will to Your infinite independent will, I salute You and beg You to rescue me. Please take care of this soul. I will not be able to guide myself. I need Your guidance. I don't want to claim independence. I don't want to rebel.

Srila Prabhupada said (I heard it this morning in a Bombay lecture given in early January, 1975) that we have fallen. We have misused our free will. There is a history to it, but we can't trace it out. Therefore, *anadi karma-phale*: even from before the creation we had karma. Now we want to revive our original Krishna consciousness and destroy the criminality that has brought about our imprisonment in the material world.

Dear radha and Govinda look very beautiful. While dressing and bathing Them, I heard *Lalita-madhava*. It was the scene where Krishna takes the place of a sapphire Deity. Radha is not completely satisfied with the statue. She wants the real Krishna. This brings Deity worship to mind. Unlike Radha's desires, which are unique, we're told that Krishna and the *murti* are nondifferent and that we should be fully satisfied with the *murti*. It is not a statue, not a "play doll." It is actually Krishna. My mind is able to accept this.

Sometimes doubts come though. I remember as a young boy we had very small metal statues of people engaging in winter sports. It was part of the scene we made every year at the base of our Christmas tree. A round mirror became an ice pond, and cotton batting became snow. Newspapers balled up under the cotton formed a hill. We placed metal figures on sleighs down the hill; others were skating. Sometimes when I handle radha and Krishna, my mind flashes back to those little metal figures, or to plastic cowboys and Indians. That's all right. That doesn't change the fact that *murti* worship is transcendental and that it is very good for an old man like me to worship the all-beautiful Couple in this way. It is not foolish. It is far more advanced than to worship the Absolute without form. Let them laugh at us "playing with dolls." We shall follow the example of the greatest *acaryas*, especially the followers of Lord Caitanya. Almost every single one of them worshiped their own Deity of Krishna, Radha-Krishna, or Govardhana-Sila.

* * *

Chant, he said, and we do. How much longer will we celebrate the '66 anniversary?

* * *

5:15 a.m.

I used think there weren't distinct seasons in Ireland, but after being here for some time, I'm beginning to see them. I had been equating change of season with the change of temperature, as happens in North America, but in Ireland, spring moves into summer and summer to fall, without much variation in temperature. The foliage, however, undergoes the same changes as it does in the Northeast United States. Trees lose their leaves in winter, buds form in early spring and burst open in early June. In fact, the foliage here is fuller because Ireland has so much rain. Right now, the lane leading to the house is like a tunnel with the arching trees overhead. The roadside ditches and banks are layered with different species of tall weeds. This morning I can hear the roadside stream, but I can no longer see it, because the grasses have grown tall enough and full enough to cover it. Mist low and rain blowing sideways through the valley.

* * *

Nihil Obstat
& No objection to whatever they
put out I'll find my way
in Krishna consciousness
hear it in "Laura"
music piped in
to the battleship or
office "wherever I may find myself
working next life "or worse.

* * *

I'll find my Krishna and dust Him
off, I mean, my forgotten Krishna
consciousness. I'll
clean it from the modes
the dross
but *nihil obstat*
there are no real obstacles.

* * *

Ahaituki apratihatah the
sincere ones find their way
as Krishna reaches out to them
Reminding them, "There are no obstacles.
Just come to Me
by the movement
of your own will.

Start with just your little finger but
begin to surrender. "

* * *

8:20 a.m., No Series

If I don't wear a hat, then Srila Prabhupada shouldn't wear a hat. If I don't frown . . . But he's free to frown. If I don't read the *New York Times* book review pages, that's better, more monklike. And I don't mean to imitate ancient-day Coptic monks. But they did have some good ideas. For example, don't become angry.

No series means no theme or logo. Words should count, though. What's the purpose of a no-meaning phrase?

Like?

Like clout equals women who wielded trim at the lectern. These days, the women as husband servants simply won't fly.

No, that has meaning. Try again.

Okay. Fear Kenneth Fearing at the helm; red Barber in the catbird seat awreet.

That too I understood clearly.

Anyway, I don't mean to drive myself into a frenzy of no-meaning. I am only talking about free expression, free form, freedom from form. Clear the town so our men can operate. Let's be realistic. Pacific broadcast. If I do slide into incoherent, illogical stuff, it could reveal a deeper strata in the unconscious.

It's a recorded testimony. Like maybe a pseudo-calligraphy abstract I do in ink. It looks interesting, has motion, color, randomness "you see, I believe in God and His intelligence behind all things, even chaos. An apparently random creation *could* show "look, here is God's creation close to the raw without me imposing my own meanings on it. Here is what the monkey (me) did when his hand moved without preaching-preaching his own conception of what needed to be said. Line these words up tightly, one next to the other, in a row from left to right and cement them in with that trowel of a pen. Explore.

I got up after an hour in bed.

How is your head?

Not sure. Is it wrong to avoid pain? My obvious motivation in doing so is to stay active in chanting and hearing. Pain sometimes feels like an unnecessary *tapasya*. Oh, but to accept it as coming from Krishna for my good is a high state, and to remain joyful and in touch with the truths of all suffering people "in touch with them humanly. That's mentioned in discussions on poverty (a kind of suffering) "that the poor person, *if* he is also compassionate, can feel the pinpricks others experience because he knows them himself.

Yet still I see myself trying to avoid pain, me, who am governed by the threat of daily pain. I remind myself of an ox forced to work under its driver. After the ox is trained, the driver doesn't have to actually inflict pain to make the ox obey but simply show the stick.

Discussing the value of pain has come again because a friend read Etty Hillesum and appreciated that she learned to pray and accepted the trauma of her life in the face of the

Nazis as God's way with her. Etty prayed, felt God's presence, and not only endured but transcended resentment, fear, and hatred. She transcended the void of victimization and instead depended upon Him. She actually felt His presence. My friend said he too would like to be like that and not run away from his pain. I ask myself, am I cheating myself every time I take a painkiller?

* * *

9:00 a.m.

"Simply by appreciating the dealings of the Lord with His pure devotees, one can attain salvation. The Lord's dealings with His devotees appear to be ordinary human dealings, but one who knows them in truth becomes at once eligible to go back home, back to Godhead." (*Bhag.* 1.16.16, purport) Lord Krishna was everything to the Pandavas, including guru, messenger, and loving friend. When he contemplated this, Maharaja Pariksit became "overwhelmed with devotion to the lotus feet of the Lord."

This is a reading and writing session, so let's have a little control. Bring the mind back from other things. Let's look for faith as we hear these scriptural accounts. The correct attitude and its reward is summed up in Bg. 4.9: "One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna." What I want to ask in these notes is what about me and *my* faith? I believe, I believe, but how deep, how true, and how much further can I go?

When Maharaja Pariksit met the earth personified as a cow, she told him of her good fortune when Krishna appeared and walked on her surface, and of her current misfortune now that He had disappeared. She mentioned that she had been marked with the impressions of His lotus feet. "But at the end, when I felt I was so fortunate, the Lord left me." (*Bhag.* 1.16.33) Srila Prabhupada comments that the Supreme Lord "can be present with us if we want Him at all." We simply have to become attached to His devotional service "hearing, chanting, remembering, etc.

"There is nothing in the world with which the Lord is disconnected." So link with Him through offenseless service, and through His sound representation, the holy name.

At the end of his life, Maharaja Pariksit took shelter of Sukadeva Gosvami and "thus he was able to understand the actual position of the Personality of Godhead." (*Bhag.* 1.18.3) We must understand the spiritual energy before we can leave the material energy. To know Krishna through Vedic study is difficult, but that difficult object is easily achieved through the spiritual master's mercy. ". . . those who have dedicated their lives to the transcendental topics of the Personality of Godhead, of whom the Vedic hymns sing, and who are constantly engaged in remembering the lotus feet of the Lord, do not run the risk of having misconceptions even at the last moment of their lives." (*Bhag.* 1.18.4) That's the answer to the final exam. Death is so rough that it's hard to remember the sublime Lord, but a submissive disciple learns to remember Him in life and is not disappointed at death.

* * *

9:55 a.m.

"I wanna go back to Godhead," says one man in the blue ink cartoon. The other, shorter man says, "Me too." Quick lines. Will I analyze them now? No, better I not tell you the secret details of how it was composed. rather, let's look out at the full, green trees and hills.

Kr sent me rain pants and a jacket, "perfect for Irish weather," from the L. L. Bean catalogue. All right, I'll wear them. The only thing that will get wet now is my beadbag. Maybe when it's pouring rain, I'll have to keep it in a pocket. I can't seem to chant without counting the rounds.

Maharaja Pariksit didn't waste a second of those last seven days. We say, "Yes, but I have a lot more time than that, and I'm still in the service mode of my life. When Maharaja Pariksit was serving as emperor, he had to know about the world's military and political activities, because that was his service to Krishna. I too need to know all the details of life that affect my service." I'm a writer (I say). It may do me good to look at the *New York Times* book reviews.

No, no.

It just isn't necessary. Whatever I have, I have. Whatever I've gained by exposing myself to the world and its literature is enough. What else is there to gain but distraction from pure concentration on God?

Narrow. Keep walking. Keep looking through the Krishna conscious viewpoint. Although it's also true that there is nothing not connected with the Lord.

Hare Krishna.

Maharaja Pariksit.

Sukadeva Gosvami. I am choosing verses and purports that I want to read for my slow-down study. Not that I intend to read every verse and purport that appears. This is not a read-through-as-quickly-as-possible plan. Something slower, to give myself an optimum chance to stay, be attracted to, and worship the Lord and His associates. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare.

Sigh. Blossoms and the dear green trees. This very world we'll have to leave. Kr said he knew he had left Ireland and returned to the U.S. when he landed at Logan Airport and asked a cop for directions; the cop was short and curt. Beth remembers Ireland as safe. Yeah, but none of us are ultimately safe, and we can't live anywhere forever. Best, then, to live where our work is, whoever we are.

* * *

Krishna, Krishna. May I press on here, press through. In less than an hour, I'll do the Prabhupada *puja*. I don't have a headache. I must do something Krishna conscious and befitting while I have the chance. This page will have to do.

And by the way, this morning's apricot jam was just peachy.

"Why don't you do more in your Krishna conscious life? You ought to read and chant more, see people, and go out and preach." Imagine me telling that to the man who made the apricot jam. How could he respond? His job is to make jam.

But I thought a *sadhu* was a cutter-through. He doesn't have to give a damn about their feelings.

Yes, that's true too.

So blow, wind, clouds, and let us keep the earth. Lord Hari, let me be with You. Let me find You in the right words, in this day's quiet.

Who is trying to escape pain? Do you want to talk more about that? Do you want someone to validate your present attitudes?

No, but I do note that only a few years ago I seemed more resigned to intense pain. I didn't take painkillers at all. I thought they were "out." Now I have devised a game plan whereby I use them in a limited way. And when I was enduring pain more, I didn't find myself morally superior to how I am now.

I want to talk with M. about this, but I'm afraid he'll hint that living in pain *is* morally superior. Isn't that what Therese of Lisieux did? She offered her pain to God, called it the greatest joy. St. Francis of Assisi also defined perfect joy in terms of feeling abused and rejected. Am I trying to be comforted or comfortable in this world? And when I am pain-free, do I use my time well enough?

I used to think pain was a kind of training for the pain of death, but who will be ready for death no matter what they do? When death comes and we feel that it's best not to shield ourselves from it "or when no such shield is available "then I can remember my past naked facing of pain and face pain again. For now, I want to be free of it.

* * *

2:28 p.m.

There are certain advantages in the age of Kali despite all the vices and diminishment of spiritual quality. In this age, we are awarded the results of our mental pious acts and don't receive reactions for sins committed only in the mind. Aside from those two dispensankirtanad eva Krishnasya, mukta-sangah param vrajet. The *Bhagavatam* states: "Those who are desirous of achieving complete perfection in life must submissively hear all topics that are connected with the transcendental activities and qualities of the Personality of Godhead, who acts wonderfully." (*Bhag.* 1.18.10).

Please, Lord, come into my life in truth and fact. I have just seen another episode in the "Abhay" series, and again I feel as if I am a character in a movie and my surroundings are the props and scenery. I also have a viselike headache. My pen is scratching. I play the part of an aging *sadhu*, a Western disciple of His Divine Grace Abhay Caranaravinda Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. I have grown old in ISKCON's service. I am now living out my life in footage of unusually sharp color contrasts. The screenplay was written by a hack. I look up in the video and say, "It seems to me that I have been here before. Oh well, let me finish my writing quota. Thus I will serve Gurudeva to the end of my days. I could not attain the jewel of *Krishna-prema* "I made so many mistakes, and now my body is old and infirm "but my guru mercifully maintains me. Let me turn up the gas lamps and continue writing until the pain forces me to stop. I am no hero."

Narrator: Thus thinking to himself, the old *brahmana*, formerly a *mleccha*, wrote his personal notes in separation from his great teacher, and this is what transpired. On the pretext of a dream . . .

* * *

4:08 p.m.

My head won't allow me to write on through this day. I could I guess do something to forget I have a body, or I could just try to be happy despite it. I could hear something transcendental. M. said he would read to me, but I can't listen properly "the pain is too distracting. Better I rest and hope it wears off. There's always another tomorrow.

Krishna consciousness "nothing disconnected.

June 10, 12:10 a.m.

"To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me." (Bg. 10.10)

Srila Prabhupada: "One should know that the goal is Krishna, and when the goal is assigned, then the path is slowly but progressively traversed and the ultimate goal is achieved." If despite having a bona fide spiritual master and being attached to a spiritual organization, we are "not intelligent enough to make progress, then Krishna from within gives [us] instructions so that [we] may ultimately come to Him without difficulty." This doesn't mean Krishna has to give His full *darSana* or speak in a voice we can necessarily hear, but He will convey His help in one way or another. Whatever help we receive is coming directly from Him. Through intelligence, through soul, through body, through other people, through all and any "the *Bhagavatam*, the soles of our feet, the earth, our suffering, the moon "it is Krishna giving *buddhi*.

This is not mere imagination or a sentimental wishing (*prakrta-sahajiya*) practice. Still, sometimes we feel the world void in Krishna's absence and we beg Him to appear. "The qualification is that a person always engage himself in Krishna consciousness and with love and devotion render all kinds of services. He should perform some sort of work for Krishna, and that work should be with love."

So "it" may not have happened to me yet, but I read these scriptural statements and take inspiration. Why should I deny that I too can receive the mercy? It is already obvious that Krishna *is* helping me in so many ways. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to move an inch. At least a bit of His light enters my heart.

And my work is blessed. I don't write out of mad false ego. "He should perform some sort of work for Krishna and that work should be with love."

It is not completely pure? Then I pray for purity.

God helps us through direct inspiration; He is the *caitya-guru*. Don't say, "Oh, when?" Assume He's helping us now and thank Him for it. Thus show yourself worthy to receive more.

When we work, we think of finishing a little more "reaching a quota or finishing a job. That steam is coming from Krishna. He moves our hands, let's the work become accomplished, gives us the coherence to express ourselves, and reminds us in so many

ways that nothing is outside of Him. That which we perceive as disconnected is our own illusion. Our free will allows us to steer ourselves deeper into that kind of disconnected darkness, away from intelligible exchange with Krishna, or to steer ourselves toward shelter at His lotus feet, but wherever we go it is Krishna's domain. Even madness, despair, and asuric rantings are within Krishna's domain. That is truth.

Devotional service is light. "Only by devotional service is the Supreme Truth, Krishna, pleased, and by His inconceivable energy He can reveal Himself to the heart of the pure devotee. The pure devotee always has Krishna within his heart; and with the presence of Krishna, who is just like the sun, the darkness of ignorance is at once dissipated. This is the special mercy rendered to the pure devotee by Krishna." (Bg. 10.11, purport)

So it happens to the pure devotee, not to a *karmi* or *yogi*. I'm eligible, although I am not absolutely pure, because I am not a *karmi* or a *yogi*. I may be a reject devotee, lower than a snake, or whatever, but I am connected by devotional service to Krishna's Srila Prabhupada, and through him, to all pure devotees.

Srila Prabhupada writes that we have been contaminated by the dust of materialism for millions of births, but *ceto-darpana-marjanam*, *bhava-maha-davagni-nirvapanam*: "The ultimate goal, Visnu, can be attained only by this chant and by devotional service." Hare Krishna, O Krishna. Let us give ourselves to chanting.

* * *

4:31 a.m.

Tired again, and I feel a strain at the back of my neck where it has to hold up the weight of my head. Inside, things aren't flowing so smoothly either. I have that sensation I call fog or vise. I could call them other names too. I no longer have that feeling "lightness of health" which I took for granted for so many years. Being young and healthy is like being a god; you tend to be careless about it and have no idea how to protect and spend your wealth. Now I know how to use physical well-being, but I don't have it.

Of course, we disciples of Srila Prabhupada did spend our youth well, but we were also reckless. We burned the flame for his mission, going out, traveling around the world, staying up reading each new volume of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Caitanya-caritamrta* as it came off the press, living with the inevitable austerities in India and in ISKCON in general. We lived in communes and tolerated all kinds of stresses, as if they required no effort at all. I can't do any of those things now. When I hear that another Godbrother's health has collapsed, I wonder why we continue to burn ourselves out so fervently. In the long run, it doesn't increase what we can do for Srila Prabhupada. Or at least that's what it seems to me.

* * *

Waving the incense in circles before each Deity and picture. Heard the beginning of the ninth act of *Lalita-madhava*, the story of Radha and Krishna in Nava-Vrndavana. She longs to see Her dear ViSakha. How nice to think of Radha's love for Her friends, which She feels even when She is in Krishna's direct association. Krishna assures Her

that ViSakha is still alive and practicing asceticism in order to meet Radha again. They won't meet again until Radha receives the Syamantaka jewel.

This morning I gave myself fifteen minutes to paint with ink pens and brushes, first on an A5-sized paper, then on 20"x26" sheets taped to the wall. I made quick marks and dabs, thinking of Sanskrit and Japanese calligraphy. I wondered, however, where the explicit Krishna consciousness would come from. On one sheet I wrote the initials "EJW," but it looked like subway graffiti, not art. Never mind. Write "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare." Keep going while you have light and life.

* * *

I wanted to write lines
poems with
correct grammar
but I forget how
to do all that
school fool
too late for me
too feeble
too much
pain.
I am my headaches
and they are me.

* * *

Someone said I needed to get married
and get a job
at sixty! Don't I get some
senior justice?
No, they wanted me to work
to get real, they said,
but I refused and chanted and chanted
then saw I couldn't do that either
except in small installments.

* * *

I got back my original *Bhagavatams*
gilt pages from when I was a big shot
I remember reading them with
faith and ecstasy
lecturing with simple scholarship "
whatever Prabhupada said "I accepted and repeated
it all.

* * *

I want to write lines and odes
and I can because I have a little time still
and words and a typewriter and anyway
I'm a writer. The world needs
Krishna consciousness even mine
even if they are indifferent
and I am so poor I have to steal.

* * *

And let there be roses! A garden in the front yard! I will walk around the house and see it. I have no other chance but to beat out those mantras and eat those breakfasts and lunches and get those headaches and take those pills and then lie down when I must. I have no other choice but to get that mail and slit it open and reply what I'm conditioned to say: "Let all be Krishna conscious, but none should be clones. Give your real self to Krishna."

I want to go back to Godhead to play with Krishna, but only when I have renounced the world and love to serve my guru in any situation. Only then can I swim in the ecstasy of *bhakti*. Remember that word? I recited it after him in September '66: *Bhakti . . . vedanta . . . Swami . . .* and watched him give birth to me as he chanted on my red wooden beads.

* * *

Turn To You
& Now I'm back at it/ and you my
friend did I forget you,
who you were how dear
you are to Krishna?

* * *

I did forget thinking only of
myself. But I can turn to
you
oh boy this is good
I've got some light
life still
I can walk and talk.

* * *

Love words like
love (mean to me)

Krishna and that sort of
thing heaven guy, woman
transcendental movie goer.

* * *

You can string a garland of
lotus
words
you can direct your attention
please to the center ring of
this here circus where the
man was injured when his
cape caught fire "

* * *

But now we've got to run along. "

* * *

Just to Friends
& Just friends the sky and hill
and me and Emily and anyone
I stole from and quoted

* * *

all the profs and maids
and toughs
and nickel bags five spots
black spots
broken limbs still ache

* * *

Navy days cold March
hard heart
hold . . .

* * *

I do confess Father
I committed some petty
wastes and worse
I wanted warmed

and warned

* * *

my old man, my mom
six strings
the version I wanted to
sell.

* * *

Break into print college
mag. Oh oh
your sharp elbows can't
even bring yourself to make a conquest
have to be helped in
or I was trained that way.

* * *

You bet I'll never tell
this at the altar but
here I do
just to friends . . . "

* * *

8:20 a.m., No Series

Think over what you'd like to do and what you must do as duty. Then measure that against what you are able to do. And what you don't feel like doing. I pretty much don't feel like doing much right now. Let me give myself a gentle prod in the right direction. Slowly, gradually, cover this page with print.

Is it wisdom to see through everything? No, that's just jaded, cynical, tired vision. Better to be fresh and enthusiastic, and to find hope and purpose in Krishna conscious actions and exchanges.

Now consider that God is present in you, in life. "Oh, so what?" the tired self replies. "I'm not prepared to meet Him just now. I'm too tired and headache-prone for such a momentous event." You talk about stress from good-but-vigorous activities. Meeting God is in that category, right? Then *when* will you want to meet Him? Only at midnight when you open the *Bhagavatam*? See how foolish that sounds? He's with you intimately *all* the time. He knows you are tired. "Try a little tenderness," says the old pop song. A gentle touch. The Bible says God comes in a soft, whispering wind. Lord Krishna comes in any way He likes. Krishna is the life force.

* * *

9:12 a.m.

A box of early-edition *Srimad-Bhagavatams* have arrived via sea mail. A dozen books are missing from the set. Many of the books are the very ones I read when they first came out in the 1970s. I'm hoping to pick up the flavor of that enthusiastic study I used to enjoy. Srila Prabhupada in his books. "Did you read the latest *Bhagavatam* volume?" I read them as soon as they came out.

The books are a bit sticky and mildewed. I wiped them with a sponge and dried them off with a cloth. The sages said to Suta Gosvami, "May you live many years and have eternal fame, for you are speaking very nicely about the activities of Lord Krishna, the Personality of Godhead. This is just like nectar for mortal beings like us." (*Bhag.* 1.18.11) They admitted that they were becoming blackened by the soot from their sacrificial fire and were uncertain of its results, "but we are factually pleased by the nectar of the lotus feet of the Personality of Godhead, Govinda, which you are distributing." (*Bhag.* 1.18.12) Srila Prabhupada writes that hearing *Krishna-katha* has this good effect. "One can feel this practically, as one can feel the result of eating food. Spiritual realization acts in that way."

I don't feel it so dramatically, but if hearing and chanting were taken away from me (I pray that never happens), I'd miss them immensely. And I'd be open to *maya*. If I were to stay away from *sadhana* long enough, I would lose my natural discipline for it and become covered again with the dust of materialism. Then it would be hard to break through again. Chanting produces chanting, hearing perpetuates hearing, and if for no other reason, I must continue so that neither practice slips away from me. My life finally has substance. I'm determined to keep it, even if my body is blackened by the smoke of doubt and error.

Pure devotees are factually liberated even while in the material world. They are not *yosit-sangi*, attached to sex and other forms of material enjoyment, but *bhagavata-sangi*, always in the association of the Supreme Lord's name, fame, qualities, and pastimes.

Govinda is the shelter of all living beings and the reservoir of enjoyment. Those who relish topics about Govinda are never satiated. I realize this on a tiny scale. I feel the trickle of *bhakti*, and I pray it never stops flowing into my life. But why only a trickle? Straw must be clogging my system.

* * *

9:54 a.m.

White blossoms outside the window. Chilly white cloud covering the entire sky. I feel a little opening in this morning's head fog. Quick, you can stop being the self-pitying weary man for a while.

Today I won't get to see "Abhay," because M. is leaving for Dublin at the time when we usually watch it. A few devotees want to turn this yard from a construction site into at least a wild garden.

Self-pity. Is that an indulgence in weakness or materialism?

Anyway, don't be overly afraid of your own feelings. I can start with self-pity and, who knows where it will take me? Scaffolding is like that.

And I give my pain reports because I want to be a friend to anyone else out there who might be suffering. I hope we can all find an easy way to be with Krishna. Pain keeps us close to the ground of Krishna consciousness. That's what the firemen say when you're in a burning building full of smoke: Stay close to the ground and crawl toward shelter.

Today was a good day, actually. I sneaked past the head guard, got in my quota, and stayed with Krishna, even when not counting mantras on beads. Was I dizzy? Yes. What was it like? Pain and tenderness toward self "grist for the mill."

"May you live a long time," the sages blessed Suta. Well, that's good to hear. Then he can go on lecturing for years.

But every mortal has to wind up eventually. Even the so-called immortals in the heavenly planets have to fall to earth and act within the mortal scope. We may get fame after we die, and that fame may later ebb. Dated. That sort of thing.

O fellow countrymen, think tenderly of me. A person who lives an obscure life has a chance that his poetry may last a thousand years. But what good does that do the person who wrote it? He still has to move on to another life, leaving his poet identity behind. He may not even take birth again on the same planet or in the same universe. And he will never hear of the effect he has had on the people as if it is his own contribution. Therefore, don't live for temporary fame in this world but live for the eternal, for pleasing Krishna and guru. In this life, give the best you can.

* * *

I'm hooked on wearing eyeglasses "can't do without them. JS was trying to get back his sight. They say we are too dependent on all sorts of things and are hooked on consumerism. They suggest we stand on our own feet and be people who can live without the infrastructure, even if we are Hare Krishnas. Go on strike, protest, go out in London and block traffic. Don't use computers or laser printers, and don't publish books.

Hey, how far can you get with that? As for me, I have to chant Hare Krishna with the teeth I got from the lab and all my postdatums. Don't worry; remember Krishna and the good effect will come.

* * *

11:24 a.m.

Sycamore tree "polly noses" blossoming. Later, they'll fall down like helicopters. We used to place them over our noses. When M. came into the room, I showed him the view of the sycamore through the skylight. He said he would have to cut the branches that hang over the roof because the leaves are bad for thatched roofs. What? Big limbs have already been lopped off this tree because they were in the roofers' way. Now more?

I tried to save the tree. I said, "That tree isn't on our property. It's on the farmer's side."

"Yes, but we have a right to cut branches that extend over to our property. That's the way it is," he says. Sorry, but that's the world we live in. He wasn't about to compromise. The branches and leaves have to go because he doesn't want them falling on his roof. Couldn't he just brush them off? I guess not. They get right into the thatch and cause trouble of some sort.

The almost-noon sky is a marble blue with a half-covering of fluffy white clouds. But I see that blue disappearing already and the rain moving in.

* * *

12:25 p.m.

How fast times passes. I'd like to maintain a continuous thread throughout the day, and not have to jump back into the writing and forget where I was going only an hour ago. Then write more.

But my thumb aches and I have run out of things to say. Or perhaps I am *ashamed* to say what is actually on my mind.

I saw a review of a book by Newt Gingrich. The reviewer said that it's typical of politicians to write a little confession, a little humility, a little candidness (without *really* being candid), and that the whole presentation is self-serving. I suppose I'm better than Gingrich, but maybe not. After all, he's a politician and I'm a "*sadhu*." I expect more from me, at least.

* * *

2:27 p.m.

"O Suta Gosvami, you are a learned and pure devotee of the Lord because the Personality of Godhead is your chief object of service. Therefore please describe to us the pastimes of the Lord, which are above all material conception, for we are anxious to receive such messages." (*Bhag.* 1.18.15)

Both speaker and audience have to be qualified. Whatever Prabhupada says must be true, although it may take us time to understand his words fully. We want to follow the example he set of full faith in the spiritual master. If something doesn't sit right with us, if it seems forceful or not *necessarily* true, we can rest with it, quiet our minds, and wait to understand it. In the meantime, continue hearing.

I don't usually have a problem with what Prabhupada says. In rare instances my mind seems to revolt. I have seen, however, that all questions are solved in time. Our Srila Prabhupada became doubtful when his spiritual master ordered a snake killed, but years later, he heard the Seventh Canto verse confirming that a saintly person takes pleasure when an envious serpent is killed.

"Sri Suta Gosvami said: O God, although we are born in a mixed caste, we are still promoted in birthright simply by serving and following the great who are advanced in knowledge. Even by conversing with great souls, one can without delay cleanse oneself of all disqualifications resulting from lower births." (*Bhag.* 1.18.18) Lord Caitanya elevated many lowborn souls. Srila Prabhupada too "and to an unprecedented degree, establishing Krishna consciousness in the lands of the *mlecchas*. We must learn the science of Krishna consciousness by hearing from authorities, "and when one preaches the science, he becomes still more qualified."

I converse with Srila Prabhupada. I want him to continue to mold me. My education is far from complete. He is still able to teach me in his books as well as through the transcendental science of separation.

One who chants the holy names of Ananta is free from all sins or defects of low birth. Srila Prabhupada states that one who chants under the direction of a pure devotee chants without offense. I think I'm still committing offenses. For example, I am not perfectly attentive. "Since His name and He Himself are identical, the holy name of the Lord can protect the devotee from all effects of sins." (*Bhag.* 1.18.19, purport) Let me try harder, with faith in the name. It's difficult, but perhaps not *so* difficult. It's just a matter of turning my attention to what I am doing.

* * *

3:45 p.m., No Series

Rain chased Ani and Uddhava from the work site. They plan to turn the wasteland and jungle-dump that surrounds this house now into a garden where I can walk. I'll reciprocate by maintaining nice Krishna conscious thoughts. I'll force my fingers along the beads, even when they are reluctant.

The house is quiet "M. gone. Almost *too* quiet. No mail to open, no one to talk to. I have a few hours. Already made my writing quota, my reading quota, so what now? Paint? The rain will keep me company.

To keep me company
God in my heart
I hope no one gets into a
car accident in the rain "I mean,
no one close.
Of course, I won't because
I'm here in my
easy chair.

* * *

I'm alone no harm and no deviation
walks through the kitchen
instead I read and
do no more. High tide
is at midnight.

* * *

The calendar says it's *purnima*
but I see no moon because of all
those clouds.
The calendar says 10
but I mark it only with
a blue or red check
depending on
the pain.

* * *

No series means a dog and a sheep may have to walk in the rain without shelter from sentence to sentence. God consciousness is their umbrella.

In autumn, the sycamore drops a honey that's so acidic it could go right through a car roof. Aniruddha told me that. That's why Madhu says the branches have to be cut. It's not the leaves or bees and birds, but the honey.

Ani also said they will build a wall to divide the garden and make it more secluded. But who has the composure to use it? What would I do back there with the branches hanging so low and probably loaded with midges? In winter it's cold and always raining. Maybe I will find a way, a time that makes sense. Maybe God will visit me in that garden. It could be a good setting for prayer. I'll take a tape recorder out there with me just in case.

No series.

* * *

4:51 p.m.

Read Cassian on the great virtue of discretion. Keep a monk's balance. My day is dedicated to an overall Krishna consciousness, but I can't be flooring the accelerator at every moment. Is there such a thing as an easy-going yet direct Krishna consciousness I could practice at times when I need to relax? Does my ankle feel up to a walk around the house? I could try out that new rain gear, guaranteed to keep me dry in severe rain storms. Will you take me out? Yes, why not? Chant *gayatri* first.

* * *

5:53 p.m.

Quieting down. Walked until it hurt. Didn't get wet in the rain. Saw where they laid down a sand outline for the garden wall. Couldn't see much else. Anyone might have a dip in his day. That's natural. Just keep the goal fixed and wait for the next productive upswing. O Suta, may you be blessed with long life. I can see why it's necessary to live long.

Somehow those sages were concerned for the entire world. Fortunately, they knew what would help people.

* * *

6:45 p.m.

Read in Cassian about nocturnal emission. He said even monks who are fasting and observing vows have this problem. It has three causes: overeating, carelessness with sinful tendencies, and the Devil's work. I pray none of the above plague me. Sometimes a monk who is proud of his chastity is humbled by such occurrences. Better we know our own frailty.

No idea yet for what I'll speak about on Sunday. I'm reading Bg. 10.10 - 11, but I've often spoken on those verses. Speak on *japa*? Me? Hypocrite.

June 11,12:08 a.m.

Dreamt I had a ticket on Alitalia Airline to go to Augustine, but Augustine where? The ticket agent asked me, but I didn't know. The agent was confident that he could help me. He recognized me as a devotee, and he was perhaps a devotee himself. But he didn't give me a departure gate. He said it was too early to tell me. Then I got lost. The other passengers were also tense. People *do* miss planes sometimes. What is the message of such a dream? Italy? Augustine?

Arjuna uvaca, param brahma param dhama, pavitram paramam bhavan: "Arjuna said: You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the ultimate abode, the purest, the Absolute Truth." (Bg.10.12) Srila Prabhupada: "Vedic injunctions affirm that only one who takes to devotional service to the Supreme Lord can understand Him, whereas others cannot. Each and every word of this verse spoken by Arjuna is confirmed by Vedic injunction."

Doubts? Who has doubts? Me? Doubts belong to doubters. Here's one: "Why should we believe *Bhagavad-gita* exclusively? There are many scriptures in the world that make similar or sometimes very different claims about the Absolute Truth. Are you trying to say that *Bhagavad-gita* is the only way? And why should you say that devotional service is the only way you can know God?"

Go ahead, make a quick reply.

The argument that you cannot know God unless you render Him service is valid. He's all-great and doesn't reveal Himself to speculators. As for other scriptures, they express the Absolute Truth from different viewpoints. God reveals Himself in different places according to time and place. This discussion is full of intricate details, but not all revelations reveal equal amounts of truth. In the end, if you want to know God, choose a path and follow it. If you are sincere, Krishna will reveal the way to know Him more fully in your heart.

"The *Mundaka Upanisad* confirms that the Supreme Lord, in whom everything is resting, can be realized only by those who engage constantly in thinking of Him. This constant thinking of Krishna is *smaranam*, one of the methods of devotional service. It is only by devotional service to Krishna that one can understand his position and get rid of this material body."

Free yourself of sins by associating favorably with the Supreme Pure. Surrender unto Him. Dive at His feet, dive into *that* ocean. It will hold you up. "Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and one should always meditate upon Him and enjoy one's transcendental relationship with Him."

Good-bye to all those who think Krishna is an ordinary person. Go with Krishna's devotees. So I didn't get exact directions to the departure gate. Never mind. Make the best of this awake situation and keep chanting.

* * *

I can write because I am alive. And how did I become alive? Srila Krishnadasa Kaviraja states that it's a wonder he can write at all, since he is so ill and feeble. Just

look how beautifully, intellectually, spiritually he wrote! It's a wonder *I* can write. But Krishna is the life force of my words. It's a wonder. The sentences won't end because my life hasn't run out. This is a testimony to Krishna's involvement in my life.

I want to train myself to write in a Krishna conscious way so that in my next life I can be a devotee. I know it can't be achieved by writing, but by writing as prayer.

A brother wrote to tell me that petitionary prayer is foolish, because God knows what is best for us. He said we should pray only to serve. But that too is a petition. All other petitions for a devotee are a variation on that one great petition. O Krishna, You do understand me already, and You already know what I want and need. Please let me know You as I write. I write because I'm alive, and I'm alive because You flow through me. Writing is how I witness to that fact. I write, therefore I am an aspiring devotee. That proves I'm not yet dead.

