

JOURNAL AND POEMS

*tasmād ahaṁ vigata-viklava īśvarasya
sarvātmanā mahi gṛṇāmi yathā manīṣam
nīco 'jayā guṇa-visargam anupraviṣṭaḥ
pūyeta yena hi pumān anuvartitena*

Therefore, although I was born in a demoniac family, I may without a doubt offer prayers to the Lord with full endeavor, as far as my intelligence allows. Anyone who has been forced by ignorance to enter the material world may be purified of material life if he offers prayers to the Lord and hears the Lord's glories.

—*Bhāg.* 7.9.12

Prahlāda Mahārāja says, "I shall glorify the Lord."

"But you are a child, sir, how shall you glorify the Lord?"

"It doesn't matter I am a child! *Whatever* I have got, I shall express my feelings, 'O God, O Lord, You are so great.'"

How can *anyone* describe God or understand His glories? He's unlimited. But despite whatever limitation you have got, if you express *feelingly*, "My God! My Lord!" that will be accepted. That will be accepted.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda, lecturing on *Bhāg.* 7.9.12, August, 1968.

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Book One

JOURNAL AND POEMS

January–June, 1985

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

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Contents

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| <i>Preface</i> | vii |
| <i>Introduction</i> | xiii |
| <i>Part 1</i> | 1 |
| <i>Part 2</i> | 69 |
| <i>Part 3</i> | 113 |
| <i>Part 4</i> | 167 |
| <i>Part 5</i> | 217 |
| <i>Acknowledgments</i> | 273 |

DEDICATION

*Dedicated to my disciples,
Godbrothers, and Godsisters,
followers and friends of Śrīla Prabhupāda
who read my books and especially
to those devotees undergoing
physical illness.*

Preface

As the title suggests, this work combines features of a daily chronicle with those of a collection of poems. There are advantages to be gained from each medium.

To keep a journal is particularly suitable for helping a devotee state his own realizations and deal with his *anarthas*. Śrīla Prabhupāda described this kind of writing in a lecture he gave in Los Angeles in 1970:

Every one of you, what is your realization? You write your realization—what you have realized about Kṛṣṇa. That is required. It is not passive, always you should be active. Whenever you find time, write. Never mind—two lines, four lines, but you write your realizations. *Śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*—writing or offering prayers, glories—this is one of the functions of a Vaiṣṇava. You are hearing, but you have to write also. Writing means *smaraṇam*—remembering what you have heard from your spiritual master.

Poetry has traditionally been utilized by many Vaiṣṇava authors for glorification of Kṛṣṇa, and in fact all of the original Vedic literatures—including the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—were written in Sanskrit verse. In the modern age, authors like Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura have given us vernacular poetry (in “simple Bengali”) enriched with the flavor of a devotee’s personal joys, struggles, and transcendental lamentations.

The prose and poetry combination can be attractive and appealing, as Kṛṣṇa conscious writing should be, and it also has the ability to capture the increasingly dull and distracted minds of persons in Kali-yuga. So I have kept it up, taking the year 1985 from a personal, but Kṛṣṇa conscious point of view.

For an opening sampler, here is the first entry of the journal and poems combination as it occurred to me at the beginning of the year.

January 1985

In the midst of taxing situations, illness, and travel, I heard about a poet who won the Nobel Prize but who was dying, and I felt moved to write to him.

To the Nobel Laureate

Czech poet Seifert sadly sings,
 “probably no wiser than a cricket’s chirrup.”
 Death he sees breaking down his door
 to startle him into last-breath terror.
 (Seifert, what comes after death?)

I like your honest song
 as you face the end of life.
 If only I, or someone,
 could have given you a link to Kṛṣṇa!
 It’s hard to imagine—
 you in the Prague hospital,
 ill in your last hours, famous, near death,
 loved by your countrymen, hated by your government.
 How could we reach you with *harer-nāma*?
 And if we did, what would you think?
 Some devotees live in Prague.
 Maybe they can try
 to give you a *Gītā*
 before Death kicks down your door
 and your sad cricket chirrup
 comes to an end.
 You are honest, humble, helpless.
 We are preachers.
 Our duty is to reach you.
 But how will we do it?
 Can this poem help?

My poem to the Nobel Laureate had an encouraging follow-up. I sent it to a devotee in Europe, and soon received this reply:

Your prayer has been fulfilled. When Seifert's daughter was in Stockholm to receive the Nobel Prize instead of her father, I had an opportunity to speak with her shortly and present her three *Bhagavad-gītā*'s. She knew *Bhagavad-gītā* since this is the seventh edition published in Czech. She was very pleased and assured me that she will give one to her father.

I hope that the *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* will be ready before Seifert dies and takes off to another body, so that he gets a chance to read about the glorious life of Śrīla Prabhupāda and takes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the last minute. In this connection I might present him with the poem written by the author of the book. We can only hope that he will, by Śrīla Prabhupāda's mercy, wake up and will write some nice poem glorifying the transcendental qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

I think that Czech *bhaktas* will find your poem inspiring—a poem personally written by a senior devotee for a famous personality of their country.

I hope this letter meets you blissfully engaged in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in good health.

Sometimes my friends see poems as quietistic or as a luxury we busy devotees can hardly afford. One who takes time and effort to write poetry runs the risk of being seen as impractical, a dreamer. But this incident shows that poems can reach out, travel, and preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

When it first occurred to me to keep a journal of my activities throughout 1985, I did not know that I would be spending most of my time recovering my health at our Gītā-nāgarī farm. Because of the somewhat unusual circumstances in which I now find myself—restricted from traveling and from associating as much as I would like with my disciples and God-brothers—the themes expressed in this volume of *Journal and Poems* are also unusual and not, I hope, representative of the themes of subsequent volumes. In future volumes I would like to describe different places and portray the broad variety of devotional activities characteristic of life in ISKCON. But my present circumstances have mostly forced me to restrict myself

in this volume to two basic themes—recovery from illness, and seeing Kṛṣṇa in nature.

My illness—chronic headaches caused by an instability in the vaso-motor tone of the blood vessels in the brain—is not life-threatening, and I have friends who have endured much more pain. But I have experienced the problems of adjustment that most people must face when suffering prolonged illness, and I have recorded my attempts to become Kṛṣṇa conscious throughout this period.

My hope is that this journal will help others who must face illness. In this regard, I have received encouragement from one of my disciples who wrote in a letter, “Will you ever tell us at some point later on how you are handling your illness, how you are thinking and praying, how your devotional service attitude remains uninterrupted?” The simple fact is that we all must go through illness. When bedridden during his last days, Śrīla Prabhupāda turned to one of his disciples and said, “Don’t think this won’t happen to you.” And Prabhupāda also related the story of the dung and the fire. A piece of wet dung once laughed to see a piece of dry dung placed into the fire to be used for fuel. What the wet dung did not know was that soon he too would dry up and be placed in the fire. So each of us must make our passage through illness, just as we must pass through birth, old age, and death. It is my hope that this book will serve to make others’ passage easier.

This period of convalescence at Gītā-nāgarī has provided me an opportunity to observe nature. Forced by illness, I have been able to notice and record more carefully than usual the changing seasons, and I have been able to feel more what these changes mean. It is commonly felt that the cycle of the four seasons provide a natural symbol of the changes each of us experiences in life. The hope and youthful creativity of spring matures into comfortable, verdant summer, then dwindles and fades, only to be reborn in a future youthfulness. In these seasonal changes Kṛṣṇa warns us not to be content with the lush productivity, decoration, and ease which nature provides in the early months but to know that such things do not last.

And as Śrīla Prabhupāda stated in Los Angeles in 1968, “These things are to be learned, how by nature’s study you can become very educated.” Thus I have described in some detail my observations of nature here at Gītā-nāgarī.

When a disciple engaged in typing and editing this work saw some rough notes in which I mentioned my peers’ possible criticisms of my nature studies, my disciple wrote to me offering the following encouragement:

Kṛṣṇa is the complete whole, one without a second. As Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself within the natural setting of Gītā-nāgarī, those revelations are also complete . . . Those whose intelligence have been clarified by devotion always recognize Kṛṣṇa when He appears, and to those people Kṛṣṇa will surely manifest Himself in nature through your writings . . . Your descriptions of “quiet scenes” on an “isolated farm”—which in an external way all seem to be very much removed from the eddies and currents of everyday ISKCON preaching and management—are in reality episodes of the highest drama. Through these descriptions Kṛṣṇa is manifesting Himself in nature for the pleasure of the devotees. One who sees His adventing in its transcendental reality will never have to take birth in the material nature again.

This letter at least expresses the ideal that I was striving for, and I hope to find readers who will receive the book in this spirit.

Some may doubt that the book is an honest journal since I have composed it with the intention of publishing. “After all,” some might say, “devotees are preachers. They write to change peoples’ lives, but a diarist is someone who writes privately for himself.” Yet I have chosen to write a diary and find it a form which can communicate strongly. And it is, in fact, a true diary. Some items from my diary I have selected for publishing, others I have omitted. But ultimately, every devotee author writes as a spirit soul, not as an ordinary person who, no matter how honest he tries to be in his private revelations, is still dishonest and motivated by sense gratification.

I admit that this book is imperfect in many ways. It is a book

primarily for my disciples, but also for other devotees, as well as those who may not be devotees but who want to hear about Kṛṣṇa. Despite its limitations and imperfections, I am hoping that my readers will be benefited from the work and that they will be encouraged to press on in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

August 1985

Gītā-nāgarī

Introduction

IN DEFENSE OF PERSONAL WRITING

There are different kinds of literatures useful for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and personal writing is one of them. To give a worldly example, *The Diary of Anne Frank* has been hailed as one of the most moving documents of World War II, and in an important sense this little Dutch girl's diary has outlived and defeated the once seemingly invincible forces of Nazism. Not only for its power to persuade but also as a form of art, personal expression commands the greatest respect and distinguishes the author-as-participant from the observing scholar.

Whatever form it may take, Kṛṣṇa conscious writing must be service to *guru* and Kṛṣṇa, and it must preach. In its own way, personal writing achieves these objectives, provided it is genuinely Kṛṣṇa conscious.

Personal writing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness tends to be confessional, a searching for perfection despite slow progress. This searching or experimenting to discover ways to more fully surrender may appear to contradict our Kṛṣṇa conscious *siddhānta*, since the Absolute Truth is already researched and the conclusion established. And Śrīla Prabhupāda did himself scoff at the title and underlying concept of Gandhi's autobiography, *Experiment With the Truth*. Prabhupāda said the truth has been disclosed by past sages and we simply have to repeat it and follow in their footsteps.

But the searching attitude is not incompatible with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We are not questioning what is the ultimate cause of all causes, nor are we, like Arjuna in the beginning of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, unsure of the best morality or the best course of action. But in all honesty we admit that we are having difficulty in personally realizing the ultimate goal of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This feeling of failure, of falling short of the Kṛṣṇa conscious standard, is often expressed by Vaiṣṇavas. "If You were to examine me now," writes Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura,

“You would find I have no good qualities.” And after approaching Lord Nityānanda, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī said, “I am the lowest of men, the most sinful, fallen, and condemned.” Yet these personalities were not imperfect beings fumbling for the truth, and neither is the personal writing we are describing. Nor is this writing the product of mental speculation. We are confident that the truth is contained in the expressions of *guru*, *śāstra*, and *sādhū*. But in attempting to fully surrender to that truth, one must be careful never to claim that he has already attained perfection.

This is not a merely negative realization. An aspirant on the path of perfection is discovering himself and discovering his blissful, eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Although we are each eternal spirit souls, we have forgotten our eternal position and for the time being (which may constitute a period of millions of births and deaths), we have lost our liberated connection with Kṛṣṇa in devotional service. But by the mercy of our spiritual master, for the first time in eons, our memory is being revived and we are now attempting the most noble endeavor—full surrender in the service of the Lord. In a sense, Śrīla Prabhupāda did himself experiment in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by searching for those policies and practices best suited for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West. We also should be always searching for better, more pleasing ways to serve Kṛṣṇa.

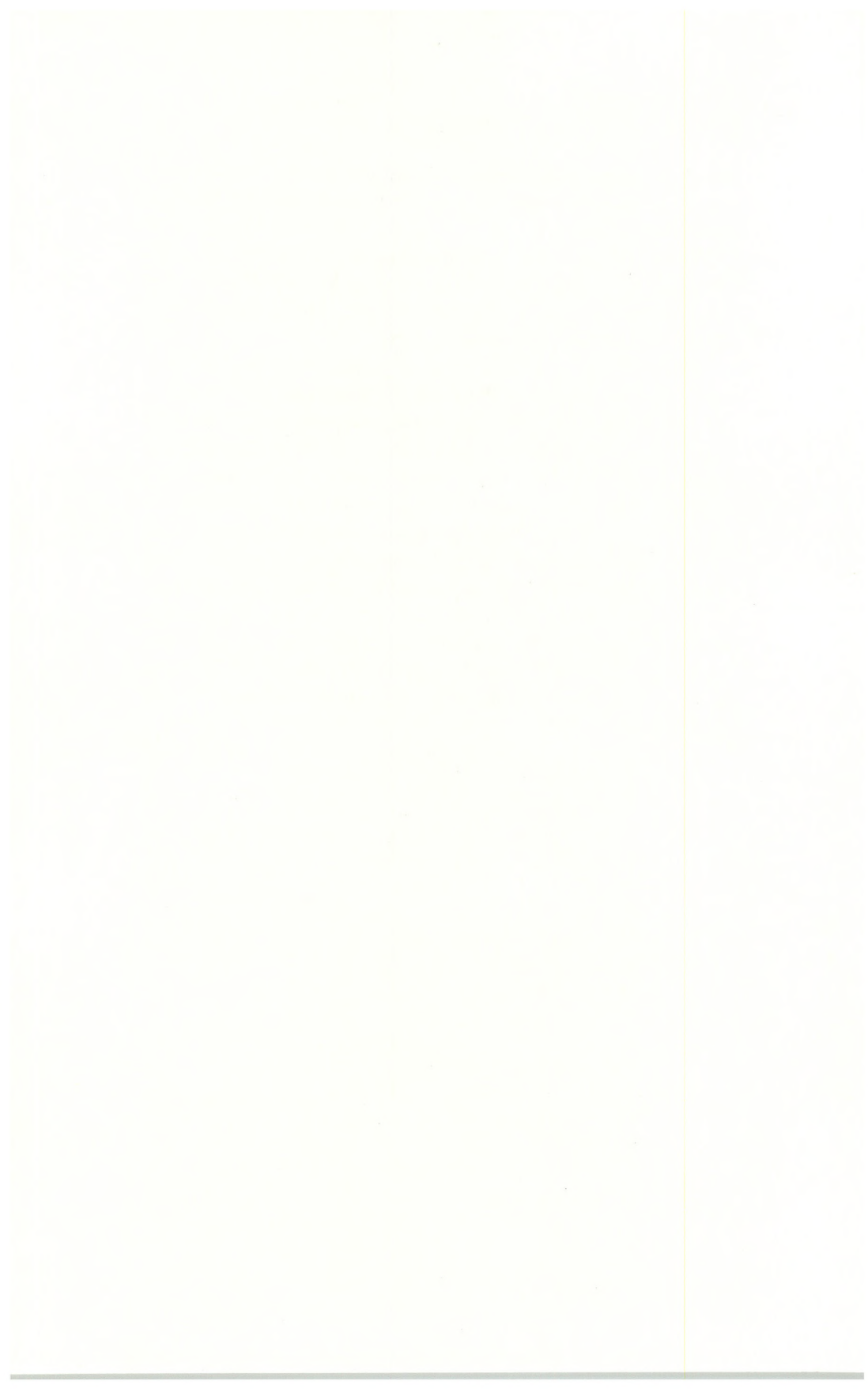
Honest descriptions of one’s attempts to surrender more fully can be a source of inspiration, both for those considering Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the first time, as well as those who are already practicing devotional service. And by each day recording our honest attempts to improve, we expose and root out the dishonest move, the failure to advance in different areas of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

One might criticize such writing for being self-indulgent or involving too much self-absorption. After all, it is always possible to fall into the subtle traps of the false ego by paying too much attention to one’s own psychology or individuality, especially if one strays from the basic scriptures. Thus one should

base one's personal reflections upon the pastimes and teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His pure devotees as received through *paramparā*.

When I write about Śrīla Prabhupāda, I do so with confidence in the importance of the writing, but what about this work, which is not about Prabhupāda but about myself? Where does its importance lie?

Actually, this book only externally appears to be about myself. The real subject of the work is the process of devotional service. I am describing in a firsthand way how practicing *bhakti-yoga* can transform a fallen person to the transcendental realm. I am describing how a conditional soul must face many difficulties in Kṛṣṇa consciousness due to his conditioned nature. And yet I am describing how such practice saves him, how associating with the pure devotee maintains one in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So it is the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness that is being described and glorified. Bhakti-devī stands always in the background as the real subject and heroine of this book. And my access to Her is through the mercy of my spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.



1

January, 1985, Gītā-nāgarī

Gītā-nāgarī farm is very special to me. It's been my home, the place where I wrote *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*. And now it is the place I go for rest when my travels wear me down. After six years there I still haven't worked in the fields or the barn or learned the details of agriculture and cow protection. Neither does the temple manager and president, Paramānanda, expect that of me. But my appreciation of Gītā-nāgarī's purpose continues to grow, and I'm saddened when I hear devotees, seeing a farm like this, say it is not as important for preaching as book distribution.

That's wrong. Our first duty to Śrīla Prabhupāda is to distribute his books. That was his dearest desire. But the books tell of a better way of life, of a place where Kṛṣṇa consciousness is actually lived without false dependence on factories and city living. There is a place, we preach, where cows are not slaughtered but protected, and where God conscious people live off the bounty of the earth.

The Vedic literatures describe a civilization that existed many thousands of years ago, but most people today are skeptical that such a world civilization ever existed. Therefore, to prove the living truth of the *śāstras* and to live as Kṛṣṇa chose to live when He came to earth five thousand years ago, we maintain and develop our rural Kṛṣṇa conscious village, the place where the *Gītā* is sung. Unless there is such a place, the world is doomed.

A Few Days Before A Festival

1

Sleds will slide now.
The oxens' back-rippling strides
will easily carry tons of wood
for warming Rādhā-Dāmodara
and Their servants.

The dark gray creek is floating ice
 as we ready for our New Year's festival.
 We are not great devotees, great planners.
 But we are found at the feet
 of the great, Śrīla Prabhupāda,
 his beasts of burden,
 determined to continue, even in the snow,
 this mission of love
 for him.

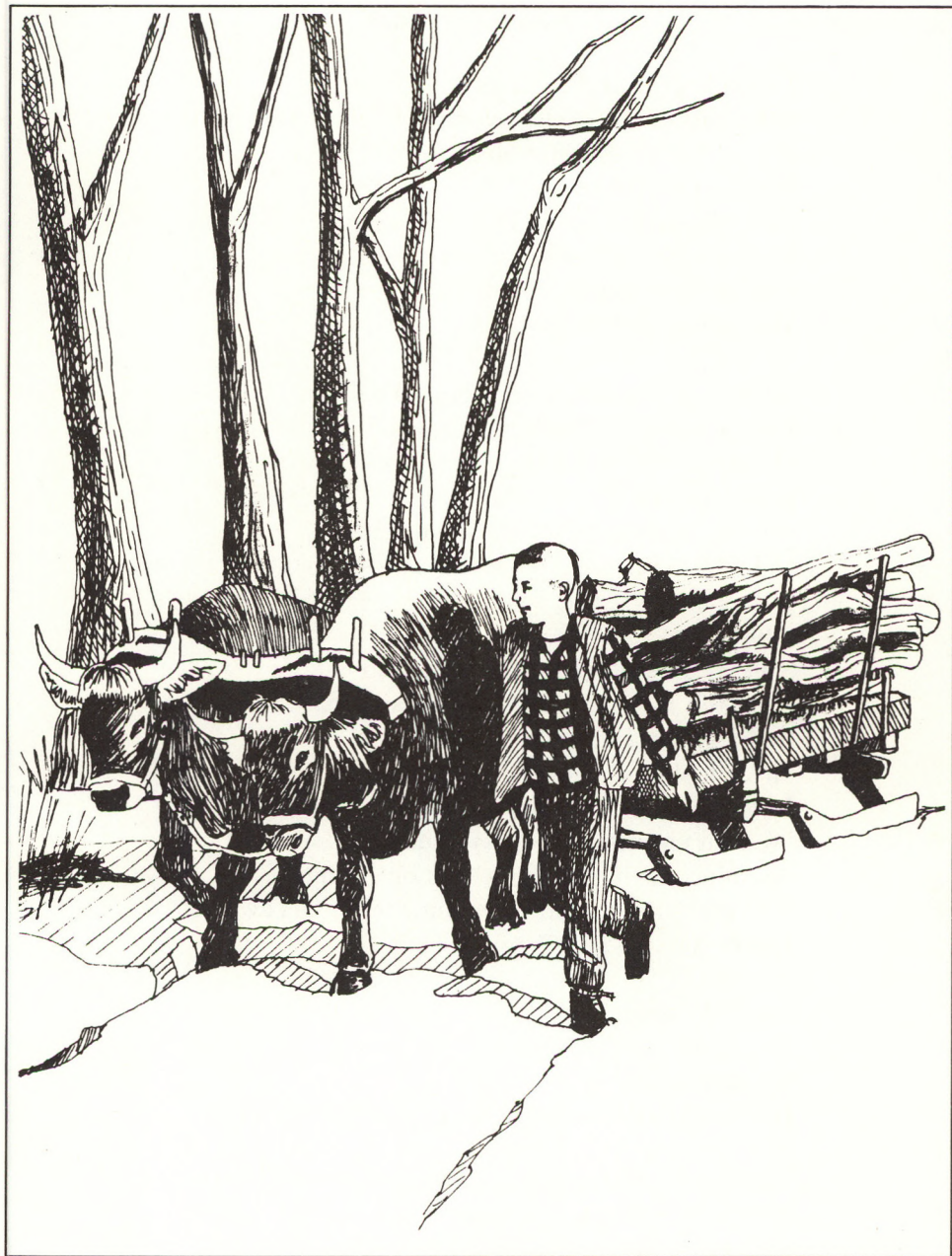
2

Full of praise we walk
 the snow-white road to the pale white barn.
 Inside are the curly-haired cows, oxen, two bulls,
 and the calves.
 The sheep are afraid of us.

Outside the schoolhouse, Gour Hari
 loads wood into a wheelbarrow.
 He hopes it snows so hard, he says,
 that I can't leave the farm.
 The boys talk of skis and sleds and Prema's broken leg.
 I begin to talk of old days at 26 Second Avenue:
 "Prasādam was Prabhupāda's mercy. He gave us
 dāl, caṇāṭis, and rice. But it was so delicious.
 And on Sunday an all-out feast."
 I remember those days as we walk past the creek,
 through the powdery cold, up to my cabin,
 where ice water runs from the spring into the pond.

3

Choosing gifts:
 Jāhnavī, who was number one in *saṅkīrtana*,
 gets large *tulasī japa* beads,
 a notebook of mine, and a picture of Lord Caitanya.
 Manu dāsa, who came in second,
 gets a set of books, a scarf,
 a pair of the *guru's* shoes.
 But I've given away all my Prabhupāda remnants.



Ox power at Gītā-nāgarī.

I want to give his blessings
 and grant to those who served long and hard
 eternal knowledge and bliss,
 but it is not so easy.
 I search among my clothes
 for a valuable sweater and then. . .
 a set of *Kṛṣṇa* books,
 a collection of his tapes. . .

4

While walking on the snowbound path,
 I met Gour Hari driving the oxen.
 He halted Rāj and Dev,
 but as we talked,
 the oxen suddenly broke away full speed,
 and Gour Hari—scared and mad—chased after them,
 yelling as loud as he could.

Several times the sun came out, and wind
 scattered snowdust from high branches.
 Squirrels do that too,
 and it looks like snowfall in sunlight.
 Later, darkness fell, but no snow.
 We wait for more snow, yet hope it
 doesn't come in such force that our friends,
 who are driving from cities some ten hours away,
 will be detained.

5

Cook the feast.
 Ready the guest rooms.
 Prepare to receive
 two hundred family members.

The creek flows steadily, freezing.
 That first day's snow was all,
 now earth shows through sled tracks.
 Being God's own picture,
 may winter-service naturally turn us

to favorable thoughts of Him?
Hoping for the best, I go on collecting
a tiny servant's view
of Lord Kṛṣṇa's nature.

January, Miami

Physical health cannot exist independently of mental and spiritual health. Actually the physical body exists only as a corpse. The life of the body depends on the soul. Health conscious persons are often in the material mode of goodness. Sometimes in ignorance they praise the body itself or attempt to "love" it. A Kṛṣṇa conscious person, however, tries to take good care of the body for use in Kṛṣṇa's service.

The value of good health is very great, maybe more so for a preacher than for one who worships in solitude (*bhajanānandī*). Prahlaḍa Mahārāja speaks of serving while "stout and strong," and the human body is described as the "pillar" of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But the body shouldn't be catered to in an exaggerated way.

Over the months I have tried various diets and exercises, and I went on a ten-day cleansing fast. Fasting removes bodily toxins and maybe mental toxins as well. They should be eliminated just like feces and replaced with a positive, Kṛṣṇa conscious spirit.

I yearn to regain the strength and vitality of youth. I must be healthy to do my service. If I am not healthy I cannot even participate in the important up-coming G.B.C. meetings in Miami and India or tackle the spiritual problems in my zone of management. Nor will I be able to write as much as I would like.

I look upon recovering from my chronic headaches in two ways. First, I want to keep a positive attitude toward recovery and to exert my will for cure and self-care. Second, I want to understand any negative attitudes I have that may contribute to the stress and anxieties that lead to the headaches.

I used to scoff at those who advocate positive thinking and regard them as superficial. I felt the same way about the hypes

of super-achievers in the business world and the cheap salvation promised by certain evangelical Christians. But now I see there is justification and a proper place for true positive thinking.

Before coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness I was proud of my cynicism. And we *should*, in fact, be cynical about material life. To see the falseness of material happiness is actually intelligent. But a pure devotee is also optimistic, because he knows the soul is eternal. He knows he is part and parcel of wonderful Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and that he is working for the best welfare of others.

While trying to cure myself, I should never stray from the Kṛṣṇa conscious *siddhānta*. As important as physical health is, spiritual well-being is more important because if we are successful in spiritual life, we will rid ourselves of all material diseases.

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, I am trying to get well by various cleansing programs. I know physical well-being is temporary, but at present I need better health to serve You better. I think maybe You are teaching me through this “*guru*,” the body, that I should not try to enjoy this human life. Also You are showing me what a great privilege is the life of devotional service that Śrīla Prabhupāda has given me. I have to fight to keep it and show You that I want to come back more strongly to serve You by preaching.

Meeting in Miami

1

When ardent desire for Kṛṣṇa's service breaks forth,
whatever is perceived by a Kṛṣṇa conscious servant,
even pigeons landing on the windowsill,
is a Kṛṣṇa conscious moment.

And a devotee's confession
is a prayer for redemption.

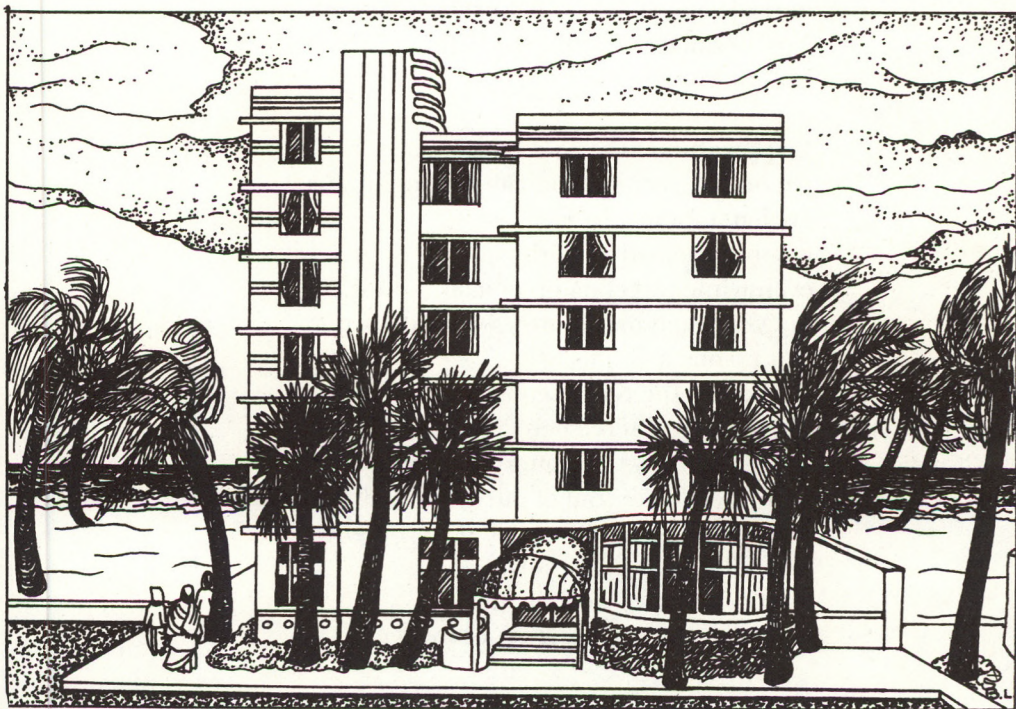
2

With snowflakes dashing,

we left the frozen ground of Philly
and flew to chilled Miami,
for a meeting of leaders.
Will it be conference or war?
Is the Governing Body at fault?
Are the second rank rebellious?
We want to walk together, a unified Movement,
as when Prabhupāda was here.
But the problems are baffling,
not to be solved in a day and a half.
Yet we are here to try.