Now, let me not be desperate. O Krishna.

* * *

Japa automatic while
thoughts go elsewhere
I won't complain
please don't complain
please ask your master
did you forget?

* * *

Beg for attention
beg
for
attention
inhari-nama.

* * *

4:32 a.m.

The life force of my words is Krishna. Krishna is the life force of everything. I say "my" words, but I don't own them. They pass through me. By convention we say, "My house," "my head," "my soul," but a pure devotee thinks that whatever he has belongs to Krishna. *HrsikeSa hrsikena* . . . Krishna is the controller of the senses; *my* senses should be used in His service, *my* words should be used in His service. He provides me the power. If I take the power but don't serve Him with it, I am a thief. I will be punished. I will cheat myself.

I like this thought that Krishna is the life force (*prana*) of my words. The words become energized not by madness or the spinning of my mental wheels (in vain) but when they are used in devotional service. Devotional energy never diminishes. Whether I acknowledge it or not, my source of strength is Krishna. Prahlada Maharaja explained this to his father. When Hiranyakasipu demanded, "Where do you get your strength that

you're able to defy me?" Prahlada replied, "O best of the demons (*asurya-varya*), from the same place that you get your anger, dear father. Everything comes from the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

The devotees are happy to acknowledge that Krishna is the source of their abilities. That is a devotee's *vilasa*; his enjoyment is to serve Krishna. The demon howls in a vacuum and fails to acknowledge or love or even know God. O Krishna, please rescue me from that sort of life.

Radha and Krishna are wearing gold and soft purple today. I could not make Their clothes fit perfectly, but I did what I could. They do look beautiful. While I dressed Them, I heard how Krishna dealt with radha-Satyabhama and Rukmini-Candravali in *Lalita-madhava*. When He was caught in a lie, Nava-Vrnda came to His aid.

I did not offer Them wool *cadars* today, because Krishna has long sleeves and radha somehow didn't seem to need one. I thought Her dress was nice just how it was.

I heard M. drive in around 11 p.m. last night. I'll hear later how he did at his Wednesday night gig at Govinda's restaurant. Usually, few people come. Hare Krishna. And you will hear, dear reader, how I did in the fortune of raiment, the . . . what? You mean when you let go completely while painting with black this morning? When you no longer allowed the directing intelligence to say, "I'm a devotee, I will now say or do something according to the rules"? Instead, you lived for your occupation of expression and hoped that it would lead you firmly toward real devotion. When I notice myself going astray in some way, I always withdraw from the freedom and get back into regulative expression. But the freedom lets me see who I am. Am I devotee, or am I a devotee only when I'm on a leash?

M. also was supposed to have picked up a week's mail from our P.O. Box in Dublin. That means a little flood from the outside world will soon be arriving. That mail assures me that I'm not just enjoying myself without caring for others.

Krishna is the life force of my words. The written words appear to be silent. They are chosen in the silence of the mind and formed on the page. But whether spoken or written, they are words, *palabras*, *paroles*. They walk like abracadabras. They are like prisoners released on parole. On their word. His word, not mine. Our mother-tongue expressions. We have language because we need it. We find a common language because we wish to communicate. The singular one.

Compensation: he couldn't play football, so he learned to play with words. He couldn't make money, so he made words "lots of them. He didn't have children, so he became a prolific author. He couldn't manage men, so he learned to manage sentences.

But don't make word-making the cause of *stri*, expansion. Lord Caitanya prays, "I don't want *sundari*." *Sundari* may be translated as "women" or as "beautiful poetry." The Lord said He only wanted causeless devotional service life after life. Don't desire to be a poet but a *Krishna conscious* poet.

I want the reader and myself to be taken aback, breath stopped by the power of words. Yes, these are also Krishna's words, and they can be used to evoke our original God consciousness.

But I said poet and thought of peyote, then pot, cactus, and the roadrunner cartoons, Pecos Bill, *pesos*, Pier Gynt and peer pressure, Great Kills pier, old wooden planks, the boats tied up. The pier is a tough waterfront "Pier 6 at Tompkinsville. Pier One stores.

Tiers of a wedding cake. Krishna is the force that drives words. And He gives us discretion so we can make serviceable and clear what flows through us. He is the letters from A to Z, and all the concepts that they form and describe. We worship Him. Hare Krishna.

* * *

5:20 a.m.

Full moon in the morning sky. Amazing. It's light enough to read and see everything green, and it's not overcast today "yet there she is, the full moon. They say they have invaded her, but Prabhupada says it isn't possible. Can you see the rabbit on the moon? I see the moon's mottled expression.

* * *

8:25 a.m.

May news report arrived. India tested nuclear weapons, including the H-bomb. The U.S. told them to stop. Then India tested more nuclear weapons. The U.S. imposed sanctions; they withheld \$700,000,000 that had been headed India's way. Then Pakistan tested nuclear weapons. U.S. told them to stop or they would impose sanctions. Pakistan tested more weapons, the "Islamic bomb." India and Pakistan announced that they were not involved in an arms race.

Devotees don't usually like to hear about any diplomatic difficulties between the U.S. and India, since ISKCON has so many roots in both places. Americans serve in India, but I suppose ISKCON India would survive without them. Is it more difficult now to get visas for India? It doesn't seem to matter to me right now. But the escalation of nuclear weapons? Bad news. Perhaps Lord Sankarsana is warming up for destruction.

All those books "let me publish them before they blow up the planet. I prefer my books to explode with gentle power. We are a peace-loving movement.

Also in the news: a pistol the size and look of a key ring can get past the metal detectors in airports. More people killing people.

* * *

Why don't we go to the *Bhagavatam*? It's not topical like a newspaper, but it's still relevant. It's the transcendental cream of the *Vedas*.

"Self-controlled persons who are attached to the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna can all of a sudden give up the world of material attachment, including the gross body and subtle mind, and go away to attain the highest perfection of the renounced order of life, by which nonviolence and renunciation are consequential." (*Bhag.* 1.18.22) See? That's what I do. I'm a good guy "renounced, nonviolent, self-controlled, and Krishna conscious. I'm the kind of person the *Bhagavatam* recommends, right?"

Srila Prabhupada describes nonviolence as freedom from envy. This verse is talking about *paramahansas*, who are rare. They love every living being in relation with the Supreme Lord and they are totally dependent on God. Maybe that's not me after all.

"O *rsis*, who are as powerfully pure as the sun, I shall try to describe to you the transcendental pastimes of Visnu as far as my knowledge is concerned. As the birds fly in the sky as far as their capacity allows, so do the learned devotees describe the Lord as far as their realization allows." (*Bhag.* 1.18.23)

Oh, that's a good one. That describes me. I can't fly so high in God consciousness, but whatever I can do, the Lord appreciates and accepts. "Those who are thoroughly honest" appreciate it too. They don't find fault with my writing but encourage me instead. Yes, sir, this verse describes me flying in the sky up to those very low Wicklow mountains, rain or shine. I'm approved by the *Bhagavatam*.

No, no, this describes Suta Gosvami. "Factually only the Lord Himself can describe Himself, and His learned devotee can also describe Him as far as the Lord gives him the power of description."

I know I'm stretching a few meanings here and there, tiny reflection that I am.

Ha!

You

described in *Bhagavatam*

as one who describes the Lord

with only your partial ability?

That's me, all right, and don't

say it's not. I'm connected

by Prabhupada. I don't like

this world, I'm not violent,

I like swans

and I can

fly and

fly.

* * *

9:37 a.m., No Series

No, seriously. I talk of my little world of publishing while the world with its nuclear weapons goes mad. I want to build a sand castle, two matchbox houses, and a popsicle raft. And I don't want to hurt people.

Very well.

No series. So make art. Write a trilogy "one book every two years, carefully crafted, each one published by a major U.S. publishing house, the second volume winning a prize, and the publishers taking out a full-page ad in the *New York Times* when the third comes out.

Naw. We print a thousand and try to sell them over the years.

Madhu says he likes a wild garden. I'll accept whatever kind of garden they want to offer.

I asked for my *parikrama* boards and got them. The rest is up to them. I'll tell you about my low maintenance garden as it develops.

Insane old man, they could cut your work and character to pieces in the worldly newspapers with their journalistic eyes or objective truths. Be aware how much we

devotees live apart from that. We write for our own members to give ourselves culture and relief. That's all.

* * *

I can hear his voice
in my backyard or perhaps
I prefer no-voice but
a scratching pen rain
tinkling rain on a skylight.

* * *

Then a break, warm
human talk, a meal slid under
a door then back
to silence.
My next lecture?
God is great, sweet
something like that.

* * *

2:37 p.m.

The source of creativity is a mystery. It comes from God because everything comes from Him. Creativity is an especially sweet and potent way He can reciprocate with a devotee. How He does it I can't always say. He empowers some more than others. I write with my energy the way Arjuna had to exert his own body and mind to fight.

The darned twinge rose just after watching "Abhay" (episode ending with the young man refusing his diploma from Scottish Churches College). I tried to sleep, but couldn't. Took an Esgic at 2, and I'm still waiting for it to calm down before I do something as demanding as reading the *Bhagavatam*.

* * *

3:33 p.m., No Series

Still waiting. A knot of pain remains. I can't read right now but thought at least I would try to squeak out a couple of pages.

Amazing . . .

Spiderman.

Old times.

Scottish Churches.

Juty.

Mahadyuti.

In the film, we saw King Indradyumna repeatedly hearing the voice of God directing him what to do. He bowed and accepted it. I would too if I heard it like that. Sometimes Indradyumna spoke back humbly, then the Voice continued to order him.

My eye hurts, so let me stop here, although I haven't reached my quota.

* * *

He's gone to make some phone calls
I'm forced to "do nothing" as
if that's what I want, a
Taoist meditator,
as if I've done so much all my
life I deserve a rest.
Brain chatters
even when the body sits still.

* * *

She wrote me a letter and said,
"My mind can't control to hear
holy names." I said I know.
I said (some advice) you
just go on trying. Don't give up.
I said something better but can't
Remember it now.
Be still and see if the pain
will go down or continue.
Either way, Hare Krishna.

* * *

The rain is beating down heavily but the sun is shining. They are building the garden wall. Our central heating system was installed. I'm not ashamed to tell you that.

* * *

4:45 p.m.

Pain in a small area of head forces me to bed. I throw around some suggestions to my pain that it is free to leave at any time. I don't need it to warn me, but if it wants to be present, couldn't it shrink itself to a *very* small area and thus not be such a disturbance? The Esgic I took was useless. The same thing happened last week when I took a pill. Anyway, whatever you do, be a reverent sufferer. After all, I encouraged one correspondent to continue praying to Krishna, talking with Him, and feeling near Him. How dare I say such a thing? It's so private "something that goes on way inside a person. O Krishna, You are the life force of prayer "of all words.

Some saints joyfully embrace suffering. I find it annoying. There's something for me to learn there. This body is meant for pain.

* * *

8:31 p.m.

My persistent headache seems to have subsided, but I couldn't sleep. Will I be able to get up at midnight?

M. is out showing the Econoline to a prospective buyer. I thought the buyer might come up here, and that kept me awake. Now I realize M. met him at the schoolhouse.

Let me think about what I might lecture on in Dublin on Sunday. How about how *sastra* is axiomatic? Any science has axioms.

No, that's too argumentative.

A verse from *Bhagavad-gita* would be a good way to leap right in without having to prove anything. But which verse? Which topics? *sankirtana*.

Why not? This writing is *kirtana*. *Kirtana* means praising God. One should praise God by all one's activities. We usually don't think of that. If we think of God at all, it's to ask Him for something. A pure devotee doesn't maintain an order-supplier relationship with God. rather, a pure devotee simply loves and praises Him. Further, Krishna consciousness teaches that a devotee pleases Krishna so much that Krishna is willing to become his subordinate. And what does Krishna want for us? He wants us to be happy. Consider this verse. It's Friday tomorrow.

June 12, 4:26 a.m.

Missed the midnight rising and reading of *Bhagavad-gita* and the more thoughtful devotional writing that comes at that time. But this time is also nice. I also missed an hour of *japa*. Hurry along now to catch up. Hearing of radha and Krishna (and Madhumangala and Nava-Vrnda) in the cave as they look at pictures of the Divine Couple's Vrndavana pastimes. The artist was ViSvakarma, and He chose not to depict the Kaliya pastime, thinking it might disturb Srimati radharani. Madhumangala saw the picture of the wives of the yajnic *brahmanas* carrying a feast (with *jallebis* that curl like peacock feathers) and became hungry.

Sweet story. Krishna and radha agreed to be dressed in Their copper and gold outfit. Srila Prabhupada is wearing his gray *cadar*, which happens to be the first one I ever got for him.

Writing follows Krishna "is a by-product. Or writing (being myself) goes to Krishna and begs for eloquence, topics, metaphors. I have nothing to say unless He wills it. Perhaps He only grants me inferior babbling. Saying that He is the life force of my words should not be a proud statement, as if my words were king and Krishna the servant. All I mean is that I have no life in words or in anything else except what He gives me by His mercy.

In bed, I continued to think about what I might say on Sunday, but I didn't come up with a final decision. I don't want to bore them, going on and on about things we have already discussed a million times. Those things are always good to discuss and hear, but

I'm looking for a new twist on old information, something to push us over the edge in our thinking and surrender.

Only slowly did the room become dark last night. From 10:30 to 11, a single bird continued to sing. Madhu returned around 10 p.m. Somehow I was cheated of sleep. No one to blame. I value my regular schedule when I can follow it. How easily things get knocked out of place and finally abandoned.

* * *

Professor Stahl wrote to Prabhupada that undeniably the *Bhagavad-gita* does not teach constant *kirtana*. rather, it teaches other things, and that, sankirtana "praise God.

I am like Krishna's friend, Madhumangala, in one respect. I am always hungry, especially for sweets. Madhumangala receives *prasadam* directly from Mother Yashoda or Krishna, and he is the Lord's dear, funny friend. What is my place in Krishna's entourage? Even Lord Brahma could not enter the Vrndavana group, nor could Uddhava. They were attached to another relationship.

Sometimes a devotee wants to serve the Lord but insists on some personal facility. Is that why I left Srila Prabhupada's personal service? The devotees in Goloka seem to have the best position, yet they're willing to do anything for Krishna. If there is any interruption in the pastimes, they suffer great separation. One who is not prepared to give himself so totally to please the Lord can hardly say he's aspiring to become a Vrajavasi. We cannot live in Krishna's abode and be into our own thing.

I don't realize clearly even the first lesson of *Bhagavad-gita*: *nahanyate hanyamane Sarire*. I don't even know that I won't die, that I'm eternal. I'm no rare *mahatma* who knows that Krishna is everything. Yet I *can* know these things. Srila Prabhupada has taught them to us. Hare Krishna.

A devotee who is not yet initiated, and not even yet twenty years old, asked me if I could recommend a book on free-writing, or do I think he's not ready for that? I don't think I could recommend a book. If he got *Writing Down the Bones* and a senior devotee saw him with it, would he say his guru recommended it? rather, I'll tell him to simply write down what comes without censoring it. Don't be afraid of chaos in writing. Just go ahead and write.

But that's not good advice for a young man. He may get tempted by "the Devil," as the Christians say, and write things that titillate or anger him, or otherwise lead him into illusion.

Yet there is something to be gained by being able to write. One can be himself instead of a new *bhakta* who gets ordered around by all the temple big shots. Writing is good if it's done with pure motives in Krishna consciousness. I wrote some suggestions about how to keep a diary in *Ista-gosthi*. I'll tell him about that and give him some practical help. Or what kind of a guide are you, with your cheap words and free advice? Everyone, just chant Hare Krishna.

* * *

Dear Bhakta Emmanuel, free-writing is something that a devotee may not do as his main service, but it is sometimes good to do. Here is a sample: Be-bop-aroo (apologize

for that). You see, we should be grave and do things only that will help us at the hour of death. That means we have to be as Krishna conscious as possible. Stick as closely to the scriptures as possible. But we are human, after all, and need to relax every now and then, and we especially need to admit things about ourselves *to ourselves*. If we are feeling more and more resistance to certain Krishna conscious activities, we ought to ask ourselves why that is, then either remove the obstacle and continue the Krishna conscious duty or, if necessary, take on a different Krishna conscious duty. Writing can help us keep in touch with ourselves.

But free-writing is not only therapy and self-examination but wordplay "allowing things to come without planning them in advance. Chaos doesn't have a preconceived program.

Oh, but you thought nonsense was bad? Hmm. Here's another unpremeditated example for you, Bhakta Emmanuel:

Lewis Carroll thread.

My aunt Mamie begot twelve children and Mr. Paul asked the Swami, "I heard you had twelve, or was it twenty, children?"

"I never said that," the Swami replied. "You should hear from the person himself about himself."

Bhakta Hanuman lifted the stones from the path and threw them high in the sky. He also uprooted trees.

How is that possible? I couldn't. "I have only skinny arms," said Aniruddha, flexing his white-skinned muscles.

The pounding pickax disturbed me so much while I had a headache that I couldn't even hope to sleep. Anyway, the room was too bright. I went down and asked him to do something quieter. He welcomed the break. I told him I had a sharp headache and had taken a pill that didn't work. "Maybe Krishna doesn't want me to depend on chemicals. Thus He shows me that they don't always abort pain." This pain, however, wasn't of the most intense variety. Still, it was enough to cancel my day.

Henry Grimes "bedlam

boots the serious way
to undo oneself.

To be Krishna conscious

just press this button or
take this pill

and read through the purport with head in hands.

It's against Mayavadis.

Why, *kirtana*. Yes, that will be a good topic. I will peruse the minotaur and be the one to find Krishna within myself with my Swami's trust. It's as clear as a rainy day what I have to do. But I just can't.

* * *

I dreamt during a headache that I was in the Washington, D.C. temple. It wasn't a temple anymore, but we still owned the property. I was trying to sleep, just as in real life I was trying to sleep. Hridayananda Maharaja arrived late at night. I went out to see him.

He said he had come to speak with me because his headaches were getting worse and he didn't know what to do about them. We decided to speak at length in the morning.

Suddenly, a group of book distributors arrived, full of enthusiasm after a day selling Prabhupada's books. Their small group had collected three thousand dollars, and they began to tell wonderful stories about how they distributed the books.

Then I was lying on a bed. The leading *sankirtana* man came into the room and layed down beside me. He took up almost all the space. By then, Madhu had gone off with the van. I was angry with him, because it was the only place I could have slept. I went outside to look for the van, but ended up wandering in a dangerous neighborhood. After wandering around for awhile, I woke up.

* * *

5:54 a.m.

Walk on ankle to bridge. Green markers ahead show the outer limit. Then return.

Sheep on top of hay bales "seems to be a more comfortable spot than the bare ground. They look up when I chant loudly. Let them hear.

Nails in the homemade bombs of the Indian nationalists. "Bloody niggers," said the British police officer after he killed one. Abhay (in the film) practiced *ahimsa* and spoke up against violence. For awhile, he was interested in Gandhi's movement.

Sadhus are peaceful and don't harm even dumb creatures. *Brahmanas* never behave as *ksatriyas* unless there is an emergency. Do *brahmanas* advocate the *ksatriyas'* violence? I suppose so, if the cause is just. But a *brahmana* himself neither cowers in the face of violence nor responds in like. I cower, though. I tremble like the Bengalis who trembled when the Pathana soldiers approached Lord Caitanya when He was unconscious in ecstasy.

Peaceful lad, read the *Bhagavatam*. Cross the brook, write the poem. Wing on home.

You will have to face stress, I know, when

eenie meenie miney mo

grabs the top of

your big toe.

Dear Emmanuel, you *can* free-write, but why do you want to? Have you read *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam* with faith?

* * *

9:10 a.m., No Series

White page. Aniruddha swinging the pickax in the yard to make a path to the garden. I scratch rows with this pen, fill them with the seeds of inked-in words. Lord Krishna is both the energy and the energetic. A man laughed to hear that there were people thirty feet tall and oceans of milk in the Hindu scriptures. The woman replied that there are also many strange things in the Bible.

I accept. I

accept.

Accept

I.

Did I say I didn't want to be layed low by the mowing machine of the Supreme Power, so I thought I should go down on record as faithful to God? Am I afraid to stand alone as a meaningless man?

I choose this Vedic way.

I'm not blind.

Blind bird

poet

mystics understood.

A mystic is an enlightened person blessed with insight, who displays detachment, compassion, and God conscious knowledge. He can also tolerate and usually does something wonderful. Mystics are the persons we call saints, pure devotees "like the Six Gosvamis of Vrndavana or Lord Caitanya Himself.

But are the records left about their pastimes accurate or mere hagiography? People don't want to be bluffed into feeling awe for someone ordinary. No deities with feet of clay. But we shouldn't deride genuine spiritual experience, especially if we have no idea what it is.

One miracle Prabhupada performed: he freed us from addiction and taught us instead to aspire for love of Krishna.

The central heating doesn't work in my room, although it works in others. Sunshiny now.

Tell Bhakta Emmanuel that he can write as he likes, because once befallen, twice shy, thrice given to transmade.

A maid in spring should be protected. But nowadays it's hard. The price of books has gone up. Our chances diminish as it takes more and more years to reach our perfection.

No envy, and no *ninda*, please. Don't wish anyone ill. Don't even waste your time on that.

A disciple said he appreciated the chance he was given by the GBC to assess its members, because he felt the structure was too authoritarian. He welcomed the new checks and balances.

As long as they don't assess me and decide that I'm not enough of a radish, I'll be fine. Maybe they'll think I'm a weed and spring me out of my hole with an appropriate garden tool, throwing me on the pile marked "Send into action."

But whatever happens is Krishna's desire. I can pray to Him wherever I am.

* * *

I found this in an introduction to Chinese poetry. It's similar to what I've been saying about my writing: "The written word itself is an expression of the powers of the sacred. The spoken word carries the breath of the sacred . . . in Chinese culture, as in the West, the word is of holy origin . . ." But the poets whose writing left an indelible hand print on humanity "are not ghosts or icons. They were fully *human* beings. Some bore the fruits of seven deadly sins; others were truly saintly; most fell somewhere between." (*Midnight Flute*, translated by Sam Hammill)

Lord Narayana's breathing is the poetic scripture. Formerly, Srila Prabhupada told us, only liberated people wrote books. Now pagans, *mlecchas*, demons, *mayayapahrta-*

jnanas, and *mudhas* write and defy God. I'm not liberated and wouldn't have been allowed to print books either. No one would have read my writing. Nowadays, however, since there are so many *mudha* books defying God or even representing Him poorly, I consider myself deputized to represent Krishna consciousness as well as I can. We cannot just wait around for someone to become universally recognized as a perfect, self-effulgent *maha-bhagavata* before we allow anyone to write. Otherwise, the nondevotees will take over the market completely. And we can't only reprint the scriptures. We must hear from hearts inclined to Krishna in the West, from those who flew the nest of materialism.

* * *

No series? Not even a poem?
The man who lives alone but cushy
will be remembered rarely
and it won't matter to him.
What matters is where he goes
and that's determined by his heart's desire.
Worship the *devas* and go to the *devas*;
worship nothing and go where you will,
but worship Krishna and "come to Me."

* * *

I know someone who is on a list
of hopeful Krishna conscious persons but
who never quite made it, who
continues to beg, "Maybe I'll make it,
perhaps He'll pardon me."
He had better face it, though "
samsara awaits or
Release for a calm heart
who prays he did what he
could, tried to practice
bhakti under his master
and utter His name.

* * *

9:59 a.m.

The bedroom is now warmed. Good. Now do something to improve yourself. I still hear Ani digging earth. I could go out in awhile and say, "Hello, fellow worker." He's kind to work to build me a garden. What do I offer him in return? I try to say something substantial. I use him and he uses me. I use everything and everyone (put them into my book) and describe the passage of time. Whatever portraits I draw in writing are brief, passing phases in someone's life.

My thirteenth round faded, sleepy, but still I uttered the names, echoing them in the chambers of near-sleep. There were long silences between names, spaces where my breathing continued unabated, but then another name would enter. All this was done silently, but the mind assured me we were still chanting, and the red snake coiled around to the summit bead and another round was completed.

Sigh in the temple of the body and wish good fortune for whomever I can think of. Practice that. And practice *kirtana* "praising God, praising God's devotees. Act out that praise.

Do you know what I'm talking about? Living in our constitutional position. That is the only way to do good to this world. Nothing will be accomplished through self-serving or humanistic plans.

* * *

Yes, if the art room is warm enough, I'll go down there. The room will feel friendly if it's warm. I'll draw my scrawly figures and blobs, and force the Krishna conscious appearance of people with *tilaka* and scattered words that come not exactly from the unconscious, not really from that rushed mood of a graffiti artist trying to get out his message before the cops come. What I can do. Who will judge it? No one should. Because it's not really art, even if it's something I want to share.

Kirtana "what is it? It is praise. The easiest method is singing the holy names. But some people even do that for money. They're not crying for God but for payment and fame. *Kirtana* is when we want to praise God by something we have done. It is acted out under an authorized person who tells us that the basis of all *kirtana* is chanting Hare Krishna. Such a person is sincere, true, and realized. That was always the bottom line for us in this movement, our faith in Srila Prabhupada. It held us up and still does, although we feel bereft in his absence.

Hare Krishna is the charcoal drawing of Matisse, the life force of everyone. But we rarely acknowledge that. I sankirtana is, but I'll read a few things about it to you. Hare Krishna. *Kirtana* does not exist if someone does not purely wish to praise God. But I just want to say that it's not simply a sacrifice made with drums and song but with all the paraphernalia of modern civilization. It is brow-sweating praise.

* * *

12:08 p.m.

It's human psychology that a person likes to hear his name sankirtanas? No, that would only date it for them, and it might give them the wrong idea, as if it were for '60s hippies and dropouts. Say it's chanted in India? No, don't stress that either. That will make it sound like Christian hymns or something sectarian. I'll mention that only in passing. Then?

We are part of God. I don't know. They tell us to praise Him. It seems right. We need to hear about Krishna first. I don't know . . . I seem to have hit a sore point for myself. If I can't make the "joyful noise" of praise of God, then how can I tell others? But I have agreed to lecture, so anything I sankirtana is the way in this age of Kali. *Kirtanad eva Krishnasya*. In Kali-yuga, where there are so many faults, where the age is an ocean of

vices, *kirtana* is the one good quality. Sages recommend it. That's why we do it. Nothing else works. Chanting the holy names is especially powerful.

Yes, I guess I could give a lecture to encourage people to chant, despite the fact that I myself fall short in so many ways.

* * *

2:47 p.m.

Watching the "Abhay" film. Each setting is clean and well-painted, and all the actors and actresses are well-dressed. It pleases the mind. Dramas are mostly resolved quickly.

I mentioned earlier that after watching that video, I tend to see my life as if it were lived in a movie. Of course, the hallways, the bathroom, the kitchen here are not always perfect "there is food spilling out of the garbage, the floors are dirty, the rags to clean it are dirty too, and no beautiful women exist here. It's our speech; it seems to be something out of a script. There I am in the mirror over the bathroom sink, Satsvarupa dasa, the character who will die just like Abhay's mother died.

The actors playing Abhay have changed more than six times as he has grown from babyhood to youth. The young man who played Abhay going on pilgrimage to Jagannatha Puri is gone now, and we see a new, slimmer man, with a mustache. The characters playing me change too. Now there is an elder figure, but not the last figure in the line-up. He's still somewhat upright. Take some footage of him walking in the morning in Wicklow Country. Do a close-up of the brook as he passes it. Make it seem that he is an intent *sadhu*, chanting on his beads.

Now footage of him seated on the toilet. What is he thinking? How just a few disciples out of the hundreds he has initiated are seriously carrying forward the mission of GN Press. They are actually bringing the books out. He knows this is Krishna's mercy on him; he doesn't beg them to do that work. If those few devotees hadn't come forward, perhaps he wouldn't be able to print books at all. Someone in the movie would have to say, "*Babu*, we cannot print your writing anymore. There is no money and no one to prepare the manuscripts." The old *sadhu* would shake his head from side to side, "All right, it is Krishna's arrangement. I am fortunate to have published so many books as it is. From now on, if I write, I will write only for myself."

The cameraman would insist on soft colors "blues and browns" while doing the shot of the old *sadhu* working at his desk, then looking up. The *sadhu* would be wondering whether it's worthwhile to spend so much time writing. Maybe there is a more direct service he could be performing, and since he's not being published anymore . . . Daydreams. He considers how he now has time to be more serious in his chanting. He sees that Krishna is taking care of him.

Back to reality. Still listening to Bhurijana Prabhu's *Bhagavatam* overview tapes. In the lecture I heard today, he was speaking about how Narada preached to Yudhisthira Maharaja after Dhrtarastra left home. Narada said, "You think that you are taking care of your brother, but actually God takes care of everyone. We should just tolerate the pleasures and pains of material life and turn to Krishna." This is what's happening in my life too. I think I'm arranging so many things, but actually, everything is arranged by Krishna.

How could I tell Bhakta Emmanuel to write? Suggest he write like this: "I want to be a good devotee, but I am not for the following reasons." Does he want to become a devotee-poet? Tell him to read modern poets? No, there's no need for him to do that.

"*Babu*, I think I would like to become a *sannyasi* when I grow up. I would like to write the kind of books you are writing. I don't want to become caught up in institutional politics."

I can smile in a fatherly way and say, "My son, life is long, and you have much to experience in this institution." Still, he seems determined, so I have to understand that perhaps he will do something good.

Live in actuality. I have three rounds left. I have to take care to turn myself to Krishna. I want to present the meaning of *kirtana*. I have little spleen left, although I'm a driven fool. Waiting for books in the mail. I should go now to Prabhupada's book and read and stop this nonsense.

I can't wait to see the Indian treatment of an American young man in New York City circa 1966. I'm looking forward to those episodes.

* * *

3:15 p.m., No Series

Struggling through the day. Using green ink now, available through my Pony Express of ink cartridges.

What is waste and what is worth? Thump of cinder blocks being off-loaded into the yard. I washed some of the stainless steel dishes "used hot water and the last of the dish soap. Spider webs all over the skylight above my desk and plenty of dust in the cracks on the floor. I could spend a lot of time cleaning in this house. A virtue, of sorts, I suppose.

Turning to Krishna.

But since He's already everywhere, how do we turn to Him?

I'll tell you. We turn to His original form.

You mean the temple *murti*?

Yes, that. O life, quiet and protected life, head so quick to close in on me at any moment, do I want things to stay the way they are?

What is K. doing in the chess-game plot of *The Castle*? Whose books should I waste time reading "novels and nonfiction? A waste of time. What is our actual life? Is it to work like a dog and to concentrate on sex and drugs? They say, "He's out of it." Prayer in a monastery? Being an accountant? "Book distribution is great. I meet so many people." It's this and that. *Samsara dava*. Swallow your gorge and live even the painful reality of friendship. Borrow and take. Flinch and twinge. Count pain-relief pills. Turn the ink-painted pages this way and that, and think, "They have their own appeal, especially if you consider many of them have a fragment of a Krishna message." Ani places blocks carefully to build a wall; my pages are like that "block after block.

Krishna is the life force of my words. Bow down before Him. M. is on the phone, pitting one insurance company against another to save us money. Our policy runs out tomorrow at midnight. While he's out, I'm cleaning up "his" messy kitchen. And Ani in

the future garden. Does he know I'll have to leave all this behind? When? Devotional service is eternal. Lift the rocks and hope it's worth it. That's all we can do.

* * *

Krishna and Prabhupada
and many lines. He said he read
in a book on stone walls "
which you see throughout
Rural Ireland "that the
best walls were made by
placing each rock
on top of another just once, no
going back to do it over.

* * *

All over Ireland. I said I
thought it was labor forced
by the British. No, he said,
there are so many rocks in
the fields that they had to do
something with them.

* * *

Go back into the house and open
Srimad-Bhagavatam. That's what
I am meant for. Student
book work. But building
walls must contain some
metaphor. Ask him
why and how he's building a
garden wall for another
man, why he thinks
this man is a guru.

* * *

I write my lines just once and
don't move them from here.

* * *

4:46 p.m.

"Maharaja Pariksit sat down firmly on the banks of the Ganges to concentrate his mind in Krishna consciousness, rejecting all other practices of self-realization, because transcendental loving service to Krishna is the greatest achievement, superseding all other methods." (*Bhag.* 1.19.5) He didn't want to achieve any higher material planet but wanted to become one of the Lord's associates in the spiritual world. Srila Jiva Gosvami says the river Maharaja Pariksit went to must have been the Yamuna.

We should not willingly commit sins, and we should always remember the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord. Think it's impossible? Don't commit the offense of blaspheming "the Vedic literature or literature in pursuance of the Vedic version." No. We may be blinded by confusion and dryness, but Krishna's feet are very soft.

Many sages gathered to hear Sukadeva Gosvami speak to Maharaja Pariksit. The king was confident and unafraid. He asked the *brahmanas* and the Ganges to accept him. "Again, offering obeisances unto all you *brahmanas*, I pray that if I should again take my birth in the material world I will have complete attachment to the unlimited Lord Krishna, association with His devotees and friendly relations with all living beings." (*Bhag.* 1.19.16)

* * *

6:07 p.m.

Each day so precious. Think of the Spirit beyond words. When I want to recoup some of the day's lost moments, writing gives me hope.

June 13, 12:10 a.m.

The four essential verses of *Bhagavad-gita* establish Lord Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. After hearing them, Arjuna makes his own declaration, "You are the Param-Brahman, the Supreme Personality of Godhead." The *Upanisads* declare that the Supreme Lord, in whom everything rests, can only be understood by one who is always thinking of Him.

So many things I do seem superficial or only indirectly connected to full absorption in Krishna. The things most focused on Krishna seem to be chanting and reading scripture. I cannot eliminate all other activity. Bodily and house maintenance require a certain amount of time. Even those things are simple enough, and I suppose if I had enough awareness, I could chant the holy name while doing them. Then there's my service of writing. I push to reach a quota. Why? Why so many things? Wouldn't it be better to concentrate on reading and chanting?

You're not going to bring up this impossible dream again, are you? You are simply not capable of it. Not enough taste or conviction. And you love to write.

No harm in reminding myself why I can't be a constant reader and chanter. I tried for it while writing *Cc. ASraya* but even the attempt turned literary.

"O Krishna, I totally accept as truth all that You have told me. Neither the demigods nor the demons, O Lord, can understand Your Personality." (Bg. 10.14)

If my life were centered more on reading and chanting (*Sravanam kirtanam*), I would have more to say. They called GN Press "the family business," and my part in it is to produce the item they will sell. But maybe it's too much, this pumping out from the marrow of the bones of my life.

Because my life is unworthy? A forced offering?

No, no, I don't think it's wrong to write in service. But I see the point. I'd have a more worthy life to report if it were filled more exclusively with *sastra* and *japa*.

It's the headaches that block me from making substantial increases in either hearing or chanting. Whenever I take new *japa vratas*, for example, I have to relinquish them when the intense head pain arrives. I hope for quality, since increasing the quantity doesn't seem possible.

"The acceptance by Arjuna of all that Krishna says should be emulated; then we can understand the essence of *Bhagavad-gita*, and then only can we understand that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

And Krishna is the life force of my writing. I shouldn't sell it short. The attempt to express myself throughout a day is personal and is my particular way to be with Krishna. It's not a substitute for reading *sastra* or chanting *japa*, and I certainly could improve those practices, even within my present mental and physical limitations. The writing would directly benefit from an attempt to improve.

Anyway, all I can do is try to become Krishna conscious. It's not a formula attempt. I can't *make* myself Krishna conscious; I can only aspire and hope.

Still, let me not shrug off the dream to make actual progress, as if it's something impossible to achieve. I don't have to remain at a low level of *bhajana*. Krishna will help me if I sincerely want His help.

Arjuna's words are also holy. I almost feel unworthy to copy them into my informal book. May his words appear always in my books, mind, and memory.

"Indeed, You alone know Yourself by Your own internal potency, O Supreme Person, origin of all, Lord of all beings, God of gods, Lord of the universe!" (Bg. 10.15) In this verse Arjuna addresses Krishna with words that establish His supremacy. He is Purusottama, the Supreme Person. One may know Krishna as the Supreme Person but not realize that He is the Father of all, so Arjuna uses the word *bhuta-bhavana*. One may still not know that Krishna is the supreme controller, so he calls Him *bhuteSa* and *deva-deva-jagat-pate*. And *jagat-pate*. There are many other names by which Krishna is known to His pure devotees in this world, Vaikuntha, and in Goloka Vrndavana. But the best names are those used by the Vrajavasis, such as Syamasundara, Gopinatha, Yashodanandana, etc.

* * *

4:34 a.m.

Nava-Vrnda lowered her head and shut her eyes when Krishna was caught by Rukmini. Radha simply left the place. Soon after that incident, however, Krishna sought another rendezvous with Radha.

This is the summit of Krishna pastimes. It only superficially appears to be like the dealings of a lusty paramour with his girlfriends, and those who are tainted by material conceptions cannot see it in any other way. But there is no trace of lust in Krishna's pastimes or in the hearts of the pure devotees who relish the conjugal *rasa*. Hare Krishna.

Today, after a long time, Krishna and Radha are again wearing Their bright red dresses with gold trim. They are also wearing red *cadars* because this room is so chilly.

My ankle hurts, but I would still like to take a walk outdoors. It's raining, so I'm glad I have that rain gear. Be happy in the life Krishna has allowed. Make the most of the brief situation here, and be Krishna conscious. Speak Lord Hari's glories. The sunset diminishes the life duration of everyone except those who praise the Supreme Lord. Those who are like dogs, camels, pigs, and asses praise those men who do not worship Lord Hari. See the importance of praising Krishna? Those who do it are worthy; those who neglect it are no better than animals. He is praised as UttamaSloka. May He be praised by my life offered to Him. I am tiny, yet I see myself as someone important. I have been confused by false ego. The truth is that Krishna is the center of existence. I now wish to be a speck of dust at His lotus feet. I have seen my own importance disproportionately. Think *trnad api* instead and be properly situated finally. Knowing how small I am, become tolerant and go on chanting. Be like a tree who can stand in the rain without protest. Let me offer respect to other living beings without being eager for respect myself. In such a state of mind, even I can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.

Aniruddha asked me what I wanted in the garden. I would like an enclosed place where I can go into the garden or wooded setting and write, like I did in *Shack Notes* or the Geaglum shed. It would be good if it was screened so the midges couldn't get me. If it could have some kind of space heater, I could write out there even in the winter.

Gardens are fragile. remember the roses in the garden at Gita-nagari? And the roses in people's yards in Cambridge? I used to see them as I walked from the Welfare office to the bus stop. Sometimes, so many unpleasant things awaited me when I returned to the temple in the evenings. I did what I could because I wanted to please the Swami. He said we had one interest, although we were always individuals. We had one guru, and we all wanted to serve him.

* * *

Krishna and Rukmini, Krishna and Radha. No one but Rupa Gosvami or someone connected with him could write the way he does. He is the *rasacarya*. Hare Krishna. *Hare* is the address to the internal energy of the Lord. It is a way to call out to Her and invoke Her mercy, and it is She who prays for Krishna's mercy to descend upon us. Krishna means "all-attractive." *Rama* means "He who experiences the greatest pleasure," like Radha-ramana, the enjoyer of Radha.

We chant these names over and over. Why don't you . . .

O Lord, please grant me,
prays Rupa Gosvami, that I may have
millions of tongues and heads with which

to chant Your holy names then
I might know the nectar
of the two syllables "Krs-na."

A moth flies by. The skylight is darker this morning. What little view I have is taken up by that sycamore tree (branches still intact). Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. I'm a boy, lost, an old man, bereft, but a happy soul in the care of my master. I want to sing and dance but cannot in this body. O Krishna, will I have to be again placed in the womb of a mother to suffer in the airtight bag, then emerge into *maya*? O Lord, will You protect me from forgetting You? I am so unfortunate.

Prabhupada wearing a burgundy scarf over a pink *cadar* over a saffron raw silk *cadar* over his dull-colored saffron *sannyasa* dress. Prabhupada, who remembered and yearned for the torn quilt and broken pot of the Gaudiya Vaisnavas of Vrndavana, and mentioned that in a letter he once wrote to Narayana Maharaja. He stayed on despite his yearnings in New York City just to deliver us and fix us in service at Krishna's feet. That was a great responsibility and joy for him. And what is our joy? To serve him.

Perhaps we are not always entitled to joy, but let us bow down at the spiritual master's feet and beg for reprieve, amnesty, pardon, to become new men and women, more pure and potent. Yet he knows we are not fit to undergo required austerities. Was Srila Prabhupada ready? Yes, and he did the needful. Krishna is the life of my words.

* * *

5:20 a.m.

Misty. Can't even see the house from the road "only the outlines of trees. Sweet morning, everything wet, including grass tops and wire fence, my rain jacket . . . I'm still dry inside, though. Birds' song in early mist, sheep, ecstasy.

* * *

Bird in Mist
& I went out in mist
and saw the small bird
haribol to wet-rain-green world.
"Ecstasy" "he dared to say it.
God is in the puddle in
the air mist but
in His original form . . .

* * *

O misty day, I feel as if
I have all time at my disposal.
I will work hard while light is
here, thumb and
forefinger
work

because this world will pass
and I too will leave
the bird-singing misty world
ewes with fat lambs half-hiding
beneath them "both
looking at me as if to say,
"What?"
I "Hare Krishnaed" them and go
on up the hill
tired but enduring to get
back
tunes, runes, but no sad
place in my heart
just simple meandering
words and respect
for that bird
until the sentence stretches
and comes to an end. "

* * *

Hare Krishna Thrushes
& I won't remember I'll live
just now this walk
this enclosed sweet
mist-world slowly evaporating
the mountains into sky puddles
and I have God's names
as a gift
to say and finger beads and
be aware
or not.

* * *

You bird, you in the
bush singing
I'm on top of the
schedule it
will have to surrender.
I told her, "Get all A's at college,
for Krishna," and, "Why don't
you write to me," I said
to a man I thought dead.
For myself there is
no other way O

green Hare Krishna thrush. "

* * *

9:53 a.m., No Series

Took an Esgic at 9:10, but the twinge hasn't disappeared. Still, I'm writing. I'm a brave explorer, like Lewis and Clark. I go forward with news that is meaningful to my own day. "Smaller, get smaller," I tell that twinge.

Pain can be controlled, some say. A sufferer simply has to find the switch to shut it off. Placebos may work that way. remember the highs I felt on the Saratoga? How blissful it was to be elevated even a little above the crushing reality of ship life? I walked among the men and metal with an inner consciousness they could not touch. In those days, my idea of writing was to construct short stories or novels. I wanted to weave the web, express something poetic, but remain always within a structure. I was prepared to make believe. I couldn't sustain a diary in those days. It seemed to have no purpose, because diary-writing didn't seem geared toward the publishing career I wanted. Kowit told me he thought I would publish before I was thirty. That was my goal. I did have a strong desire to write for the sake of writing itself, but I didn't honor writing in the personal, full way I do it now. All of that was zero until I added the One of Krishna consciousness.

Now I seek the pain-free state so I can write more. The quota is a scaffolding I use to climb the ladder of communion with Krishna through my service. I never really throw the ladder away. I need it every day.

* * *

11:54 a.m.

During breakfast I heard Srila Prabhupada say it's not possible to completely still the mind. Sometimes he says it's not possible to stop desires either. He said the best way to control the mind is to think of ways to spread Krishna consciousness. I was surprised to hear that, but I welcomed it. It was certainly the remark of one who did absorb all his desires in preaching. We can think of strategies to give people Krishna consciousness, to uplift them, convince them, help them maintain their spiritual lives. That can occupy our minds. He said it was the best way. Thus preaching is not only performed because we are altruistic or compassionate, or only because our guru or authority ordered us to preach; but if we absorb ourselves in it, it can free our minds.

* * *

12:01 p.m.

Hare Krishna. The twinge remains, but somehow I'm finding an outlet for my creative ideas "writing notes to devotees, ordering books, thinking about how to "be here now" in Krishna consciousness. Looking for insights into real Krishna conscious life.

I also got an idea for a kind of freer drawing I could do, and requested the right-sized notebooks for it to be put by the easy chair. I didn't do the Prabhupada *puja*; I had too much pain at 11 a.m. I'm still hopeful my head will clear by this afternoon. But I will

cancel watching "Abhay." We usually do that immediately after lunch. Better to stick to things that don't tax my eyes when I have a headache. I'm happy. At the same time, I know I'm not single-minded.

* * *

2:54 p.m.

This is the second time this week that I have taken an Esgic and it didn't stop the headache. This is a serious turn in my little life. These pills have been the mainstay of my pain management strategy. I thought I had a clever game worked out whereby I could take no more than three pills a week (more than that would start me on the rebound headache cycle) and suffer any extra headaches that come. But if Esgic won't stop pain, and if the headaches are like Nazis coming down over France's defense line, then what am I to do? right now, I'm using free sample Esgics. Maybe they are too old and have lost potency. The package says the expiration date is 1/99. Maybe that's the problem. Let me try the pills I was prescribed last December and January. Should I take a second one today (which would fill my three-a-week quota)? The pain is not *very* bad yet. But I was unable to read *Bhagavatam* this morning, and probably won't be able to this afternoon unless the headache goes away. And I'm far short on my writing quota.

* * *

3:55 p.m.

I took a second Esgic at 3:10 p.m. No change yet. I just sit around, can't do anything. Maybe I'll rest early. I have already lost my verve to write, even if the pain were suddenly to disankirtana. If I'm up to it. Hare Krishna. Hare Krishna.

* * *

6:08 p.m.

Went to bed before 5:30 p.m. Pain seems to be diminishing now. Sitting up in bed. After a heavy, rainy day, the evening sunshine is finally bright, not conducive to an early night's sleep. I can hear the roadside stream. Different projects floating through my head "letters to write, things to ask for in notes, and books.

Let me finish a page so that the day's quota won't be left so low. Don't laugh at it. If I hadn't made my *japa* quota, I'd certainly stay up until it was done. Raghunatha dasa Gosvami fulfilled his *dandavat-vrata* even when he was ill and weak from fasting. Why not take the writing quota seriously?

Asked Madhu to chant his *japa* in the other house. Sheep bleat. A bird sings. "Is it all right if we hug and kiss? People have different opinions," someone wrote me. They'd value my opinion, but I can't have one on that.

Venture into Krishna consciousness. What does Lord Krishna say? What would He say about the Hindus' hydrogen bomb?

Book spines staring back at me from the bookshelf: *Lost Christianity*, *Yevetskhenko*, *A Passion for Truth*. That roadside stream. Wide awake now, but better bed down soon. I

don't want to miss my midnight rising. Think thoughts conducive to sleep, serenity, aspiration.

Can I wake up to see that Krishna consciousness, *bhakti*, is staring me in the face? O Krishna.

June 14, 12:12 a.m.

Dreamt devotees were playing a game of mock golf. I was one of the devotees who originated this game. The main fun was when the players assumed comical roles as they played. ISKCON leaders were the main participants, but others followed and took their turn when no one was watching. Only the leaders played comically. The others played straight golf.

When the big game started, I decided I wouldn't play but would keep score. Off they went, goofing off and inventing details like where the holes would be, etc. I saw Romapada Swami keeping score on a computer, so I lost interest in my own score-keeping and tagged along behind the players. The game dragged on and on, and I realized it was just a waste of time.

Now the alarm clock has gone off, it's midnight, and I'm up. I feel a little guilty about taking two Esgics yesterday, but I'm still wondering why they were ineffective in stopping the pain. What's in store today and during this week? I do play games, perhaps not mock golf, but "When will headaches come?"

Anyway, "Please tell me in detail of Your divine opulences by which You pervade all these worlds." (Bg. 10.16) Srila Prabhupada states that Arjuna is asking Krishna this question "on behalf of the common people." The Mayavadis, as well as the common people, usually think of God in His all-pervading aspect. Therefore, Arjuna asks this question to resolve any doubt that it is Lord Krishna who is the all-pervading Lord. Krishna has already asserted that He is the source of all, so Arjuna is now asking for proof.

"O Krishna, O supreme mystic, how shall I constantly think of You, and how shall I know You? In what various forms are You to be remembered, O Supreme Personality of Godhead?" (Bg. 10.17) If this question or meditation is not for pure devotees, then why should I be concerned with it? We know we should think of Krishna in His original form in Vrndavana. We should call on Him through His holy name. But those who do not love Krishna must come to know His greatness by hearing of His all-pervasive nature.

Arjuna is himself interested in hearing about Krishna's opulence. "I am never satiated in hearing about You, for the more I hear the more I want to taste the nectar of Your words." (Bg. 10.18) Go on hearing about Krishna and we will never grow tired. It may not be the most confidential understanding simply to know how Krishna appears in *this* world, but let us pay attention and learn to see and feel His presence in the taste of water, the light of the sun and moon, and all the ways in which He empowers people in the world. In this way, we will enrich our faith.

Of course, we cannot know everything about Krishna, because He is limitless. Still, we should be greedy to hear more. "In discussing Krishna's opulences and His diverse energies, the pure devotees take transcendental pleasure." (Bg. 10.19, purport)

My dear Lord Krishna, I don't have time right now to read more about Your *vibhutis*, but that is not because I lack interest in them. It's just that it's time for me to chant. Please help me. From Chapter Ten's *vibhuti* verses we learn of Your opulence and see how it is referenced so easily in Vedic culture "the *devas*, *gayatri*, the six seasons, sages' names, devotees, etc. You are for all people and all cultures, but You seem particularly easy to find in the *Vedas*.

I'm writing with only a few lights on. The electricity that produces heat is off, so it's chilly. I'll wait until Madhu gets up at 5 to ask about that. Let me warm myself now with the holy name. There is always time to turn to Krishna.

* * *

4:37 a.m.

Each day I don't know when pain will come, but this is not a loathsome torture. My pain is mild compared to what many *jivas* experience. And I have so many amenities and blessings; I will be grateful. The relatively little pain I get is there to teach me that I cannot be comfortable in this world. It is the nature of the human body to break down and cause pain. We try to use our bodies as a vehicle for our sense gratification, but the amount of pleasure we receive while riding the senses is nothing compared to the amount of painful sensation of which this body is capable. Miseries lash us, often due to excesses in those things that gave us pleasure.

That's my Sunday morning sermon to myself. Just be satisfied. Nevertheless, I have my strategies, and I consider how to live with headaches, those friends who are often with me. If one comes today, I will stay home from Dublin. If one comes while I'm in Dublin, I'll take a pill to subdue it. Whatever happens, I will accept.

In the last episode I heard in *Lalita-madhava*, Krishna was caught in a trick. He dressed as a woman to gain Radha's association even in Rukmini's presence. Radharani left, intending to give up Her life in the Kaliya lake, where she expected the snakes would bite Her. At that moment, the residents of Vrndavana suddenly arrived in Dvaraka. Krishna and His associates all had a grand reunion. Happiness pervades, except Radha is gone.

Prabhupada in brown wool *cadar*. radha and Govinda in cream-colored dresses. I offered Him pale gold earrings and radha pale blue earrings to match the blue patterns in Her cream dress. A dark cream *cadar* for Her.

The lecture I plan to give is on the substantial topic of *kirtana*, but there is nothing unusual about my presentation. If only I could sankirtana isn't enough. Quoting Srila Prabhupada's correspondence with Professor Stahl provides a different angle. Still, I have to bring it "home" to them.

Dear friends, I know you wish you could praise God and that you feel you don't. I feel the sankirtana? Srila Prabhupada was the greatest *kirtana* maker, and there is also Narada Muni and many others. Let us hear from them in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and sing Krishna's glories in everything we do. Let us feel a deep gratitude that Krishna has allowed us to serve Him. If we try to know Him better, we can love Him more. Don't neglect this relationship.

I could say that.

Dear friends, here we are. When we sing, does it feel dull to you? What is the remedy? For me, the best *kirtana* is when I play the *brhad-mrdanga*. I'm somehow not able to relish temple *kirtanas*, especially when they are loud and showy, young men in an inner circle, women in the back, guests wherever they can find a place to stand. I even have a hard time with some other kinds of *kirtana*, like those staged to bring us all together. How, then, can I perform *kirtana*? I can praise God in my words, in my heart, with soul. I can find Krishna in the book and praise this process of Krishna consciousness no matter how difficult things may seem. *Kirtaniya sankirtana* can include so many things, as long as they are intended to praise Krishna. *Kirtana* means driving out selfishness in our service. I've said all this before. Maybe I really don't have something new to say.

O Bhakta Emmanuel, dear friend, you sankirtana? I don't approve if it is not.

Dear Bhakta E., do you want to be initiated? Do you want to be a temple president? Will you get married someday? You say you are doing all right, I think, but you say you are afraid you may weaken. Just push forward and always depend on Krishna. You can write how you feign and forsook, how you almost did this or that but didn't in the end. Push through the days and let the Lord decide. Please Him only, and measure everything against the increase in your desire to do so. Note when the barometer gauges need rewiring or repair too. Note if the pilot goes mad or gets highjacked in some way. Now how to push the button that will bring His help. Surrender to Krishna. That's my advice.

* * *

5:20 a.m.

It's cold out. There's a sort of brown color coming through the clouds. Many white spots on the leaves of different ferns. Spring is gone. Now the foxgloves are blooming on the bank just outside the barbed wire fence leading into the meadows. Such a variety of weeds and grasses. I don't know all their names, but I see their different shades of green, different blades and leaves, different buds and flowers. I know the foxgloves, of course, and the yellow gorse, and the buttercups. I can see 360 degrees of horizon from here too "I just turn around and look toward the low mountains or the flatter, tree-filled areas. The sky is often different in one direction than another. Looking ahead, I might see menacing clouds; looking behind, I might see a hopeful white-gold sunrise. There is not just one sky but many, all on the one big dome of God's ethereal vault.

* * *

Broken Kirtana

& Walk back you are going to forget all
worry. You're going to take one day at
a time, one hour.

Foxgloves.

Mister, can I go out/ can I see God
in *vibhutis*, the fat backsides of white cows
not pretty
barbed wire stretched taut.

* * *

Midges bite my forehead.
The same old thing "prepared lecture
on *kirtana*/ it will
bore them/ I'll imitate
perform perforce
think of something clever at the moment
then fall on my face.

* * *

Want to sankirtana is part of
God actually coming from our
chest and that's His gift, comes down
sky, sky . . .
dear Wicklow books he wrote.

* * *

Life was quick, wasn't it?
Left only with
pictures, impressions

* * *

of pretty clouds.
The man who owns the weekend house "
where is he? His new red car.
In America?
What's it to me?

* * *

How about a broken *kirtana*
like a broken iron water pot,
a torn quilt, a poor man,
crying blues of separation
no Mormon Tabernacle Choir
singing Handel. "

* * *

8:45 a.m., No Series

Kirtana-rasa. No fuss or bother. Just lather up when you shave, and avoid the scab on your upper lip (which I nicked last week). Has it already been a *week*?

He confessed in a letter. I wasn't much moved. I liked the other letter better where he told me he saw a bird fly into its a hole in the wall and say, "Chirrup, I'm happy or sad, depending on my will and other factors." Krishna told us to tolerate happiness and distress. Look out at the birds and learn your lessons.

Let's read the *Bhagavatam* and elevate this song. We left off where Maharaja Pariksit was seated on the bank of the Ganges-Yamuna, fasting until death. He'd told the sankirtana.

A question I anticipate: "Can you sankirtana?"

I mean, of course, the cry from the heart. Such cries often come out as broken sobs rather than eloquent praises. For example, perhaps the person who is crying feels intense unworthiness, or perhaps he is acutely aware of his *anarthas*. Do you think his broken cries mar the *kirtana*? We can say that they mark it or blemish it in a sense, but a connoisseur considers those broken cries ornaments.

But the cry should not be affected. Better to show no personal emotion than to show off. Don't become famous for the tremor in your voice, because otherwise, you'll find yourself cultivating and refining it until it produces exactly the desired effect "on others.

Enough on that. Just arrived: a flower in a vase. I should stand up, greet it, and learn its purple name. And while I'm up, why not take off Prabhupada's knit cap? This room has warmed up. And while I'm up, I'm still wearing my sweat pants from the walk. I might as well change into my *dhoti*. And check my pulse and the air pressure in my tires. I mean, since I'm up. Krishna, Krishna, Krishna "this isn't a Christian group that allows no devotees. It's a Sunday afternoon Hare Krishna feast lecture, and it will begin with the formalities of song and prayer. When all that's done, I'll say, "In the *Bhagavad-gita*, Lord Krishna says that the first symptom of a great soul is that he praises God."

Satatam kirtayanto mam "a good proof. I'm sure I'll run out of stuff to say and have to revert to the old harp strums. But we'll get through.

* * *

The flower from Hare Krishna dasi's garden has no common name she knows of, but its botanical name is *Pirmula biali*. She first saw this flower in some famous public garden called Powerscourt. A group of admirers were standing around a clump of them, she among them. She got some seeds, and after a few tries over the years, managed to grow her own clump. "I always think it is almost bordering on the bizarre or curious. It comes up as a crimson cone, then layer by layer these crimson buds open from the base of the flower upwards into these marvelous violet flowers. It's that combination of crimson and violet which is so striking. It's also odd that the closed buds are colorful and a completely different color from the open flower."

"I had made up my mind to send you up one of these a few days ago, but when I went into the garden (the sun had just come out after a day of torrential rain), I saw that a peony had almost opened. I was about to pick that when I looked inside and saw two spiders and a couple of hover flies, and I felt I shouldn't disturb so many peoples' homes. After rain, big flowers especially are often full of insects. I suppose they make good shelter for tiny beings from the life-threatening downpours."

* * *

10:15 a.m.

Fill your pages with Krishna conscious things. "The whole world is my garden," he said. Quite a concept for one who is thinking that the only garden she has is in her backyard. Imagine how a Krishna conscious devotee who thought that his narrow way of chanting only the *maha-mantra* and reading only select books (and in my case, staying alone in a house, writing to and for devotees) could instead see the entire world as his garden. We do say that Krishna consciousness has jurisdiction over everything in the world. Everything is connected to Krishna, even if we don't always choose to acknowledge that. A godly person can create a link between Krishna and the different fields of learning, politics, art, and human exchange, but it often means rejecting much of what is going on in the nondevotee version of those things. What am I getting at here? I am apologizing for the fact that right now I am writing instead of reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I'm trying to make this writing a Krishna conscious exercise. (Strange how we beat around the bush rather than come out with what is on our minds, isn't it? Is it because we are ashamed that we are not more Krishna conscious?)

Someone wants to know why I'm not reading right now, if I feel guilty about it. I'm not reading because on the mornings before I drive to Dublin, I try to take it easy. I am always afraid I'll do something that will trigger a headache. No straining of eyes allowed.

* * *

I told M. how I took those two Esgics and how they didn't work. I asked him what he thought about the expiration date problem. He gave reasons why I should be confident that the pills still have potency and pointed out that the third pill I took, which was from the new batch, didn't work either. Then he said, "I don't like them." He conceded that when one has pain "and he gave the example of his hernia operation "one has to take anesthesia, but implied in his statements is the idea that he wouldn't take painkillers if he were in my position. Anyway, he knows I have tried for years to treat myself without them. I cannot be governed by what he may or may not think. I have to live with the consequences of my own choices, so I will have to be the one who decides what's best for myself.

As our talk drifted into other areas, M. pointed out that the Sunday feast lecture is supposed to be short, and that my talks usually last no more than an hour, including questions and answers. As usual, I said, I am perhaps too well prepared. Let's see what happens. I think my outline is too short. So don't rush but amble to the conclusion. And I have several conclusions.

* * *

2:36 p.m.

Arriving in Dublin, passing the "Shame" billboard, and still breathing in and out. Whatever I'm attached to I will have leave. No more "Abhay" films, for example, or writing pads, easy chairs, drinking water, early mornings alone.

But I don't know what's next. I *can't* know. I try to move forward in *bhakti* so that I will take it up again in my next life. Then I will learn new particulars for achieving the same goal. *Bhakti-yoga* is progressive like that.

"It's heavy traffic for a Sunday."

I heard devotees are having a *harinama* downtown today. They already know about *kirtana* "the feeling of praising God.

City Centre ahead. "Dual carriageway ends." I'll see what comes to mind as I speak within my outline. Trust the *parampara*. Feel each word. Love the people you're speaking to. That's the main thing. Otherwise, it's only an exercise.

* * *

Parked near Govinda's at almost 3 p.m. Hot in car. I'm in a bubble. Someone might pop it, but not really. I'll be polite, answer philosophical questions, and talk about whatever else there is to say, striving to clearly understand the Irish and British accents. What am I *doing* over here?

Dublin license plate: Bail Atha Cliath. Heel clicks of passersby. One day a headache, the next day clear. Caranaravinda printed out pages from the diaries of headache sufferers "she found them on the Internet. One woman wrote that she was afraid of becoming addicted to Esgic. She asked if anyone knew about "Esgic withdrawal." I could tell her, but what's the use of that kind of communication? Better I concentrate on these people here and discuss *kirtana*. Hot in this car.

* * *

4:20 p.m.

Heading back. M. trying to use his mobile phone as he drives. I told them to praise God, and that such praise has to come from the heart of our sincerity. Nothing nominal.

"Why don't we dive in and do it?" Praghosa asked.

Because we think God is asking too much, perhaps, or we think He doesn't even exist.

Someone with a strong Irish brogue said he was reading a book on paganism. It said *maya* would chase us to the ends of the earth until we surrender to the Great Mother.

I said, "*Maya* is the personification of illusion. She punishes us. But if we surrender to Krishna, she recognizes our triumph."

Bhakta Leo asked if Krishna would help a devotee control his senses.

Yes.

There were guests present. Some were followers of Sridhara Maharaja; others I didn't know. Lecture took about forty-five minutes. Head pressure didn't stop me.

* * *

5:54 p.m.

Some Fenian commemoration was blocking the road near McAlister cottage on the way home. A man directing traffic told us we couldn't go any further on that road because two thousand people were walking toward us. We had to take an alternative

route. I took off my eyeglasses and beheld the beautiful scenery with hazy vision. Up the mountain, vista of green acres and heavy June foliage, back to our area, where some Hare Krishna families lives. We really are out in the middle of nowhere. JS commented on that when he was here. That's where I want to be. Now back to the quiet routine.

* * *

6:20 p.m.

Kirtana. Even the word doesn't seem clear to me. I want peace and quiet, and ability to write from Krishna and for Him. I want to meet Him. I want to. Is that *kirtana*? A silent yet loud *mrdanga*. Yes, I'm a writer. Writing is *kirtana* if it's praising Krishna. If I don't acknowledge that, I have no hope.

How can we actually feel *touched* by God so that we want to praise Him? Imagine being so moved by Krishna that *kirtana* comes naturally. I was trying to explain the importance of aspiring for that.

As we left, ISani gave me a new set of nightclothes for Radha-Govinda. Maha-mantra dasi sewed them. She also gave me some coconut milk sweets covered in carob, I ate one on the way back while I mused about *kirtana*. Maybe I'll find out tomorrow. Praise God even in a whisper, but sincerely, because you have been touched by Him.

June 15, 12:12 a.m.

That question yesterday: "Why don't we just dive in and do *kirtana* from the heart since we all know it's the best taste?" We can't. We have serious shortcomings in ourselves. We are afraid to surrender to Krishna, or we doubt Him, even doubt His existence. We share these shortcomings with atheists and nondevotees.

That's correct philosophically, but if we boil it right down to its essence, we don't dive in because we really don't want to. Therefore, just to ask ourselves the question is a first step forward. We may find ourselves asking it again and again throughout our lives. Usually, it's not that hard to arrive at the answer that we *should* dive in, but to actually do it . . . Well, if we did, we would be *mahatmas*.

"Such a *mahatma* has firm determination to achieve at the ultimate end the association of the Supreme Lord in any one of the five transcendental *rasas*. To achieve that success, he engages all activities "mental, bodily and vocal, everything "in the service of the Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna. That is called full Krishna consciousness." (Bg. 9.14, purport)

"Be fully engaged," I told Bhakta Leo. "That's how to control the senses."

Maybe one of my answers will inspire someone. Maybe it will inspire someone more than it inspired me when I gave it. Srila Prabhupada says we should be determined, and follow the rules and regulations. Krishna consciousness is easy and should be performed in a happy mood. Another question we can ask ourselves: "Does this describe the reality of our experience?"

"One does not need to undergo any severe penance and austerity. He can live his life in devotional service, guided by an expert spiritual master . . . in any position, and anywhere in the world, he can perform this devotional service to the Supreme

Personality of Godhead and thus become actually *mahatma*, a great soul." (Bg. 9.14, purport) In his correspondence with Professor Stahl, Srila Prabhupada said that by 1970, his disciples were "quickly occupying the posts of rare *mahatmas* simply by vibrating this transcendental sound Hare Krishna."

* * *

Lord Krishna ends the brief list of His opulences by saying, "I am the generating seed of all existences. There is no being "moving or nonmoving "that can exist without Me." (Bg. 10.39) When we see any creature or object, we can think that it has its existence in Krishna. He causes it, He sustains it. "Without Krishna's energy, nothing can exist; therefore He is called omnipotent." That we think of existence as separate from Krishna's energy is illusion, *maya*, "that which is not." Is it real to you? Live with yourself without pretension or pride and find out.

* * *

4:39 a.m.

White rabbit hurrying, because he's six minutes late. Where did time go? Perhaps it was because I sponged the bathroom floor with hot water and dried it. A virtuous act. Or perhaps it was because I dirtied the water after Krishna used it (by sticking a Kleenex that had been used to brush the altar surface into it), so I had to go downstairs for another container of clean, warm water for radha's bath. Another virtuous act. Good to be consistent. If I give radha and Krishna nice clothes, I should not at the same time give Them water in a dirty cup or any other slovenly thing. Anyway, time flew. Now rushing along.

My room seemed warm as I worshiped Radha-Govinda, and I was almost uncomfortable as I listened to the last act of *Lalita-madhava*. Radha is saved from the Kaliya lake, which is full of glistening black snakes, when Krishna comes up to Her while She is standing in the water and puts His arms around Her. At first, She thinks the snake has come to bite Her, and She remarks how pleasant death actually feels. Then She discovers that Krishna is rescuing Her. Then Rukmini and all the Vrajavasis come, and the queen gives Her permission for Radha and Krishna to marry. At the very end of the play, Radharani offers a benediction to all those who go to Vrndavana seeking Krishna consciousness.

Now hurry, white rabbit, and don't think you have to stop to read Julian of Norwich or that other book someone gave you, unsolicited. You have so little time. How will anything but the *Bhagavatam* serve you at the time of death? If they can't serve you then, they cannot serve you now.

* * *

He said what he didn't think he could say. He went inside himself to his feelings and thoughts, pulled them out, and wrote them down. Good, a victory. Now more.

But he's sleepy. Work anyway, past the sleepiness. Keep moving until breakfast, and after that, after his meeting with M., he can finally collapse with his head on a pillow. White rabbit "he won't let them catch him.

The editor said the typists don't always know when I am playing and when I am trying to make sense. They can't always understand what they are hearing. Well, if it doesn't make sense to them, let them still type what they hear. Yes, they say, they are willing to do that, but they are not always sure what I'm saying. Then listen to this:

Bhakta Emmanuel asked how he should write and be. He wants to know if poetry and art are illicit. I told him that they are good if they are used to give Krishna pleasure. Still, I can imagine his authorities looking over his shoulder and deciding that he should paint realistic pictures "propaganda art. All other art, they would think, would be *maya*. The same for writing. Words are meant to kill demons and uplift devotees. No mention of freedom or self-expression in Krishna consciousness in their advice. If they thought he wanted to claim free expression too much as his service, they might decide he's not ready for initiation. Bhakta Emmanuel also told me that he was propositioned by a *gurukuli*. Did I say, "run, rabbit, run"?

No, I asked him who would repair the hair net. Or something about diving caps. Last night when we came back, M. was determined to watch an Irish TV program showing last year's contest for Irish traditional music. It was held in County Mayo. I watched some of it with him. Nice fiddlers and accordion players. Some were sexy women, though, but all in traditional good spirits. Still, sex appeal is sex appeal. I decided to go up to bed and pretty soon fell asleep, thank God. Dreamt about some entanglement or another.

Bhakta Emmanuel, when will you be ready for initiation?

* * *

Advice to Bhakta Emmanuel on Writing and Krishna Consciousness
& It's never the same "every day
it's different, smoky-rose clouds
climbing over the hills

* * *

the hills and
hurry man you'll
be walking cold in that green jacket
no animals "didn't see any "
but told myself the chanting should
be most important and to
let the scenery fade.
Don't you see? It had to go will
have to go
sooner or later
but God's names
are eternal.

Do you know what
that means?

* * *

But I'm a writer after all my
service and as I walked without noticing
I began to think of poems I could write
upon returning to the house
and I wished I
had listened and seen better
because
Krishna is sustaining this
creek this hill "is causing
this rosy-brown cloud to
be indistinguishable from the
hilltop curve.

* * *

Is it sense grat, Bhakta E.?
You want to know
when is poetry illicit or
when you can draw a picture
in ISKCON "when
will you be allowed?
I'll tell you be cool
but I "I
know I am

* * *

it's past now my
worrying whether drawing is
permissible.
now I
just do it.
I mean,
I am a devotee along
with the rest of
the things I am,
aren't I? "

* * *

You Save Me

& Slow down, white rabbit/ I was sad
I walked with you
so distracted and hurried I
didn't think or feel a single
line of *gayatri* just of what
I'd do right after.
I did notice the sun ""multifarious
somniaulant big glorious sun-
god" of *Brahma-samhita*
prayer, Narayana's eye
and thought of my spiritual master "who he
could be, permitting.

* * *

My spiritual master. When
I surrender to something beautiful
and full of grace in this world and
just appreciate it, my style,
or I'm awed, whatever,
I say he's with me too because
he saved me, loves
me.

* * *

Saved me from becoming a fool
enamored and shrunk up. I see
forms of Krishna consciousness.
Strength of *sadhana*
protects me from
indulging in art world,
world love,
because that's how it has to be
for us *sadhu* soldiers,
usrecruits. "

* * *

8:30 a.m.

You know what it's like when you read the *Bhagavatam* purport but remain an outsider "all you can do is carp and make some petty argument or knee-jerk reflex over faulty grammar. But you remain outside. What to do? Call off the attempt? No, try again. "Again, offering obeisances unto all of you *brahmanas*, I pray that if I should again take my birth in the material world I will have complete attachment to the unlimited Lord

Krishna, association with His devotees and friendly relations with all living beings."
(*Bhag.* 1.19.16) O Krishna.