3

Early the night before,
I turned the room lights out



“Govinda’s Vaikunṭha Building,” ISKCON Miami.

and put a sign on my door.
 Early in the morning I'll rise and chant,
 and then enter the tumultuous arena.
 Is it against my nature,
 to manage others' strife?
 But Prabhupāda has picked me,
 "because you do what I ask."
 Let me rise to the task.

4

Why should one allow his service
 to be threatened by fools or aggressors?
 To fight for self-survival comes first.
 But is there nothing else?
 If I am loving and open,
 will I be exploited
 in the name of love and trust?
 No, we must maintain the faith
 in Prabhupāda's system.

5

Brisk walks on the cold beach. . .
 An on-the-scene chronicler of humanness,
 ancient China's Tu Fu,
 recorded sensitive truth
 even while traveling on official duties
 or even when his country was war-torn.
 But no one asks me
 to capture the Kṛṣṇa conscious moment.
 My duty is to serve here and now,
 to give all my attention to the conference,
 to help save the soul of our worldwide movement.
 For this purpose we work day and night,
 and we fight, and we joke.
 And sometimes we look out
 at the mysterious, bright ocean.

6

Returning to the north,
 I file my report:

“There was progress, not just conflict;
 it is hopeful, and we are meeting again,
 at our annual gathering in Māyāpur.
 Sincere devotees can differ yet resolve.
 Lord Caitanya will protect us, I know,
 and even amid schisms and casualties,
 our onward climb will endure.”
 And so may my chronicle
 of big and small events.

Vancouver, January 30

Doctors of various schools—Āyur-vedic, allopathic, homeopathic, naturopathic, even a psychic—gave the same opinion: for one in my particular condition, travel (especially jet travel) is not good. It is not good for the bodily airs (*vāyu*), it dehydrates the brain cells, it disturbs the biorhythm and creates constipation. But with all respects to the doctors, I chart my course for the weeks ahead: from Boston to Vancouver, then back to Philadelphia. And soon, to India.

Without traveling I cannot tend to my basic duties. And travel is spiritually stimulating for a *sannyāsī* because it allows him to preach to wider audiences. Travel also leads to material detachment. Besides, I am caught up in a bond of mutual love with devotees in various parts of the world. They are asking for my association, and I am desiring theirs. And because this travel pleases my topmost guides, Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa, it pleases me also.

*Searching for Kṛṣṇa in the West:
 a Week in Vancouver*

1

Prabhupāda's gift
 has gone deep into our hearts,
 but now in his absence we face the loss.
 And where is Kṛṣṇa, whom we never knew?

2

As I drive to Canada, trees speed by,

but I cannot see Him,
though I am trying.

3

In India, they say, the air is surcharged,
even in a city, with Kṛṣṇa.
But my failure to see Him
will be the same in *punya bhūmi*,
unless I surrender.

4

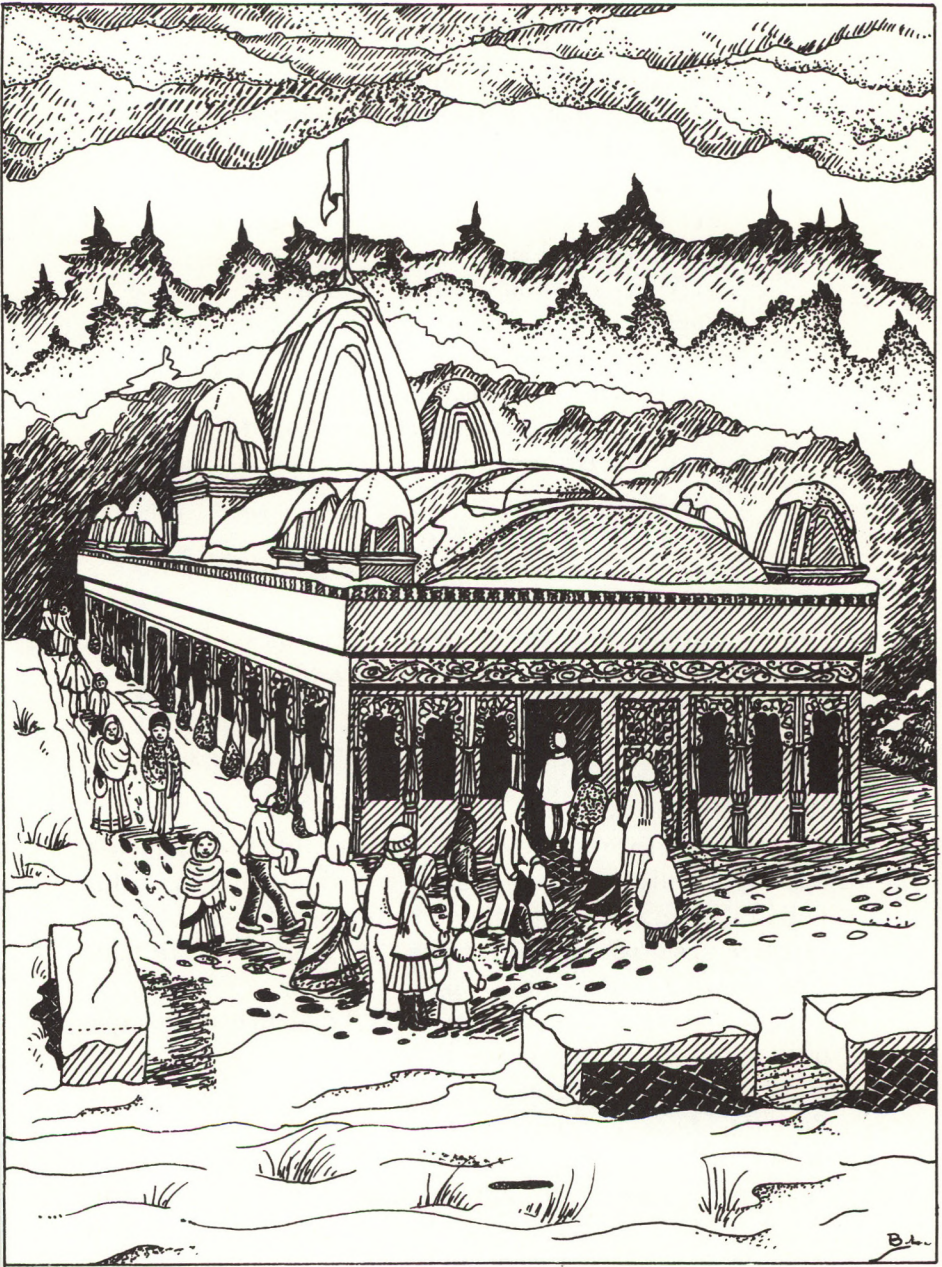
Overnight it snowed. And all day my time was ruined
in dark-room headaches and sleep.
I could not read, write, or chant,
and this poem of searching I also abandoned.
Now, in the evening, I'm relieved,
but lack pure energy
to see everything as Him.
And I remind myself
that Prabhupāda has said,
"Don't try to see Kṛṣṇa,
but act in such a way
that He will see you."

5

On Sunday, many guests attend
my dutiful lecture.
Never mind if they don't listen.
I entreat them to chant,
and by that humble preacher's plea,
suddenly I lose myself.
I see everything in Kṛṣṇa,
and Him in everything.
Now know the secret:
preaching is the essence.

To a Disciple

Śraddhā, I heard your face was hurt,
disfigured now with stitches.
Your vivacious smile and pointy nose



Vancouver temple, January 1985

no longer capture the mind?
 Before the accident, you had already left us,
 saying strange, rueful things:
 “Gurupāda doesn’t know his disciples.”
 And you left your good husband struggling.
 I heard you fled away
 to a Vancouver island with an “artist”
 who flattered your paintings—
 and your false ego.
 Now all is hurt, stitched, ruined,
 except your eternal connection to Lord Kṛṣṇa,
 which awaits your simple return.
 Please come back,
 take up service where you left it:
 sewing dresses for the form of Lord Nṛsiṃha,
 painting pictures for Kṛṣṇa,
 chanting His names, following His rules,
 and progressing on the path back to Godhead,
 where beauty and youth
 are eternal and unbreakable.

February 10, Gītā-nāgarī

Last night I sat and talked for hours with Paramānanda, and we hardly mentioned the worldwide conflicts within ISKCON. We are involved with helping Gītā-nāgarī. Before he came to see me he had been out five hours in the freezing cold, plowing roads, cutting wood.

I am packing my briefcase for India. I plan to listen to tapes of Prabhupāda’s 1966 lectures to revive my memories, as well as to gain new insights into that miraculous time when Prabhupāda came alone to New York City and awakened the dead souls.

Today I looked through a stack of photos of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I am captured by his love and locked on his orders, yet my frail memory and affection seem to wane with time, almost like the fading of youthful vigor. But aside from delicate sentiments, we sincere Godbrothers have to come to-

gether in the most substantial way and please Śrīla Prabhupāda by working cooperatively.

Tonight Baladeva made *upmā*, and I remembered Śrīla Prabhupāda's letter to me about *upmā*, written fifteen years ago.

Remembering Upmā and the Guru's Order

"Do you know what is *upmā*?"

Prabhupāda inquired.

"Tell your wife to make some."

Farina cooked with vegetables,
good for winter with melting butter.

Without wife I am happier now,
but his letters and visits are gone.

And his ISKCON movement like a ship,
is tossing in a storm,
longing for the hand of that captain.

"I am here in my order,"

he said many times.

Godbrothers! Shipmates! Let's work together,
intelligence and courage will follow.

Prabhupāda will steer us
by the three pointing stars:

guru, śāstra, sādhu.

En route to India: Washington, D.C., February 15

What is the importance of my health compared to the health of this whole ISKCON movement? There is so much tearing at the body of ISKCON. Sometimes we say this movement will always go on because it is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission. And that is true. But what form will it take? Śrīla Prabhupāda entrusted this ISKCON movement to us and asked us to protect it. We scarcely thought when he was here that it would be so threatened or that some devotees would form schisms, as is the case with almost all religions.

Many persons who have left ISKCON are openly antagonis-

tic. They blame all their problems on ISKCON. But we determined followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda must stay together and work in this movement—even if no individual among us has the solution to all of the problems.

I once heard Śrīla Prabhupāda give a wonderful example of love, and I think it can be applied to the love we should have for ISKCON. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that a father will naturally become anxious when he learns that his son is very ill and fears he may die. The son, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained, may not actually be in danger of dying, but the father's anxiety is a sign of his love. Therefore, said Prabhupāda, out of love for Kṛṣṇa and *guru* we feel very bad when we see any mistake or lacking on our parts as devotees.

In this light I thought of the threats and troubles to ISKCON. Should I disregard the troubles and say that since it is Lord Caitanya's movement it will endure? No. I should be concerned out of love for ISKCON. The movement will not die, but I cannot escape the anxieties. Neither can I check the troubles. But I can become strong and active as a member of ISKCON and work cooperatively with others.

On Prabhupāda's *vyāsāsana* in the temple room at ISKCON Potomac in Washington, D.C., there is a photo of Śrīla Prabhupāda taken when he visited the temple in 1976. He looks grave and to my eyes even sad. I remember how during this visit he also appeared to be ill, and it was in fact the beginning of the illness that lasted until his disappearance. But beyond these perceptions I realize that Prabhupāda is not sad but rather in ecstasy of love of Kṛṣṇa. As he traveled all over the world spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he was feeling the ecstasy of his compassionate work on behalf of his spiritual master.

The photo in Potomac shows Prabhupāda looking downward toward a large birthday cake decorated with lit candles. It was the tenth birthday of ISKCON. The picture made me think, "Just see, here is Prabhupāda and ISKCON. We have to preserve this movement against its outer enemies and inner weaknesses."

The enemies declare that ISKCON has lost its spiritual quality. They say the present institution is but a hollow shell, an illusion of the real ISKCON Prabhupāda started. But these enemies cannot prove that the spirit soul has actually left the body of ISKCON. They can point to the failures of this movement and to its growth pains, but there are too many signs of life to declare ISKCON spiritually dead. There are too many signs of surrender to Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.



Signs of Life

Tiny sparks, blessed to burn,
 fly to India now,
 bright embers of the ISKCON fire.
 (And in every Kṛṣṇa temple
 they're worshiping their Lords.)
 Who claims these are signs of death?
 Has the Mayapur Chandrodāya Mandir vanished?
 Are there no pilgrims this year?
 Wherefrom comes this strong *kīrtana* sound?

Because they have deserted
 they say all have deserted,
 like the deaf who claim all others are deaf.
 They no longer come to Māyāpur,
 but a thousand faithful do,
 dancing to the order
 of the *śaktyāveśa* saint.

“But devotees quarrel as to who shall be *guru*!”
 Yes, but differing is also a sign of life—
 as long as they merge, after quarrels,
 in the Ganges and together dance at *kīrtanas*;
 and as long as they reside
 in the Māyāpur *dhāma*
 and worship together
 Rādhā-Mādhava and Prabhupāda.

Today I held initiations, and tomorrow I leave for India. At the fire sacrifice I read aloud from one of Prabhupāda's purports that the spiritual master in disciplic succession from Nārada Muni is in the same spiritual category as Nārada. I also read about Dhruva Mahārāja, to show what a determined disciple he was, and I told the story of Nārada and the hunter. I read from an old essay of mine, “Second Birth,” about how I suddenly realized at my own initiation that I was obliged to

spread the knowledge that Prabhupāda was giving to us. And I also read from *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* and told how Prabhupāda's disciples served him by helping spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world. I requested the new disciples to work together in a similar way to increase the preaching in our zone.

There are many items of faith my disciples must hold—faith in Kṛṣṇa, in *śāstra*, in *guru*. They also have to have faith in me, and I must have faith in myself as a connected representative of Śrīla Prabhupāda. One might say, "It is not difficult to have faith that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, because He is cited as such by great authorities. Prabhupāda's purity is also beyond doubt. Nor is this blind faith, but rather it is based on the historical manifestation of his potency as *śaktyāveśa-avatāra*. But how can we have faith in you, when some of your Godbrothers who were appointed *guru* just as you were have fallen?"

A Castor Tree Guru

When there are no trees,
a castor tree is a big tree.
"I may be imperfect,"
Prabhupāda would say,
"but if I speak what Kṛṣṇa says,
then that is also perfect."
And a Prabhupādānuga
is in touch with the *śakti*.

The tree in the courtyard is also small,
but sturdy, even in winter.
And in springtime it will bud green.

Let me grow as I am able,
even if I am small.
And let me also shelter *śiṣya* birds.

I am his foot dust,

his boy, his saved, his son,
 his typist, a bringer of a mango.
 But I cannot rest on these credits.
 Today also I am traveling
 to his Māyāpur.

I pray to stay a small tree,
 since that is what I am,
 and to deliver these *śiṣyas* given to me.
 By chanting and hearing
 and always living with the Vaiṣṇavas,
 by preaching and urging myself and them,
 I'll help keep these ISKCON places sound
 until the end of my life.

February 17, London

Baladeva goes ahead to check our luggage, but he phones from the airport to say that every suitcase is being searched. It turns out we are on a special flight: Queen Elizabeth's daughter, Princess Anne, will be on board. They want to be sure, I suppose, that no bombs are planted.

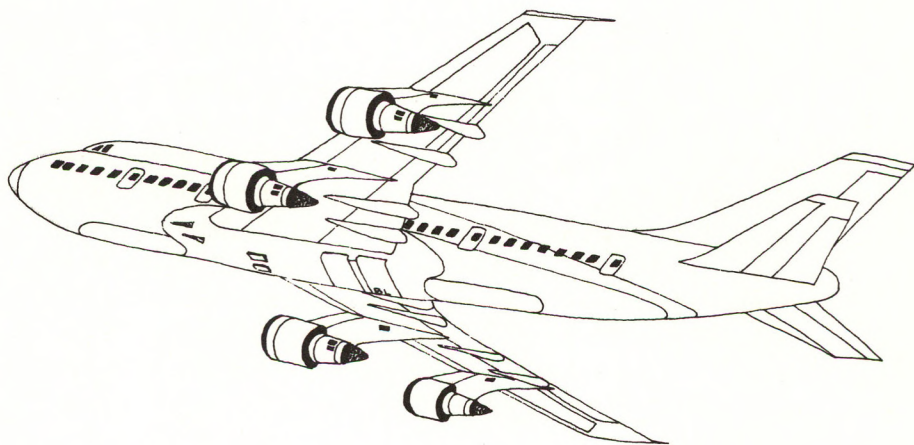
I pack up the remaining briefcases and ride to the airport in a taxi. While I sit looking on, a brown-shirted security woman wearing white gloves painstakingly searches through every medicine bottle, each rolled bit of underwear, every notebook, exchanging a few friendly words with Baladeva as she goes. Suddenly she discovers our Coleman stove, so valuable in India, and after consulting with the police she decides that because the stove has a trace of gasoline in its tank, they must confiscate it! These are some of the rigors of modern travel.

Airport

Bound for Calcutta,
 I get ready for my jet seat
 with Prabhupāda tapes and books.
 Nine hours with *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

is an excellent proposal,
but this body and mind
are too weak and fickle
for in-flight *samādhi*.

I wish I was thinking of the Deity,
Māyāpur's Rādhā-Mādhava,
tall, broad, Their large eyes blessing us.
And I wish my heart would gladden
when I rejoin with many friends.
But this body I am in
is a complaining clod,
and the mind I restrain
is ungrateful and sorrowful.
Yet Prabhupāda has packed me in with the best,
and for that kindness
even I am grateful.



HEARING ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA'S TAPES FROM 1966

It will be more than nine hours to London, so plenty of time for hearing Prabhupāda's tapes. The tapes from July 1966 are noisier than Prabhupāda's talks in the Bowery loft or the uptown *yoga* institute.

"You can come forward," Śrīla Prabhupāda says, inviting guests to move up from the back of the narrow storefront to where he is sitting on a mat on the floor. We can hear dogs barking, children shouting, cars rushing by, but only when the noise is disruptive does Śrīla Prabhupāda even pause. At these times he clears his throat and then continues. He preaches strongly—his voice strong, his conclusion strong.

While I listened to these tapes I tried remembering those days, my first meetings with Śrīla Prabhupāda, his first year in New York, and the first gathering of Western disciples at his feet. In some ways I have already told these reminiscences, and by having the lecture tapes in our possession, do we not have the most important life of those times? *Śāstra* states that one should not endeavor primarily to see a *sādhū*, but rather a *sādhū* must be heard.

As I reflect upon the times with Prabhupāda in New York, I wish there was some means, like a time machine, to go back and relive those days.

But in 1966 I was such a neophyte. What would be the benefit of seeing my raw beginning? I might see how in the beginning I did not appreciate Prabhupāda fully and that only gradually did I begin to perceive his greatness. And wouldn't I mostly be immersed in the mundane surroundings of those times—the hippies, the antiwar movement and all the rest? Wouldn't I see mainly how we failed to properly receive His Divine Grace? Or would it be worthwhile to collect just a few rough gems from that holy time when Prabhupāda first gave us Kṛṣṇa's love in the transcendental world he created on Second Avenue?

Give us a scrap
of his cloth,

of his life,
a view.

Almost twenty years later I'm trying to listen to those '66 tapes and to note down a few principal points. I heard Prabhupāda explaining the six items detrimental to devotional service as given by Rūpa Gosvāmī. *Niyama-āgraha*, Prabhupāda said, means to follow the rules and regulations blindly. He gave the example that in India there are numerous rules for spiritual life, but all these rules may not be practical for introducing Kṛṣṇa consciousness in another part of the world. He then spoke of his own life's work and said he was more interested in preaching than in following all the technical rules for *brāhmaṇas*. He said that if he were to insist on following all the rules, then he would not be able to preach in America.

To Śrīla Prabhupāda

I come to your door 94 Bowery
not with your boldness
but yearning for the picture of you
alone in the city-hell.
I come as your student and son,
praying to evoke memory of you.
I have no power,
but I have come to praise you.

February 19

Unable to rest all night, I look out the plane window at the bright morning. "Why do I have to go to India?" I complain to myself. But then below I see a large, twisting river appearing as on a map. I think it must be the River Ganges. The captain does not announce it as anything to note, although if we were flying over a big city he would probably mention it.

As we arrive at the Calcutta airport I immediately feel my Kṛṣṇa consciousness challenged. I ask myself whether my per-

sonal writing projects are valid and in *paramparā*, or are they some kind of a concoction? The demand for being a pure, potent ISKCON man, one whose service is recognized by Prabhupāda, bears down upon me. It is good to be accountable, but I am surprised that I feel this so strongly simply upon landing in India, as if by proximity to Prabhupāda's Māyāpur. As we deplane, this mood is only increased by the spontaneous comments of the first people we meet. Upon reaching the bottom of the stairway, an Indian gentleman greets us with a sincere "Hare Kṛṣṇa." A moment later an immigration official asks, "Are you going to Māyāpur?" Then a taxi driver adds, "Māyāpur, the holy festival."

Commitment to Writing

This writing is my festival,
my conquering,
my big endeavor,
absorption of mind and thought,
my mango offering
to please my spiritual master.

No, I don't know for sure
if he likes it,
because he's not here
like before.
But he liked my '69 Lord Śiva essay,
and in '76 and '77
he kept affirming, "Write another book."

I'm obsessed, certain
of the power of Vaiṣṇava words
and of the desire of this soul
to *write* my offerings in *paramparā*.

If you find it wrong,
don't tell me to stop,
but how to improve.

And if you don't like
 a journal and poems unrhymed,
 then pass me by.
 Yet these lines need someone's
 favor and commitment.
 Without the blessings of the Vaiṣṇavas
 they cannot please the Lord.

Staying at a hotel in Calcutta to recover from jet lag before driving to Māyāpur

I want to make a confession about my *sādhana*. In one sense confession involves something you don't want to admit to others. It exposes your weakness. It damages your reputation by making the hard truth known. Yet weakness and difficulties exist, and a sincere devotee wants to confront them and rout them out. He desires, therefore, to confide in someone, especially if by doing so he can rectify his mistakes and purify himself.

Some of my lacking in chanting *japa* as well as in reading scripture has to do with physical weakness. Chanting takes lots of energy. Sleepy reading is partly due to a poor physical condition. That's not such a terrible thing to have to admit, although it should be rectified.

But mental weakness, lack of spiritual taste—these are hard to confess, and it is imperative to overcome them.

Signs of good reading:

1. Defeating doubts about the Vedic literature by putting them aside. This is done not only by logical debate but by an internal meditation and by submissive attention to the points Śrīla Prabhupāda makes.

2. An attentive and seeking attitude. In a word, appreciation. For example, in a narration about the *Varāha-avatāra*, the narrator suddenly changes subjects and begins describing the Lord's rescue of Gajendra, the king of the elephants. Prabhupāda then follows with a short but enlightening comment which helps us to understand why this verse suddenly appears. It is a sign of good reading to study such verses and

purports with care and attention.

3. Another good sign is when reading in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* leads one to write straight Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

And a sign of poor reading is when your head slumps to your chest.

Chanting

1

Slow-start *sādhana*—
when your life for it is gone,
your mind's focus off,
then where is your improvement?
The answer is "Press on."

2

To a patient one, it comes—
the urge to be a devotee,
the energy to do it,
the blessings of Kṛṣṇa.
These things I feel
while chanting.

Submissive Reading: *Face to Face with the Bhāgavatam Sage*

1

Kardama Muni,
did you want to marry
from material desire,
or because you were asked by Brahmā
to create at the beginning of the world?
Both reasons are stated,
and we study the subtle case,
guided by the purport.

2

In pure mind's eye we see you,
great *yogī*, and we admire you—
even from our tiny place in Kali-yuga.

How you could concentrate
for ten thousand years!
Two hours of chanting
is difficult for us!

3

Kardama, you advise us
to give up the world
and take shelter at His lotus feet.
And Prabhupāda confirms,
“One has to take shelter
by chanting and hearing
the activities of the Lord.”

4

This lowly *sādhana-bhakta* prays,
“O Lord Kṛṣṇa, let me read and chant *japa*,
under the umbrella of Your feet;
there is no need of wife or home;
Your service is my all.”

PERSONS

How to describe a person? He is infinite. Just now I thought of my disciple Kṛṣṇa-kṛpā dāsa. He is one of millions of persons. He is growing, aging in human life, twenty-five years old now. Psychologically, even physically, he is extremely complex. And each person is someone entirely different; each is beyond the mind and body. Each is a spirit soul.

Although human beings are sociable by nature, people sometimes find meeting and talking with others difficult. I find refreshing those times when I can retreat from the day's strains and stresses and in peaceful solitude write or read Prabhupāda's books. Nevertheless, the association of devotees is essential to spiritual life, and it is glorious. One needs it in order to grow. Our duties to our spiritual master involve counseling juniors, working with equals, and hearing from seniors. And because we are preachers, we should be eager to approach the innocent nondevotees so that we may increase our number.

At the Māyāpur festival friends and associates from all over the world will gather, and the pressure to associate with devotees will be stronger than usual. Almost all the leaders from my zone will be there. By associating and communicating more effectively, we will be able to mitigate our ideological differences and misunderstandings. Yet the sheer number of exchanges with my Godbrothers gets so great that it becomes difficult to give as much care and attention as seems required. Thus I feel the strain. Although I genuinely do want to have worthwhile exchanges with devotees, lack of time as well as my lack of capacity makes it practically impossible.

When the tension builds, my tendency for being alone becomes stronger. But under the present conditions being alone is difficult. It also seems somewhat out of line. We are here in Māyāpur for positive appreciation.

When it came to giving his time to others, Śrīla Prabhupāda led the way. Some things he did alone, like rising early to write his books, and he usually took his *prasādam* and chanted *japa* alone. Yet his schedule was balanced. After rising from rest, writing and chanting by himself, he would take his morning walk, go to the temple and deliver his *Bhāgavatam* lecture in the company of devotees. I will try to follow his example and balance my schedule, although I know there will be difficult hours.

February 20

Two devotees from the Calcutta temple came to our hotel. I spoke with them about leaving tomorrow morning for Māyāpur in a temple bus. In the course of the conversation I mentioned how we came from London on the same plane as Princess Anne. The devotees then related how two ISKCON devotees met the princess yesterday at a gathering of dignitaries held at the Marine Club of Calcutta. Two devotees from Scotland attended with copies of the *Kṛṣṇa* book, which they were determined to present to the princess. Although some Indian members of Parliament and other guards were body-blocking our Scottish devotees from approaching the

princess, they managed to somehow reach over the guards' shoulders and hand her a book. She took the book and looked up with interest, saying, "Oh, *Kṛṣṇa*." In an informal way she then asked the devotees where they were from. "Scotland," they said, and she asked, "Which part of Scotland?" "Glasgow," they replied. She then asked how long they had been in India. The conversation went on in a friendly way for several more minutes. Hearing this story I was relieved and enlivened that the Calcutta-based devotees had managed to distribute Lord Caitanya's mercy to the princess.

Different material and spiritual circumstances in each part of the world present different opportunities for preaching. Wherever the ISKCON leaders are enthusiastic and pure and all the devotees are resolute, *Kṛṣṇa* consciousness can endure and make serious, lasting impressions on the people.

Calcutta is a chaotic, dirty place, but ISKCON is deep-rooted here, with over six thousand life members, the biggest ISKCON Ratha-yātrā in the world and enthusiastic plans for expansion. Sāttvika dāsa said that beneath the filth and chaos of Calcutta is a gold-like opportunity for preaching *Kṛṣṇa* consciousness.

My friend Dayānanda reached a similar conclusion. He had come here to do research for Garuḍa's book on the history of Vaiṣṇavism. After a little while in Calcutta, he wrote that he didn't like it at all because of the degree of human suffering there. And to do even the smallest thing for human maintenance was unbelievably involved and difficult. He felt like giving up his research. But a few months later he wrote again, this time saying that he loved Calcutta. He had found many people who were at heart devotees of *Kṛṣṇa* and Lord Caitanya, at least in their own way.

The people of Calcutta are very friendly and respectful to ISKCON devotees, and they have a special love for Śrīla Prabhupāda, who considered himself to be a Calcutta man. The temple president, Adridhāraṇa, is soon going to publish a large printing of *Prabhupāda*, the single-volume, condensed version of Prabhupāda's six-volume biography, *Śrīla*

Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta. He plans to advertise the book on billboards and in the newspapers. Adridhāraṇa says he is trying to replace Ramakrishna with Śrīla Prabhupāda as the most popular saint.

Although there may be problems in the world of ISKCON, when we come into contact with the many thriving centers we become confident that Prabhupāda's world plan is succeeding. Just as miserable Calcutta has its redeeming features for Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so any place in the world has some attainable gold beneath its material surface. I hope I can remember this in my own area of service and not be easily discouraged.

Far Away from Rādhā-Dāmodara

Two oxen move forward,
traversing toward me
over the autumn leaves
as Rādhā-Dāmodara ride on Their cart
past the tall trees.
The air is chilling,
but They are wrapped in warm clothes,
golden-crowned, graceful.

But I am far away
by devotion
as well as by physical miles.
Yet Their picture is close before me.

Without *bhakti*
I'm just another dead object,
like a pen or a *lotā*.
And so I try to see Them
as They ride on Their ox-cart,
while I wait in Calcutta
for a ride to Māyāpur.

February 21

I feel a surge of bright, promising energy. I'm severely limited, my service mixed with false ego, yet still Kṛṣṇa inspires me to feel that I can do something to serve this movement.

Today we are going on a pilgrimage by car from Calcutta to holy Māyāpur. This is the opportunity that lightens the existence of all devotees, the chance to reside for two weeks in "hidden Vṛndāvana."

Travel in India is austere; one meets with so many difficulties and unforeseen accidents. Baladeva dāsa calls it "the India factor." But only here can one visit Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana, the holiest of all places, the places to which Prabhupāda directs us.