* * *

9:27 a.m., No Series

I was feeling lazy when I told myself it was good for me to rest. I have a reputation to uphold.

Here come fifty soldiers. Let's tell their stories. Each one married a princess won in a *svayamvara* ceremony.

Here is a rheingold ad, a Meister Eckert. Here is a pack of Tarot cards, shuffled.

Once upon a time, a person became a devotee.

But then what?

Just relax and listen. He found it hard to take to Krishna consciousness. He wrote to his guru but got no reply. These institutional gurus, I tell you! His guru was busy saving the world, traveling widely and initiating disciples. He said, "See by my example how I don't stay in any one place and therefore don't get a tan."

You mean, we should be like you?

Seven men times three equals twenty-one men. Flies torture sheep and cattle. Nature provides them with tails but no better fly swatter or the intelligence to construct themselves a house with screens. We could grow up like that. Therefore, we must spend our human form of life helping others and restraining ourselves. A human shouldn't smoke, drink liquor, eat meat, or engage in illicit sex. He should perform austerities, although not as many as the *yogis* and sages who people the *Bhagavatam*. Because if we don't use this human body, well, we will have to take birth into a suffering condition next life. That's the law of nature, cruel as it sounds.

We talked about her behind her back. Each person used their weapons. I received counsel from my own "Canakya."

So what happened to those soldiers?

I'm trying to tell you. Give me time to make it up. There were many miseries on the road to national independence, and since gaining *svaraj*, more miseries have appeared. There seemed to be no end to misery.

But I thought they were members of the Krishna consciousness movement. Didn't that help them? I mean, I thought ISKCON was supposed to deliver people from misery.

Yes, and it did to some extent, but people are quite stubborn usually and aren't always exclusively seeking pure devotional service. That's where the pain comes in, see. These soldiers wanted to enjoy the latest scientific inventions and have become dependent on machines, so when the Krishna conscious message reached their ears, they weren't inclined to listen. They began to take it as a joke. They decided they didn't need to change to a Hindu religion, and they were already fed up with their Christian one.

How sectarian. Well, it's their fault if they didn't listen.

But the other devotees didn't give up trying. They held festivals, distributed books, invited people to the temples, but misery unabated in this age. That's how it is.

* * *

9:55 a.m.

You mean when he tries to read in the late morning he falls asleep?

It depends what he tries to read. If he attempts to read his spiritual master's books or something similarly excellent, yes, he falls asleep. But someone gave him a used copy of the Penguin edition of *Julian of Norwich* wrapped in a paper bag. He hadn't asked for it! Now if he were to attempt to read *that*, he probably wouldn't fall asleep at all.

As we came into the city yesterday I saw two youths walking the city streets, each with his own shiny bag of junk food and stuffing his face. That was their way of being. The sun was out and they were out walking, harmless, but not too contemplative looking. I forgave them for that, as I hoped they would forgive me.

Here is a prayer for forgiving people that a Godbrother sent me, taken from a book written in the 1950s on positive thinking:

I fully and freely forgive [mention the name of the offender]; I release him mentally and spiritually. I completely forgive everything connected with the matter in question. I am free, and he/ she is free. It is a marvelous feeling. It is my day of general amnesty. I release anybody and everybody who has ever hurt me, and I wish for everyone health, happiness, peace, and all the blessings of life. I do this freely, joyously, and lovingly, and whenever I think of the person or persons who hurt me, I say, "I have released you, and all the blessings of life are yours." I am free and you are free. It is wonderful!

Short version: "Peace be to you."

* * *

Other things I saw during yesterday's outing:

1. On the road after we had passed city and suburbs, and were entering the countryside, a hand-lettered sign by the side of the road: "Wexford Strawberries." It came up too fast for me to ask M. to stop and buy some, since I knew he wouldn't be inclined and would say something like, "So-and-so will get strawberries later." But stopping to buy fruit or vegetables on an outing is fun, and I look forward to offering them to Krishna.

However, I remember years ago seeing a hand-lettered sign for Wexford Strawberries and stopping to buy some, but they weren't good.

2. I know I saw other things yesterday that I don't remember, just as I conveniently forget what I saw while walking through Mediterranean cities while on leave when I was in the Navy. Krishna does protect us.

While driving, I thought of what Srila Prabhupada said about intelligence and how we misuse it. Intelligence is meant to discriminate between right and wrong, and to help us control our senses. Intelligence, *buddhi*, is higher than the senses but below the spirit soul. We sometimes call it the next-door neighbor to the soul. Therefore, it is close to God. Intelligence is meant to do the soul's bidding. And when the soul is following God's instructions from scripture, then the intelligence acts as the medium. Intelligence is useful like that.

* * *

I now have quite a collection of personal headache sufferers' histories printed from the Internet, but I don't know what to do with them all. I can't get reliable medical advice from them, that seems certain. I could write in and say, "I'm so glad to have discovered this site. It's a solace to know that other people are suffering and trying different remedies and suggestions, and asking for help. I hope those who are writing in are getting help from those who experience similar problems, because misery loves company." (I'm not being sarcastic there "fellow sufferers really do give solace.)

Reading of headache sufferers, I realize that my own pain is mild in comparison to what some people go through. I shouldn't complain. But I do get headaches several times a week, and I feel their weight upon me daily. I'm embarrassed to say that my headaches have not been accurately diagnosed. There are so many types! My headaches seem to share symptoms with a few of the different types. Anyway, what does it matter what the medical diagnosis is? They seem incurable, and that's the point.

Could I dare to write this? "You see, I'm a devotee of Krishna, and we believe that suffering may very well be a karmic reaction. As for myself, I'm an initiating guru, so my headaches may be caused partly by the sinful activities of my disciples. I know that sounds crazy to all of you out there, but that may be the truth. Of course, just because we suffer from karma doesn't mean we can't try to gain relief through medication. For me, I want pain relief so I can get on with my religious duties. Krishna tells us to tolerate our pains and do our duty despite them, but tolerating may include trying to get better so we can do our duty better.

"My duty is to write. Please feel free to visit our website at www.GNP.com. We publish books on self-realization.

"I was born in 1939, the son of a New York City fireman. My mother comes from Ireland.

"Oh, we are running out of memory. See you in Hawaii someday (don't all Internet surfers live there?) and hope your headaches go away."

Yours,
SDG

* * *

3:15 p.m.

Great souls who share the Supreme Lord's qualities and who are like the sun without the cloudy covering, come to the world "as messiahs," to "reclaim the fallen souls rotting in material existence." Maharaja Pariksit praised the sages who had come to witness his passing away and who would listen to Sukadeva Gosvami's instructions.

"O trustworthy *brahmanas*, I now ask you about my immediate duty. Please, after proper deliberation, tell me of the unalloyed duty of everyone in all circumstances, and specifically of those who are just about to die." (*Bhag.* 1.19.24) Here Srila Prabhupada remarks that "everyone is a dying man." What is his duty? We will learn that it is to surrender to Krishna and be saved from all sins and their reactions.

While the sages were presenting their various opinions to Maharaja Pariksit as to his best course of action, Sukadeva Gosvami arrived. He was only sixteen years old, but he

was the most spiritually advanced. Therefore, he was given the "presidential seat" at the meeting.

"Simply by our remembering you, our houses become instantly sanctified. And what to speak of seeing you, touching you, washing your holy feet and offering you a seat in our home?" (*Bhag.* 1.19.33)

Nice to read this on a clear afternoon. Maybe someday they'll make a film of this pastime "Sukadeva Gosvami arriving, and Maharaja Pariksit offering obeisances and inquiring from him. Hare Krishna.

A man's life passes before him. In "Abhay" we saw Gour Mohan De, on the occasion of the birth of Abhay's first son, suddenly fall into a reverie "and we go with him with the help of flashback footage "remembering when he was a young man and his wife had just given birth to Abhay. Feel the emotional tug. Remember how baby Abhay chose the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* instead of the coins at his grain ceremony? His wife died before Abhay was fully grown. Now they stand before her picture . . . Life is like that.

* * *

4:02 p.m.

No mail today. Sit here and, like Gour Mohan, fall into reverie. Then what happened with Gour Mohan? Abhay will be persuaded by one of his friends to see a *sadhu*. "No," he'll say, "I don't want to." I'm eager to see that segment "his first meeting with his Guru Maharaja.

* * *

4:45 p.m.

I heard some children here feel neglected. They go to school all day and only see their parents one hour out of twenty-four. Their teachers have become like second parents to them now. The children, apparently, are angry, and they take it out on the other children. But if these children don't go to school here, how will the parents do their service? And it's not just a service but a business. All this is passed on to me to solve because I'm the parents' spiritual master. Or, perhaps they don't expect me to solve the problem, but they do want me to hear all its details. I said to M., "Maybe we'll have to move to a desert." He said, "It doesn't have to be a desert "we could get a place in Kerry." But that's not practical, especially after all we've been through to establish ourselves here. "Maybe they should write to you about their personal lives only once every two months."

But even if I were aloof, what would I do? I'm not a cloud, white or blue, but a person. I'm also supposed to be a preacher. But sometimes I look at their lives and draw a blank. I can't fix anything for them.

Not enough oomph right now to do much. Pray for the souls of the . . . Sing a song of broken *kirtana* . . . Be on guard in County Down. The June mid.

* * *

5:35 p.m., No Series

Oh, I am seated too far across the room to nicely see Radha-Govinda's features, but I can see Srila Prabhupada well from here. That's because he is larger. I would like to be captivated by Their forms and think that on the day I meet radha and Krishna in the spiritual world They will look like my Radha-Govinda. Is it too warm for that soft wool *cadar*? I'm feeling too warm in my sweater.

Received a letter from a graphic artist-devotee in Croatia. She turned her little home into a studio and gallery, and gave a show of illustrations from *Songs of Bhaktivinoda Thakura*. She loves my books, which contain encouragement for fellow artists but advise them to stick to Krishna consciousness. I'll write her back, encouraged. My sort of people.

O Krishna, no series, no substance. I painted four A4 pages. Thought of "brilliant corners." The drawings look unintelligibly abstract. If I try to make a face, or human or four-legged form, that's all right, but sometimes I lose energy in the process. I like the primitive clash-splash line-loop when I do otherwise. That artist in Croatia did more representational work. Her work reminded me a little of the work of Kim and Chris Murray "poetic expressions of *sastra*. The more we do that the better, but we shouldn't limit how things want to come out. People are going to do that more "become both artists and devotees "wherever they are in the world.

I like patterns. I went outside and saw the walls, the sunshine, the dirt. No flowers growing here yet. I saw a fox on several occasions.

June 16, 12:10 a.m.

It's impossible for someone to read all that I have written or for a publisher to print it all. Face this. Does it make me wither or not want to write? No. A preacher can't expect everyone to hear what he has to say or to surrender to his message. For example, Daruka told me about the nice *bhakta-vrksa* meeting they had the other day, but only a few attended.

Krishna says: "Know that all opulent, beautiful and glorious creations spring from but a spark of My splendor. But what need is there, Arjuna, for all this detailed knowledge? With a single fragment of Myself I pervade and support this entire universe." (Bg. 10.41 - 42)

Distracted? Go ahead and read *Bhagavad-gita* even if you are not able to banish all other thoughts. At least *Bhagavad-gita* will enrich the other thoughts and put them into a Krishna conscious perspective.

The phrase, "What is the need for all this detailed knowledge" strikes me as a challenge to diary writing. What need? I need to unburden myself, and I maintain a probably vain hope that someone might read it and draw benefit. At least *I* will read it. The details in this book are the details of my life, and every bit of it is linked to Krishna for me. Because nothing is outside Krishna. That which appears to be outside Him is actually an illusion. I write with the purpose to link things to the Lord.

Advice to devotees considering writing diaries: be careful. You can get hooked on writing. Thoreau worried that his journal was becoming more important than his life. Also, be careful about reading books outside the teachings of Krishna consciousness which you think will improve your writing style. Be sure you read Srila Prabhupada's books. Then even if you are a diary addict, at least your writing will reflect Krishna. It's Krishna we want to meet. Make your life as Krishna conscious as possible now so that someday that will be possible. I worship Radha-Govinda Deities. See how They enter my diary? May They also enter my words, dreams, life.

"The Lord here tells Arjuna that there is no point in understanding how things exist in their separate opulence and grandeur." Know that all things exist "due to Krishna entering them as Supersoul."

Does that mean I can drop the lists? Yes, it might mean that. Just go directly to Krishna, the One, and hear about Him in His original form. Or at least never forget Him by acknowledging Him in everything you see.

Here is Krishna, and here is Krishna too, and here. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna "we could write only those few words. But somehow we want to preach by using other words too. Then make sense, be poetic, tell what hurts and what gives joy "but don't forget Krishna. Go ahead and write, but *never forget Krishna*.

"Pure devotees, therefore, concentrate their minds in Krishna consciousness in full devotional service; therefore they are always situated in the transcendental position." Part of me writes out of madness, habit, the vainglory of authorship, but another part writes because Srila Prabhupada did and I saw how effectively he preached through the written word. "My personal ecstasies," he called his purports. He wrote to convince people and to provide them with Vedic literature in their own languages. I feel I'm following in his footsteps.

After hearing from Krishna, Arjuna was convinced that Krishna is all-pervading and the Supreme Controller. He was convinced by hearing. But he wanted proof that could convince the common man, so he asked Sri Krishna to reveal His universal form. We should not demand to see Krishna in any of His personal forms, as if we need proof of His existence or supremacy. "Krishna is not obliged to reveal Himself unless one surrenders fully in Krishna consciousness and engages in devotional service." (Bg. 11.4, purport)

Lord Krishna revealed His universal form, and it was recorded in *Bhagavad-gita*. That form inspires both fear and awe. Even Arjuna became bewildered upon seeing it, and he asked Krishna about the mission of this devastating force. Lord Krishna replied, "Time I am, the great destroyer of the worlds, and I have come here to destroy all people." (Bg. 11.32)

* * *

4:28 a.m.

The dull ache in my head is trying to tell me something. It says, "Stop writing and go lay down." Another voice assures me that rest won't help but will only eat up my time. O Radha-Govinda, please captivate my mind despite these voices. Please guide me, Srila Prabhupada, and oversee and approve my attempt to worship the Divine Couple in your

presence. I hope it won't be too long before I receive the nice *vyasasana* devotees are making for you and the new throne for Radha-Govinda. Today, Govinda has His silver flute and crooked leaning stick.

Sigh. Let my fingers dance on the typewriter keys. It's only the headache that makes me hesitate. "O Lord Hari, when will I become enthusiastic to read the books left by the Six Gosvamis? Then I shall be able to enter Vrndavana and understand the conjugal love of Radha and Krishna." How deep are the meanings in Narottama dasa Thakura's poems. He longs to directly serve the Divine Couple in Vrndavana under the direction of rupa and raghunatha Gosvamis. I hear him, I hear.

And I hear Srila Prabhupada. Srila Prabhupada fought, sacrificed, ordered, and commanded as he lectured in Bombay. He gave nightly classes to whomever wished to attend "usually not so many. His teachings on Lord Kapila were amplified. *Serve Krishna*. He wanted *Bhagavad-gita* spoken among the devotees. Krishna never said preach among *jnanis* or *yogis*. Big *yogis* like Durvasa Muni possess *siddhis*, but Krishna wants our devotion.

* * *

Come on, don't dally, finish your lessons to Bhakta E.

Okay, if you want to write, first do a belly button dance.

I don't mean that. But don't make popcorn or eat fish.

You know that already.

As for writing, admit the worst. Then assess your gains and losses. You'll come out with more than you think.

What is your purpose in wanting to write self-expression? What shortcomings do you feel? You are a very young man, and you said you realize you will have to grow up even though you are now a devotee. But a devotee grows up differently. He doesn't become dissolute. So keep track of your days "that's what you do, I guess, in your journal. Yes, you can show me some of what you have written, but the mental goings back and forth become tedious for anyone, including yourself. Try not to ride too long on the *manorathena*.

I told the restaurant audience to be *gosvamis*, not *go-dasas*. Oh boy, and me a *gosvami*. That's me I'm talking about when I say that one should give orders to his senses. Because that's my name: Go Swami. The name was given to me by the greatest exponent of Krishna consciousness in the modern age. Yeah, now I got it made.

We got a great deal on our insurance "only two thousand pounds. Gour Mohan De still looks pretty good, but I know he's getting older and one of these days . . . We see the point when the son shaves his head and looks like a *sadhu*. O Krishna, O radha, please engage me in Your service.

Service Discharged Vets Administration Hospital in Long Island "somebody going there for free treatment. But he complains. Horror stories about the Internal revenue Service's mistreatment of American citizens. The invasion of the locus body snatchers. The dream of making money in Hollywood "a disciple wanted to do that. I didn't step on his toes. He packs a stack of jute. I said that, I know, in a clumsy way.

* * *

Until You Love and Serve
& He's good I like him
I don't think he's cheating
or bluffing me.

* * *

God gave me the ability to ride this pen
the words come out from
Him so direct them to Him
in praise
but how
if you don't love?

* * *

Broken pot, cracked heart
weak wrist, broken pot
headrest/ footrest
pea pod
Beware reunion
I am body and soul.

* * *

Ride up-down don't
walk too fast he warned
a person with your
constant tuition
ought to be careful.
Into Thin Air "an
Everest climb.

* * *

The vest-pocket tulip
is dead. A man wants
peace on a walk even
plain "to think of me climbing
Everest is impossible I'd
get a headache even flying
first-class to India.

* * *

This is the toad's sonnet
and I try to shape the
words away from their possible
worst but nothing can come out
in praise of Krishna
until you love
and serve
and there's
the truth. "

* * *

Each Unit is Intensive Care
& Gruff go, go boy the dog
Runs and I run too

* * *

I forget how to "

* * *

He touches in the soul you
gotta run forget your
head and feet
just run for
the Lord.

* * *

I am not going to learn
from doctor or shrink
or priest or new guru
on my own . . .
stay with the one

* * *

who taught me in youth
and sustains me
still.

* * *

Mickey Moo and Shoo
the winner of the under twenty-fives

best fiddlers is
from Dublin he wowed when
he was handed
the gold cup.

* * *

He is me in mirror
boy or girl? I
couldn't always tell. I don't want
priests, pillows, black
nuns or
Rock salt

* * *

I'm old man downhill
by river run
with words
words
so quick
I ain't got strength.

* * *

2
Now we have got to be in tune
with the master's rhythm
forgive him and us
to be the one kind cat
I gotta learn how to
conduct myself.

* * *

Each unit is intensive
care cotton swab
bud they call it
bud
Bud.

* * *

The tip is to clean Their
eyes and mine and
to see Their glories

since I don't read unlimited
or shout out open windows
at passing foxes.

* * *

Because Krishna gets all my words.
He catches them and makes
a mark in my heart
a hole right through.

* * *

He's God of all/ I'll be
with You at death
Lord I'll be wailing
or maybe not "maybe
quiet gritted teeth
will be my lot.

* * *

Gritted teeth and
gritted life a
devotee with a last
wish for all if
I'm a teacher-preacher. "

* * *

8:50 a.m.

Maharaja Pariksit said that he was fortunate Sukadeva Gosvami came to him. He said that fortune was Lord Krishna's mercy upon him, because Krishna is affectionate toward the only grandson of the Pandavas. Srila Prabhupada writes, "One can achieve the ultimate success of going back to Godhead if he is favored by the Lord's sending His true representative." The disciple can go back to Godhead in this lifetime.

But it depends on his sincerity. We should rest assured that to get the "help of a bona fide spiritual master means *to receive the direct help of the Lord Himself.*" (*Bhag.* 1.19.36, purport)

"You are the spiritual master of great saints and devotees. I am therefore begging you to show the way of perfection for all persons, and especially for one who is about to die." (*Bhag.* 1.19.37) This is a good prayer to use when begging Srila Prabhupada for his mercy. But what more is there to ask of him? Hasn't he shown us enough "and still we fail? He can't just carry us unwilling to Goloka Vrndavana. It's not *that* automatic. We have to show Krishna we have taken seriously all the instructions the spiritual master has

already given. Yet the spiritual master will continue to give relevant instructions even to his slow students.

"Please let me know what a man should hear [*Srotavyam*], chant [*japyam*], remember and worship [*smartavyam* and *bhajaniyam*], and also what he should not do. Please explain all this to me." (*Bhag.* 1.19.38) If I am saying that Maharaja Pariksit is at the beginning of inquiry but I have already heard for thirty years, what should be said? "Then hear again, slowpoke." This is the glory of the scripture and the gift of Vyasadeva "that the instructions have been written down, and we can hear them again and again. With Srila Prabhupada's purports. Now once again, from the beginning, in case you missed the point the other four thousand times you have read it.

* * *

I just paused in my reading to write a draft of a letter to the Wicklow devotees, asking them not to entangle me in their struggles. I didn't come here to arbitrate. I am willing to listen and to help in some ways, but I don't want to feel I need to closely monitor their family lives. I will compare it to the difference between watching every play in every game of the World Cup soccer matches and just hearing the outcome of the last game.

* * *

10:18 a.m., No Series, Semi Series

Ah yes, he doesn't care. He doesn't care what the nondevotees think. And he doesn't write for them. He writes for the Krishna conscious cause. But when he's got *nothing* to say, he likes to mock. Damn it, keep this road clear. This job is as important as an airline pilots'. I am responsible for hundreds of lives. Even if I were responsible only for myself, that's still a heavy enough duty.

But I have enough distractions to last me lifetimes. I can't do as much as I'd like because of them. And hampered too by possible or actual headaches. I might as well admit it "I'm no different from any of those people who write their diaries on the Internet. I'm not even the most pained among them. But we share a common suffering, marked by destiny.

It's good to identify a little with our material reality, in one sense, yet we know that by Krishna conscious standards we're not part of any group. We're not men or women but spirit soul. A spirit souls doesn't get headaches and has no need of pills.

Anyway, it's good to be alive, and despite my material identifications, I feel fortunate. I'm among devotees "that small group in the ocean of humankind.

* * *

Syamananda will come tomorrow morning to photograph my artwork. Have a laugh. Someone put baby cobs of corn in the mixed veg yesterday. O people, this quiet man shouldn't claim anything. He has forgotten how to write poems even.

* * *

12:40 p.m.

Headache Internet report: "Hi. I hurt. Have to take pills and wish I didn't." My doc is great, told me not to worry because all I have is a headache. He said that's what I want and told me to write to him. Yas. I will pray to God.

* * *

2:35 p.m.

Om namo bhagavate vasudevaya. By chanting this mantra we offer respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Lord Krishna, the reservoir of all pleasure

I'm a spiritual son of Srila Prabhupada, entitled to render devotional service to guru and Gauranga. I'm also entitled to hear *Srimad-Bhagavatam* with faith. I must bring myself to do it, that's all. Maharaja Pariksit was glad to receive Sukadeva Gosvami. When the king asked about the duty of one about to die, he implied that he wanted to hear about Krishna. There are a number of references in the First Canto to indicate that Maharaja Pariksit had an intimate relationship with Lord Krishna both through personal inclination and through family lineage.

"Sri Sukadeva Gosvami said: My dear King, your question is glorious because it is very beneficial for all kinds of people. The answer to this question is the prime subject for hearing, and it is approved by all transcendentalists." (*Bhag.* 2.1.1)

I lectured on this verse in the Los Angeles temple in 1969 while Srila Prabhupada was visiting. It was my first visit to ISKCON's then world headquarters. I was able to repeat what he said with initial, fresh faith. Whenever *Krishna-katha* is narrated, the place, speaker, and inquirers all become purified.

And a second verse: *grheSu, grha-medhinam* "Srila Prabhupada lectured on that verse during his Dallas visit when he installed Sri Sri Radha-Kalachandji. He chanted that last line to himself when we were together, and he pointed out to me how people are blind and don't want to hear about Krishna. Prabhupada preached naturally and spontaneously in normal conversation, not just while he was lecturing. We appreciated his wonderful absorption in Krishna consciousness, and by it, we were motivated to obey him.

* * *

So Abhay met his spiritual master. They depicted that well in the film. How could they miss? I liked the young man's portrayal of Abhay, often wearing a sleeveless vest, wearing *khadi*, sometimes a light *cadar* over his shoulder. They showed an abbreviated version of the meeting where Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura praised the *brahmanas*, then praised the Vaisnavas as greater. It was a good scene. Then in slow motion, with jerky film technique, they showed the entire audience of *sadhus* rushing forward to touch Bimala Prasad's feet. His father was at home ill, so Bimal Prasad spoke in his place. "Be victorious," he said. Yes, it was good.

After Abhay heard from his spiritual master, he was impressed. He went home, restless, then returned to see Srila Bhaktisiddhanta at the Math. But he had already left for Jagannatha Puri. Abhay sat and spoke to one of his guru's followers, and when the talk was over, Abhay, crying, declared that he accepted Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura as his spiritual master. Just see, he didn't get so much personal association, yet that meeting changed him for life. He gave up following Gandhi and began to follow Lord Caitanya.

I wish they had shown the *brahmacari* to whom he spoke giving Abhay some of his spiritual master's books. Instead, they showed him going home and joining his father in singing melodic *bhajan*s before radha-Krishna, Abhay on *mrdanga*.

* * *

4:48 p.m.

The mail has arrived. Some agitating letters. One disciple went to India and met someone there who told her that Srila Prabhupada is not in a bona fide disciplic succession. She accepted that person's version of our *sampradaya* and took initiation "from an elderly Gaudiya Vaisnava." She has rejected ISKCON, Srila Prabhupada, and me. She said that although this changes things between us, she would still like to correspond with me. I also read the reports of the ISKCON *sannyasis* on their 1997 - 98 programs, mine included with my talk about headaches yet my wide 1997 travels. The report I hand in at the end of this year will be different. One *sannyasi* bravely wrote in his report that he doubts there's any good in his writing this report or anything valuable in someone else reading it. He said he doesn't trust the GBC with his internal life.

What else? I haven't read many of the other letters, and I don't want to mention the contents of those I have read here. Placed the stack of mail in the cubbyhole. What a world.

* * *

5:40 p.m.

Gayatri while looking out the window. At least I want to be loyal to Srila Prabhupada and his Guru Maharaja. Hearing about someone blaspheming them arouses my love for them. I'm inspired by them and by their revolutionary boldness and absolute stance on the side of Krishna. May I go down fighting for our *parampara*, shrimp that I am.

Head fogging. Okay. When I read the *sannyasis'* reports, I saw that I'm not doing much. Someone said we should live simply and be renounced. Someone else said we should discuss more how all *sannyasis* can live simpler and more renounced. Someone else said we *sannyasis* should all associate together and go to *mangala-arati*, chant sixty-four rounds during Karttika, and generally get along like that. Varied opinions. Someone else said that we shouldn't be friendly with Sridhara Maharaja's followers. Someone else said . . .

My head is spinning. No wonder it is fogging over. Satsvarupa reported that he gets headaches. Big deal. He writes twenty pages a day, is building a garden, preaches once a week in Dublin, gets nice letters from people who read his books, and feels older than most of those other guys. That's how he leads the pack, up until the end.

GNP decided to print several volumes in one, with four-color illustrations and with good paper and case binding. World Cup. Beware the zonal-*acarya* disease "it's back, someone said.

What to speak of . . .

Who's got love of God (Krishna)?

Are we in the right *sampradaya*?

Origin of *jiva* . . . oh . . . we fell, *I* fell

today

on the path

had to pick myself up

to go back.

Srila Prabhupada says there is a history to our predicament in this world, but it's remote. The main thing is to own up to our fallen condition and go back to Godhead. I prefer simply to accept whatever he says, because he gave me (us) Krishna.

Lord, I'm going to have to rest soon. Prabhupada, please don't forget me. Krishna, Krishna.

June 17,12:08 a.m.

Interrupted sleep. Too many dreams. My will kept surfacing, and I was determined to rise by midnight.

Looking over this writing, I see so much self-mocking and defense. I'm feeling that my writing is too long and repetitive. I won't go into it all again, but I'm trying to develop strength and confidence in my service. Let me not be attached to the results, but try again and again to focus on good writing in Krishna's service.

Let's look at what Krishna says to Arjuna. "Just become an instrument: *nimitamatam*. This word is also very significant." The whole world moves under God's plan. "What is that plan? This cosmic manifestation is a chance for the conditioned souls to go back to Godhead, back to home." Instead of following that plan, most people try to dominate material nature. "But anyone who can understand the plan of the Supreme Lord and cultivate Krishna consciousness is most intelligent." The pure devotees' plans are as good as Krishna's plan.

"O great one, greater even than Brahma, You are the original creator. Why then should they not offer their respectful obeisances unto You? O limitless one, God of gods, refuge of the universe!" (Bg. 11.37) Yes, it's ridiculous to compare ourselves to God. Certainly He is more interesting, and *His* day is worth writing about. There's also more benefit in doing so. Perhaps I'll read parts of *Govinda-lilamrta* to get a feel for how His day goes and record my discoveries here. If I were a pure devotee, every time I wrote I would either glorify God or be making preaching plans, or I'd write an article arguing why people should take to Krishna consciousness. Or would I? Or might I still write this micro-focus on one soul? I am interested to track how one soul can be molded into Krishna consciousness, how the self can be faced by facing its present reality.

You know, I like the self. I can't help it. I have befriended myself and therefore desire that I become a better devotee. I can't keep cutting at myself with "you shoulds." This writing is a long letter to the self, begging him to become Krishna conscious.

In this section of *Bhagavad-gita*, Arjuna declares that his friend, Krishna, is the Supreme Lord, worthy of worship by all beings, even the greatest demigods. And why *shouldn't* they worship Krishna? Unless we feel that kind of pride in our Master, how will we present Krishna consciousness to the world? What will our message be otherwise? We want only *bhaja govinda bhaja govinda bhaja govinda mudha-mate*. O rascals and fools, what good will your various learned, hard-working endeavors for enjoyment do you at the time of death? Better to worship Govinda.

Dear Srila Prabhupada, I have become too familiar and even critical of you at times. But you have no fault. *The Nectar of Instruction* informs us that any seeming defect in the spiritual master should be overlooked, just as one overlooks the muddy complexion of the Ganges river during rainy season. We are meant to bathe anyway. Dear Srila Prabhupada, I am filled with faults. Some of my faults are faults of circumstance "my powers are waning, ISKCON has changed, and my mind still plays its inevitable tricks. I can't take myself too seriously, even when I make mistakes. I know it's only surface stuff. So I go on listening to your lectures three times a day, reading your books three times a day, and doing everything as you have taught me to do. I am not proud of myself; I have impeded my progress in so many ways. I pray to Lord Balarama, the founder of *guru-tattva*, to set me right in my worship of guru. "I have dishonored You many times . . . O infallible one, please excuse me for all those offenses." (Bg. 11.42) My relationship with you is eternal; I cannot forget it. I want to make the most of it. Krishna told Arjuna to become an instrument. May I become a fit instrument despite a broken body and a crazy, restless mind?

* * *

5:12 a.m.

Took Esgic and went back to bed. How sweet the dark room, the soft bed, the hope and likelihood of reducing the pain, of falling asleep felt. How sweet the ability to write sentences that lead me, and I hope others, to Krishna consciousness. And to still be alive after all this time.

All these things are sweet, but I don't always have my way. Sometimes the pain doesn't go down, for example. Some people say I should not take pills but should ride out the pain. That's hell, that no-relief program. Like the lives of many of the headache sufferers on that web site. Some of them have to humiliate themselves and go to a hospital emergency room, tolerating the cold stares of nurses who think they are junkies. The pain of migraine and the aura, the very sharp pain of a cluster headache. People are unable to work because of the pain. Imagine the humiliation of having to call in sick yet again. I read their accounts and thought how these sufferers must have caused some kind of suffering in their past lives. This is their karma. Mine too. How nice it would be to practice such virtues as forgiveness. But it's obvious, especially for people who live with pain, that equipoise is not a condition that can be imitated. O Krishna, please save us.

Besides the headache pain, I feel the pain of my disappointments in ISKCON. Our own members are seeking to build a movement so different than what we thought we were building when we started. There's nothing wrong with that, but I can't help but feel that it's something less than our original ideals. The fact is, however, that we were blind

with our ideals. We thought we could follow Srila Prabhupada in ways that don't seem possible now. We were also looking for freedom. But that's not what we ended up with.

Before I went to lay down, I worshiped Radha and Govinda. I felt the pain going off like a red light, warning me that this will probably be a big one. Their clothes fit nicely. Krishna's *dhoti* is pink, and it draped eloquently, tucked between His legs and showing His feet. His blessed feet of which the demigods take shelter "so beautiful. I don't know anything about these things; all I know is that Krishna looked nice. If more devotees could find relief in looking at Krishna, maybe we would have less controversies in this movement. Radharani is also beautiful. I hesitated whether to offer Her a woolen *cadar*. She looked fine without one, but maybe She needed the warmth. I decided in favor of it. While bathing and dressing Their forms, I listened to Narottama dasa Thakura's prayers. He prays to be with Radha and Krishna in the spiritual world, along with his spiritual master. The poetry: "Those feet . . . those feet . . . one who has not connected with Lord Nityananda does not know anything. His life is a waste of time." Yes, yes. Krishna is inviting us, "Come to Me." I don't go on pilgrimage to Ekacakra, I don't live in Vrndavana, but I get these drops of mercy even here.

* * *

I took the Esgic today because I wanted to stay active.

Letter from Teri Covington. She has been working all these years in the Navy, doing her bit. She would like to retire and go back to New York, where her mother lives. Her ship is called the U.S.S. Arctic. I asked her to tell me about her position and life on the ship, but she didn't say much. She said when she joined the Navy, she told them she wanted to be a photographer. They agreed that she could do it after her first year, but they reneged on that. She says she's a "radio man," which she says means she's a paper-pusher. radio-man Covington, black lady sailor and dear disciple. She still has the *japa* beads she purchased in Vrndavana. The ship's chaplain says she can use the chapel whenever it isn't being used. She often goes in there and chants her rounds. Her initiated name is Aditi-devi dasi. Krishna loves her. Maybe she will go to Him soon. Such a simple person, living without luxuries. Why is she in that situation? I don't know.

I took the Esgic so I could be there for such persons. I won't give anyone who hates me or all ISKCON gurus the satisfaction of seeing me fallen and betraying my disciples. I don't want to give those who have faith in me the pain of yet another desertion. Krishna, please protect me. Hare Krishna.

* * *

9:39 a.m.

The Esgic I took at 4:30 a.m. didn't work. That means it hasn't worked four out of five times. I spoke with M. about it again, but we reached no conclusion. I mentioned the possibility of taking Imitrex instead of Esgic. I am not interested in headache clinics or drug-free programs. Doctors are usually arrogant with their natural therapies. They coerce you to accept them as gurus, then if you do you give your heart and effort to them and their program for months and years, enduring so much pain along the way but

keeping faith in aerobic breathing or Chinese herbs, yoga or whatever it is. In the end they conclude, "I guess it doesn't work."

Why not accept it as karma? Or, better yet, as Krishna's mercy? That takes a deeply philosophical attitude. But I've been enjoying more uptime in recent months with the medication, and feel my *kirtana* of writing twenty pages a day is worth fighting for. Let me stay active.