We drive in fog before sunrise in a rickety Ambassador sedan. As the sky gradually turns pink we see familiar sights: ubiquitous hammers and sickles painted on walls; roadside *mūrtis* of goddess Kālī and other deities; the poor and simple life of the countryside; broad signs with names like Kṛṣṇanagar and Śāntipura and signs that read "Krishan Company," "Goswami Travels," "Ghosh." In a tiny park stands a statue of Vivekananda, and further on a statue of Subhash Chandra Bosh. Red blossoms of the *kṛṣṇacora* trees arch over the road . . . and then the holy sites, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's house, Śrīvāsāṅga, the Yogapīṭha—and Prabhupāda's long saffron buildings, ISKCON Māyāpur, our spiritual home, an ISKCON pilgrimage and G.B.C. headquarters, my place to stay for the next two weeks.

Now I'm in my rooftop room, bathed, rested and feeling a little better.

February 22

Ācāryadeva came to my room early this morning. He carried with him a scholarly book about Western philosophy. He himself is working on a Kṛṣṇa conscious book about Western philosophy, based on Prabhupāda's original idea, called *Spiritual Dialecticalism*, and we talked awhile about it. When he asked me how I was feeling, I described my bad overnight

headaches. He then launched into a relentless case of the need for me to take care of myself if I want to recover my health. He described himself as being like a Jewish mother, and he was strong, stern, and reasonable. He said that if I continue to use up every little gain in health by traveling and preaching, I would soon become worse than I am now, and there would be no question of getting better. He said I should not travel simply on the request of others, but I should act “selfishly” for Śrīla Prabhupāda and improve my health. He said I should plan on thirty more full years of service and not act as if I am an old soldier prepared to die on the battlefield while doing my duty.

Ācāryadeva said I must follow certain conditions absolutely. First of all, he said I should not attend the G.B.C. meetings, although I could be on hand to vote on important matters. Furthermore, he said that after the meetings I should plan on resting for the whole year without any travel, and he said I should go to a place where this would be possible. This talk with Ācāryadeva made an impression on me. I agreed with him, but I wasn’t sure whether I could bring about the complete change of attitude toward my service that his program required.

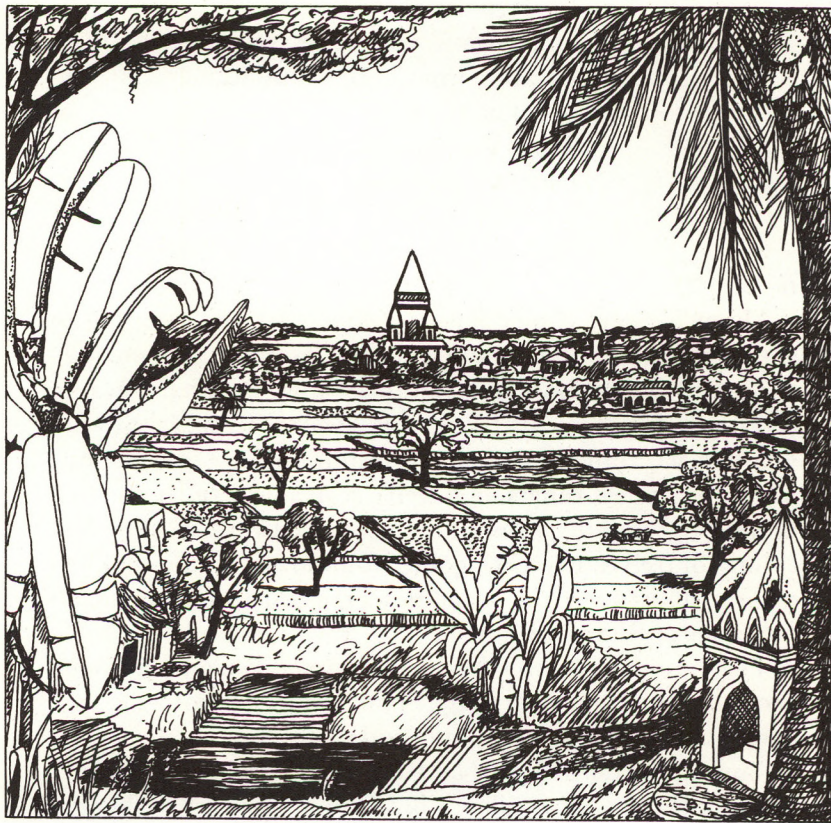
A few hours after speaking with Ācāryadeva I talked with Ādi-keśava. We discussed ways to intensify the preaching in the Mid-Atlantic zone by increasing book distribution, making new devotees, and improving *sādhana*. We also discussed my health. Ācāryadeva had given sober advice about the need to rest, and he had suggested I delegate management to others. Nevertheless, I am a leader in the zone and have to take responsibility. After talking with Ādi-keśava I decided to revive our monthly temple presidents’ meetings.

Maṅgala-ārati

I might as well be blind
so little do I feel
when I see

Their Lordships Rādhā-Mādhava.
Are others like this,
or only me?
Those many lives of sin
hinder me now.

But let's not discourage
this near-hopeless fellow.
At least he is here,
and he wants to be here
more than anywhere else.
Now raise your foolish head,
see His blackish lotus feet.



Night Vigil

1

Māyāpur, You are lovely,
 orange trumpet flowers
 on pale green vines,
 tame animals in the park. . .
Be careful, I warn myself,
 don't be an offender here,
 whining in my illness.

2

Bird who cries all night,
 I hear you.
 But you are
 a dumb signaler of the hours.
 As far as I know, you aren't crying
 of separation from Lord Caitanya,
 but out of bodily lust.
 So I reject your plaint,
 and listen for the other.

February 23

Many persons gather for *maṅgala-ārati*. I go from one to another within the final minutes before the curtains open, talking briefly with Nirañjana, Agrāṇī Swami, Narahari Swami, Nava Yogendra Swami, Trivikrama Swami, Tripurāri Swami, Ācāryadeva, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, Brahmānanda, Śrī-pāda, and a few others. I haven't seen many of these God-brothers for months, some of them for a full year. We circulate among ourselves like bees going from flower to flower. Then the iron gates open, the *pūjārī* blows the conch, and we are all in *darśana* of Rādhā-Mādhava.

They are the supreme leaders, Supreme Persons, supreme nectar for the beelike servants. Sometimes we devotees glance upon one another while we sing and dance, but mostly we are looking upon Lord Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī, who are dressed this morning in light yellow silk with pink patterned flowers.

Rādhā's dress blooms out into a large flowing skirt, and Kṛṣṇa's feet are large and well-shaped to be our shelter. The smaller golden Rādhā-Mādhava Deities are also most wonderful. This is the start and the basis of our day: to see the forms of the *arcā-vigraha* and to chant His holy names.

February 23, 3:00 P.M.

The G.B.C. meetings begin in an interesting way. Some of our senior members say ISKCON needs to be organized better. They say we need a stronger administrative structure and that we should govern ourselves by constitution. They feel we could avoid so much worldwide trouble and so much criticism of the G.B.C. if we were better organized from top to bottom. Some leaders see the G.B.C. as governing only during its annual meeting and that it is unwieldy and not able to deal with problems that arise throughout the year. While none of us is naive enough to think that a change in ISKCON's structure will answer all problems, it nevertheless seems to be the immediate need. Efficient administration is not the heart of spiritual life, yet most of us realize that it is impossible to govern our large world organization without it. If this is so, then this year's G.B.C. meetings will emphasize structure and organization to make our leaders more accountable and responsible.

The first morning's G.B.C. session not only brought out the general direction of the meetings but also exposed my own debilitated condition rather painfully. I felt weak, and within half an hour I began to get a headache. At one point I raised my hand to say something but then felt so weak I could hardly speak. And what I did end up saying was not very intelligent. My condition must have seemed pretty pathetic compared to the strength and vitality of the other G.B.C. warriors in action.

I can see that my state of physical disability has increased since coming to India. After two-and-one-half hours in the meeting I exited, pulled on the arm by my Jewish mother, Ācāryadeva. Thus I departed by TKO (technical knockout).

Now I am wondering how long I can stay on in India, and I

am looking forward more sensibly to the year of recuperation. I would like to organize our zone so that things can run smoothly. I'm also as interested as ever in writing.

DANGEROUS KNOWLEDGE

Beware the influence of Franz Kafka. His diaries arrived today in Māyāpur. I was very close to these books about twenty years ago. Kafka is king of the agnostic neurotics, a genius with a sensitive but faithless intellect. He can offer no good direction to a transcendentalist. I am reading him because he is dedicated to the art and craft of writing, and if I am careful I can learn something from him. Even if I learn what not to do from one in *māyā*, that is also valuable.

Kafka's introspection gets tedious. His negative mood is searing and hopeless. Although Kafka has left his author's body and has taken another birth, thousands have read his books and now hold a similar viewpoint or at least look up to him for having developed his bleak philosophy of existence. So it may be useful for me to read his diaries in order to defeat his philosophy.

Kafka was a dedicated and talented writer, a keen observer of physical and psychological conditions. My attraction to his style of writing is risky, but by looking through his diaries I may get some ideas—both positive and negative—about journal-keeping. I have in the past found the diary of Anne Frank and others helpful in different ways, and so I will look at Kafka's work.

Those authors who have interested me the most in this connection are the ancient Chinese poet Tu Fu and the seventeenth-century Japanese poet Basho. One edition of Tu Fu contains a scholar's commentary on the poet's life and travels as well as the poems Tu Fu wrote during the different periods of his life. This serves as a model for the poetry and prose combination in *Journal and Poems*. Similarly, in *Narrow Road Through the Provinces*, Basho writes of his travels in both prose and poetry.

A Vaiṣṇava should not associate with the nondevotees except for the purpose of elevating people through preaching. One may also sometimes study a philosophy in order to refute it with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So I occasionally seek out expert authors and from them learn literary techniques. In this way I hope to strengthen my preaching. People should not be satisfied with Kafka or Tu Fu or Basho, no matter how penetrating or beautiful their writings may be. Rather, they should come with me and seek out knowledge of the self beyond matter, beyond nature, beyond art, and beyond the mental process. I want to lead my readers to knowledge of the Absolute, although I know how hard it is for the agnostic materialist to make the transformation to eternal certitude in devotional service.

February 24, 2:00 A.M.

For a few minutes after I awoke this morning the world seemed distant and abstract. I listened to the loud, weird sounds of birds—owls? loons?—calling to each other outside my room and flying about in their lusty chase. Thus we wake sometimes far away from the realities of our immediate concerns. Gradually now I remember that the G.B.C. members are drafting a constitution.

Then I remembered my illness. It seemed like an event in the distant past, and as I faced another day I thought, “What course will today’s headaches take?”

And then I remembered this writing project. I remembered what I had written about Franz Kafka’s diaries, and I doubted how beneficial that would be for the devotees. The whole writing project seemed vague, and I had no immediate sense of where to go with it.

It is not often easy to maintain one’s *sādhana* at the G.B.C. meetings. Most of us hardly have time to attend the full morning program. But now I am up and ready to chant *japa*. That is the real advantage of rising early.



Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava, Mayapur Candrodaya Mandir

Maṅgala-ārati 2

Rādhā-Mādhava,
 the *sahajiyā* wants to faint
 in public at Your feet,
 or he hopes to see Your arms move.
 But I want You
 cemented within my heart,
 just like You are cemented
 on the altar of the Mandir.
 Your changes of dress flow
 through days of silken pink, blue, yellow. . .
 and You change our lives
 as You change the worlds:
 at Your will.
 This morning I pray,
 please make me a firm one,
 who never forgets Your early-morning face,
 who never fails Your order.

We sat under the large portrait of Śrīla Prabhupāda—twenty or so G.B.C. men and about fifty other leading disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda from all over the world.

As incumbent secretary, Balavanta explained our historic work. We are planning to finalize a constitution for ISKCON by Gaura-pūrṇimā 1986, the five-hundredth anniversary of Lord Caitanya's appearance. By open discussion we hope to decide upon the contents of the constitution, and then a committee will prepare it during the coming year.

Balavanta explained that the constitution is a blueprint to the house Śrīla Prabhupāda built—the house in which all the world can live. Today's devotees will not be here after, say, sixty years. We'll be gone. But we have received direct training from ISKCON's founder-*ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and so we are meant to establish an enduring foundation. So it is a historic challenge, especially for those G.B.C. members who will be drawing up the constitution.

Of course, we are struggling in some ways, suffering after the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda, but now our cooperation is being tested. We must discuss and resolve all the controversial issues that divide us, while formulating a constitution capable of directing our Society now and in the future.

The first principle we unanimously chose to include in the constitution is that Śrīla Prabhupāda should be the center of ISKCON. The devotees present suggested how this should be done. Trivikrama Swami said everything we do should be to please Śrīla Prabhupāda and accomplish his will. Bhagavān Goswami said we should keep Śrīla Prabhupāda in the center by accomplishing the goals he set for ISKCON, such as opening temples and systematically spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Then controversy arose when Bahūdaka said he thought Śrīla Prabhupāda had been to some degree removed from the center of ISKCON by so much attention and worship being accorded to the current spiritual masters. From here the discussion went back and forth. The open communication seemed healthy to me. Now it remains to be seen if the persons with differing views can be reconciled and satisfied.

February 25

I find myself hungry for praise—as a spiritual person, as an intelligent speaker. I am disappointed when I am not praised or when I must honestly admit to myself that what I just said was not outstanding. This is especially painful when I not only admit it to myself but when it is openly observed as such at a large gathering of Vaiṣṇavas.

What is the distinction between worthless feelings of inferiority and the gem of Vaiṣṇava humility? At last night's meeting, Trivikrama Swami proposed that we all strive to be more humble and admit our mistakes. It was inspiring. At such times we want to admit, "Yes, I make many mistakes. I have faults. I want to be humble." Humility has the power to save us all from the unending debates on different ideological viewpoints. Yet at other times a G.B.C. member's righteous assertion also seems appropriate.

One cannot be too humble, provided one's humility is genuine. But when humility does not ring true, it hints at spiritual impotence. True humility is fearless. And it proceeds from dependence on *guru* and Kṛṣṇa, never from false ego. One must be willing to constantly work at this.

Third day of G.B.C. meetings. The G.B.C. members were joined by about sixty Godbrothers. Today I spoke my "two-cents'-worth" at the meeting. I suggested we expand the number of initiating *gurus*. To facilitate this expansion I suggested we consider reducing the elaborate standards of *guru* worship for the new *gurus*. I said this reduction could help facilitate the worship of several *gurus* in the same temple, and it would also help mend the present rift between some of the ISKCON *gurus* and some of their Godbrothers.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami then spoke. He said that he envisioned ISKCON as a Vaiṣṇava society like that described in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, where we see many Vaiṣṇavas initiating disciples and living with them and other devotees. All are devotees of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and all are nonenvious. They are fixed in love of God and do not so much distinguish as to whose disciples are whose, who is a God-uncle or who is a *guru*. He said we should interact in a similar way. He also said that he felt the ISKCON Godbrothers who want to initiate are not envious, and so should be given facility to accept disciples and thus spread Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement.

Of course, not all the devotees agree with the expansionist idea, what to speak of the concept that the ISKCON *gurus* should be allowed to lower the present standards of worship. We have yet to see what the G.B.C. will actually decide this year, aside from their plans to write up a constitution.