M. recalled the times when I felt grateful to get a day or two clear of pain each week. That was when I wasn't taking medication. For years now, the headaches have come at the rate of five per week. The only change that has been made despite my following numerous regimens is whether I have been able to abort some of them with medication. No fasting, no herbs, no homeopathic remedies, no physical exercises "nothing has been able to change their frequency or their intensity.

But maybe the pills not working indicates that I'm in for a change. I would have to tell my dear readers, "Please excuse me if I don't write twenty pages a day." Most readers would say, "No problem! Quite all right!" It's me who would feel . . . well, cheated.

Still, I can take a lesson from the graphic representation of Gour Mohan in the "Abhay" film. The same actor has been playing him from the beginning while already six actors have played his growing son. We see Gour Mohan getting grayer, then walking with a hitch, slowing down, and we know it won't be long before the final scene, probably accompanied by sarod and sitar. I won't always be sailing along either.

Somehow, though, I think I still have a good amount of work to do before that scene. I'm not the lord of nature, and I can't control my own life span, so I have to go along with whatever Krishna ordains for me. That includes suffering through headaches without relief, if that is what is to be.

* * *

11:30 a.m.

A few months ago I listened to some lectures by Richard Rohr. I remember one especially about "woundedness" from the Catholic perspective. I just read some comments I wrote in an earlier volume of EJW about it. I referred to Rohr and said, "Yes, that's part of the cruciform life." The word "cruciform" didn't seem to be a real word. Maybe the typist misheard it. I thought I would strike it out and keep only the next sentence: "Life is good and wonderful, but hard and painful." I decided to check the dictionary: cruciform means "cross-like." Okay, I'll keep it.

Life is beautiful, but some days hurt. Like today. We can't run away from those times, can't abort them all. We have to face them, and not in the sense of a confrontation that increases pain, but with a willingness to limp if that's what seems to be going on. We each have our share of misery, and we should be strong enough to take it. Perhaps others sometimes help us to carry our burdens, just as Simon helped Jesus carry his cross part way to Calvary, but otherwise, pain is suffered alone.

* * *

12:30 p.m., Pain free-write
Pain a friend but we

choose distraction from it
although in the end
it always comes back
with a pinch.

Can we distort time and imagine that twelve hours are nothing? "Time is relative." Or can we visualize pain, draw it into a tiny ball so that it doesn't flame up? Or just say live with it, unable to resist its power? When pain arrives, release your plans. Pain comes from God for a devotee, and it is for our own good. Why fear it? Don't even brace yourself. Just relax and let the day turn into afternoon, then night.

* * *

6:47 p.m.

Went to bed two hours ago, but the sharp pain remains. Krishna is the life force of my words, but I can't write many of them down because that pain is sitting right in the tender spot behind my right eye. Where is my life force now?

Squirming, you can only lie there half-conscious while inferior things pass through your mind as if they were a sewer or roadside stream. Just waiting for the ache to subside so everything can return to normal.

O dolphin endorphins, why don't you work? But I am not alone. The whole crowd of humanity writhing in disease or in death throes, in anxiety or insanity "this is the place of disease and pain. No one escapes unless they're already dead.

June 18, 1:55 a.m.

Still no relief. Sharp pain all night "that classic, deep-cut, right-eye pain. I used to be reticent in writing about it, but now I seem to have created my own "on-line sufferers" page. Anyway, I'm simply waiting for this one to go away. I have already surrendered to it. Silent *japa*.

* * *

8:37 a.m.

It's gone, but I feel weak. I feel like I've been through a devastation. I can't just jump up and write a bunch of pages now, and anyway, I still have rounds to chant. My cubbyhole is stuffed with letters from the Baltimore and Dublin addresses. I have to chip away at that. Those voices. Back of the neck weak while I sit in the chair making slow progress on my rounds. Dead tan moth at the top of this page; been there for hours.

Read a newsletter from a loving community. In one article a *matangi* praised her guru. She said he was good-looking and had a nice smile. She also said he was a neat dresser. She was attracted by these qualities.

Oh, don't make fun. I have old bones, need to shave, wear wrinkled clothes, and I don't smile.

Let me write to that mother whose thirteen-year-old son writes to me. I don't think I ought to initiate him. I also wonder whether she is putting him up to asking me for initiation. A nice boy like that living in an Indian *gurukula* deserves a more energetic

guru who can love him and be with him and celebrate his birthday. Seems like all I can write about this morning is gurus. Our society is guru-crazy.

Rain leaking down the wall. Something wrong with the roof, maybe, but M. says it's an "original defect" in how this house was constructed.

All my drawing pages are white and empty, taped to boards, waiting for me to make some crude stabs at them. When I'm stronger.

* * *

3:36 p.m.

One more round to do. Whisper it or say it, but push it out. The letters are overwhelming. Faces, lives "how can I tend to this one when so many others are waiting?"

* * *

4:25 p.m.

Heard the van coming up the hill. No time to write. M. will be up the stairs in a few minutes to tell me what he accomplished on the phone. Devotees may be coming from England. This is a recovery day. Will Esgic stop headaches? Stay tuned.

In his foreword to Allen Paton's *Instrument of Thy Peace*, Malcolm Muggeridge says, "One could build a house on a high hill and sit quietly there talking to God." He says it's better to take part in the good fight and to try to change the world, social change and religious change. Some people withdraw to save their love and pity for themselves.

These words could be used against me. Am I not sitting in a house on a hill trying to talk to God? Have I not given up the fight in ISKCON's ranks according to how we normally define preaching? Don't I pity myself as I speak of my headaches?

I think I am doing what I can. I speak both to God and fellow sufferers "not just headache people, but of all suffering from the threefold miseries. As a member of ISKCON, the things I would be expected to do in the "good fight" don't appeal to me, are not me. I have a different service. It's simple to understand. I share the battlefield from a different strategic position. That's all.

M. has not made it up the stairs yet. I have time to finish this page. May Krishna speak through me at least so that my words recognize His power and steer toward Him. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare: chant the holy names, be faithful to your master and his line.

June 19, 12:02 a.m.

Top of head pressure. Just before taking rest last night, it was pressing hard, but I wanted to unpack the last of the original edition *Bhagavatams* which arrived in a dirty old sea-mail bag. At that moment, M. was having a hay fever attack and had run off, and Caranaravinda, who brought over the mail, drove off in her car in pain. She has some kind of infection. We're all suffering.

I'm no saint about it. Thinking again of Muggeridge's point about loving and pitying others. Some people are social activists. While praising South African Paton,

Muggeridge said that we must mix work for social justice with work for improving people through evangelism. One is not enough without the other "not nowadays. But he admitted that Jesus and St. Francis didn't work for nationalism or social improvement. Srila Prabhupada and Lord Caitanya didn't work for those things either. Srila Prabhupada wanted us to expend all our energy to preach Krishna consciousness. He knew it was the panacea for all ills.

I feel as if I have to reconstruct my reading life. I may not be able to read much today. I have to at least make a dent in the mail, and I can't abandon EJW "not yet. Am I asking Lord Krishna to make me an instrument of Krishna consciousness, so that where there is hatred, I can sow love, where there is despair, I can sow hope, and where there is doubt, I can sow faith? Because in giving, we gain all these ourselves, including eternal life. Well, yeah, I guess I am asking for that. Aren't we all?

As I unpacked the *Srimad-Bhagavatams* last night, I sponged down and dusted those that needed it, then lined them up, all thirty volumes by Srila Prabhupada and the nine by Hridayananda dasa Goswami and Gopi-paranadhana Prabhu. Then I had to go to bed to rest my collapsed head. Yet I had a flash of desire to read those books all lined up, and I felt as if I could read several volumes at once.

Midnight reading of *Bhagavad-gita*: Arjuna asks Krishna, "Please forgive whatever I may have done in madness or in love." One wants to tell Arjuna how glorious he actually is. He doesn't need to ask forgiveness for the depth of his love and how he revealed that to Krishna. "I have dishonored You many times, jesting . . . O infallible one, please excuse me for all those offenses." (Bg. 11.42) It's *we* who have to pray with that last phrase. Our *aparadhas* are not something done in intimacy but from a distance. Our offenses are the offenses of *asuras*. Yet by Srila Prabhupada's grace, we have been able to approach Krishna. We play with Deities even though we don't realize Their actual forms, and we are ignorant of the proper procedures for *puja*. O Krishna, please forgive us. You know we want to come closer to You. Please draw us to You. Please allow us to serve. Make us mad with affection. May You be installed in the innermost core of our hearts.

"Arjuna did not know how many times he may have dishonored Krishna by addressing Him, 'O my Friend,' 'O Krishna,' 'O Yadava', etc., without acknowledging His opulence." Krishna played with Arjuna as a friend; that is Krishna's kindness, despite His inconceivable opulence. The relationship is fixed; it cannot be forgotten, either by Krishna or by His devotees.

* * *

4:26 a.m.

Do you remember? Yes, I remember. How you got influenced? Yes. Whatever I take in, I become like that. Or at least I have to sort it out later. I asked Kr not to send me the *New York Times* book review section anymore, but another one has arrived. I dispatched it within five minutes, but that was enough to leave me impressions of V. S. Naipul and Octavio Paz, William Shawn, the exposé on the Clintons by So-and-so (I forget) in a book called *Arkansas Mischief*.

Srila Prabhupada wearing his brown *cadar* today, I'm glad to say, and Radha and Govinda in one of my favorite dresses colored brown and gold. The only thing I don't like about this dress is that it covers Krishna's lotus feet. That's a serious drawback.

Answer the mail, the door, the phone, the question, God. Sometimes devotees write to me in open and charming ways about their own limitations. One writes he knows Krishna doesn't want to be addressed as the order-supplier, but is it wrong that he asks Him to allow him to use the intelligence he has been given? (This person has a lifelong problem of being too shy to use his intelligence openly.) Someone else writes that she is afraid to pray to Krishna for service because He might give her something to do which she doesn't want to do. There is something charming about such candor before God, and I'm sure it appeals to Him from the human, limited point of view.

Oh yes, and there's a new book about Jimmy Carter. Almost everyone agrees that he did wonderful work, not as U.S. President, but after, when he took up all kinds of important causes for world peace, health, and harmony. He's religious, they say, and an activist "not the quiet type.

There's that word again, and again being quiet is disparaged. The religionist who doesn't come out to work with people and their problems, the one who stays alone and prays "what good is he? But the contemplatives have their champions too. Merton used to say that the praying hermit is the center of the world, because he takes the world into his solitude and prays to God to relieve its suffering.

Someone wrote how he suddenly realized, during a visit to Mayapur, that Gaura-Nitai are the most merciful Deities. He had thought they were Deities for neophytes. Yes, and I waited thirty years before worshiping Radha-Krishna in my room. Don't jump to the *rasa* dance, Srila Prabhupada said, but study *Srimad-Bhagavatam* step by step "what is the body and the world, what is forgetfulness of God, what is *sambandha*. Then you can come to Krishna's dealings with the *gopis*. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Bhagavad-gita*. That's where religion has gone after the disappearance of Krishna from this earth.

* * *

So I am back alive, trying to live the way I was living before that all-day headache. I tend to forget it completely "forget even that I have a chronic disease "when I'm not feeling it. That's probably healthy. Live one day at a time. If I am well today, then I'm a well man. If this afternoon (or later this morning) I get a headache, then that's something different. But I have to be realistic and not forget so much that I make a lot of plans for travel that I will just have to cancel.

If possible, I will don the letter-answering persona today.

Come on, man, speak about Krishna. He is the Supreme. I very much like the verse where Arjuna asks forgiveness for being so friendly with Krishna. It's neat or far out. It's the cat's pajamas. It makes me want to hear more about Arjuna and Krishna. Srila Prabhupada will tell us the details. Krishna is best with the *gopis*, but we don't renounce Krishna's talks with Arjuna or their friendship. We don't understand the depth of their relationship, even though we've heard about it a number of times.

And that's something else I don't understand "why the *Bhagavatam* doesn't deal more with Krishna in His original form. Why do we have to learn all that stuff about the Visnu

incarnations and the Vaikuntha-bound devotees? But I have faith that *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is the *summum bonum*. It provides us with examples of surrender to Krishna, and gives the groundwork that will allow us to become attracted to and work toward our Vraja goal. We cannot be with Krishna and the *gopis* unless we have assimilated the *Bhagavatam's* lessons. We have to become free of our mundane understandings of God. That's what the first nine cantos of the *Bhagavatam* try to teach. O Krishna, please teach me, please keep me.

Birds chirping, mist blowing, dawn coming. Work for koan-like sentences that come at the end of a paragraph. You can't just stick them there purposely. They have to come of their own accord, earned by living and writing with dedication. I like sentences that are both practical experience and wisdom in one. It's the inextricable web of sense perception lived through Vedic wisdom. It takes shape.

I'm aware how precious eyesight is. St. Francis became blind. I'm dependent on looking through magnified glass. They say the optometrists have led me down this path and I should have resisted. Now I can't see without spectacles, can't chew without my false teeth, can't live without headache pills, can't move without a car, without the government's sanction "no self-sufficiency. But I can chant. Did it quicker this morning.

* * *

5:20 a.m.

Mist all around. Not so cold today. Wearing my green rain gear. The foliage gets thicker and thicker each week. I've never seen a drought in Ireland.

Devotees, disciples I know, want their guru and Krishna to love them *as they are*. So should their guru accept them, or should he demand that they do more, be more? That disciple I mentioned who didn't want to pray for service, prays instead simply that she hopes her guru will love her.

* * *

Please Accept Me
& Make it even make it
even Steven. We went out to see
the wet mist and discovered

* * *

that we like people's disarming candor
before God "their prayers to be accepted
as they are
just as they accept Him
when he sends them pains
in the head or elsewhere
or gives them so much trouble.

* * *

I like to walk
and think that He
is with me everywhere
will teach me
and love me and
protect me
that He is doing that
for *everyone*.
Maybe they're not wrong
when they ask to be accepted
as they accept Him. "

* * *

He Will Figure It Out
& You sure got a devotee charmed
you sure got it easy
are you sure?

* * *

God is who? Don't bother
us give us Krishna in the
porridge
go ahead and blow.

* * *

He's got hives, AIDS
an appendix
throat lozenge

* * *

Krishna the sweet pull
for a little while some
have good karma
questing after all these years

* * *

in the mail
in the hall
wanting God (to serve them?)
Rascal!

* * *

Birds on the road amid
mist and closing-in greenery
fictive rocks
wood gate that doesn't shut
or open in the rain.

* * *

Our only asset our guru's
service even offered in this
broken and whimsical condition
self-righteous each one
of us. "

* * *

8:45 a.m., No Series

In the Krishna conscious rearview mirror, we see what just happened. If we turn it another way, we can see what is creeping up on us in the future due to things we have done in the past. Whatever we see, we cannot control events.

Hare Krishna. Ants on the march. They immediately detect a grain of sugar. We know it was provided by God. God provides for elephants and ants. We're all insignificant, but still He provides. We humans, however, have an exaggerated sense of ourselves and a general lack of dependence on Krishna. We prefer to stock up on items from the survivalist catalogues. "When your life hangs in the balance," the ads say.

When my life hangs in the balance "*while* my life hangs in the balance "I will be reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Getting strength to approach it. I'm at the beginning of the Second Canto.

Dreamt of folks living on a large ship with time to spare. Saw MathureSa Prabhu among the crew. He seemed relaxed and self-assured. I wondered how he could be there "what about his duty to his wife and children? I was not self-assured, even though I had no family duties to call me away from the ship. But I really didn't want to be there, had no calling, no place.

When I say Krishna is the life force of my words, that's a truism, because Krishna is the life force of everything. He's the cause of all causes. But when I state it, I want to include the awareness that Krishna is close to me. He can speak through me. My words are a mystery "I mean, the process of discovering them and releasing them. People theorize about where creativity comes from. I assert that it comes from God. See? Krishna is the life force. Therefore, we ought to look at words with respect, not only that they might have come filtered through someone's ego trip. Each one is actually a gem that can be used in Krishna's service. Each one carries that potential, because they come from Him and can be offered back.

I'm sure a lot of questions can be raised about what I am saying, but my point is simple. I don't need to analyze everything people *do* with the creative impulses Krishna gives them. Some words are not used in His service and dissolve like morning mist.

Srimad-Bhagavatam is a special collection of words. They never dissolve, and can actually liberate us from all our illusions. They are potent and transcendental.

We saw Abhay sitting on a horse-drawn carriage. He was alone with his suitcase, leaving his Calcutta home and heading for Allahabad. Good-bye, Abhay. They (the movie-makers) said he wanted to preach Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's message and that's why he took the job as sales agent for Dr. Bose's lab "it would give him more time to do the thing he most wanted to do.

Hare Krishna. Srila Prabhupada set off for America even more boldly and with clearer intention (yet even then he had no exact plan) when he was seventy.

* * *

"Those persons who are materially engrossed, being blind to the knowledge of ultimate truth, have many subject matters for hearing in human society, O Emperor." (*Bhag.* 2.1.2) Our minds are many-branched. Therefore, we must learn to dovetail our enterprises. If we have ultimate truth, why go back to material or vaguely spiritual interests?

* * *

Is it wrong of me to feel glad that I'm alive? Should I be too serious even for that? To be grave means to always stare death in the face. When we do that, it allows us to make amends and pound ourselves into submission, doesn't it? But is it wrong to look up at the skylight just to see the trees and to feel joy?

Human life is meant for solving the miseries of birth and death, but *grhamedhis* don't pursue self-realization. They become absorbed, as we will hear, in other things, such as earning and shopping. They don't settle in to hear *Krishna-katha* constantly. "They want to hear something about the name, form, etc., of everything temporary, and they do not know how to utilize this propensity of hearing for the ultimate good."

Vedic knowledge is meant to liberate the spirit soul from matter. This is called *atma-tattva*. *Karmis* are more interested in making money to gratify their senses.

* * *

10:30 a.m.

I asked for a clipboard, or a lap board, as it is called here, and now I have been given one. I will use it when I'm sitting in the easy chair.

"All we asked of our guru," someone wrote me, "is that he preach coherently and follow the path. He simply had to be coherent in his preaching and behavior, but he was not." This devotee didn't expect the guru to take a big profile "the disciples could have lived without that "but now he has written to tell them that he is not qualified to lead them, that he has suffered too many personal traumas, and that he is not mentally balanced. If the disciples insist that he keep his position, he'll have to disappear. The

disciples are disappointed: "Do you have any advice?" I can only advise the devotee who wrote this letter to go on serving in the temple under Srila Prabhupada, the Deities, the holy names, and her friends. All shelter is there.

Do you like this lap board? It's okay. I could write a novel on this board, or a poem. I could use it as a springboard and bounce off into something else. I'm using it with a different kind of paper.

Clear day so far. Get ready for Srila Prabhupada's *puja*. All we ask is that you be coherent. And simple. And don't fall out of the traces or make a fool of yourself. Try to show people that there is some good in being connected to Prabhupada's ISKCON.

Blessed be.

A person wrote from Italy saying that the years she lived in the temple were her escape from reality. Now she's facing her inner fears. At least that's reality. She's also facing the reality of economic survival, of finding a place to live, and a purpose for living. She says she's trying to live for the moment.

We're all doing that, we sheep and humans. But what *kind* of moment? Sukadeva Gosvami says our moments should add up to a life directed toward Krishna consciousness. What's the point in being absorbed in temporary things? Some feel only monks or nuns (i.e., those who are economically subsidized) can concentrate on attaining pure devotion, but *bhakti-yoga* teaches us how to practice in an active life. The ISKCON community life which Srila Prabhupada envisioned and which we tried to put into play seems not to have worked for many people, myself included. I'm sympathetic to those who struggle with it. But I won't condemn it either. What we each must do is find a valid, viable life, and then live it *in Krishna consciousness*.

Now this board will become part of my writing repertoire "board notes, board stiff (no puns, please). room and board. Yes, bored sometimes too. I'd like to bore into my heart like a boll weevil into cotton. But not to ruin the plant. Bore in with love and interest and good things, as in the expression, "Narada penetrates into the presence of the Lord by the transcendental chant." Let me just remain coherent. That's up to Srila Prabhupada. I pray he'll continue to keep me in his service.

* * *

3:00 p.m.

A human being fights death with the "fallible soldiers" (*atma-sainyesv asatsv*) such as the body and the family. This is the world of death, so it's a losing battle. A human being, however, has the ability to understand the struggle and inquire into freedom from it (*atma-tattva*). Most don't do that. They are "sufficiently experienced" to see that everyone before them has died, but that doesn't change their foolish hopes that they can continue living in the material world indefinitely. They search vainly after permanence in a world of impermanence. "Everyone is a dead body flapping only for a few days, and yet all the energy of human life is being wasted in the decoration of this dead body." (*Bhag. 2.1.4*, purport)

"O descendent of King Bharata, one who desires to be free from all miseries must hear about, glorify and also remember the Personality of Godhead, who is the Supersoul, the controller and the savior from all miseries." (*Bhag. 2.1.5*)

I'm always near a headache. I could be typing this "whereby I'd more quickly reach my quota and generate good ideas "but it could tip me over the edge into pain. So I am handwriting these pages. Still, I feel the right-eye twinge growing. The migraineurs on Dr. Robbin's web site cry, "Help! My doctor took me off Imitrex because of my heart condition. I need a new way to relieve pain. Somebody out there, help! I'm petrified just thinking about the next headache."

"I don't work anymore," someone writes. "At least I can lay in bed whenever I get a migraine. My husband is great; he knows I'm not faking it to get out of work."

Have you tried feverfew? Get it from such-and-such company. Ice packs?

The foolish materialist wastes his time working and "maintaining a band of relatives who are to be vanquished in the air of oblivion." Classic lines that ring true. But who can live up to their spirit? Still, no sane man can deny them.

To free ourselves of vicious *samsara*, we should act on the Lord's behalf. As I mix thoughts from *sastra* to headaches, I see connections for myself. For example, if I ask myself whether I am struggling with headaches and remedies as service to Krishna, or simply behaving as a *karmi* with his line of fallible soldiers, that is sometimes a difficult question to answer. Esgic is a fallible soldier "it failed me four out of five times. But it's also a tool by which I stay active in Krishna's service. It just depends on what's going on in my mind.

O Krishna, do You accept my writing as service? In order to work for You, I first have to hear about You, then glorify You, and then it will be possible to remember You constantly as I serve "or when I am in pain. "This brings freedom from all sorts of fear." (*Bhag.* 2.1.5, purport)

"The highest perfection of human life . . . is to remember the Personality of Godhead at the end of life." (*Bhag.* 2.1.6) The various paths of perfection are valuable only if they bring us to remember Lord Narayana, Krishna. "This is possible only by the association of a pure devotee, who can give a finishing touch to the transcendental activities of all *jnanis*, *yogis*, or *karmis* . . ." (*Bhag.* 2.1.6, purport) Mold your life so that you can think of the Personality of Godhead in every condition.

* * *

3:58 p.m.

Looked at the booklet that goes with the first-aid kit. I doubt I could do much good if someone were really injured. Better I try to get more professional help, unless the injured person was about to die. I'll read about how to do things, but I would really need to practice the techniques before I would feel comfortable attempting them. Foolish fears and squeamish, untested mettle. Death stalks us, waiting to spill our blood, but we walk in a circle, we victims and rescuers. Oh, and the rescuer is legally liable for his actions.

Hey, let's just think of Krishna, okay? And let's take a little walk around the house. Get some fresh air while we chant.

* * *

4:51 p.m.

I hereby confess that although I don't do much, it's a pleasant relief to move colors around on a page. It feels like the testimony of a lonely spirit getting lost in blue. Neat, Miro-like blobs in the sky "extensions of arms and bulbs and winding artistic hopes. I'm not going off any deep end, don't worry.

Oh, what is that place you drew? Did it come from a dream where you were both afraid and thrilled? But you want Krishna, you keep telling yourself. Following the sages leads toward truth. The temporary is wrong. Can there be a similar thrill in practicing Krishna consciousness? Are we devotees bound in the ropes of rules and regulations?

"I am free!" he shouted, and ran away from the temple, jumped over the low fence, then caught his foot and fell. They noted that "told it as an anecdote.

"I am free!" He walks around the house so near the stupid-looking cows, some looking back him, their gray tongues lolling. Exploited beasts. The smaller sheep and the helpless grass "grass has no legs with which to run away. And where's that wandering fox?

Hereby Confess, you are a mess. Your typist in France and the dance is masquerade.

No, stop me, *please*. I'm a monk in saffron and don't dance. You see, I'm on the trail of release from birth and death. I don't want to pay some immense fine just because I tried to have a little fun before it was all over. I didn't, I didn't.

But I can't apply myself right now to talk to a man who wants my advice about a symptom he has discovered in himself. He says that suddenly the controller part of himself went dead. He grew detached. Nothing wrong with *that*. Go on with your duty, mellowed man, even if you aren't the controller you used to be.

Somebody, tell me I'm not mad and not wasting my time. When the official leader of the religious organization to which I belong, the leader for this particular nation, comes by, I will ask to see him just to show him that I'm all right. I'm still shaved up and can talk and think whatever I'm supposed to. He can think whatever he likes about my under-achieving. I will ask customary questions, but I don't have much of an agenda. Except the sixty-four puns, lies, and piebalds; the thirty-four harem divers and whoosabouts; three hundred and fifty-four *yugas*; and two million circumambulations "all tallied while you wait. Bill of lading directed to appropriate parties. No refusals or "return to senders" possible.

* * *

Do you hear anything approaching from far off? Is that the sound of Irish trad music in the background? M. must be around. I usually hear Praghosa's car climbing the hill around 1:00 or 1:30 a.m. That's when he gets back from the restaurant. By then, I am deep in my chair chanting *japa* with a clock, assuring myself I am giving the holy name my best time.

Do I know that poet brother? No. Which one? The doctor says he goes out and has fun when he's not in the emergency room applying splints. He's got the guts to look wounds in the face, and he sometimes takes a person's tongue in his fingers and connects

it to their lips with a safety pin. He says it doesn't hurt them, because if you have to do this, it means they're about to die anyway. But don't do it if you don't know what the hell you are doing! Green leaves . . .

End of June almost.

I asked M. earlier today if he would be willing to discuss my headaches, even though I don't give him equal time to discuss his hay fever. I told him that I take advantage of him because he's a disciple. I felt strange saying that. I do take advantage, but then I think he expects that. It's called "accepting service." If they serve me, it gets offered to God. The gurus' enemies, of course, would say otherwise. They would present us as wolves stalking a flock of innocent sheep.

I don't see it like that. I'm trying not to operate on the basis of the lone fir tree of my ego. I mean, I may be ordinary, but I'm trying to represent my spiritual master. *Everyone* is trying to do that "or most everyone. We learn that from the *Vedas*. You can't say that this atom is nothing if he's doing that. He may not be important, and in a way he's not, yet he is too, if he's representing his spiritual master. Some say all that's important is making money, getting a woman, and standing on your own two feet. Oh yeah, and you should have a car, a cellular phone, and live in America.

* * *

5:20 p.m.

"O King Pariksit, mainly the topmost transcendentalists, who are above the regulative principles and restrictions, take pleasure in describing the glories of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 2.1.7) Srila Prabhupada writes here that a neophyte is guided by the spiritual master under regulation; he is like a patient treated under the restrictions of a medical regimen.

Like me, a devotee told me, he reads *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. He is convinced it's good for him. He recognizes that the topics discussed are important guidance for him in spiritual life, and that temporary topics don't help. He subscribes to eternal life and wants to use this life to improve his position in the next life.

But that's salvationism, not pure devotional service. The topmost devotee reads the *Bhagavatam* not because the rules tell him he should but because it is also pleasurable.

Srimad-Bhagavatam is the graduate study of the science of Godhead, and it must be studied under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is the Lord's sound incarnation. "That very *Srimad-Bhagavatam* I shall recite before you because you are the most sincere devotee of Lord Krishna. One who gives full attention and respect to hearing *Srimad-Bhagavatam* achieves unflinching faith in the Supreme Lord, the giver of salvation." (*Bhag.* 2.1.10) Srila Prabhupada told us that our progress would depend not on our ability to research but on how much mercy we have received from our spiritual master. When the guru is satisfied with a disciple, knowledge automatically manifests in him.

O Lord, I note this, but You are not injecting me with real taste. Or I am refusing to take the nectar in the right way? I'm cynical, hurt, frozen up, doing something wrong,

and refuse to listen to what is good for me. I'm not a *maha-paurusika*, "one who deserves to approach the Supreme Lord."

Just now I'm thinking a disciple who wrote to me about his experience in Vrndavana. He went on *parikrama* wearing shoes, and a Brijbasi stopped him and asked him to take his shoes off. The young man, who is from Russia, didn't want to comply. The Brijbasi asked him again, and my Russian-ISKCON disciple replied, "I'm a *mleccha*." The Brijbasi then said, "*Acha?*" and backed away in disappointment.

June 20, 12:10 a.m.

Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. No one is greater than or equal to Him. Arjuna declares Krishna to be the father of the cosmos and the supreme spiritual master ""and any bona fide spiritual master at the present moment must be a descendent in the line of disciplic succession stemming from Krishna." (Bg. 11.43, purport)

"You are the Supreme Lord, to be worshiped by every living being. Thus I fall down to offer You my respectful obeisances and ask Your mercy. As a father tolerates the impudence of his son . . . please tolerate the wrongs I may have done You." (Bg. 11.44)

So many wrongs we have committed. Some of them stem from long-standing, offensive attitudes. We can't even trace the origins of some of our attitudes. Some of our offenses stem from having lived a life of skepticism and miseducation. Srila Prabhupada has forgiven us these things and given us our second birth, but still the skepticism and offenses live on. We will have to pay in tears of remorse if we want these things washed from our hearts.

When the alarm rings and I sense another day ahead, I feel if not joy, then determination. Today is the day I will overcome the obstacles to developing *bhakti*. I move quickly into the other room, face the clock, the light, and the holy book.

Arjuna asked to see Krishna's four-armed form so he could be relieved from the intense fear he felt at beholding the universal form.

Our Krishna conscious diet of rice, *dal*, *sabji*, and *capatis* "I have been eating like that since 1966, and I still love it. I live for it "the aroma of fresh, hot food offered to Krishna. This whole life. We used to sit on the floor. The pots would be placed on straw mats before us, and we would be served. Why mention *that*? And my visits, especially the post-Tarksa ones to Trinidad, and Guyana "the coming and going to and from that country. Just a few memories. I mean, I'm just trying to show that my faith is a long-standing one. As that man prays to Jesus, "I have faith! Please help me where my faith leaves off," I ask the same of Srila Prabhupada and Krishna. O Krishna, may we too see Your universal form through Arjuna's eyes, and request You to reveal Your four-armed form so that we too can be relieved?"

"One who knows Krishna becomes free at once from all contamination of the material world." (Bg. 10.40, purport)

Krishna, Krishna. Now stay a moment and think about something as immeasurable as the love between Krishna and Arjuna. Arjuna was so brave and faithful that he asked to see the *viSva-rupa* to prove Krishna's supremacy over all. Then he became afraid. He longed to see Krishna's humanlike form "which would also establish Krishna as the source of the *viSva-rupa*. This is a high moment in *Bhagavad-gita*.

A reader wrote to tell me that she resonates with my childhood memories more than with anything else I write. She says she never gets enough of them. Imagine, out of all I could give as an ISKCON writer, someone treasures those memories above all, while others don't care to hear about me in this conditional form of life. It's holy, it's woundedness, it's who we are as conditioned souls "those memories of a self stuck in a body, overshadowed by parents, then becoming teenagers. As a fifth grader, I watched Mrs. Patterson, our teacher, chew on a pencil. She was a rough woman, almost manly. And remember Miss Williams, the more ladylike fourth grade teacher? She used to draw chalk arrows on the blackboard around the word "forget". She told us we must never forget.

* * *

4:26 a.m.

O ISKCON, O controversy, O loving disciples, may we survive this one lifetime. It is up to each of us to become dear to Krishna by our loving attitude. I want to assure those who look to me that I will not fail them. But can I guarantee it? I can only try.

I saw a guarantee downstairs on Madhu's desk for a clock he just purchased. It said the clock was constructed of first-class materials and assembled under rigorous standards. The company guarantees the clock to work for at least one year from date of purchase. If anything goes wrong with it before that time, wrap it up carefully and send it in.

Is a guru like that, guaranteed by ISKCON? "If the guru you have turns out to be defective, mail him back and we will send you another one." But your guru should not break down under normal use, unless he is defective by nature, such as one who decides he's sick of the whole guru trip and wants to find something else to do, who admits his weakness and then abandons his disciples. I mean, why should we have to pretend to be perfect? And why do we have to compete with all those other gurus, both inside and outside ISKCON, as if we are all being measured one against another? And so on.

Radha-Govinda in mostly white today. Narottama dasa Thakura said he simply wants to worship Govinda and avoid the various kinds of nondevotees. Cry out, "Govinda!" and the evil elements will flee from you the way elephants flee from a lion's roar. Narottama doesn't want to travel to various pilgrimages sites. He wants only to reside in Vraja and worship Radha-Govinda.

It's warmer today. I read and answered letters. I'm about to give up and say I have nothing new to say. She said she accepted me as a saintly person, and she's alert when others criticize me in their generic attacks against ISKCON gurus, ex-GBC men. She knows I'm attacked simply because I'm a member of ISKCON. Or for some other reason, real or imagined. I don't attack back though. Who has time?

The emperor's slippers. Musical tales and Fletcher or betide. The critic says, "This is intolerable! We want straight philosophy. We want to hear of an ISKCON project that went down a holy river and preached, distributing tons of *prasadam* and then organizing 70,000 people in a stadium. We want to hear of millionaires giving their bucks, and books being distributed at airports, not this so-called radio show where you talk about your childhood." But I found out some people think otherwise.

I have rejected the life of a devotee, Narottama laments. Yes, I'm in that tradition. I am not a devotee. I am alone with my machado. That same devotee told me that her husband doesn't want her to belong to ISKCON, but she does belong, so he tolerates it. It is painful, sometimes, family life. She continues and I continue. They continue. Everyone continues for awhile, then one by one we stop and go off to another life imperceptible to the people with whom we shared this conditioned existence.

Srila Prabhupada said, "Here we are lecturing on *Srimad-Bhagavatam* about the properties of fire. Some people expect that *Srimad-Bhagavatam* means only going to the *rasa* dance chapters, but to know Krishna means to know everything."

A violent gang is also a kind of community. The Hare Krishna movement is a congregation. A zoo is a place where animals are kept in cages for humans to look at. The bank is "what? And the pub? The school? The church? The mall? The music store? Everywhere, something is going on. The Mayavadis call this illusion, insisting that nothing is really going on in any of these places, but Vaisnavas know that the temporary places are also within God's external energy. They are real but impermanent.

I always write at this time of morning, unless a headache cancels the show. Today is okay so far.

Chant, chant your garrulous sound your
maha-mantra mountain climb,
your creekish verbalizing of Hare your
devotion devotion-less
names.

And don't forget to wear your rubber boots while you're out there.

Was your heart warmed by that letter from a loving disciple? Well, here, take a dash of reality.

No, love is real too.

Scholars say St. Francis never really wrote that poem, "Make Me an Instrument of Thy Peace." Most people think he did. At any rate, it's a nice prayer. "Where there is hate, let me sow love," etc. Act on Krishna's behalf. We sometimes think of being His instrument, but St. Francis (or whoever) took that sentiment pretty far. He prayed to add the good quality wherever it was absent, just as Narada did in the *Bhagavatam*.

* * *

5:20 a.m.

Out for a walk. Many slugs and snails on the road, smashed by passing cars. They are so helpless and slow. One nearby meadow pastures both sheep and cows. I also see piles of wet hay. The sheep tend to park on top of them. Innocent, foolish creatures, stained blue with their owners' initials.

But I don't want to examine the concentration camp up close, so I have turned to look up at the sky. It seems more pleasant to look off into the pinky-blue to a place where living beings don't torture one another. Or is there cruelty beyond the sky's horizon too? Beautiful bits of clouds. Almost behind them floats a thin, pale, wafer of a moon. Some people say they've become spiritually dead after so many years in the Hare Krishna movement, because pat answers are so easily given and they no longer have to search for

truth within themselves. But we don't have to be dead. Anyway, this philosophy makes sense even on the cosmic scale. We can accept it and let it live in us without dying. I wanted to tell those people who thought they were dying spiritually to wake up and see Krishna. His *darSana* doesn't come just by joining this movement. We have to continue the quest that brought us here, but with the gift of greater knowledge.

A new, simple, blue flower has joined the foxgloves. It looks like a dandelion, except it's on a longer stem and is pale powder blue. Some of the foliage around here reminds me of blackberries "these must be blackberry bushes. The roadsides are decorated with many varieties of ferns, weeds, grasses, and tassel-headed beauties. If we are dull, you see without discrimination; an observant eye sees the variety. See the clover? *White* clover.

* * *

Like the Creek rushing
& Now that's saying something "we went
into town, down the *bonne*
route, happy in the present
for awhile until
it got too hot
pressured head
tire flat
money low,
food bad,
lost . . .
border guards . . .

* * *

I said wait this has to be worked out.
Word in him and him in words,
world worked through so
a reader can get it
my thoughts
like creek rushing
water down hills
of rain
the day after a brightening blue sky.

* * *

She's making a list of all Srila Prabhupada's
disciples "our family Diaspora "
four thousand at most
it seems they took
it seriously after all

1,200 active in ISKCON
1,200 with some connection
800 missing in action and
no one knows them except for
names in a book, Tirtha dasa, Govinda
(the third), Bharata, Bindu.

* * *

Keep them fingers moving along those
beads, talk in quiet words and slow
movement is a steady factor
if we want to keep going on past
that immovable wall.
And a second wind
is also a useful asset."

* * *

Body and Soul
& Now we have body and soul
we must meet in it
love and hate, sex
and renunciation of it.

* * *

The body is the dead carrier of
all that is temporary and miserable
the soul eternal *atma*
servant of Supreme.

* * *

We're like lights
the body the emerald's setting
His dancers, warriors, friends . . .
no rebels us. "

* * *

8:26 a.m.
Don't be afraid.
Good advice.

Don't even be afraid to be afraid, if that's where you're at. I mean, for example don't
let fear gnaw at you or cause paralysis. Hey, I'm talking to you, my friend.

Srila Prabhupada said (as Lord Krishna says) that the mind can be both the closest friend and the worst enemy. I'd rather be friends than enemies. The mind makes a nasty enemy. If the mind is against us, how can we be loving enough, or properly disposed toward helping others? Don't let the mind sabotage the higher self.

In the meantime, don't be afraid your service isn't acceptable. Just do the best you can. It may *not* be good, but it's yours, and it's all you have. Allow it.

* * *

I have to urinate. Santoka wrote a few urination haikus:

Urinating,
I look down
On the sleeping village.
Nonchalantly urinating
By the road
Soaking the young weeds.

* * *

Everything has its place.

* * *

Writing here a Constitution of the United States of the Self. We have come to the conclusion that we want to be friends, all us sub-persons, and work together to throw off the yoke of self-oppression. We no longer wish to find fault with others or ourselves, nor be afraid that others will meddle with or control our lives. We will simply remain alert to prevent that. But we won't wish anyone ill if they try to overcome us.

* * *

10:00 a.m.

"O king, constant chanting of the holy name of the Lord after the ways of the great authorities is the doubtless and fearless way of success for all . . . (*Bhag.* 2.1.11) In his purport Srila Prabhupada makes it clear that devotees (he doesn't even use the phrase *pure* devotees) desire only Lord Krishna's satisfaction. They don't mind where they are, where they are going, or what facilities they have. They can chant anywhere "and that chanting is the most recommended process for devotees at any level of advancement.

One can be relieved of offenses toward the Lord by taking shelter of His holy name, "but one cannot protect himself if one commits an offense at the feet of the holy name of the Lord." In this purport, Prabhupada lists the ten offenses. The second offense is described in a particularly amazing way: we should honor the name of the Lord as people chant ""by the particular name of the Lord as it is locally understood." Ten offenses "we know them by rote because we recite them daily in our temples. What

about inattention? Anyone whose chanting is infested with the ten offenses cannot attain the goal, *Krishna-prema*, even if they chant for lifetimes. Oh boy.

I dictated a letter to Samika Rsi telling him I'm at a crossroads in my pain management. Then I told him how four out of five Esgics failed to relieve pain. I suggested we consider a preventative medicine. That letter is on my mind and could even trigger a headache. I feel a bit jumpy right now, not able to concentrate on reading. But it was nice to hear about chanting and the ten offenses. Such purports are meant to transform our consciousness.

I thought how I have become a no-frills disciple of Srila Prabhupada. I admit so many shortcomings and struggles that I almost can't imagine how I could have been that once-enthusiastic youngster. Nevertheless, I feel myself holding tenaciously to my basic service connection and identity.

* * *

10:50 a.m.

Tomorrow I'm supposed to talk to the devotees about the special relationship an author has with his readers. Won't take too much from nondevotee literature. But I just looked at a selection of Kerouac's statements on the topic. He spoke well at times, especially about his craft. His main point was that an author should write for himself, and that writing will go telepathically to the reader's human mind and find resonance there. Yes, I like that.

I'll tell them what the devotees say who read my books. It will sound like I'm reading rave reviews, and in a sense, I am. But they tell a side of the story they may not often hear. What can I say? I can say general things about the author-reader relationship, but it's up to them to acknowledge this particular author if he has some affect on their lives.

The same is true in the relationship between the readers of Prabhupada's books and Prabhupada himself. And of course, it is also true between a reader of Vyasadeva and Vyasadeva himself. It's a personal thing. I don't know if some of the book distributors from the North European zone will be present when I speak, but if there are, I'm sure they'll look at me with a touch of hardness in their eyes. I'll speak anyway, because my friends have made some endeavor to attend.

* * *

2:33 p.m.

"What is the value of a prolonged life which is wasted, inexperienced by years in this world? Better a moment of full consciousness, because that gives one a start in searching after his supreme interest." (*Bhag.* 2.1.12)

His words are so well chosen. I do want to "prolong" my life, because I've been awakened to what it is for. I can't claim I have ever had a moment of "full consciousness," but I'm trying for that moment of consciousness fixed on the Supreme. Any time I have should be used to advance my cause. How doubly foolish we are if we meet the *sad-guru*, learn of the path, then fall back into living as if we don't know any better.

Sukadeva Gosvami encouraged Maharaja Pariksit, who had only seven more days to live. His life was not prolonged at all. I've already lived longer than he did.

Srila Prabhupada glorifies the holy name in this context as the easiest way to achieve the supreme goal. "One should, therefore, utilize one's life in glorifying the Lord by all means, without any offense. Such activity of life, even for a moment, is never to be compared to a prolonged life of ignorance, like the lives of the tree and other living entities who may live for thousands of years without prosecuting spiritual advancement."

King Khatvanga heard that he had only a moment to live, so he immediately took shelter of Sri Krishna. We once acted that out in a skit for our Boston congregation. Perhaps we showed the different benedictions the king might have received from the demigods. We might have presented him with a beautiful young woman, wealth, followers "all refused by the saintly king. "Then what do you want?" He wanted know how much longer he would; he wanted to be prepared. "Oh, all right." The demigods consulted perhaps an astrologer or some arcane book. "Oh! You have only a moment left!" When he heard that, King Khatvanga sped from their presence and dove to the earth, where Sri Krishna was still present. "He was successful in his great attempt" " eternal life at the Lord's lotus feet. Just a short skit before the *pakor*s were served.

Maharaja Pariksit was fortunate to instantly meet Sukadeva Gosvami and begin hearing from him while preparing for his own death. What are *we* doing to prepare? "In other words, everyone can best prepare himself for the next life simply by hearing *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. . . The rituals are not formal, but there are also favorable conditions, which are required . . ." (*Bhag.* 2.1.14, purport)

Training usually starts from very early in life. We should begin by practicing simplicity and celibacy. I missed that early training and had to begin at twenty-six. But I became serious under my guru's direction. Now I should be even more serious. But who will encourage me, and who will throw me stern glances? The same guru. I can hear from him daily by reading his books. If we want to abandon material desires, we must actively cultivate spiritual desires. I'm not immune from matter, so I work hard to fulfill my spiritual aspirations. Light the intense last glow of our flame. Don't be absorbed in pains and remedies. The more we desire to go back to Godhead, the less we will desire temporary material gains.

Vedic culture sets age fifty as the time to detach ourselves from home and business. "The principle is that one should take it for granted that the death warning is already there . . ." Go to a holy place. The *dhamas* are meant as residences for those who have retired. At least after fifty, go "live a life of spiritual regeneration . . ." But don't become complacent by "creating another home at the holy place, either lawfully or unlawfully." Prabhupada means we shouldn't take up again with the opposite sex. *Maya* is that strong. Be self-controlled; renounce sex life. Serve free, and offer your love to Krishna. Fight for this.

* * *

4:30 p.m.

Risk it. Paint. Feverish. Whole body involved. Srila Prabhupada. Me immersed. Passionate. "Let the hand move." Forget art-schmart. Now a twinge. The price? Sweating. Better wash the brushes and get back upstairs.

* * *

Hey, let's take a pic of Skinny in his jumpsuit, washing paint brushes. rushes. Watercolors. See that rainbow palate? Yeah. Get a shot of that too. But Krishna is more beautiful "a *million* times so "and eternal, too. That's no bluff. Dostoevsky wrote that the moment before an epileptic fit was sheer bliss.

But I prefer a steadier calm. And Krishna conscious wisdom exonerated by the responses I receive.

Arjuna had mighty powers, but Krishna removed them because they were not needed for his going back to Godhead. For that, all he needed was to depend on Him. Weep for joy.

Madhu got a tape of the simple Kerry music he loves "accordion and fiddle. He played it alone in his room and began to dance. He saw a picture of Krishna and said, "I hope You accept this happy moment. Please share it with me." Because it came from Him.

You think old stodgies are going to give us permission before we live and love? No. People go wherever love directs them. Just let it be Krishna conscious.

It's so often chilly here that it's strange to feel warm. raining again, room dark. radha-Krishna a dull golden shine over on the altar.

* * *

5:22 p.m.

SureSvara called me a "skinny, invalid monk." Headachy. Perhaps ashamed of that.

June 21, 12:05 a.m.

I told M. yesterday how when I painted, I felt vibrant and young in body. He said that sounded like an important gain. Otherwise, he said, I would always be like an old man, waiting for another headache. And it's true. It's midnight, and I feel myself watching for the symptoms. Chronic pain creates anxiety, and not always without cause. Since I felt so young as I painted yesterday, I stood longer than I should have, and now my ankle is painfully swollen. I'm not a young man no matter how I may feel. Still, it was a worthwhile experience. The vibrancy yesterday didn't come from physical well-being but the feeling that Krishna was present. That's why I say it was worth it.

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: My dear Arjuna, happily have I shown you . . ." (Bg. 11.47) Lord Krishna told Arjuna that no one had ever seen His universal form before. "Those who are atheistic . . . cannot have the divine vision." That includes Mayavadis and Buddhists (unless they see it in Buddha Himself), and all kinds of

voidists. "It is not possible to decry Krishna and at the same time have the divine vision." (Bg. 11.48, purport)

I'm pausing here to remember a detail in my dream. I introduced a devotee friend to a more prominent devotee. I said, "Here is your Godbrother." One Godbrother was so prominent and the other so obscure that although I called them Godbrothers, we could barely have considered them equals. Upon waking, I wondered why the disparity between two brothers? Is one actually so great and the other so insignificant in Krishna's eyes, or in Prabhupada's, when all is said and done?

I'm also pausing to actively practice forgiveness "forgiving and releasing devotees outside our movement from any feeling I have that they have hurt our movement in some way. I would like to also forgive their followers, especially those who have left ISKCON and who now recruit among our ranks. A general amnesty. I don't want to maintain any heart-clenching envy.

Forgiveness includes being grateful for what we ourselves have. In this case, I have discipleship at Prabhupada's feet. That's a wonderful blessing, so why not forgive those who were not so fortunate or who have chosen another path? Peace be upon them. Wishing well to those we forgive doesn't necessarily mean wishing them success in any destructive plans they may have toward us. It means wishing them actual success in spiritual life. We should be open-hearted, not tricky or deceptive, ill-willing or ill-doing. I find forgiving others sometimes includes forgiving ourselves for our lack of charity up until the present. We have to face the whole picture to free ourselves from the self-defense that maintains envy. When we forgive, we should do so sincerely and with our whole being, and it doesn't hurt to discuss it with others to make it more solid in our minds.

Dear Lord, I pray for divine vision of a simple, earthy kind, where I can see You in Your manifestations on earth "in other living beings, or at least in devotees if nothing else. I want to see You in Your Deity form and taste Your presence in the holy name. Happily You showed Arjuna Your universal form, and happily You can show me Your original form. I am only waiting for that day.

"My devotee, be free again from all disturbances. With a peaceful mind you can now see the form you desire." (Bg. 11.49) A devotee wants to see the form of the Lord that inspires him to reciprocate love. Lord Krishna then revealed his *saumya-vapu*, His beautiful two-armed form. As the *Brahma-samhita* states, *premanjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena*: only a person whose eyes are smeared with the ointment of love can see Syamasundara's beautiful form.

The form of Krishna. Its confidential nature. It's not wrong to be on the lookout for a divine vision the way Maharaja Pariksit ("the examiner") was always on the lookout for the form of Krishna he saw when Krishna saved him in the womb. Have I ever seen Krishna? Only in the *arca-vigraha*. *Jagannatha svami nayanapatagami-bhava tu me*: "O Lord of the universe, kindly be visible unto me." We see *so* many forms in this world, and the combination of matter and spirit bewilders us. Srila Prabhupada asked us why we should insist on vision that "occurs only in the eye." He told us to see Krishna by hearing. In fact, hearing is the primary sense by which we should learn to "see."

* * *

4:34 a.m.

We say we forbid gambling, but there is so much inevitable gambling. We gamble that the Krishna conscious path is the best and that giving up sense pleasure will help us gain eternal pleasure in Krishna's loving service. We gamble by refusing to associate intimately with one of Srila Prabhupada's Godbrothers, because we hope that remaining exclusively fixed at Prabhupada's feet will take us back to Godhead. Those who go from ISKCON to the Gaudiya Math gamble that they will not lose Prabhupada's shelter. We gamble that despite ISKCON's faults, it is still Prabhupada's movement and he will bless us for cooperating. We may say that none of these are gambles, that they're all sure things, but there is always risk in life, because we can't see the future.

I risk when I balance my emotional release with the need to refrain from self-expression. I allow myself to be spontaneous but sometimes pull on the reins of the rules and regulations.

Some Christians say that unless we surrender to Christ as our personal savior, we will go to hell eternally. We risk not being Christians. We deny by our actions the possibility that others are right who think that devotion to Krishna is not required. We risk economic insecurity in favor of dependence on Krishna. We give up a lifetime of sex enjoyment because we have heard we won't miss anything but misery. We devotees are willing to take so many risks. They make our lives interesting. Perhaps some devotees are so totally faithful that they won't know what I'm talking about, but I think others will know what I mean. To them I speak: yes, you should gamble that devotion to Krishna is the best. Take the chance, and give it this one lifetime.

* * *

My head weather is looking good for an 8 a.m. departure to Dublin. Take the risk that the van will make it, that this body won't collapse. A devotee takes risks, and when things turn against him, he doesn't abandon his surrender to Krishna. He constantly experiences Krishna's mercy, even during dangerous times. Even if his body is killed, he prays to remember Krishna. Surely Krishna will save such a devotee.

Krishna told Bhima, "Go call Durvasa Muni and his thousands of disciples to come and eat." There was no food in the house, but Bhima was a faithful devotee and followed Krishna's order. That was a risk, wasn't it? So go ahead, do what Krishna says. Bhima went to the river and called out, "Sirs, please come and eat. The food is ready." Of course, the sages didn't come because they had become miraculously satiated when Krishna ate a tiny piece of vegetable sticking to the pot. But even if they had come and found that no meal had been prepared, and even if Durvasa accused Bhima of cheating him and had cursed him and the other Pandavas, Bhima still would not have given up his surrendered position. In that sense, there is no risk. Because Krishna really does protect His devotees. Any way a situation turns out, the devotee wins. There is no way to lose in devotional service. The Pandavas are good examples of that, because even though they lost wife and kingdom, they were victorious in the battle and went back to the spiritual world at the end.

Srila Prabhupada used to say that we are spreading Krishna consciousness against all odds. The odds? It isn't likely that many people will take to Krishna consciousness.

When he came to America, Srila Prabhupada said, "Let me take a chance." The odds are still not in our favor.

We won't be back from Dublin in time today to bathe Srila Prabhupada. We usually get back around 12:30.

Radha and Krishna are wearing pink with peacock designs. I tried to dress Them nicely, working with my ten thumbs and sputtered drive. Don't push too far, mate. You've got a lecture date to keep. But still, I had to find the right earrings for Srimati Radharani.

I consider paintings finished when are done quickly and with high energy. After, I don't like to bring them down to earth with my small view. Let them be. Don't mess with the process or add afterthoughts. Just start on a fresh one. Same with writing. Lean into the wind and sail.

When I go to the lecture, I'll carry a big book bag full of books from which I'll quote. Then I'll look out at the audience and say, "This is a talk for friends. If you aren't one, you might like to leave." Today I'll talk to people who like to read my books. I want to assure us of the relationship we have when they read what I have written.

I heard they took away your safety net. True? Do you gamble by thinking the Esgic Plus will work? Yes, but if it doesn't, my real safety net is to endure the pain and remain within my identity as a devotee who wants to serve Krishna.

* * *

5:20 a.m.

I'm risking not wearing a scarf. It's deliciously chilly outside. White clover. The cooing of mourning doves punctuating the air. Hare Krishna. risk taking a walk when I need to save energy for the lecture. I want to improvise when I get there, yet not be totally unprepare. I think I'll say that I tried to think of one essence to define my writing, but I kept thinking of several. Some are as follows:

1. Improvisation.
2. Honesty.
3. Love.
4. Poetry.
5. Intimacy.
6. Being able to say something in the exchange between writer and reader that couldn't or at least wouldn't be said in any other context.
7. Love of work, of self.
8. Listed fears and confessions. We can be real people in Krishna consciousness even before we become pure, ideal devotees.

And while speaking so personally, don't forget to deliver *Krishna-katha*. Don't forget. Maybe I should write some of these points down on an index card so I can glance at it during the lecture. Improvisers can do stuff like that.

9. Spontaneity "another essence.

When I write what my senses perceive, such as the beauties of nature, I risk that I perhaps should have paid more attention to Sastric truth. I risk that my honesty may ramble, that comments on ISKCON issues will grow outmoded within a few years. I also

risk that the process is actually a mundane one, just like my critics say. If I didn't take these risks, I would risk dying in the traces in the name of loyal service. What is it that William Blake says (it's a risk to quote him "I might get it wrong), something like that it is better to strangle an infant in the crib than to not fulfill a desire. I see two basic kinds of risks: the risk that I may touch something that will poison me and my audience, and the risk that I may renounce something I could have offered to Krishna. Timidity might prevent me from actually serving with my heart.

* * *

Free and Duty
& Don't forget Krishna
he's going so fast.
I mean, I want to be a boy
with a green jacket swinging
carefree arms

* * *

not a non-entity who
almost forgets who he is.

* * *

I don't want to live
in a cage of my own making
like I did before July '66.

* * *

But joy in this *duhkha* world
to spit at things and
turn my face to see
the *murti* of a green June "
the Lord's hand and face and
feet in white and purple clover,
buttercups, the path
to a happy home, me
heading home to a poem
like homing pigeon. "

* * *

It's Coming Down
& Sunday go to church with
your modern sound to

praise God in a way.

* * *

The truth of God
came down in Ganges water
from the toe of the Lord meeting His
servant Bali.

* * *

The truth descends like
a holy river crashing
smashing to death except for Siva's
hair his holy hands
cupped
half-moon, moonish smile at
serving the Lord.

* * *

Truth descends like a mango handed
from guru's venerable hands
finally to you.
Receive it with
faith and reverence. "

* * *

8:45 a.m.

Arrived early at Bhadra's, so I had time to sit at his slanted desk. I'm no Soren Kierkegaard (who also had a slanted desk). rather, I'm preserving energy to speak on the qualities in my writing, the special relationship I have with readers. I'll try not to blow my own horn. And the relationship? How I can say things in a Krishna conscious way? Of course, they (Manu, Aniruddha, Abhaya, etc.) know these things already, and each of them has written to me about their understanding. I'm not the only author in the world, I know, but I don't want to talk generally about reading books. I'll admit in the beginning that this is a personal talk, and it is not intended to be self-advertising. I am looking for real exchange.

Krishna is the life force of my words, and He is coming through me in a particular way. Those who have taken initiation from me should want to understand what that way is. I have already listed the essences available in my books. They are meant to give my disciples encouragement and to inspire them to find their own Krishna conscious voices through their own services. I pray not to skip over meaningful things out of shyness.

Looking out the window, I see the chimneys of the nearby row houses. I can also hear Bhadra's little boys downstairs, trying to be quiet. A wind blowing through something is creating a sound "and a big white cloud floats in over Inchicore.

* * *

9:17 a.m.

Gradually, gradually, Srila Prabhupada said, we will develop *love of Krishna*. That's the main thing. We want to hear about Him because we love Him.

* * *

11:25 a.m.

Late leaving for Wicklow. Stopped at an Esso station on the way back.

The audience was small. At the end, Abhaya dasi asked, "You spoke about the author-reader relationship, but what about spiritual master-disciple?" But I did address that topic. I said that an author would love to have people who type, edit, publish, and distribute his books voluntarily, and sometimes I think I'm exploiting my disciples who do these services. But I'm not, because we are all becoming purified by the fact that the books are being offered to Krishna and released into the world to preach. A Krishna conscious author can engage others in his mission.

I used the word "exonerate" several times, and "oeuvre." I'm exonerated when I hear from readers who have been helped by my work. The oeuvre refers to the complete work.

Prabhupada dasa asked about the pressure he feels to read all that I have published "pressure because he's not able to keep up. I told him not to worry about it. They should just read whatever they like. My talk underplayed the spiritual master-disciple relationship, I suppose, but almost all their questions were directed toward it. It made me realize that they read my books because I'm their spiritual master. How else could I presume to give such a talk? They are "a captive audience," Prabhupada dasa said.

* * *

2:47 p.m.

Let's get back into a routine now. Feeling mild regret at this morning's class. Why? Maybe speaking about writing and reading will lessen my ability to write, because it makes me suddenly remember that there are people out there reading what I write. I have spent a lot of time forgetting the audience. Sometimes I playfully wave "hello" to them, then get back to writing for myself. And I told them some of my tricks of the trade. Did they appreciate hearing any of that? Someone asked whether he has to read all the books. No, he doesn't, because "it's only beginning for me. I'm going to write so many books that you'll never be able to read them all." My books are for those who are addicted to reading. We wish Prabhupada wrote more, although he too wrote quite a lot. Maybe later in life my disciples will be more inclined to read what I have written. Then that devotee asked the same question, gesturing to the stack of books coming out from that infernal

GNP. He said he didn't want to feel like a Ph.D. candidate who has to study every last bit of information. All right, all right, but a writer has to write.

Upon returning to the house, I read some more headache material from the Internet, then took a nap. When I awoke, I had a head full of merged impressions "recent events, the talk on my books, headache jargon. and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Try Triptan, but beware of rebound. Meds abusers beware. Improvement in pain relievers since 1998 makes us less likely to prescribe daily preventative meds for severe *Srimad-Bhagavatam* cases of no taste. Try to get several a month, writing out of false ego, several books a day, Imitrex. Vyasadeva? Get it together. Why did I tell them I love to write? Why were some so silent? What good can come of such a meeting? *Haribol*, Kleenex.

Let's get back to the *Bhagavatam*. Desire cannot be killed. Change the mind's action and the senses will change with it. ". . . and it is only the transcendental sound which can bring about the desired change of the mind and senses." (*Bhag.* 2.1.17, purport) *Bhakti* instead of *pranayama* and yogic *samadhi*, which are for neophytes and difficult to sustain. Sukadeva Gosvami recommends that we fix our mind in service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna. Hearing, chanting, etc., if done under proper guidance, "is the surest path of progress, even for the disturbed mind." (*Bhag.* 2.1.18, purport)

"Everything created by the material energy can be dovetailed with the Absolute by an attitude of service, which is the essential part of living energy." (*Bhag.* 2.1.20, purport) The pure devotee knows the art of converting everything into spiritual existence "and that's how the theory of pantheism ("everything is God") can be perfected.

For the impersonalist who finds the person of the Absolute, such as Krishna or rama, unattractive, Sukadeva prescribes meditation on the *viSva-rupa*. Such persons do not accept the *acaryas* and want to see God with their own eyes immediately. Let them see the gigantic universe and understand it as God's universal form.

* * *

Swami Satsver is a cartoon
boy who ate spinach
as Popeye did in 1940s "
Mom was there and
Madeline but I think Dad
was in the war.

* * *

Stephen Thomas alias
Satsvarupa later
a swami became.
Swami Bhaktivedanta conferred the
honor. A Valentine no more
except for God.

* * *

Nonpartisan rally
words roll out
I never kept a
notebook all those years.

* * *

4:04 p.m.

Maybe I'm tired from riding in the bumpy van. And the class was exhausting somehow, and its aftermath. Am I? Am I tired of living but afraid to die?

I suppose I embarrassed myself to spout off all that stuff this morning about poetry and art, intimacy and love. Most of them said nothing. And what have they to give back? Some try; others not so much.

Someone replied to the headache sufferers' line, "Do I have to take all those dirty looks the nurses give me when I am forced to go the emergency room?" Madhu says these are not real people but drug company correspondents who write in under the guise of actual sufferers to encourage people to try their products: "I tried feverfew nasal spray and it worked great. If you want, write me and I'll sell you some. I have extra bottles." He's sure they're all bogus. He says he can spot them a mile away. But I thought I heard the voice of real pain.

Patri in the hospital. When we drove by his house, I meant to ask if he had been released. Then I heard he was receiving a blood transfusion. Now there's a man with a problem. He faces life and death every day, and carries it off so well that the nurses and doctors he meets want to know what it is about Krishna consciousness that enables a man to be so good and likable even when he's under such stress. By comparison . . . Well, don't compare.

Next Sunday, I'll reincarnate as a straight preacher. How about discussing the first steps in God consciousness? Or how God can be perceived in the taste of water? A favorite verse? I had better be on the alert to find something to say to the people out there. Jive it up a little. They all know the basic philosophy already. No one is asking me to speak about Krishna and the *gopis* either. So what can I say that they haven't already heard?

Sitting facing the rain now. The sun will be back again, eventually. On July 12, the road into Wicklow will be closed for the Tour de France. On the same day in Northern Ireland, the Orangemen will march. I think I'll stay home on that day. Isn't that the weekend the devotees from England are supposed to come over? I can't remember.

Madhu is planning to visit his family in England on July 4th. And when is the electric company coming to finish the job? When will Ani be back to prepare the garden? I'm telling you, coming events.

* * *

5:45 p.m.

Mix "don't be afraid to mix. Another block I face is my interest in writing about writing. But why be ashamed of it? I read an editor's note about Kerouac. It said he wrote; he didn't write about writing. But I admit that I do write about writing. It's not bad or good or weak or strong in and of itself. I don't have to be ashamed of it. If it's not good for the reader, the editor can remove it. But let me not block what wants to come out.

It occurred to me that the most important thing for me to do is to prepare for the time of death and the attempt to return to the spiritual world. That's even more important than developing a mature writing art. The ultimate purpose may sometimes require that I turn my back on writing. One who wants to go back to Godhead might think he can abandon the voices of subpersons and readers, and concentrate fully on the goal. That may be true, but we would hope that the subpersons would be willing to help the final effort. That whole self, in my case, is absorbed in his service, and we would hope for a friendly relationship between the service and the whole person.

Time running out on this day. It's already almost 6. It will soon be time to dress Radha-Govinda in Their night outfits. I can't fake it. I have to be who I am. I had a pain-free day despite the trip to the city.

June 22, 12:15 a.m.

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: My dear Arjuna, this form of Mine you are now seeing is very difficult to behold. Even the demigods are ever seeking the opportunity to see this form, which is so dear." (Bg. 11.52) I pray to believe in the original verses of *Bhagavad-gita*, which are as clear as the sun. May I come to express Krishna as my all-in-all. If I fail, what good is my service? Lord Krishna awards His mercy to whomever He pleases. There is nothing we can really do to achieve it.

Lord Krishna, You seem far away, yet You are intimately present in my life. I want to surrender to You, although I fear surrender and what it might entail. I came late to You after a boyhood and youth of living in a *bhakti*-less culture. My Krishna consciousness was grafted onto me when I was already twenty-six. But I don't want to have to come back to be born in India during Kali-yuga. Unless You want me to. Whatever You say I will accept. Please allow me to become submissive to Your will, not as a resigned slave or a stoic sufferer who lessens the pain of his surrender by preaching a philosophy of permanent disappointment. I want to surrender to You in joy, as Your pure devotees do. May I learn of Your wonderful reality.

". . . although to see the universal form of Krishna is very, very difficult . . . it is still more difficult to understand His personal form as Syamasundara."

"My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing before you, and can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter into the mysteries of My understanding." (Bg. 11.54)

Words and thoughts "let them pass without judgment: Leave me alone to worship Krishna. Give me time (duration) to come to the right point. Let me come to conclusions

that will help other devotees. Let me surrender to Krishna and work at this mix. And may they bring the topsoil here soon, so we can get growing. Hare Krishna dasi sent me a full-color catalogue of roses and told me to take my pick. But she knows best what will grow here. I do know I like shiny ivy growing all year round, and hips and berries and cascading blossoms that emerge even in wet weather. Plenty of flowers to cheer my soul. The garden and my garden of 108 big red roses strung on a cord and blessed by Srila Prabhupada, these two gardens I will tend.

* * *

One ISKCON editor suggested I no longer use phrases such as "Allow me" or "Let me," because they are empty ISKCON jargon. Srila Prabhupada used them, but they are outmoded. But I see no reason to give them up. I am asking permission, blessing, before I act. Krishna is the permitter who is with us always. We reluctant, suffering *jivas* are dealing with complex issues in life. Asking permission is facing the here and now both of our complex lives and our need for Krishna's shelter.

* * *

4:28 a.m.

A Guyanese devotee sent me a page from the *Guyana Chronicle* with a notice that ISKCON has no connection with the man and his father who are making televised speeches. I also read a letter to the editor complaining that an American engineer was merely fined for smoking marijuana, whereas poor boys in Guyana are put into jail. Where is justice? The Prime Minister is asking for cooperation between gold miners.

Listened to our reading of *Bhajana-rahasya* while I dressed Radha and Govinda. Krishna's peacock feather is high up on top of His turban. *Rahasya* means confidential. The pure devotee thinks of Krishna throughout the day's divisions, adding up to twenty-four hours a day. Prabhupada also asked us to think of Krishna twenty-four hours a day, even while asleep.

I spoke with M. last night while standing in front of my paintings. I agreed to continue being happy and painting, not worrying whether they have an explicit Krishna conscious message. M. said I also shouldn't worry whether they are photographed. That would be in tune with the philosophy taught in *Life, Paint, and Passion*, where they say process is important, not what we do with the paintings. No harm if I feel joy in painting, then stow the results under the bed. I can put up more drawing sheets on the wall and go at it again. Later, I can look them all over and decide which ones to photograph, if that seems important at the time.

Srila Prabhupada said we are like fish entangled in a net. We are caught in the modes of material nature and doomed. Only the Supreme Lord can release us, just as fish can only be released by the fisherman. The fish don't know how to appeal or surrender to the fisherman (nor would the cruel fisherman listen to their entreaty), but we in the human form can hear Krishna say He will protect us if we surrender to Him. And we can surrender. At least we can try.

Abhaya dasa from Guyana says he doesn't socialize much because it means taking sides in controversies. He likes devotees, but not the haggling. Another man from

Guyana wrote and told me how when they give out plates of *prasadam* in public, people often take just a little and throw the rest away. That's not good, of course, so I suggested ways he could remedy that problem.

* * *

Devotees encased in flesh and blood meet with hope, disappointment, and confusion one after another. The waves come one upon another. We don't mix the modes, they mix themselves. And devotees should learn to spell better. The word is *queer*, not *quire*. Janet Jagan is the Prime Minister of Guyana. I was in the country when she was elected. I didn't do anything illegal there. My master speaks, so I had better listen and drive away with a strong stick all offensive actions. Keep separate. Don't let everything become a homogenous lump.

Today I have to make my own breakfast, because Madhu is drinking water and Epsom salts, running back and forth to the bathroom, and he requires more rest. He's trying to battle his hay fever, because he wants to take part in the Coltais competition later this month. Can't be sneezing while he's trying to sing on stage.

Keep things separate. I'll eat fruit. Keep distance between matter and spirit, women and men. Some things, of course, may be integrated or mixed. The word "integrated" comes from the Civil rights days. I joined the Hare Krishna movement and was integrated into the spiritual energy. I was a spirit soul and didn't belong in the material world. Krishna science flattens the ride "mixes the Krishna conscious writer with the senses and the mind.

Krishna is always playing His flute. I heard that from my spiritual master, and he is my guide.

Here is a poem I like:

A record of My Trip to Mount She
Yellow leaves spiral down through air;
waterfalls spray flies into raindrops.
Patches of moss darken Buddha's face;
the stones here have been brushed
by the robes of a god.
The monks are tranquil, though their kitchen
has few vegetables;
the mountain, cold "not many sparrows in the flock.
Of themselves, my worries all disappear;
I do not have to try to forget the world.

"(Yuan Hun-Dao, *Pilgrim of the Cloud*, p. 40)

I thought by quoting that I could write a poem of my own, but it seems that's not going to happen.

All glories to Vrndavana and the devotees who live there no matter what. If I go there again, I will write there. The place has genius, and mix is Radha-Krishna, the dust, the monkeys, the Mandira, and you can choose to exclude the position papers and always-raging controversies.

* * *

5:20 a.m.

That cow must really be relaxed, because she's passing urine as she stands "a bright, arching stream "while her brown calf snuggles under her to suckle. I don't want to disturb her. I'm only out here to share the sublime morning air. Breathe it in deeply and let it out again in a sigh.

As I pass nearer to that dirty white cow, I see that she has two brown calves, one on either side of her, both nursing at the same time. I thought only the sheep had twins.

Clumps of mud on the road. Our two lady neighbors are gone. They come only on weekends. They drive cars, and keep their place completely uncut and uncared for. The place at the bottom of the hill is for richer people. I guess it's a weekend place for those who wish to get away from Dublin on a Saturday. We're here always. Always.