After the Day's Meetings

Blue dusk on smoky horizon
turns into night,
while Murāri Hari and the *gurukula* boys

sing sweet Bengali *kīrtana*.
 The electric lights go off
 and on but I'm satisfied
 sitting at the low desk
 and sipping at a coconut.

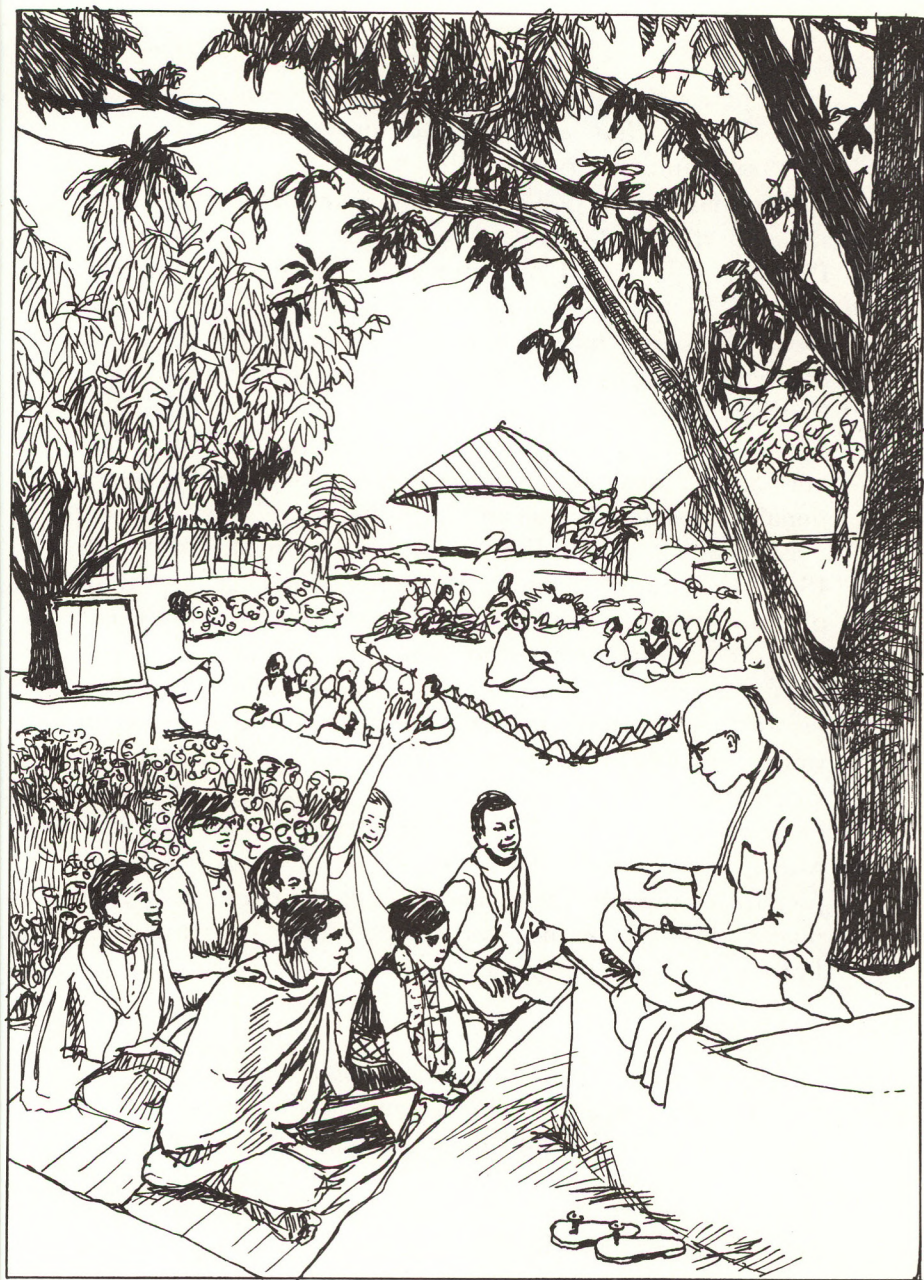
Today at the meetings
 my proposal was defeated,
 and they saw my view as wrong.
 The flashing on
 and off reminds me of the truth
 that one day we shall all be gone.
 "Don't care for praise and blame,"
 I tell myself.
 "Do the needful;
 admit your error;
 don't be afraid."

February 26

Today was the fourth day of the G.B.C. meetings. We elected officers. Balavanta was confirmed as chairman, Bhagavān Mahārāja the vice-chairman and Rāmeśvara Swami as secretary. Some resignations were also accepted. I realized better what a privilege it is to attend the G.B.C. meetings as a member. My bad health has taught me that this is a privilege not to be taken for granted.

I have often written about ISKCON issues and ISKCON activities, but after having come to Māyāpur I see more than ever that ISKCON is a living reality. I feel more confident and bold to write of ISKCON and not think it will soon be a historical relic. ISKCON has what sometimes seems to be discrepancies within it and, as a result, many critics. Such criticism sometimes causes devotees to think disparagingly of ISKCON. But we should be like the poet Cowper, whom Prabhupāda quoted as saying, "England, with all thy faults, I love thee."

ISKCON, with all thy faults, I love thee. ISKCON, you are



Gurukula, Māyāpur

the living community of Vaiṣṇavas. You are meant to carry forward Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* movement to the five-hundredth anniversary and well beyond.

Yesterday in the G.B.C. meeting Viśvambhara Goswami spoke in favor of a more democratic way of managing ISKCON. He ended his speech saying that in this way ISKCON would grow wonderfully, and we could come back in future lifetimes to take birth in this movement. I was startled that he should speak of being born again in the material world. Our goal is Kṛṣṇaloka. But then I reconsidered and thought, "Yes, he has said it correctly. The devotee aspires only to be born again and again, provided he can render causeless devotional service unto Kṛṣṇa and the Vaiṣṇavas."

Even when there is disagreement, being in Māyāpur with ISKCON's leaders inspires hope and confidence. I pray to play my little part in history, to take my responsibilities seriously and not be attracted to name and fame or bodily comforts. All these things are summed up in Lord Caitanya's *Śikṣāṣṭaka* prayer: "I do not want any wealth or beautiful women or followers. All I want is Your causeless devotional service in my life, birth after birth."

We can apply this to the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. We come to Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana to become purified, to organize, to prepare for the year's work and then go out to our respective places throughout the world, determined to carry out Prabhupāda's will despite all obstacles.

February 27

While at *maṅgala-ārati* the two brass bells (the ones that Śrīla Prabhupāda used to ring while circumambulating the temple) were gonging loudly, pulled by young devotees. I looked at Rādhā-Mādhava and thought, "I could choose to ignore these bells and say they won't affect my headaches. But I know better." As I watched Rādhā-Mādhava, I wanted to conserve my energy and use whatever I have in Their service. This is the limitation Kṛṣṇa has enforced on me according to His plan. Therefore this is also a kind of service, to preserve myself by re-

fraining from all-out participation in *kīrtanas* or conversation. I must be especially careful today because of the upcoming voting sessions.

Today is the fifth day of G.B.C. meetings. We are going to discuss expanding the number of *gurus*. I hope our ISKCON takes the big step forward and blesses more Godbrothers to initiate disciples. Whether we do so or not will be decided by vote, and there are many opinions. So there is excitement in the air. The discussions will be interesting and intense, but it looks like we will open up the field for more *gurus*.

The events of ISKCON are a greater drama than my own life, and the cast of important characters numbers in the hundreds. Why should I dominate the stage—even in my journal? It is natural that I see things from my own perspective, but I should also take care to record the events themselves.

I don't have the time or capacity or inclination to write a newspaper story. That will be left to others. But even from the viewpoint of a diarist my self-interests are overwhelmed by the larger events, events more important than how I may feel today or exactly what my subjective opinions are.

The G.B.C. is made up of many individuals, each with a different viewpoint. But when we all come together to vote on such important issues, the final decisions should be accepted by everyone. This is what Prabhupāda wanted. "Not that one of you knows everything," he would say.

We want to hear from others about our ideas. It is not shameful to have one's ideas refined by the minds of others. There is something inconceivable and divine in this refining process. And the *paramparā* method means that the individual must submit to the G.B.C.

I am trying to conserve my health so that I can attend as much of the G.B.C. meetings as possible. My own importance is as an instrument to cooperate with my Godbrothers in Prabhupāda's movement.

I have found that keeping a journal has helped me to become more honest and to know myself better. This has helped my attempt to see beyond my selfish motives and act as a devotee.

With my usual headache coming, I had to leave the meeting before 1:00 P.M. Now I am lying in my room. A few moments ago I heard a loud cheer coming from the meeting room. I hope they have reached some victorious conclusion, and I am eager to hear. I am also eager to play my own part, however imperfectly. Māyāpur *dhāma* is such a wondrous and powerful place! I get the feeling that I'm playing a part in this ISKCON drama that is not exactly known to me. I'm like a chess piece being moved by a highly intelligent chess master. Of course, to the best of my ability I try to examine my conscience and make Kṛṣṇa conscious decisions, but I feel that we are all part of a large plan that is ultimately inconceivable and beyond us.

February 28

Sixth day of G.B.C. meetings. The following persons were voted by the G.B.C. to take on the duties of initiating spiritual master: Jagadīśa Goswami, Bhaktitīrtha Swami, Agrāṇī Swami, and Gaura Govinda Swami.

Due to illness I have only been able to attend a few hours of the meetings each day. But I find myself always very eager to go back into the meeting room as soon as I recover a little physical equilibrium. The sense of duty calls me. To be a responsible officer in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is a great privilege.

The tension I experience in these meetings provokes headaches, and when I feel one coming on I sometimes regret attending. But in a larger sense these headaches are the nectar of devotional service. Kṛṣṇa wants us to attend these meetings, and therefore it's pleasurable.

I'm not the only one who is suffering physical and mental pains while taking on burdens in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The other night at a late-night session of the Privilege Committee, several of the members were literally falling asleep on their feet because they had been attending one meeting after another since the early morning. But still they were eager to render re-

sponsible and sober service to Prabhupāda. Because it is the service of the Lord, even troubles in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are felt by a servant as transcendental pleasure. As Bhaktivinoda Thākura states, “The unhappiness I encounter while serving You I will consider a great pleasure.”

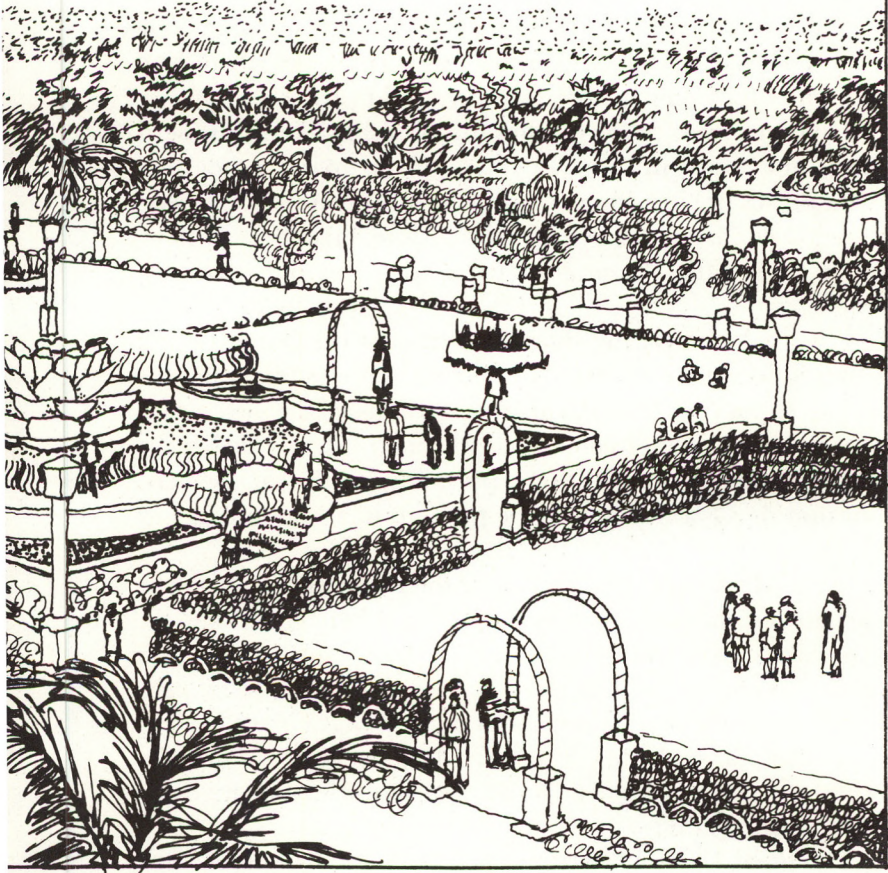
When I made my proposal that an ISKCON *guru* be allowed to conduct the level of *guru* worship according to his realization, the non-G.B.C. Godbrothers attending the meeting applauded enthusiastically. But the next morning the G.B.C. defeated the proposal. Various *gurus* offered reasonable, philosophical arguments why things should be kept as they are. Aside from the many particular points that were raised, the general feeling among my *guru*-Godbrothers was that since Śrīla Prabhupāda was best praised and worshiped by furthering his preaching mission, there is no gain in trying to reduce the position of his leading servants. The *guru* receives worship not for himself but on behalf of Kṛṣṇa and the *param-parā*.

For me, this was a humbling experience. I accept the G.B.C.'s reaction to my position. Certainly I was responding to the discontent of some of my Godbrothers who have been disturbed that the worship of their *guru*-Godbrothers has seemed to them almost identical to the level of Śrīla Prabhupāda's. If there was any good done by my proposal, I suppose it may lead others to appreciate more that Prabhupāda should be worshiped at a very high standard. Also, my proposal may have helped to heal the wounds and rifts in ISKCON as the non-*guru* Godbrothers saw one of the present *gurus* sharing their opinion, but I am submissive to the G.B.C.'s decision.

March 2

As I awoke I noticed one of my front teeth was loose. I thought, “Well, it probably won't fall out for a while yet.” This led to thoughts of mortality. Why don't I work this year on a





Śrī Dhāma Māyāpur

better understanding of *that*? Soon I will have to die, and I should be preparing for it.

Some Godbrothers have sternly advised me to spend the year recuperating my health at Gītā-nāgarī, but I don't know whether I will do it. If I recover a little I will get restless and will want to travel and preach. How could I stay in one place and justify it as the work of a *sannyāsī*? Of course, I'll have my work—both local preaching at Gītā-nāgarī as well as by phone—and devotees may visit me. But beyond all this I have that task each one of us must take up—the task of preparing for death.

In the introduction to *Kṛṣṇa* book Śrīla Prabhupāda writes that before the next death comes, we have to become completely Kṛṣṇa conscious. We have to become detached from matter by fully engaging in chanting and hearing.

I have not gone to the Ganges this year, but like a prisoner I have kept myself in this room. When I do go out, whoever I meet makes my head hurt too much. At Māyāpur you're supposed to chalk out your year's work. Mine: take the year to recover my health. An unglorious assignment, but what can I do?