Mature work of Vyasadeva was *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Mature work.

* * *

Talk With Thee
& The air is drenched
and words don't have to mean
what they might mean
in an ordinary sense.

* * *

Sense "the way it
ought to be. The Hare Krishna chant
keeps me going.

* * *

I don't want to belabor prose
like little flowers "or wild species "
turnips and radish, rhubarb
plants.

* * *

Excuse these ramblings.
but I just wanted to be with
this blessed gray-scarf mist
this morning on a walkable
creekside on an old Irish
Road that no one inhabits
and talk to Thee. "

* * *

8:37 a.m., No Series

I was listening to Julie Harris reading the poems and letters of Emily Dickinson as I prepared breakfast. The prunes were hard "forgot to soak them. Seems Emily didn't go to church, didn't pray, yet God is present in her poems along with thoughts of death and eternity. Got to leave her too. Forgive everyone as part of my amnesty plan. I'll have to practice that forgiveness meditation again and again, like how we have to practice relaxing our limbs while in the dentist's chair. Just a few letters left until the next batch arrives.

I hanker for a story or something a little different, and I fear how boring it must be to live such a tightly confined life. But I swear, everyone's life is confined by time and space, and we all tend to re-chew that which we have already chewed and spit out with the same old body. Why be afraid to admit that? For myself, the variety comes when I pick up the pen or the paintbrush. I also like to vary my stationery supplies "for example, I am now using this lap board. See the wood grain of the board? Let it in and you won't be bored.

A mighty effort will be required to finish another round. I'll have to rouse the energy. Surely the headache adventure is about to call again. That in itself is a change of fortune.

What to speak of the world in books, especially in this one book, the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. And in my attempt to mix reading and writing (writhing) together. The hook and the worm. Emily? Bereft of guru's mercy.

Yes, I must face the blade of doubt. Someone brandished it this morning when I heard Srila Prabhupada speak. The gremlin jumped in, "Why do you believe Krishna is God? He's just for Indians." Then what to believe instead? I don't want to go back to an eclectic life. Srila Prabhupada said the magic words: *caksus-Sastra*. He was speaking about the *timing* fish, then the *timingal*, which swallows the *timing* (whale). "We "I "haven't seen it," he said, "but we have seen it because it is in *sastra*."

Astavakra walked with a curvy gait, and Krishna's wives laughed at him. He cursed them, then modified the curse into a blessing. He said, "You will get Krishna as your husband. Later, you'll be kidnapped by rogues, and then you'll join Krishna again."

If we acknowledge all these worlds, we will never be without variety. But do we have to feel the pressure of harried students with an unkind prof and read so much for homework? No, no. Everyone is free to some extent, but all must suffer. Still, we have minute free will and can read as we like the smallest book.

* * *

Swami Beetle Acorn

wampum news item:

he always noodles words makes

mountains. If you believe God

is Krishna, he says "and, I do I

assert it

broadcast it too

and want to convince you.

* * *

10:15 a.m.

"O great sages, the great soul Maharaja Pariksit, constantly rapt in the thought of Lord Krishna, knowing well of his imminent death, renounced all sorts of fruitive activities, namely acts of religion, economic development and sense gratification, and thus fixed himself firmly in his natural love for Krishna and asked all these questions, exactly as you are asking me." (*Bhag. 2.4.3 - 4*)

We shouldn't minimize Maharaja Pariksit's sacrifice. It's very difficult to relinquish our busy-ness. If we don't relinquish it, however, it will be taken from us by disease and death. I have personal experience of this. Any of us could also lose our hearing or sight, then have to live on for a number of years with that handicap. Even then we would probably still find ways to be as active as we were before. Only death removes the field of action for most of us. So to actually simplify our lives and concentrate only on hearing *Krishna-katha* requires spiritual taste. Otherwise, it's impossible.

Srila Prabhupada quotes the prayers of three *mahatmas*, Lord Caitanya, Rupa Gosvami, and Madhavendra Puri, each of whom expressed their undying love for the Lord and their casting off of all other interests. They each promised to remain faithful even if Krishna appeared to neglect or punish them. "Still my mind does not budge an inch from the determination to serve the lotus feet of Govinda, though I be unable to do it."

Let us echo those sentiments. When *will* the day come when we will be able to give up all other interests and simply chant, hear, and remember the glories of Govinda? And when will we be compassionate enough to help others in Krishna consciousness?

In my reading, I'm avoiding questions and answers related to the material creation, although much of the Second Canto covers this topic. I have been through these chapters so many times. No harm if I skip around a little. Let me fix my limited attention span on something that interests me, such as those prayers by the *mahatmas*.

O Krishna, I only want to think of You. I don't care what others say. Neither do I mind how You treat me, Lord. Please allow me to go on serving You and hearing of Your pastimes. These words were spoken by our saints.

Srila Prabhupada warns us not to neglect hearing about Krishna's greatness in the material world to jump prematurely to topics about Vrndavana. He wanted us to hear everything gradually (and repeatedly). Krishna is *acintya-bhedabheda*, simultaneously and inconceivably one and different from His creation. The pure devotees are able to teach us about Him, and sometimes they even act more powerfully than the Lord Himself. By Krishna's grace.

* * *

12:15 p.m.

I opened *Life, Paint, and Passion* again and read the first chapter. I'm hoping to follow some of the book's suggestions while living in this house. Here are a few quotes from the book.

"It is the basic tenet of this book that the creative process is enough. It is not only enough, it is a doorway into a direct experience of the essential life force which is at the root of the urge to create art."

For me, the life force mentioned here is Krishna. When I painted the other day, I felt some strong emotions. I won't deny them. I could ruin that emotive quality in the release of painting if I start trying to superimpose meanings on the paintings.

Cassou and Cubley describe what they do in their workshops: "No importance whatsoever is placed upon a finished product: we do not critique the paintings or interpret their meaning, and we do not encourage their commercial use in any way. The inner experience of creating is the touchstone for everything that happens. Once this groundwork is established, something deep within relaxes and the real life-transforming work can begin."

I would like to relax like that. For me, "commercial" use is the too-eager striving for a product that can be published, for something others will consider beautiful or Krishna conscious art.

"Play is one of the most basic and primitive elements of the human psyche, and ultimately art is simply a deep and essential play." Let me play in Krishna consciousness.

* * *

2:52 p.m., "Board Lap"

The board will decide. I mean, the ISKCON Board Stiff Book review Board.

No, that board certainly didn't last long. It did produce a few anxious moments when it was existing. Even encouraged me to publish a little of my writing underground. I guess it gave me some good energy, in its own way. When it folded, I gave it my "Fare thee well."

Actually, the pressure from that board gave birth to "Among Friends." I should be grateful for that. raining. M. has developed a weak, skinny voice after the Epsom salt cleansing. If it subdues his hay fever, the austerity will have been worth it. But he said "smiling slightly" that it didn't seem to work. Why, what was supposed to happen? He said he was supposed to have passed a gallstone. really?

A disciple confessed, "Back in 1990 I took some Tylenol under doctor's orders, but enjoyed the high it gave. Later, I took another drug, which was also prescribed for pain, and again enjoyed the pleasant high." But she's no drug-abuser. Catching the high of a pain-reliever is like enjoying the drop of honey that falls from the root of the plant we're clinging to before we plummet down the cliff "you know that story."

Let me cut through. Ease into the water of the Ganges, but don't go out so far that you end up in the tow current. Chant Hare Krishna and discuss the nature of preaching. I'm an elder and have something to say. To become the instrument for preaching, we ought to desire to bring joy where there is sorrow, forgiveness where there is injury, faith where there is doubt . . . Let me desire to love rather than be loved, to console rather than to be consoled. Because by giving, we receive, and by dying, we gain eternal life. A lot is required of us, actually.

"But still, *any* preaching is good," he argued. I agree. If someone distributes Srila Prabhupada's books, that is great. Even if he doesn't possess the consciousness by which he can also deliver forgiveness, enlightenment, and peace, even if he is himself afraid or proud, one of those books can make a person's life perfect.

What do people fear in early childhood? Big dogs, aggressive dogs, rodents (some of us), things that come to mind when you're in the dark in bed, bigger, rougher kids, anything . . . scary. Yet most of us lived on our blocks like any other kid, took our turn playing games in the gutter, in screaming contests, and standing on the rough curbs or stoops, facing the traffic. I did all that in Queens, New York. We lived by the word of the *vox populi*. "Give us Barabas!" they screamed in one town. "Lover boy," my Aunt Mary called me. And that other Big Woman, the wife of George Roland (the fireman and my Dad's friend) "the one who bent down and brought her flushed face so near me that I almost choked. An enormous woman stepping into my sacred space, teasing me with an incomprehensible "motherly" love. Shy little boy.

Last week I averaged only seventeen and a half pages per day "122 pages total for the week (because of those two down days).

I heard you have three symptoms of a migraineur: (1) More than one severe headache per week; (2) the headaches diminish your quality of life; (3) they come on one side of the head. Maybe *you* qualify for the elite club that can benefit from Imitrex. We'll check your references and let you know. For now, just chant Hare Krishna every day and remember that by loving others, you become an instrument of His peace. Amen.

* * *

"Sukadeva Gosvami said: Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead . . . He is the complete whole residing within the body of everyone, and His ways are inconceivable." (*Bhag.* 2.4.12) He is Purusottama. We cannot learn about Him or even about His creation from nondevotees, academics, Indologists, or interfaith Christians dabbling in Indian philosophy. We can learn from the gurus in our Gaudiya *sampradaya*.

Krishna delivers His devotees from distress and destroys the demons. "For the transcendentalists . . . He grants their specific destinations." (*Bhag.* 2.4.13) Pure *bhakti-yoga* is understood by the *paramahamsas*.

". . . He enjoys His own abode in the spiritual sky. There is no one equal to Him because His transcendental opulence is immeasurable." (*Bhag.* 2.4.14) Each of these verses is subject matter for a forty-five-minute *Bhagavatam* class. Pull your notes together. Explain the categories and divisions. Show that you know the higher and the highest. Sanskrit, please. Insight too, and example, analogy. I couldn't compete with an elderly Gaudiya Matha *sannyasi*. His followers would giggle if they saw me try to assert myself while I reached for some Western cultural reference in literature or psychology to explain "what? But I don't know anything about the stages between *bhava* and *prema* or the finer analyses of the degrees of *prema*. I'm a Western boor, "*madhyamaat* best," someone said. Oh, well.

We take up quite a bit of time in this movement refuting the challenges of mundaners. That's not time wasted. The scientists deny the spiritual sky because they haven't seen it

with their telescopes. "So the Lord and His residential abode will always remain a myth or a mysterious problem, but for the devotees the Lord will always be available as an associate."

"Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto the all-auspicious Lord Sri Krishna, about whom glorification, remembrances, audience, prayers, hearing and worship can at once cleanse the effects of all sins of the performer." (*Bhag.* 2.4.15) Shake your sins off by hearing about Krishna.

In a class with devotees in a temple?

Yes, clear your heart of rivalries and worries.

"*Kirtanam*, or glorifying the Lord, can be performed in very many ways, such as remembering, visiting temples to see the Deity," etc. Sing and recite. Don't be disappointed thinking Krishna isn't there. Associate with Him, and serve Him with *bhakti*. Don't commit the offense of sinning on the strength of the holy name.

* * *

4:43 p.m.

Put aside some thoughts and go for the other words. My dear Gertrude, you are probably forgetting who I am by now, but I remember your brother Wynn too. You were both orphans. You must be sixty by now, and here I am, still a Hare Krishna person "been here for over thirty years. If you see Wynn, please tell him I wrote. Whatever happened to him? Did he ever become a minister? I doubt it. Did he become a big businessman? Ever lose his joking ways? I'm sure he'd remember me. And you? Your father must have gone to the heaven for Dutch reformed ministers by now "your stepfather, I mean. Your eternal father is God, right?

And dear Wynn, I am mustering up the energy to write you a "Dear Sky" letter. But all I want to say is "hello" from the dugout where we used to drink beer together until we went our separate ways. I moved into the hip Jewishness of Brooklyn College, and you went to the Midwest "Hope College, I believe, where you could play the organ. You were more of a theist than I was in those days. remember Jack Kerouac? He's gone now. But the present isn't, and the future is yet to be, so I hope you're happy. I'd like to tell you about Krishna, although you might give me a belly laugh. But if I could talk to you after all these years, perhaps we could take one another more seriously and cross any barriers we might have developed within ourselves over the years.

I don't *only* know Irish Hare Krishna devotees; I have known many people in my life. But I seem to move from one group of people to another rather than to have a thread of relationships that runs through my life. It's raining again here. We are like straws on an ocean, or foam out to sea.

* * *

Hare Krishna. Heard you went downstairs to paint. Saw some wild human forms come out. Is that what they were?

No, they had *tilaka* on. I thought they were good enough to put in the Complete Works of Chide Divers. And why not? I haven't taken a vow to stash them *all* under the

bed unseen. If I like some, what's the harm in allowing Syamananda to photograph them, since he wants to anyway?

It's Monday. I had better look ahead to what I'll say at next Sunday's lecture. Maybe I'll speak on those wonderful *mahatma* prayers. No one is too busy to hear those prayers or to apply them in some way. I hope none of them object that they're too busy as householders. It takes almost no time at all to hear sincerely.

* * *

6:43 p.m.

I forget the name of the electrical company to which Srila Prabhupada subscribed, but they waived his bill. Oh, it was Con Edison. Going to bed now.

It is a delicate thing to serve in separation from our guru and to grow old doing it, or just grow "different" yet maintain vital faith. Don't bluff. Don't simply follow a principle or lie to yourself. Pray to love him past all the superficial struggling. Become a disciple.

June 23, 1:30 a.m.

Couldn't sleep all night. Was it the controversy-filled letter or something else? Sat up and turned the light on after 9 p.m. and read about poetry, then tried to go back to bed. Up at 11 p.m. Took a Tylenol. All night, my head felt a tolerable vise gripping it, but I wanted only to sleep. I love my routine of rising at midnight, reading *Bhagavad-gita*, writing to it, and starting *japa* by 1 a.m. Had to forego all that. Trying to catch up.

* * *

4:28 a.m.

News from a letter sticks in my mind, not as a single-minded judgment on the situation but as data and emotion and the conflicting viewpoints of different parties. I don't really want to think about it. Anyway, the situation is past, just as my sleepless night is over. The head pressure, however, is still here. I still can't seem to relax. received a letter from a devotee who also has chronic pain. She called it "a slow death," and said she wants to accept it wholeheartedly with joy. She already accepts it philosophically as inexplicable karma, without regret, and without thinking it's connected to a trauma she won't release (doesn't consider herself a victim of "woundology"). Now she wants to take it further so she can see Krishna in it and thus use it for her devotional service. I was disturbed to hear of her pain, and to think of mine also.

I don't embrace my pain. rather, I seek relief. Her choice seems more saintly in a sense, and it reminds me of attitudes of people like St. Therese and St. Francis. They too embraced pain and came to love God as expressed through their own suffering. They accepted pain as a sign of His special mercy upon them. Maybe I am intimidated by her austerities, as if the acceptance of pain is more heroic than my own approach. I'm still searching through the medical literature for the right prescription drug or alternative treatment, but someone else has gone beyond that, beyond psychology. Yet she feels the crushing hand of a slow death.

I'm a little behind on my quota and also missed my *Bhagavad-gita* reading. It's good that I want to use my time well. Will the pain knock me out completely, as it did twice last week? I just don't want to sit around unable to do anything. That's why I relieve my pain.

Anyway, chant Hare Krishna. Heard Srila Prabhupada give a lecture to the ladies and gentlemen of Bombay at the 1975 cornerstone laying ceremony. I worship him for that. He achieved so much.

I also have to note that more than twenty years have passed since he gave that lecture. So much has changed. Let me seek what is unchanging. I'm no longer the Boston temple president or even the editor-in-chief of *Back to Godhead*. I'm the eternal servant of my spiritual master. That's still true.

If Prabhupada were here with me now, I could ask him so many questions. But we lived together for only a few years, really, before he departed for the spiritual world. The *guru-gayatri* reminds me that I want to meditate on him and his essence and enthusiasm, his ability to please Krishna. This relationship is deeper than outer appearances may allow. He can instruct me in the heart and in his books, if I wish it. And I do. O Krishna, I beg you to point out the subtle way to understand and serve my guru which will allow for me to be what I am today and yet remain faithful to the unchanging relationship.

* * *

Because I need to answer the mail, and because of the issues I wonder or worry about, I can't seem to give wholehearted attention to this page. My life is bigger than this book after all. What would it be like to live a life free of distraction? Would I hear Krishna's pastimes full-time and nothing else? Or hear only the holy name? I would be transformed by my understanding that Krishna is nondifferent from His names.

* * *

5:20 a.m.

I didn't notice before that foxgloves were pure purple. I thought they were a little maroon. But this morning . . . It also seems funny how this one flower has dozens of bells on one thick stem, whereas the flower that looks like a buttercup has only one flower per stem. Like rich and poor people.

Ahead on the road I see a black animal. Is it a cat, or something more exotic? There is something different about the light this morning, because the creek almost seems to have a touch of blue or black in it. It's the dark sky and the all-night rain and freshness "and the beauty-beholding eye that Krishna has given me for now. That animal is a cat with a white tail. It stalks a couple of hundred feet ahead of me, looking back from time to time. When it sees that I am still bearing down on it, it runs fearfully ahead, then slows down and looks over its shoulder again. Yes, I'm still coming.

Now it has dipped into the grasses and I have passed it. Oh, there it is again. That cat must think I'm really overbearing, as if I'm after it. If it were smart, it could have kept going on the main road, but instead it ducked up the same rocky path I'm walking, so I continue to track it down relentlessly. But the fact is, I don't want anything to do with it.

I hear the cows in the meadows. Everything is wet but pleasing, like morning dew.
Just outside the neighbor's house, in a big bush of overhead trees, I hear a little pewee
sound, reminding me of the plaintive eastern pewee, that wan maiden of the Gita-nagari
forest, or the sad, old man. Hare Krishna.

* * *

Invitation to a Series Inspired by Bach
& So sad the music dripping
beauty like a morning shower.
Shows me where my feelings are "
simple and buoyant.

* * *

Sad beauty lies beneath Bach
chamber music "you imagine
entering under an arch into a garden,
a whole world to explore
like Beauty meeting the Beast.

* * *

Bold yet profound I could
lose my identity and discover a
new one if I wished
these fifty-four sonnets
on death "
but not one with no connection
to the master. "

* * *

2
& The same "it sets you off into
thoughts away from the present moment "
sends you into reverie,
past pain, through doors and halls "
and out a window into a
night of stars.

* * *

O Krishna, You in all times.
I missed our midnight rendezvous
but You will offer yet another.

Will it be the same "no, late
morning and midnight are different,
but You are kind and
everything is absolute in
the *Bhagavatam* at least.

* * *

'round and 'round the lines are
exact and I'm amazed at the ability
of masters until I wake to
take my own voice and
find the lyricism in it. "

* * *

7:52 a.m., No Series

I don't feel like writing, and I don't live with as much pain as a person with cancer. I remember the dialogue for and against pain between the abbess of the Lisieux convent and the doctor who had come to treat Therese. The topsoil man is supposed to deliver, but Ani has to be here for that. I don't want him coming by tomorrow when I'm alone. Am I envious of devotees more potent than me? Will I even admit that they are more potent? We each must take our place and be content with it while continuing to strive for improvement.

Hey, remember you are speaking to others.

Okay, then, "Folks, some genuine topsoil, complete with worms and humus "the real old sod of Eire "will be delivered to our yard soon. Once it has been shoveled and raked into place, we can plant flowers and get our garden under way, rain or shine."

"Get growing," I told my friend, because I want to be here at least long enough to see roses bloom in the "bee-loud glade" while I walk my *parikrama* path around rain-shined vines. Of course, we don't hear of Maharaja Pariksit starting any garden during his last seven days, except that he planted the garden of *bhakti* in his heart and that the flowers bloomed fully after being watered by Sukadeva's unceasing recitation. *Nasta-prayesv abhadresu, nityam bhagavta-sevaya.*

Today is the disappearance day of Bhaktivinoda Thakura. He spent his last days at Jagannatha Puri, shut up alone, living in a trance of Radha-Krishna *lila*. Before that, he wrote a hundred books. Rupa Gosvami too. Hare Krishna.

* * *

8:36 a.m.

"Let me offer my respectful obeisances again and again unto the all-auspicious Lord Sri Krishna. The highly intellectual, simply by surrendering unto His lotus feet, are relieved of all attachments to present and future existences and without difficulty progress toward spiritual existence." (*Bhag.* 2.4.16)

In his purport, Srila Prabhupada refers to Bg. 18.64 - 66, and rewords his previous translation. He says that Lord Krishna instructs Arjuna, "or for that matter everyone concerned with becoming His unalloyed devotee."

"My dear Arjuna, you are very dear to Me, and therefore only for your good I will disclose the most secret part of My instructions. It is simply this: become a pure devotee of Mine and give yourself unto Me only, and I promise you full spiritual existence, by which you may gain the eternal right of transcendental loving service unto Me. Just give up all other ways of religiosity and exclusively surrender unto Me and believe that I will protect you from your sinful acts, and I shall I deliver you. Do not worry any more."
(Bg. 18.64 - 66, cited in *Bhag.* 2.4.16, purport)

This is the Lord's last instruction in *Bhagavad-gita*. Srila Prabhupada writes that this devotional service is based on love of God and is thus distinct from the nature of routine service mentioned in *karma-*, *jnana-*, and *andhyana-yogas*. Take to *kirtanam*, *smaranam*, and *icchanam*.

Yeah, I want to. I can focus on that whenever the pain doesn't stop me.

(I just noticed that I jumped to the fourth chapter of the Second Canto. I had selected verses to read in the second chapter, but I haven't done it. Those were nectar verses I found in the fourth chapter. Let me return to the second.

* * *

9:36 a.m.

Now tell us about your wounds and resentments.

There once was an old woman who lived in a shoe, who had so many children she didn't what to do.

I don't remember the rest, but I remember the image I got of a woman with a shoeful of children hanging out all over the place. Bizarre rhyme, sticks with me yet.

So, how are you feeling?

I am feeling my pulse, and I'll let you know. I feel all right, good. I want to feel the pain-free sensation of walking in the fresh morning air.

Can I feel God? *For* God? Can I feel sorry that people are unhappy in this world, or feel compassion for the poor animals? Can I feel the world vacant in Krishna's absence? Here, feel this. We would close our eyes while another boy held something out to us. We would touch it, and guess what it was? A dirty joke. Those dirty kids on 76th Street in Queens. I was exposed to it all.

Okay, let's get back to ISKCON.

We were reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* but had mixed up which chapter we were reading. Also, the mail arrived, and I had to stop to answer it. Hare Krishna. I'm behind today, but I'll catch up sooner or later, or remain content to have an easier day.

Something else was sent to me, unsolicited: four CDs of poets reading their poems. The person who sent it thought I might play a poem, then write one of my own. Last night I didn't want to bother getting into it. Time is so limited.

Here comes a car "maybe it's Ani. I asked if he could hang up four layers of drawing sheets on the walls so I'd be ready for the next strong day when I can get into the art room.

Krishna consciousness bred a man who went out and invented a flying saucer. He thought he could ride it back to the spiritual world. But then I once sleepwalked out my window when I was on LSD. I'm no longer that daring, and spiritual life has cured me of my pretensions to take flying saucers back to Godhead. Spiritual life is more practical than that.

Srila Prabhupada, I'm still here on earth. I just have to pass through that last mortal disease called death before I can join you again. I have my fantasies about how that should go. Despite obstacles and misgivings, I would go to Vrndavana and lie in a bed there. (Hey, be prepared for the romantic version.) It won't be difficult for me to give everything up, because I would have spent the last years of my life cultivating deep renunciation. I would lay there and feel a great, simple faith that I was now in Krishna's hands. I would be like a child turning to his father, just like I used to do when I was a tot. My father was a physically powerful presence in my life, so I understand the principle of taking shelter.

Just now my mind switched over to something I read about punk rock starting in the U.K. as a protest movement among the labor-class youths. When it got to the U.S, it was converted and sanitized by market-savvy people.

Hare Krishna is already pure and cannot be sanitized or dissolved. When my end comes, I hope to remember that, and remember my days with Srila Prabhupada.

* * *

2:56 p.m.

In a dream, my cousin Mary saved me. The coin she handed me looked like a religious medallion. She didn't have much money herself, but she gave me that coin willingly. It sure was good to remember you, cousin Mary, in a situation like that, because who knows what they would have done to me? People treat you nice enough if they have money, but if you don't, they treat you like a criminal. When I awoke from the dream, amused to have been in such a jam, I put my feet on the floor and suddenly remembered Archie Shepp playing a Coltrane tune, "Cousin Mary."

My assistants get into trouble, but I forgive and protect them. We burn our notes. The *Vedas* say we should wind down material desire as soon as possible. Dear Lord, please protect us all, and please protect my good name. Or do what You want. If You wish to reduce me through an assistant's mistake, I will accept it. I just want to remain Your devotee, no matter what it takes.

Just got a letter from a disciple saying that he's having a crisis of faith in the senior devotees (including me) who went to see Narayana Maharaja. Strange, he should come out with that now. I wrote him back a little righteously, saying I have served Srila Prabhupada since 1966, and although I was imperfect, he always accepted me. Even when I was going to see Narayana Maharaja, I never flinched in my devotion to Srila Prabhupada. This disciple shouldn't judge.

See what I have to put up with? Then I thought I should look over that draft and perhaps polish it up a little. How can I claim I have never flinched in my devotion to Prabhupada, for example? I'm sure I have. I've quaked in my boots too, and watered stuff down. Maybe I'm still suffering from that.

* * *

"Do not go gentle into that good night/ old age should rage against the dying of the light." I remember hearing Dylan Thomas read that. I have a lot memories, and they are not the currency to save me. The main currency is the service I offered Srila Prabhupada even as I replied to that doubting disciple. Outside the Hare Krishna movement, I have no credit and no standing at all. My ISKCON clout is all nonmanagerial, a kind of emeritus influence, like, "You wouldn't hurt an old disciple of Srila Prabhupada's, would you? I belong to the class of '66." And if I'm speaking to the right kind of person, I might say, "I served on the GBC, was Srila Prabhupada's secretary, and wrote the *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. Please give me another chance."

This is all-gray, all-misty Ireland, and it's me who is trying to learn to forgive others. If they are disciples, I encourage them not to misbehave again. I don't prescribe any penance other than to get serious with their rounds and to read Prabhupada's books. And don't make faces; just go straight. Yet another close call on the road back to the spiritual world. Dear Lord, please accept our obeisances until the end of time, Lord Brahma prayed. As long as the sun shines, we are Your servants.

* * *

3:34 p.m.

"Endeavor only for the minimum necessities of life while in the world of names." (*Bhag.* 2.2.3) Life in this world can never be comfortable or secure. All material things are built of the three modes of nature. A devotee avoids attachment to them, knowing that they are like the babble of sea waves. "Since every second of human life is important, an enlightened man should be very careful to utilize time very cautiously." Noble words. Prabhupada put this idea into a motto: "Plain living and high thinking."

"Are there no torn clothes lying on the common road? . . . above all, does the Almighty Lord [*ajitah*] not protect the fully surrendered souls? Why then do the learned sages go to flatter those who are intoxicated by hard-earned wealth?" (*Bhag.* 2.2.5)

Mendicants should not live off the householders like parasites. "The first duty of a person in the renounced order of life is to contribute some literary work for the benefit of the human being in order to give him realized direction toward self-realization."

(*Bhag.* 2.2.5, purport) I can accept food and shelter if I write and thus preach.

Depend on the Lord. Train yourself to do that from the very beginning.

"A *sannyasi* should always live alone, without company, and he must be fearless."

Unless we know God is in our hearts, we will feel alone. " . . . a man in the renounced order of life must be purified by the process; thus he will feel the presence of the Lord everywhere and will have nothing to fear (such as being without any company)."

(*Bhag.* 2.2.5, purport)

* * *

Fire Music

& Getting through the afternoon and these pages. Krishna conscious, but don't hold your breath just

be who you are.

Soul "

soul is "don't be afraid. And don't forget the things that count.

The fiery music of people.

accusing you.

Get going I pause

dumbfounded. I have to be on time with things.

I want to be a devotee, in there with my brothers, defending the movement. This is a big concert, and Srila Prabhupada (the maestro) points in my direction for a solo sound. I let it rip and depend

on the rhythm section. Then he turns to the main group

who roar into action and harmonize

I'm expected to join in

with no more solo parts

until the end.

Do you so much want the solo that you'd leave the orchestra to play on a corner under a street lamp?

No, I won't leave this family reunion. I'll be a part.

Or so I say. And I mean it. But I am afraid of the man who will come to the door with the topsoil or to fix the electricity or to rob me.

Not afraid "not

Really.

Just like a little free space to make music

to send to the people.

Because I am the forgiving elder, the

smiling bow tie "I know how people are weak and I

dispense compassion. This music is itself

my revolution. It begs mercy on

hands and knees:

Needs love of God. "

* * *

5:09 p.m.

Blue ink stain on my finger. Drew a doodle of a tree house, or maybe it's a ratha-yatra cart. Numbers "phone numbers? Not much else. Michaelangelo has obviously not been here.

Take off your slippers and relax. It's the right of a celibate, as long as he's always on the look-out. remember how strict Lord Caitanya was in rejecting Chota Haridasa, how much he suffered for his slight indiscretion? Warn your assistants. In the Cc. chapter, the devotees became afraid to even dream of the opposite sex. *Maya* can easily offer us excuses: "Don't be a mere follow-the-rules automaton," "The person I had sex with is a very good devotee." I am writing this from the strict side, and thank God I still see things that way.

Sex at my age would be *most* ridiculous. Krishna arranged that all my teeth fell out, and that I am a clown and fool. I'm not even in the running.

Primroses on the summer path. I'll be going North later in the summer. Krishna, Krishna. We ate a little more at lunch today, because there were no other meals. "Hearing from Srila Prabhupada" cassette album on floor by tape recorder. It's standing upright, don't worry. Hey, Mr. rules, don't bug me, okay?

Tomorrow I will dress Radha-Govinda in a white outfit, or perhaps not. I think They wore white fairly recently. Sometimes They have to wear outfits in need of small repairs. The purple and gold one is like that: Radharani's skirt tends to slip too low. Otherwise, it's a nice outfit. Maybe mention the defects to M. and he can help.

Dreamt I had a servant other than M. He didn't provide something I requested, so I reprimanded him. He began to cry like a child and I walked away. Later, I embraced him, assuring him that we all make mistakes and that I appreciated his service. Love means breaking through and both feeling and expressing ourselves truthfully. I wish I could feel that more in my relationship with Krishna. I heard a *Bhagavatam* lecturer say we should love Krishna and "*just want to please Him, that's all.*" It's hard, though, to give up all our desires and act only for Krishna's pleasure. Where to begin with that? But that's the standard of pure devotees, they say. If we want to "do our own thing," then we can come back to this world where everyone is doing *their* own thing. That's why this place is such a frustrated mess. Misery is the one serious defect of the lording-it-over mentality. Our freedom is to be found in serving Krishna.

* * *

Lap board. Lap milk like a cat. Balarama would rest His head in a boy's lap while another boy fanned. Someone else would sing. How dreary to be retained in this world.

June 24, 12:10 a.m.

"My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing before you, and can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter into the mysteries of My understanding." (Bg. 11.54)

We have to really *want it*. Pray for it. This one thing is what we should pray for. O Krishna, please let me understand You and become devoted to You. O God, O Lord of all, O dearest friend, Lord Krishna!

See the gap between us and Him. Be aware that we're not going to sufficiently close that gap in this lifetime. We may think we're at least getting the consolation prize of being able to continue where we left off next life, but can't we do better than that? We can at least ask the Lord to help us close the gap. How to close it? We may not be daring enough to do what it takes.

Maybe not daring enough.

Maybe we shouldn't worry about our own ascension to the spiritual world. If we continue to execute our duties to our spiritual master to the best of our ability in this world . . . Maybe we should just set our sights on not falling down.

Universal form to four-handed form to two-handed form "appreciate each. That progression is part of the *Bhagavad-gita's* drama. Srila Prabhupada explains in his purports that the foolish commentators have done the *Gita* a disservice. The Krishna consciousness movement is based on learning and disseminating the correct understanding. Prabhupada's translation and commentary has potency.

Memorizing verses last night with M. I stumbled over some. *Yasyatma buddhi kunape tridad tuke. Idam satam brahmah sukana bhutyah.* I don't do it to add fuel to my lectures anymore but *asbhajana*. I want to live in the *Slokas*, this little collection I have gathered.

From the *Gopala-tapani Upanisad*: "I offer my respectful obeisances unto Krishna, who has a transcendental form of bliss, eternity and knowledge. I offer my respect to Him, because understanding Him means understanding the *Vedas*, and He is therefore the supreme spiritual master."

The purport to this verse contains many Vedic quotes to prove that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Among them are the quotes from *Bhagavad-gita* where Krishna or Arjuna proclaim this truth.

"My dear Arjuna, he who engages in My pure devotional service, free from the contamination of fruitive activities and mental speculation, he who works for Me, who makes Me the supreme goal of his life, and who is friendly to every living being "he certainly comes to Me." (Bg. 11.55)

I like writing out verses in my handwriting. It lets them pass gently through me, as if I am sitting on the edge of an ocean on a mild day, letting the wave-ends roll over my body. " . . . he who works for Me, who makes Me the supreme goal of his life, and who is friendly to every living being "he certainly comes to Me." Devotional service. Transfer your work-energy entirely to Krishna consciousness. Give Him the result. This is called *Krishna-karma*.

* * *

4:29 a.m.

Krishna is the life force of my words. I could not speak or write unless He gave me power. My intelligence allows me to write sentence after sentence "nothing random there, no mere electrical connections or atoms circling a void "but that intelligence comes from and is guided by Krishna. Thus I ask the Lord's permission to speak. Krishna sanctions the nonsense words of the *karmis* and *vikarmis*, just as He allows donkeys to bray, frogs to croak, and silent snakes to hunt by hearing. But He blesses a poet who wishes to glorify Him in words or music. We should acknowledge His blessing and use it properly.

When I think of my writing process, I can't help but feel that my words would jam up into gibberish if it weren't for Krishna's direction. I push my luck, I know, because I am trying to let the unconscious speak. But I think whatever is going on is working, with Krishna's blessing. Even when I don't know what to write, and I feel reluctant to even try, if I begin, something comes out. This is the divine search for the perfect Person.

* * *

Free-write trucks on the Stroudsburg highway, the summer of 1991, window screens protecting me from mosquitoes. That year I wrote as many words as possible and turned the pages over to the typist. Baladeva was encouraging me to reach for something further. He pushed me to go to the screened-in shack in the wooded backyard and write more. But I couldn't make a complete breakthrough. The gremlin stopped me. I had only three weeks.

My stay here is threatened if my servant can't behave. So many reasons I might be driven away. But all my belongings are unpacked; it would be emotionally difficult to leave. Who would take care of the place? But let me not worry about that. When I die, my sons will ransack this house for souvenirs.