When I look over my shoulder I can see the Ganges River winding along its course. Around me the air fills with the sound of bicycle horns and, incongruously, the noise of a nearby lawnmower. I can hear the sound of *shenai* music playing. It is four days until Gaura-pūrṇimā. But I won't be here. On that day I will probably be pent up in a London airport hotel.

On my last night, as I sit under the revolving fan with the curtain pulled shut, I can find nothing significant to say. We generally don't hear writers talking about their aches and pains, except perhaps in their private diaries. In their published works they transcend and write of ideas or of life beyond their own pains. Or they transform their pain into art, like the crippled saxophone player I once heard playing one night on the Lower East Side.

The great Vaiṣṇava writers speak directly to Lord Kṛṣṇa,



Gaura-Nitai on procession, ISKCON Māyāpur

whereas I tend to complain about how badly I am getting on with others and with this body. Endless complaining. But a devotee is meant to be pure and fearless and tolerant. He accepts pain as he accepts the events of this world, which come and go like the seasons.

I lament to be leaving Māyāpur without seeing and touching the Ganges or seeing the terra-cotta artwork at Prabhupāda's *samādhi* or visiting the ISKCON Śrī Jagannātha Mandir. At least I saw Rādhā-Mādhava and went to some meetings. But I did not attain pure *bhakti*. And my God-brothers have now seen firsthand how ill I am. And they have seen my spiritual imperfection as well, judging from the contributions I made at the meetings. They forgive me and I forgive me. But where is the great progress? If now I turn to chanting for solace, won't it be the same, mediocre? But I'll try, I'll try again. It may improve, I hope.

Mahānidhi Swami gave me a poem he wrote, which he laughingly dismissed, saying, "This is the first poem I ever wrote!" He had written the poem while sitting in Prabhupāda's room in the Māyāpur building. It described a ritual that takes place every evening when the Mandir's *pūjārī*, Jananivāsa, circumambulates the verandas of the building, ringing a bell. Another devotee accompanies him, blowing a conchshell, and they carry a large earthen pot of glowing frankincense. They go in and out of each room with bell and conchshell, the frankincense smoke billowing everywhere. We've all been told that one of the purposes of this ritual is to chase ghosts. It also functions to drive away mosquitoes. In his poem, Mahānidhi speaks of how impressed he is that eight years after Prabhupāda's disappearance Jananivāsa is very faithfully performing this evening service.

A skeptic might inquire, "What is the scientific evidence that these procedures chase ghosts?" But as Mahānidhi wrote, he's doing it "because his spiritual master told him." I appreciated Mahānidhi's feelings evoked by the obedience of the

disciple. I also began to think more about the actual function of that ritual.

Vedic literatures assure us that such things as ghosts exist. They are unfortunate spirit souls who due to lust or other misconduct have not been able to take another material body. Usually mischievous, they move about in subtle bodies looking for chances to inhabit a living material body or to cause trouble. The Māyāpur area especially is supposed to abound in different Muslim and *brāhmaṇa* ghosts. And so it's no wonder Prabhupāda had Jananivāsa perform this function every evening.

Prabhupāda personally used to like Jananivāsa to enter his own room when Prabhupāda stayed in Māyāpur and sit beside Prabhupāda until the whole room was filled with so much frankincense smoke that you couldn't even see another person a few feet in front of you. Prabhupāda liked it for its purifying effect and for ridding the room of mosquitoes. As for ghosts Prabhupāda was always ghost-free.

Last Night, Chasing Ghosts

The sound of *karatālas* and singing
reach my ears,
but my heart is encased in steel.
Japa cannot pin down the mind,
not *my japa*, *my* mind.
And work and friendships
seem like great, insurmountable hills.
All seems defeated
in my attempt for perfection.

Ghosts of Māyāpur,
now vanish at this bell
and this smoke of incense
aimed to banish you
from Prabhupāda's sacred verandas.
Banish ghosts!
at the sounds

of Pañca-tattva *mantra*
and Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana*.

Leave me, mental spectres,
Tṛṇāvartas, Pūtanās,
hags on sticks,
and you lesser black art jinns
assigned to attack me.

I am ready to fight you,
by turning away
with attention to my duties,
and wherever I go
I'll chant and serve
and keep you evil spirits off my back.

In simple happy *kīrtana* chorus,
in learned philosophical exchange,
in pure goodness,
devotees serve carefree
while Jananivāsa dāsa chases
the last remaining ghosts
of the Māyāpur night.

March 3, Calcutta

I haven't seen a nondevotee for over a week. Therefore as we drive up to the Calcutta Airport Hotel, I feel apprehension. As ragged as the Indians may appear, they are not as demoniac in demeanor as are the Westerners. And underneath the materialistic covering of the Indian is a devotee, one somehow born into the vestiges of Vedic culture.

The Māyāpur meetings are over, and most of the other G.B.C. members have traveled on to Vṛndāvana or Hṛṣikeshā. I'm bound for Ireland via England. From the window of my room at the Calcutta Airport Hotel I can see a large billboard, which says, "More Trees, Not People." Is this a reference to abortion?

It's Dola-yātrā and the dye-throwers are frightening the travelers. A local newspaper reports the massacre of Tamil farmers by Sri Lankan troops. The Indians defeated the Aussies in cricket.

I feel I am at a junction in my spiritual life. How can I continue writing *Journal and Poems* when all I have to look forward to is a year of confinement? Maybe I could live like a recluse sage, absorbed in chanting and writing poetry in my remote cabin in the woods. No, our tradition condemns that. We are meant for active service. If I imitate Haridāsa Ṭhākura, by trying to chant all of the time, I will only sleep and think lusty thoughts.

Even if I must stay in one place, I can still arrange meetings there and devotees may visit me. I will remain in active service by writing my *Journal and Poems* and working to improve my health. And although I have my ticket for London, only Kṛṣṇa knows what will actually happen.

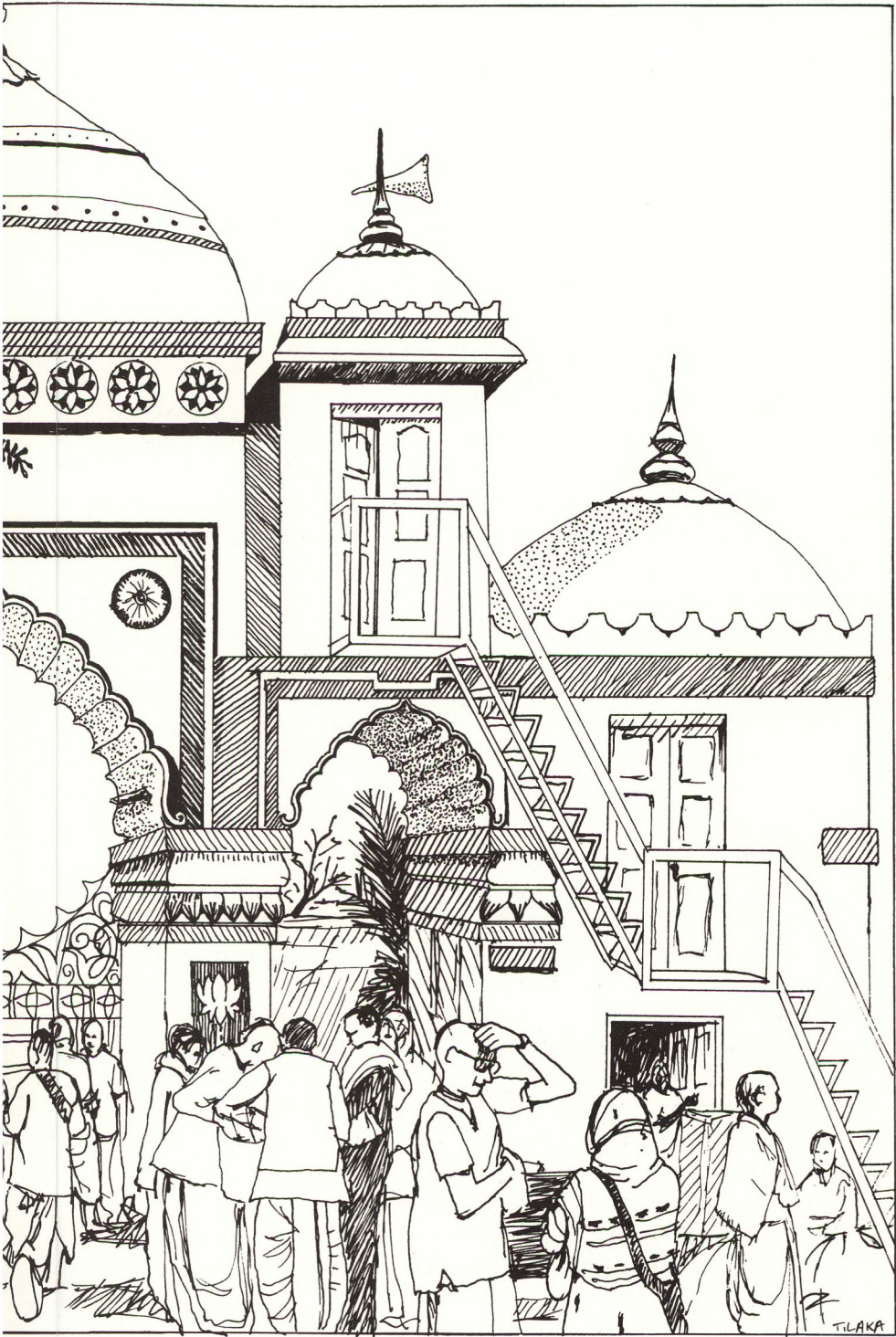
I think I could become a more serious student of the holy name. I should also read and hear better.

An encouraging *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse advises hearing *for a long time*. Kapiladeva tells His mother, "One can get liberated by seriously discharging devotional service unto Me and thereby hearing for a long time about Me or from Me." (*Bhāg.* 3.27.21) Devahūti had been asking how it is really possible for the conditioned soul to be free of matter and become liberated. She doubted that theoretical knowledge on the subject could bring actual release. She also doubted that the spirit soul could stand unaffected by matter as long as the seed-cause of the material connection—enviousness of God—remained. So Kapiladeva replied to her questions.

In the purport, Prabhupāda emphasizes that we must hear about or from Lord Kṛṣṇa "by hearing for long periods of time." He also states, "By continuous, regular hearing, the effects of the contamination of lust and greed will diminish."

I have a neglectful habit of accepting the *Bhāgavatam*'s state-





Front gate, ISKCON Māyāpur

ments in a merely theoretical way. In other words, I do not practice the philosophy seriously enough. If I grant that I am suffering due to contact with the modes of material nature, and if I accept that chanting the Lord's holy names and hearing His instruction and *līlā* will purify me and release me from material infection, then why don't I take up chanting and hearing more regularly, carefully, seriously? Whatever the reason for my failure, the failure itself means that I have allowed the Vedic knowledge to remain theoretical.

This verse by Kapiladeva reminds me that becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious is a relatively long process. Similarly, I am advised that cure of my physical health can only be achieved by faithfully following these slow but thorough healing processes of Āyur Vedic and naturopathic remedies. And now I have this inkling—which I pray will develop into determination and actual practice—to improve the state of my *sādhana*.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if I could improve my chanting so that it was not merely a mechanical exercise that I drag myself through, but a real session of prayer in devotional service? Now I chant out of duty and yes, there is some spiritual relish and consolation involved. It is also true that it is hard for me to chant out loud when I am physically weak. But if by taking advantage of the imposed rest and recuperation I could improve my *japa*, wouldn't it be a great personal gain?

When I think of my chanting, it seems mostly void of conscious prayer. But it should be a supplication in communion with the holy name. I am so attached to achieving something, to at once producing something in a pragmatic way, to using immediate energy to create some immediate product that I can show to others as proof of my efforts, proof of my endeavor. But chanting does not produce material results. As Prabhupāda once said, "Chanting produces chanting."

I would like to chant with attention, not utter words mechanically while thinking of many other things. Yes, it requires some physical energy, but maybe I can work on it in a way compatible with my present weakened condition.

I have to admit, though, that these hopes are not easily at-

tained. I've attempted this before and eventually succumbed to neglectful habits. But it is worth a try.

As for improving my reading, that starts with the personal discipline to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda's plan for the daily reading of his books. That is the first step, even if at first taken as a chore, like a schoolboy reluctantly doing his homework. From there one can go further.

Keeping myself in one place and reducing other concerns for reasons of health may also be compatible with the regular reading program. In this way I can make the best use of the bad bargain of my confinement by improving my *sādhana*.

I have strong urges to write to the end of my days. Yet logically, the urge to improve *japa* and to be absorbed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* should be even stronger because *my time is limited and I have a long way to go*.

March 5, 8:00 P.M.

Departure from Calcutta, West Bengal, India

"Jaya Jagannātha," says the customs agent as he dismisses us after some interrogation and mild harassment for taking a few rupees out of the country. On the wall behind him are two-foot-tall *daru-brahman*,* Lord Jagannātha, Subhadrā, and Balarāma, dusty but benedicting the travelers with their *darśana* nevertheless. Then up the escalator to airport security, where the searcher admonishes me: "You are leaving before Dola-yātrā?" He asks for a *bhajana* cassette, which I don't have, and then he speaks in Bengali. When I do not answer, he says, "You do not know the local language?" "I'm sorry," I reply. And I'm sorry we have to leave before Gaura-pūrṇimā. Suddenly I wonder, "Why are we going so early, without even seeing Vṛndāvana?" Thus I again act in forgetfulness of my illness, although the headaches persisted for most of the day. It seems that as soon as I am free of headaches for even an hour or two, I think I am perfectly all right. In Sanskrit that's called *preyas*, seeking temporary, material happiness. It is considered

**Daru-brahman* means wooden deity.

less intelligent in comparison to *śreyas*, or seeking eternal, spiritual happiness. For me ultimate happiness means facing the fact that my health is poor and I should take care of it instead of continuing to travel and work as if I could ignore the debilitation.

All-night flight westward. After the plane landed in an obscure Mid-East touchdown called Doha we then flew on to London, cabin lights out, passengers sleeping. I noticed the brightness of the full moon. I realized that this was the full moon of Lord Caitanya's appearance day and regretted that I was going to spend Gaura-pūrṇimā in a London hotel. After talking it over with my secretary I decided to disregard the cautious health plan, and upon arriving in London we booked a flight to Belfast. Thus we were assured of being in the company of the devotees and Nitāi-Śacīnandana on Gaura-pūrṇimā day.

Gaura-pūrṇimā

By Kṛṣṇa's grace we have arrived at ISKCON's Northern Ireland chapter, a thirty-two acre island known as Inish Rath. Devotees are gathering, and this morning we will be together for *kīrtana* and class. I have chosen a verse, *kṛṣṇa varṇam tviṣākrṣṇam*, quoted by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, to speak on in a class about Lord Caitanya. There are about twenty uninitiated *bhaktas* and thirty initiated devotees eager to hear.