* * *

Mr. Sandman, Mr. Pennyworth, please give us a Krishna conscious song. The world could become a place for devotees, the In God We Trust Party would triumph, and Balavanta would be president. But he'd have to grow out his hair. Then he could place Hare Krishna devotees in the Cabinet and in the china closet and the Senate and the House. And devotees on the road in Dodge vans "let them go door to door, carrying the sound of the holy name.

O Krishna, O radha. While dressing Radha-Govinda in purple and gold, I listened to more *Bhajana-rahasya*. The Hare Krishna mantra is made up of praises of Radha and Krishna. Pray for devotion to Their names. Pray for purity of heart.

It's all right to mention the beating rain. That has a Krishna conscious mood to it. But if I say "airplane glider," it doesn't. Unless I think of an airplane from Vaikuntha gliding down to pick up Ajamila after he had performed *sadhana* in the Himalayas. Or a plane landing with a devotee preacher on it who is coming to deliver Krishna's message to a temple in Guyana. We say it's Krishna conscious if we mention the plane in relation to the preacher, but sometimes people wonder about the real significance of yet another visit by yet another traveling preacher. Perhaps he picked up some disciples while he was down there, or some donations. Was anyone's faith revived? It must have been, because after he left, they all continued to practice their *sadhana* as before.

In Guyana, a good man is taking care of his family and the Deities in that jungle. rain beats down there too, at certain times of year. It's just as lonely a sound there as it is in Ireland. Here, I walk in it.

I say fiction is a game to keep up a reader's interest, but isn't any writing?

Yes, but explicit spiritual writing gives us Krishna immediately. It's not afraid that the nondevotee will run away, so you should first spend four hundred pages warming him up to hear a whispered, "Krishna is God." If he doesn't want to hear it, he won't read a spiritual book.

Suta Gosvami tells us about it. We should read what he says. He doesn't warm up his audience too much either. Did it rain during the thousand-year sacrifice? One would have to assume that it did. Did they erect tents for the *sadhus*, or did they all live outside under trees? Did they take *prasadam* breaks? Was there a bathroom? Were women present? How did the sages intend to benefit humankind by their *yajna*? We seek to

understand things through material investigation, but don't expect to touch it with your senses.

I told a devotee to stop wasting his time faultfinding devotees. Don't judge others. Stick to self-examination. Chant Hare Krishna and pray to hear "that's how a devotee minds his own business.

* * *

5:20 a.m.

The mountain streams have invaded our roads, both the rocky path leading up to our house and the main road. rushing water can be ferocious. The stream is torrential at the bridge where two streams meet and smash against the rocks. Plenty of foxgloves blooming now. I noticed two blossoms standing on the bank next to the foaming water. They are a rich purple in the darkness of a rainy morning.

Sheep and cows act as usual. Prabhupada describes how these animals do not have the intelligence to build houses, but sometimes he says they also aren't in anxiety about shelter. They also seem to maintain their good health living out in the elements. We, however, are delicate.

Puddles "sheets of them "punctured again and again by raindrops. White cloud mist. I can just feel the greenness getting richer from this rain. All the weeds are soaking it in, the ferns, stems bending over, are bedraggled. My boots splash playfully through puddles. The squashed sack of its body is all that's left of that frog.

* * *

Downpour
& Go and be happy streams
over rocks, alone with Krishna.
A man can lose his worries-
cares-schemes-facts
in a downpour.
The rain is
Krishna explicit.

* * *

He is in the gray white
mist the balls of
water smashing flowers
bent over.

* * *

My Lord, I chant Your name
as I ford puddles and
stop a moment at the bridge

to see Your Siva-principle torrents
praying on beads. "

* * *

Dance To You, My Heart Clear
To the Lord of Brahmacharya
& I'm sad about that love you
weren't allowed, I had to tell
you, my son,
that if you want to be a
brahmachari it is forbidden.

* * *

You have to withdraw your heart where
you placed it in a woman's care,
because she touched you with
her earnest devotion to guru and
God that sure commends her
but there's no scope for
bodily affection in these
Ranks.

* * *

That's how it is because we have
a higher calling, we have our
orders "sex allowed only
when a full lifetime's responsibility
is accepted
and are you about to commit to that?

* * *

I feel soothed in mind
that I could preach celibacy
without hypocrisy. Please protect
me, O Lord of *brahmacharya*.

* * *

O Lord we come to You
in the pure dance pure
chance it seems I met Your pure
devotee anyway I'll take

it and dance to You my heart
clear of family burdens and
money concerns, I can walk down
country roads fearing only speeding
cars in the heavy rain.

* * *

I am yours to say Krishna
Krishna, Krishna You let me sing but
please let me sing with
pure devotion
but I know
the answer to that "You
want to know whether I can pay
the saint's price
or am I just out here
for a walk
a funny man-boy who
can't go deeper
where it hurts to
give up self and see
God
as my guru does. "

* * *

9:32 a.m., No research On-line (No Series)

I felt a twinge (my identity, this body) and took an Esgic at 9 a.m. Now let's see whether the stuff still works for me. If you give rats poison long enough, a generation will become immune to it. Can't abort the budding headaches anymore, and they grow as they like, as ordained.

It's nice to squeak in "I mean, sneak in "pages before a possible shut-down. Authorial bullying? Not by me. But I have no a story to tell aside from this. Author means God's life force passing through him. I is art, or the way of getting in touch with the spirit-creative source who is God. You don't always have to write the words "God" or "thank You," but you do always have to think of Him.

It's been half an hour since I took the pill, but the twinge ain't gone away yet. It's up to Him what happens today. I'm learning to accept that more and more.

* * *

2:10 p.m.

I think I'll be alone for a few hours this afternoon. read some nice words about the poet in solitude in Erica Jong's essay. reminds me of what Srila Prabhupada wrote of a devotee being unafraid to be without company. Even if there are only one or two people

around, their lives can complicate the simplicity of our own. But I don't seem ready to undergo the most severe austerity of being completely alone. Santoka Taneda walked alone and begged. If he collected enough, he stayed at an inn. Otherwise, he kept walking. He writes in his poems:

The willow leaves are falling;
From there I'll begin begging.

* * *

No inn to spend the night "the moon leads the way.

* * *

The Six Gosvamis slept under a different tree every night, but where? In Vrndavana. And there were jewels under those trees. Krishna communed with them, and if not, they felt intense separation from the Divine Couple. They wrote their books, chanted, saw people and talked about Krishna, and established Krishna consciousness.

Looks like early next year I will travel to see my disciples in the U.S. I heard that various senior devotees go to the temples there and keep mostly to themselves. right now I'm hiding out with the Irish sheep.

Rain has let up and I can hear the roadside creek. Now I'm alone for a few hours. What will I do during this time? The twinge gone down. Likely I will go next door and read *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I might even make it to the art room and casually sidle up to a drawing sheet and smear it with color. O Krishna in Vrndavana. Let me first wake the Deities from Their post-lunch nap.

I just heard a noise downstairs. Is Madhu still here? Chant Hare Krishna and don't forget Him. He said the time of death is more difficult than we can imagine, and we don't want to . . . O Krishna, please help us.

* * *

2:36 p.m.

By worshiping the Supreme Lord, serving Him, "one can end the cause of the conditioned state of existence." (*Bhag.* 2.2.6) It's nice how Srila Prabhupada chooses words that make both this world and the eternal world as real as possible to our immediate understanding. We are conditioned and bound. The spiritual world will release us into our own eternity. Krishna is substance, not illusion. Currently, however, we serve illusory objects; we search for happiness in the temporary world. Some say that's all there is. "If we at all want to end the cause of our conditioned life, we must take to the worship of Lord Sri Krishna, who is present in everyone's heart by His natural affection for all living beings . . ." (*Bhag.* 2.2.6, purport) The Lord tries to bring us home, but we don't care to go.

"The Lord is impartial to all circumstances of the sufferings of the living entities, but to one who takes shelter at His lotus feet, the Lord gives proper protection, and He takes such a living entity back home, back to Himself." (*Bhag.* 2.2.7, purport)

M. left, started the van engine, then rushed back into the house. Now he's gone again. I told him not to speed. He's a wild driver. It's raining again. This page shines back at me.

* * *

5:10 p.m.

I did five or so 20"x26" sheets and now feel a sense of accomplishment. Perhaps the nicest thing about doing them was listening to Srila Prabhupada's *bhajana*. On one, he sang, then explained the *bhajana* written by Bhaktivinoda Thakura, who was speaking on behalf of conditioned souls. Bhaktivinoda poured out a list of bad qualities, which he perceived he possessed "how he's happy when others meet mishap, how he's always causing mischief, etc. Then he says he has been humbled by old age, his senses finally exhausted. In this condition he wants to surrender to Radha and Krishna.

I recorded some of his words on my drawings. Some of the drawings depicted two people fighting, or when seen from another angle, dancing. We sometimes hear that two *ksatriyas* appear as if they are dancing when they engage in a duel. My figures were muscular, reminding me of the myth of my strong father and the myth he passed down to me that strength should be physical. I have no physical strength, but I can draw muscular figures. A compensation, I guess. The eighty-pound weakling draws muscle men, or men of spirit who knock out sense gratifiers.

Anyway, it was a delightful time spent alone with Srila Prabhupada. I'm willing to let Syamananda photograph them as part of my in-process, documenting spirit. Strong and primitive pictures from a bold spirit.

Did you hear? When some of your *sannyasi* Godbrothers come to Gita-nagari, they stay to themselves at the cabin and don't feel obliged to attend the whole morning program. One of them goes only to *mangala-arati*; others don't attend anything at all. But they are leaders, and they fill up their days with compassionate preaching endeavors.

Heard Bhurijana Prabhu warn in his *Bhagavatam* overview class that death will take everything away from us. We can't keep anything we have done. We don't even keep our sense of accomplishment. Whatever we did to contribute to our Krishna consciousness "and that means how much we detached ourselves from matter and attached ourselves to spirit "that's all we'll have. Trying to prove anything to our contemporaries counts for nothing at all.

I think some devotees are afraid they will find out at death that everything they have worked hard to accomplish, which they thought was great, is actually insignificant. Death will be the moment when we are most exposed. When alive we can think ourselves good and worthy people, but at death, we'll be openly in the company of our *anarthas*.

* * *

After that one Esgic, two hours later I am now strong. Afternoon getting later. Drink water and feel it like in that Dickinson poem, something about the "inebriate of dew, tipsy, drunkard of air, take to the fill . . ." Hare Krishna. Inebriate of Krishna's beauty and service. Greedy to be with Him. Just hear what His pure devotees do and don't make

any claims about what you can do. I'll tell them that next Sunday. And I'll discuss how the words and lives of saints are documented in history and scripture, and their lives provide a powerful proof of the existence and nature of God in this atheistic world. If we are inclined to overcome skepticism and know God, go to the saints and hear from and about them. But we cannot imitate just because we hear of their spiritual exploits.

Baladeva acted as apprentice when I did my first collages. I would set down all the pieces on the poster board and ask him to glue them in place. Mass production. I like to move quickly when I work.

Krishna, Krishna. Sukadeva Gosvami sankirtana is, we are so fallen that we avoid it and remain lost in the lower modes.

Devotees are attached to their own flavors of sense gratification and bewilderment. Preachers try to cut their illusion, but we are sometimes too proud to hear them. We think those who have come to cut our bonds are heartless. We think the preacher isn't human enough. What the hell. We have to read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and become absorbed in the message of the *sadhus*. The biggest illusion is sex desire, which we transform into romantic love and care for others. Only Krishna can truly care for others. Chant Hare Krishna.

I'm too tired to go out and walk, so I'll walk in my room.

* * *

5:45 p.m., Lap Board

The aegis. The poem lines. The lines of old age. My ears strain to hear if that's a car making its way up the hill to our house. And did you hear about the African *kirtanas*? Or the Aussie brashness and their cash crops? Did you hear what So-and-so sells and distributes on "*sankirtana*"? May I mind my own business. Prabhupada ordered me to do that once.

Prabhupada is the center of those Prabhupada reunions. Imagine making the keynote speech. The audience would be surprised at how old and awful I look, so changed from that thin but okay-looking young man they have seen in photos. "Wow, old age has really flattened *him* out. Look at his face and his made-in-Italy smile." Ah, but what does he say when he takes the microphone?

"Dear Prabhus, Maharajas, and Matajis, this is the first Prabhupada reunion I have ever attended. I didn't realize how wonderful it would be. We have all come together for one purpose, to put aside differences and controversies at least for the day, and to be drawn together by the magnetic love we each feel for Srila Prabhupada. That love is both real and inconceivable. There are many reunions in this world, some to honor rock stars or politicians or high school graduates or families, but this one is significant because our bond is not based only on sentiment. These meetings are quite important. Therefore, I would like to thank the organizers . . . "

I would overlook everything else "the battered, fallen, switched-*aSramas*, not-exactly-following-what-Srila-Prabhupada-said, American, Kali-yuga devotees. Because we all still want to love Srila Prabhupada and declare ourselves his followers.

* * *

6:50 p.m.

Goodnight to me and the Lord in my heart. My snake life force, Candavega, attacks me too with his day-and-night diminishing soldiers. Eventually, my soul will be driven from this body. But not quite yet. Only guileless service offered to the lotus feet of the spiritual master will save me.

June 25, 12:02 a.m.

"A Krishna conscious person knows that if a man is suffering it is due to his forgetfulness of his eternal relationship with Krishna." (Bg. 11.55, purport) So he risks his life to spread God consciousness. We can only imagine how merciful Krishna is to those who risk everything for Him. "Therefore it is certain that such persons must reach the supreme planet after leaving the body." Each one goes as if in his own airplane. Learn on the ground from others, but take off on your own. One by one the Pandavas left and went back to Godhead.

Now pause long enough to ask yourself what *you* can do. "The pure devotee does not even want salvation. He does not want to be transferred even to the highest planet, Goloka Vrndavana. His only objective is to serve Krishna wherever he may be." He'll serve Krishna here, if that's what Krishna wants. He never requests the Lord to transfer him to Goloka, where the service is more fulfilling in his own estimation. Yet "he wants to enter the highest spiritual planet, namely Krishnaloka, Goloka Vrndavana." We should cultivate both hearing of Goloka and the surrendered attitude to simply please Krishna. These things aren't easy to balance. For example, it is stated that a preacher who risks his life goes at once to the supreme planet after leaving his body. But he wasn't spreading Krishna consciousness while calculating his reward. Rather, he was acting on his Krishna conscious compassion and the knowledge of what Krishna wanted him to do. The motivation to please Krishna has to be foremost for the service to be called pure.

* * *

At 8:15 p.m. I woke hearing the neighbor's devotee son shouting in rage. It wasn't a pleasant sound "a family fight, or an argument between father and son. It had been so peaceful up until then with the soft sounds of the roadside stream and an occasional birdcall that I easily fell asleep. I put in my earplugs but continued to hear children's voices, calmer this time. My bedroom window faces the front road.

I was awakened out of some dream about a group meeting to discuss writing. Someone had published a commercial novel. We spoke of packaging and advertising the work. After the meeting (which stylish people attended), I thought how we didn't discuss the point that we should each write as much as possible and thus all our needs to come up with a product would automatically be fulfilled. But I had no special ax to grind. I simply felt my commitment to the writing process deepen.

Heard M. pull in before I turned on my light at 11:51. He's been out making music. When he comes in at 5 a.m., he'll have the mail from the Tallaght P.O. Box. Glad he's arrived home safely again.

We seek peace here because it's conducive to the life I seek. Fall into the mode of goodness. In *Cc. ASraya* I wrote that that was the risk I was taking "to be stuck in the mode of goodness "but I was asking Krishna to protect me as I strove to chant, read, and write in a quiet place. And paint.

Now I hear Praghosa's car arriving after another day and night at the restaurant. Satsvarupa's light is blazing from his room to prove he's up.

"But those who worship Me, giving up all their activities unto Me and being devoted to Me without deviation . . . " It's good to get deeper as I read. Can I go even deeper and find Krishna? Krishna is showing me a way. He wants me to risk my life to spread Krishna consciousness. I can't do that in some extreme way, but I want to take the risk here, on this page. I have entered a cave, however, and seek depth in reading, depth in chanting, and depth in confidence about how I am preaching. The verse continues: " . . . engaged in devotional service and always meditating upon Me . . . " Unbroken meditation? Possible for me? Only if I go from act to act and try to offer everything I do to Krishna "I mean, really to Krishna. Act only for Krishna's pleasure. " . . . having fixed their minds upon Me, O son of Prtha "for them I am the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death." (Bg. 12.6 - 7)

"One should fix his mind fully on Krishna in order to achieve Him." Don't be fruitive: "I'll gain for *my* interest, gain the pleasure of ultimate safety and bliss for *myself*, in Krishna's company." Serve Krishna and be rescued by His superior strength.

Do any kind of work, but do it for Krishna. Desire only to please Him. "The process is very simple: one can devote himself in his occupation and engage at the same time in chanting Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Such transcendental chanting attracts the devotee to the Personality of Godhead."

* * *

4:33 a.m.

Move your body; keep moving while you can. They say whatever you do will all be destroyed at death. Look within yourself and see whether that's true. It is certainly true that you have to die. No one is an exception to that rule. You can choose, however, to remain ignorant of what that implies or what will come after. I am not ignorant; I have received teachings from *Bhagavad-gita*. Krishna says there that whatever we think of at the end of life will determine our next body. We should "think lovely thoughts," as Peter Pan said, but all directed to Krishna. If we hope to do that, we have to be practicing to fill our minds with such thoughts now. If we enter this kind of *bhava* now, it will carry us to a favorable and Krishna conscious situation next time.

Krishna and radha are wearing an outfit I used to consider a night outfit. It's red and yellow, a thick silk with beautiful patterns on it. It's regal yet simple, and as bright as anything you might see on a Brijbasi woman or pilgrim on her way to Vraja.

Just thought of JS and how he used the phrase, "dressed to kill." He was saying that when women become *vanaprasthas*, they shouldn't make themselves attractive. I wondered where he got that phrase. He grew up in New Jersey, so I guess it's not so hard

to imagine him acquainted with such phrases and then keeping in touch with them in his BTG work.

Trace the mind wandering. I thought of this, then that, and that. Now catch it and bring it back.

Srila Prabhupada said Krishna is strong and attractive. When we sit Him in our hearts or turn to Him, He will capture our attention. That's good. I want to show Him I am willing, able, and ready for that. Prabhupada said that great souls are not touched by matter. He mentioned Haridasa Thakura, Prahlada Maharaja, and Jesus Christ. That made me think of how the Christians don't agree with Srila Prabhupada's version that Jesus did not suffer at his crucifixion, as if his yogic powers were strong enough that he didn't feel pain or wounded. At the heart of Christian worship is the belief that Christ suffered like a human being. Let me try to understand the essence of what Prabhupada said. The whole thing is inconceivable to me and probably to most Christians. He suffered and he did not suffer. Oh, my eyes are tired.

* * *

I can expect that M. will want to rest immediately after breakfast and again miss our meeting. All right, we can meet later. There's nothing urgent anyway. I'd tell him about the cry of rage I heard at 8 p.m. last night and discuss our plans to be in the U.S. around Christmas and . . . but nothing urgent. What did he think of what I said yesterday? Keep moving and see what happens.

Maybe I'll start a new series tomorrow with the new volume. Yes, today is the last day of Vol. 26. Krishna is the life force of my words. I wanted Krishna in the title. I wanted to be ecstatic, to go back to Godhead. Actually Krishna is coming through me. Whatever I do is with His permission, the Supreme God. But if I say, "I'd like to capture that disciple who's aspiring for another guru and initiate her myself," or, "I'd like to collect a big pile of money," or if I discover that I wish someone ill, how could I claim that those words were coming from Krishna? I could make that claim, because *everything* comes from Him. He is the sound in ether, the light of the sun, the taste of water, and the beginning, middle, and end of all. The elements merge back into His *mahatattva*. The Vedic directions are meant to help us find Krishna. radha and Krishna.

"We want to believe in God. Can you help us?"

Yes, press your nose on one side and breathe in long and deep. Then exhale out the other nostril. Chant Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare as you inhale and exhale. This works, I assure you.

"But I've heard people have been trying this method for years, and few can say they are feeling bliss."

You could say that. Keep trying. It's not easy to attain Krishna's *darSana*, believe me. Just go on chanting with attention, and be satisfied. Don't daydream that you're seeing things no one else sees.

"Stephen, give us a childhood memory that will resonate in us."

No, I don't think I will, because those memories are not Krishna conscious. I'm a preacher, after all.

"So then give us a memory and use it to preach."

All right. Once I played marbles in the gutter. One of the kids brought out a cardboard shoe box with a few holes in it, and he said we should shoot our marbles into the holes. According to the scores, the shoe box owner would either keep our marbles or we would win some of his. My father saw our game and made me a deluxe marble heaven out of wood. It surprised my friends (the way the GBC was astounded when I presented the "Mad Dog Award" "a stuffed dog made by M. Jagattarini). The moral of this story is that although my father made a marble heaven, it didn't suit everyone. Better we had all simply remembered Krishna.

Sorry I didn't connect the memory with the chant. My father tried to give me the best things for the Queens streets. Too bad, because I could have been running down the front stoop chanting Hare Krishna and encouraging the boys not to waste their valuable human form of life on squabbling over marbles.

* * *

Someone did a service for the county by cutting down the weeds and wildflowers on both sides of the road. That was to create a shoulder for cars. But it didn't really widen the road, and now all the lovely foxgloves have been smashed and sliced along with the yellow buttercups, clover, and a variety of other weeds. But they only did it on a section of the road. Further down the road, the wild glory is still proclaiming the end of June, and as I walked this morning in the cold, clear air, a large gray fox suddenly stepped out of the weeds at the side of the road, sighted me, and leaped back in. It was so quick!

* * *

Fox Prays
& I saw a fox I am myself
a fox of sorts
always trying to attack
trying to outsmart.

* * *

But Death has me marked as he
marked J. S. Bach centuries ago
and caught him despite his lovely
songs and violin and harpsichord notes
and that people still play
his sonatas hundreds of years later.

* * *

I know what this is
like my
life charted by prayer
that God be

my swift deliverer.

* * *

Please please pardon
enlighten
and may I
get going growing
kinder working
without complaint. "

* * *

For a Brief While
& For a brief while a man and woman
can linger but
an old man alone with his gruel
blind man
cool man.

* * *

Nature without her diadem
calm after a
storm, visits the hospital
filled with the odors of official halls,
how grace has given him
this sacred space and still
he wants more because
a person's never satisfied

* * *

until he knows God as his
protector. The poor affected
fellow will do better if
he recites scripture but
which holy book
to choose?

* * *

We old men gather in this precious group
and quibble instead of celebrate
that Krishna is revealed and we
should desire Him only.

* * *

A few minutes He held the
hand of a devotee. He and
His *gopis* have sweet
partings sometimes
that never die or fade.
Only takes faith. "

* * *

8:00 a.m., Last Day of Twenty-six Series

Maybe I'll return to some logo-billed series, but no strict, confining themes or laws, please. Maybe the next volume will take a turn in that regard, but my life probably won't be much different than it is now. How, then, can the writing expect to be different? It will still be full of distractions and headaches, except it will be July. June passed swiftly. Nothing wild happened in this book. Maybe in July. It's always possible to get a run of sweet clover in summertime.

I said distractions, outer stuff, but if I remove it, what will I have? Myself asleep? A letter arrived today marked "urgent and confidential." I was immediately suspicious. I don't want to hear something urgent and confidential from an unknown source. I opened it. It was from a man I don't know who was pleading that Srila Prabhupada was in favor of polygamy. He wanted me to support his view. That's what was urgent. Someone else with an urgent, feverish air writes, "I don't agree with you philosophically regarding the origin of the *jiva*, but I want you to be my spiritual master. How is it possible?" Oh, just leave me alone. Find another reporter, replier, or guru who agrees with you.

I know, I am creating a self-portrait even here of a well-meaning recluse whom people bother with silly stuff. Otherwise, he'd have time to become great and humble. For example, he told a disciple to stop sending him the *New York Times* book review supplement, but he sent another. That's the worst distraction for me "reading the critical approach toward authors and literature. It throws me immediately into the role of critical reviewer of my *own* literature. Or, I begin to imagine someone doing that to me: "Satsvarupa is . . ." I can't even imitate it; their words are too slick and clever. They are experts in put-down. I don't want to read them. For example, a reviewer on a new book about Nixon writes that the book's author is inadvertently one of the greatest comic writers of our time. That stuff fills up your head.

I prefer to stay with the *Bhagavatam*, although that's not always easy. Sukadeva Gosvami describes the material world as illusion and the Supreme Lord as truth. It is sobering, inspiring, transcendental. At least I can copy out some passages from it. But slipping on wet rocks as I try to think always of Krishna.

As I write, Syamananda is in the house taking photographs of my artwork, and M. is asleep. Things aren't routine. I'll have to go downstairs and say something to Syamananda to see if he's okay and to see that he gets breakfast.

O cynical devotee, the optimists look the other way and go on with their festivals and marches, temple openings and temple runnings, their recruiting and marathons. Business

as usual. It's the ISKCON world. I can't seem to write anything but this sort of tension and talk of ISKCON and "beyond" ISKCON.

* * *

8:52 a.m.

"The Lord's magnanimous pastimes and the glowing glancing of His smiling face are all indications of His extensive benedictions. One must therefore concentrate on this transcendental form of the Lord, as long as the mind can be fixed on Him by meditation." (*Bhag.* 2.2.12) The impersonalist doubts the Lord's form. I don't, but I don't see it either, not even in the *arca-vigraha*. It remains theoretical. But I am fond of Radha-Govinda, whom I hold in my hand each morning. I know I'm not aware who They actually are. That's my sad case.

Bhakti-yoga destroys *anarthas*. "Meditation on the lotus feet of the Personality of Godhead, the first processional step, must show its effect by *anartha-nivrtti*." The grossest *anartha* is sex, because it binds one to the material world tighter than anything else. Sex desire expands and is summarized in headings like "profit," "adoration," and "distinction." When we are finally free of the taste of mundane sex and have assimilated the contents of the first nine cantos, we can enter the realm of the Tenth Canto pastimes.

"The transcendentalists desire to avoid everything godless, for they know that supreme situation in which everything is related with the Supreme Lord Visnu. Therefore, a pure devotee who is in absolute harmony with the Lord does not create perplexities, but worships the lotus feet of the Lord at every moment, taking them into his heart." (*Bhag.* 2.2.18)

* * *

10:22 a.m.

Distractions. Went over notes with Madhu "my business affairs. But how can I get to a prayerful center? I say I would like to be with Krishna . . . A good way to begin is to worship Srila Prabhupada through massage and dressing with real attention. It's a way to be with him face-to-face in a servant capacity. And the *Krishna* book tape is on while I do it "Srila Prabhupada dictating *Krishna* book. Anything connected with Deity worship is directly focused on the Lord's form.

Chanting the *maha-mantra* has great potential for directing the mind to pray "if not actual prayer, then a state of prayerfulness. Somehow, though, I have never been able to get there. Or did I once?

I used to walk outside either with a *Bhagavad-gita* or some *Sloka* cards. I would read one verse, then speak into a dictaphone. Started that in the "entering a life of prayer" days. I was trying to find how to talk to God from inside myself.

As for free-writing, it's a mix, but it churns both matter and spirit, and it has its prayerful dimensions. Gave up on dreams.

Painting is good. When I have a *bhajana* playing in the background and I am detached from what comes out, I reach a more Krishna conscious state.

* * *

11:55 a.m.

"We are trying to minimize sex and you trying to increase it," said Srila Prabhupada to a disciple who asked permission to marry a second wife. I can't seem to bear down and read for long right now. What's this about some more direct form of Krishna consciousness? Don't concoct something, please. Don't claim visions or the ability to talk with Krishna like a *sahajiya*.

No, I'm not doing that. I'm referring to an easygoing method of just being. You see, even when I don't have a headache, I feel fragile, as if I am always *near* a headache. At such times, when I can't bear down to read or chant vigorously, maybe I can still do something with myself. Looking for the direct approach to Krishna consciousness, by SDG.

Govinda shines in His yellow garments trimmed in red. radha wears red trimmed in gold. Beautiful. They are bright and daring, happy and festive, as if They are dressed for a celebration in Vrndavana.

Maybe I will stop being so curious about everything that goes on here. If Madhu tells me so-and-so just came to the gate to talk, I don't have to ask what that person said. Unless he brings it up, don't keep nosing into all those affairs. It's as if I'm not interested in my own solitary affairs, and the daily opportunity to write and read without distraction. I seem to be looking for distraction so I can get a break from the intensity of my alone life. Or the boredom that comes up. I'm bored and want to know what the neighbors are saying. Then I write that onto these pages, because that's how I write. If I don't deal with outer things, I'll have less of an occasion to mull over them or write them out. After all, we don't hear of Maharaja Pariksit having a comic relief act to spell his seven-day hearing of the *Bhagavatam*. No one adjourned to the local pub or took a cigarette break between chapters. He remained concentrated on hearing Sukadeva Gosvami's words, because he knew he only had seven days left to prepare himself for death. I am not Maharaja Pariksit, and I assume (without grounds) that I have more than seven days to go, but that's no excuse not to attempt to maintain my Krishna conscious focus.

Preparing for lunch now. Lunch divides the morning from the afternoon. Not so much mail; I'll answer it bit by bit. Whatever you do, ask Krishna's permission, then make it service. Just turn to Him in affection, hope, and prayer. When you fail to do so, sigh a Hare Krishna mantra, or part of one, even one word.

* * *

2:59 p.m.

"Hey Ma, give me *kacauris*. Ma! I'm late. I have to go to school." Abhay's mother is dead. He awakes after the funeral, forgets she has died, and calls out to her. Only when he looks in the mirror and sees his shaved head does he remember. His younger sister sees him going through this change and cries. Everyone cries, these actors "like fountains. Abhay (the seventh or eighth actor to play the part of the growing boy) has a physique you could only have developed by lifting weights. Okay, I admit it "I cried too, watching it. Why shouldn't I? I loved his Ma too.

Bhakti-caru Maharaja does flashbacks of her life in a nice way, not crude, yet an American filmmaker would be more slick. The whole episode made me think of my own mother and how she rejected me for becoming a devotee "quite a different story from Abhay's experience.

Later, he cuts to a scene in which Gour Mohan tells Abhay how his mother's body is dead but her soul lives on. I like his father. He was about to relate the story of Maharaja Citraketu, but we turned the video off at that point. We'll save that for another day.

M. noted that Abhay was allowed to grieve before his father instructed him in philosophy. Preachers sometimes insert the philosophy prematurely and don't allow people their normal human emotion.

I went outside and felt that I was in a movie too "the film of my life. I almost said to M., "Wait until we see Gour Mohan's death." I mean, that will tug at our hearts even more. Bhakti-caru Swami added some nice touches "as she cooked Abhay *kacauris* one last time and massaged his legs because she knew she was going to die. Ma!

* * *

The devotee sees everything as the Lord's property and therefore tries to engage everything in Krishna's service. That means he could write a series "it could have music in the background or even be a kind of story like the "Abhay" TV series. "He is so faithful that he engages himself, as well as everything else, in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. In everything, the devotee sees the Lord, and he sees everything in the Lord." (*Bhag.* 2.2.18, purport)

"Only the purified soul can attain the perfection of associating with the Personality of Godhead in complete bliss and satisfaction in his constitutional state. Whoever is able to renovate such devotional perfection is never again attracted by this material world, and he never returns." (*Bhag.* 2.2.31)

* * *

4:10 p.m.

Last afternoon of this volume. I thought of an excuse to speak. I heard you don't rewrite.

Who told you that? I rewrite everything fifty times.

I heard you don't like carrots.

That's not true. All these rumors about me! I don't eat animals, though, or engage in sex, licit or illicit. I don't do things that are against the regulations of Krishna consciousness, and I chant sixteen beautiful rounds of Hare Krishna *japa* every day. Tomorrow I'm going to start a new series. It may have a small hook to it, or a little thimble. I may even like it. But I won't tell you what it is; I don't want to spoil it. But something about Radha-Govinda and pain and prayer.

The series will begin with a master of ceremonies making a speech.

Will there be music?

That I can't tell you. We will have to see where the creative muse leads. But it will be Krishna conscious. That's why I gave you that quote: that a devotee is "so faithful that he engages himself, as well as everything else, in the transcendental loving service of the

Lord." By engaging Krishna's own energy in Krishna's service, a devotee glorifies and remembers Him.

This series will also insist on the appearance of other people. I won't be the only person I write about in it. Of course, that means I have to make the people up, or at least I have to disguise my friends. I am trying to be kind (and nonviolent) when I don't write about other people. They always get hurt by what I say "it doesn't even matter whether I'm sarcastic and cutting or attempting to please. But merciless truth cuts, and people don't like to read it in print. Therefore, all the people I write about in my books have to be fakes. But they are usually based on real people. Anyway, it's how I use my imagination in Krishna's service.

That's the preview of coming attractions. Stay tuned. See the series pop before your very eyes.

* * *

Someone asked the speaker recently, "When we go to the spiritual world, do we do what Krishna wants in the sense that we take orders from Him, or are we in a state where we do what we want but motivated solely by the desire to please Him?"

Prabhupada would say to such a question: "When you go there, you will see for yourself." The speaker told the questioner that we have an eternal identity that will be fully realized in the spiritual world. Each *rasa* has regular paraphernalia and *lilas* and, of course, moods, and Krishna will want us to learn how to engage in those things that please Him from His expert devotees. But most likely we are free to act within the parameters of the mood we have ourselves developed, according to the inspiration we receive from Krishna. He is the source of everything, including His own pleasure. He is the transcendental Cupid personified, His glance incites in us the personal desire to serve Him in a particular way. We will also take our tiny free will and plan something lovely for Him, just as we once contrived to please our parents in some small way.

* * *

5:50 p.m.

After painting, I feel fulfilled, relaxed, less jittery about headache, less closed. My feet and legs from the knees down are tired in a nice way. My eyes are sated. I was happy to have had the health to put on that drab green jumpsuit, happy about the painting of Lord Jagannatha that spurted out, multi-colored, drawn only from mind, body, and spirit. I had a warm feeling of being close to Krishna consciousness.

Appendix I

Erica Jong on "The Poet in Solitude":

" . . . we are destroying both solitude and the ability to tolerate solitude. Try to find a place without CNN, traffic sounds, deafening music, distracting videos. You have to be a billionaire to afford to escape the noisy over-stimulation of selling that is ubiquitous in our cities, suburbs, airplanes, airports, cars, and trains. Solitude has started to feel strange to people. We walk into the house and immediately turn on the TV for company.

The sounds of silence seem too peculiar. But poetry, like all creative work, is triggered by solitude. When Yeats described the 'bee-loud glade' in 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree,' you knew he had listened to bees, not traffic. Only the poet knows how loud the bees are in the bee-loud glade. Only the poet refrains from walking through the meadow with a boombox or a Walkman. Constant audio and video 'input' drowns our own 'output.' The 'wild mind' (as poet Natalie Goldberg calls the poetry-producing place in our brains) needs space to dream and retrieve images. We have nearly lost that space. Perhaps we have willfully abolished it. But the mass media of consumerism cannot do for us what poetry can.

"Where does the poet go to find necessary solitude? And where does the reader of poetry find the space to read? The truth is, both writing and reading are endangered. But the need for poetry is such a basic need that it adapts itself to new circumstances."

"(Erica Jong from, *A Century of recorded Poetry*, by Rhino records)