I am not a great scholar, nor do these devotees expect a very technical analysis. Yet they are eager for a genuine manifestation of Lord Caitanya and His merciful *śakti*. Lord Caitanya Himself was greatly loved by both the scholars and the simple devotees. By His beautiful form and blissful chanting and dancing He changed whomever He met into a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Only with learned scholars did Lord Caitanya argue philosophically. But when He did, His brilliant explanations astounded them and brought them to understand that Kṛṣṇa is nondifferent from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. It was with His confidential devotees like Rāmānanda Rāya that Lord Caitanya

shared the innermost secrets of the *līlā* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

I will discuss this verse as far as I am able and in accordance with *paramparā*. I'm sure that these devotees will be bright faced and appreciative. That is the natural, positive manner of the Irish devotees, and that is the way they have been trained and nurtured by their leader, Pṛthu Prabhu.

As part of the Gaura-pūrṇimā festival in Northern Ireland my disciple Śaunaka Ṛṣi dāsa put on a dramatic skit. The scene was a live TV show produced in the year 3000 A.C. (after Caitanya). Śaunaka described how archeologists had made interesting finds on a piece of land known as Inish Rath in Northern Ireland, finds dating back a thousand years to the year 1985. According to the skit, by the year 3000 the world had become entirely Kṛṣṇa conscious, and the ancient days of 1985, when Vaiṣṇavism was only beginning, was a subject full of curiosities. Using this fantastic angle, Śaunaka then made comic portraits of different "artifacts" and activities of our present-day devotees.

He said that one of the interesting archeological finds was the diary of a very primitive neophyte devotee of those days. The diary recorded the daily struggles of the beginner trying to control his mind while chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. As soon as Śaunaka mentioned the diary and the devotee, the Irish devotees began to laugh and whispered that this was a joke on their Godbrother Prabhupāda dāsa. Apparently, Prabhupāda dāsa keeps such a diary, and he is known to be on the "mental platform."

In a dramatization of the ancient diary, a player chanting *japa* came onstage, followed by another player, who wore a sign which read, "The Mind." As soon as the devotee attempted to chant *japa*, "The Mind" began harassing him with many objections. "The Mind" spoke enviously about other devotees and induced the chanter to become sleepy. It was a brilliant piece of theater, and we were all laughing as we identified not only Prabhupāda dāsa but ourselves with the struggling chanter oppressed by his own mind.

After seeing the skit, I wondered how my journal, in which I sometimes write of *sādhana*, is different from the laughable struggles of the young devotee portrayed in the skit. Am I myself another laughable diarist, a chronicler of the mind-soul struggle? Or is it a simple fact—one that all of us should admit, whether we keep diaries or not—that we are indeed engaged in a struggle with the mind? Should we not admit it and then go forth fighting the mind, so that we can chant and hear and think always of Kṛṣṇa?

Just today I also read in one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports, "One need only concentrate his mind on the narrations of the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and become always absorbed in such thought. Then he will be in *samādhi*. *Samādhi* is not an artificial bodily state; it is the state achieved when the mind is virtually absorbed in thoughts of the Supreme Personality of Godhead." (*Bhāg.* 3.28.6)

Prthu's Dream

Prthu, take me in the motorboat.
 Show me the gray water, the waves,
 and in the distance,
 the island you purchased.
 Point out the buildings, some ruins.
 Tell me when you will build them anew.
 Invite me to get out and walk in the mud.
 Show me on the map your dreams
 of a great Vedic temple for Northern Ireland.
 Speak to me your confidence:
 "I am absolutely sure it will take place."

My Dream

Why am I not as ecstatic as he is
 of the vision?
 I share Prthu's vision,
 but I also have my own.
 I walk round the island,
 mulling, ill.

Yes, I have my dream,
but I cannot
tell it here.

I saw a pheasant this morning
through the window
and opened the window
for a better view.
In the clear air,
while many birds sang,
I beheld the red-necked pheasant
pecking on the path.

As for the temple for Northern Ireland
and the making of many devotees here,
that is, I know, most pleasing
to Śrīla Prabhupāda.
And I pray to take my part,
as initiating *guru*.

But there is something on my mind.
When I walk it stirs hopeful,
and during *maṅgala-ārati*
it rises up into many-branched
all-positive, Kṛṣṇa conscious thoughts.
And when I saw the pheasant . . .

As Pṛthu's dream needs time,
and I don't doubt it,
because he purchased this island,
which once seemed impossible,
so I also need time,
and Inner Guide
before I can articulate
my Kṛṣṇa conscious dreams.

Some time after writing these two poems I asked my secret-

ary, Baladeva Vidyābhuṣaṇa dāsa, to explain what he felt the meanings of these poems to be. “The meaning of ‘Pṛthu’s Dream,’” said Baladeva, “is that Pṛthu is going to build a gorgeous temple and develop the land of Inish Rath. Based on his previous successes, he is confident that he can do this.” Then he turned to the poem I had written.

“Knowing you,” said Baladeva, “I would say that in ‘My Dream,’ you are expressing your vision that you want to go back to Godhead and bring your followers with you. Since this is such a great undertaking, it’s not something that you can be easily confident of.”

I was startled by this very nice explanation. In one sense, it expressed more than I had actually written in the poem. I had intended to express hope and optimism in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The poem states that I need time and an inner guide before I can actually see these hopes for what they are and develop them to maturity.

When I wrote my poem I had in mind plans for literary works which have not as yet come forth, and I was reluctant to speak openly about them. I worried that some readers might think the desires and plans expressed there were too vague. Some might also think I was envious or ungrateful about Pṛthu’s practical work. Yet I also wanted to show the undeniable desires of each servant of the Lord to render some personal service. It is not disrespectful if on seeing one preacher’s wonderful service to think that we also would like to do something ourselves, no matter how small by comparison. (Devotees often feel this when they go to international gatherings such as Māyāpur, and they should not feel ashamed when comparing their smaller service to that of giant leaders. Even if we join a particularly empowered preacher and work within his vision, we nevertheless want to have some particular service of our own, whether it is to dress the Deity or to head up some large project. All projects are absolute, and all servants have a right and a tendency to express themselves individually.) So while expressing my feelings in a spontaneous, poetic way in the verse, I did not want readers to think that I was dis-

respectful towards the glorious vision Pṛthu has for expansive preaching engaging millions of people in Lord Kṛṣṇa's service.

Often I feel that my utmost expression is something which I write, but as I mentioned once in a poem, my writing must be direct service. Only then can it be a bona fide *paramparā* offering. If I can actually situate myself completely under the shelter of Kṛṣṇa in the active service of Prabhupāda, then I will have the blessings of higher authorities to engage my disciples in eternal service and to bring others to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Baladeva's positive appreciation surprised and pleased me. To go back to Godhead and to bring all my disciples with me are certainly desires of my heart, and if Baladeva saw these desires through my poem, that is the gift of his devotion to *guru* as well as his understanding of my inner heart.

March 10, Inish Rath

Today I am giving *harināma* initiation to five devotees and brahminical initiation to nine others. The spiritual master has to teach the disciples all about Vedic knowledge and devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. And he also has to teach them to worship the spiritual master as *sākṣād-dharitvena*, the direct representative of Lord Hari. Yet the spiritual master should think of himself as a humble servant of the servants of the Lord. Rūpa Gosvāmī states in *The Nectar of Devotion* that no one should think of himself as a great, empowered preacher. Rather, we should think of ourselves as instruments serving the purpose of the previous spiritual masters.

Thus today I was thinking of my duties as *guru*, of the simple but critical function that I have to perform. It is a function similar in a certain sense to the tasks performed by welders and locksmiths. To forge a disciplic link for the devotees, a *guru* has to be strict and pure in *sādhana*, and he has to repeat the instructions of disciplic succession without any change. Beyond that he does not have to aspire to be a very exalted person, yet the task he performs is a profoundly exalted one for human society. In material life also, if the welder or the airplane mechanic makes the slightest mistake, he could be responsible

for the deaths of hundreds of persons. Although such workers may be humble craftsmen, they must take their work very seriously. Of course, the *guru* should be honored above all occupational workers, yet he should always think of himself as a humble worker, accepting honor only on behalf of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

While looking through Śrīla Prabhupāda's books for an appropriate verse to speak on, I found this explanation of why a spiritual master sometimes gets sick:

A disciple should be sympathetic and consider this, "For my sinful activities my spiritual master will suffer." If the spiritual master is attacked by some disease, it is due to the sinful activities of others. Don't make many disciples. But we do it because we are preaching. Never mind—let us suffer—still we should accept them.

—PQPA pg. 59

The initiation ceremony was very blissful, with Pṛthu Prabhu making the fire and chanting the *mantras*. Bhaktas George, Peter, Limerick Paul, Michael, and Dave received the spiritual names Gaṅgā dāsa, Paraśurāma dāsa, Praghoṣa dāsa, Murāri dāsa, and Dāruka dāsa. Afterwards, all the devotees posed for photos standing in front of the Inish Rath mansion. Then upstairs Pṛthu played the guitar and sang some songs. The Irish devotees are particularly friendly, easily satisfied and happy. They have little inclination to argue or raise doubts about the hierarchy of ISKCON, but they are intent on following their leader and executing *saṅkīrtana yajña*.

Supposedly this is my last traveling fling for the entire year. Baladeva read to the devotees from his journal and told how I was not able to go to Vṛndāvana but had to leave India abruptly. When he mentioned my friends and disciples in Vṛndāvana, I felt sorry I couldn't go. I'm feeling the high price of recovery. But it's making me keener to get well so I can join with the devotees in Vṛndāvana. I want to write them letters as soon as possible, just so they will not forget me and I can maintain a living connection with Vṛndāvana's Krishna-Balaram Mandir, even in separation.

March 11

I saw Govinda's restaurant, located in the busiest square of Belfast. The devotees here are very enthusiastic. There's always something new for them to look forward to—another restaurant, an island, more devotees, more money for new, exciting projects. And they are working together in a loving spirit. I couldn't help but praise them on and on and feel myself contagiously caught up in their endeavors and successes. By contrast, our temples in the Mid-Atlantic U.S.A. are running more on a survival basis—except some of them are distributing more books than in Ireland.

Seeing Pṛthu's absorption in very practical affairs of Kṛṣṇa consciousness made me question my literary endeavors. Pṛthu says that before spending any money or starting any project he thinks, "Will this help directly to make new devotees?" If the answer is no, then he doesn't spend or work for it. So I should ask myself how my writing is making new devotees.

At the airport I spoke until the last moment with the Irish devotees about their preaching work and finally left them at the departure gate. Baladeva and I were the last two passengers on board for London. Now one last day before flying back.

Jagannātha Bliss

Jagannātha is checked in
to room 903.

How can the Lord
of the universe
be a Sheraton guest?
Because He consents.

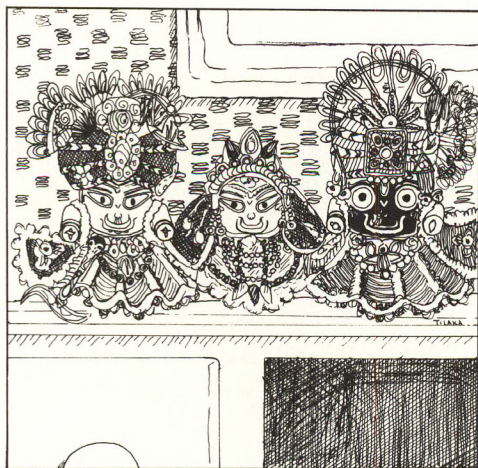
First thing to do
is make up His altar—
today He's in yellow,
Subhadrā red, Balarāma blue.
And I'm collapsed beside Them.

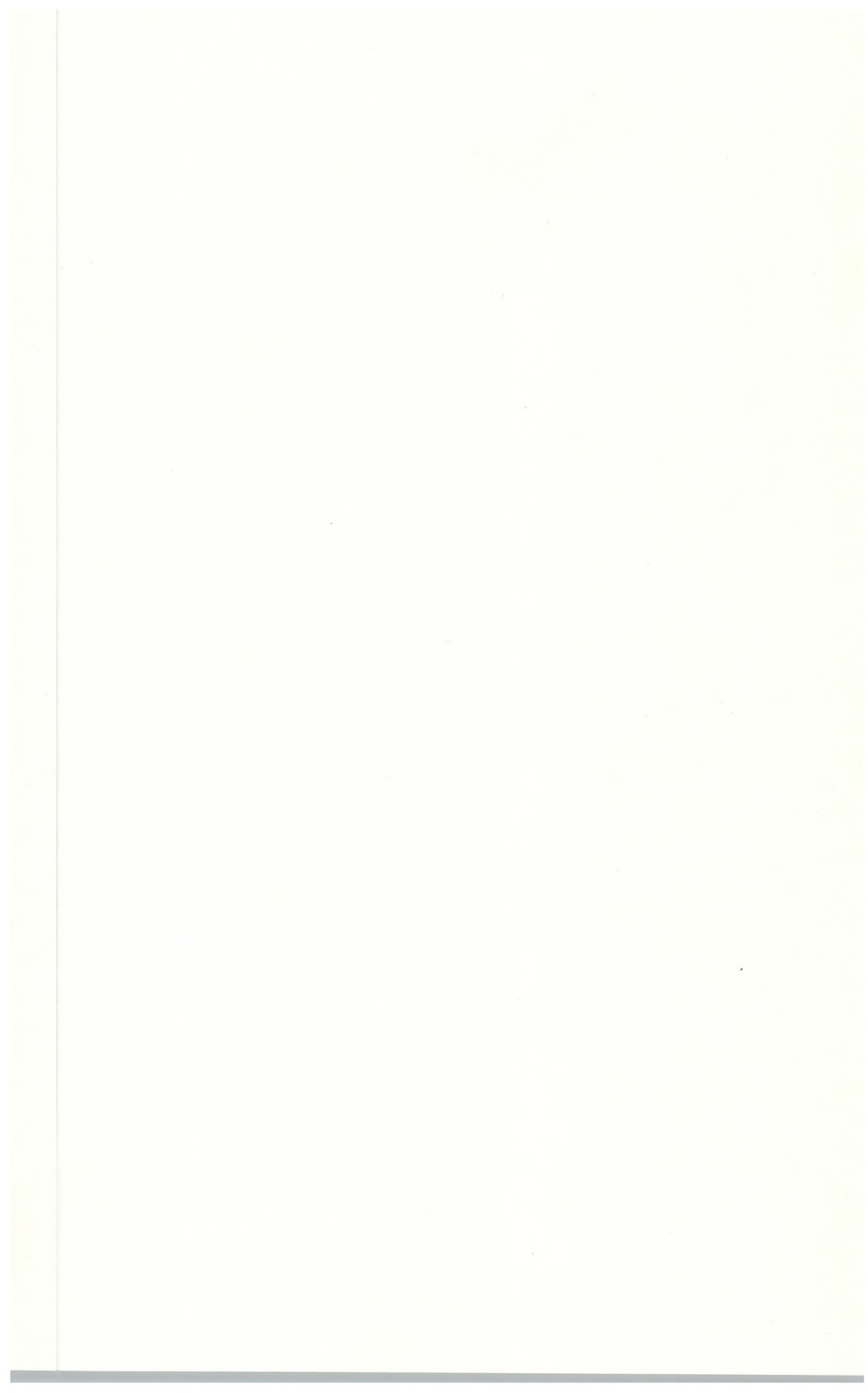
Travel is exciting

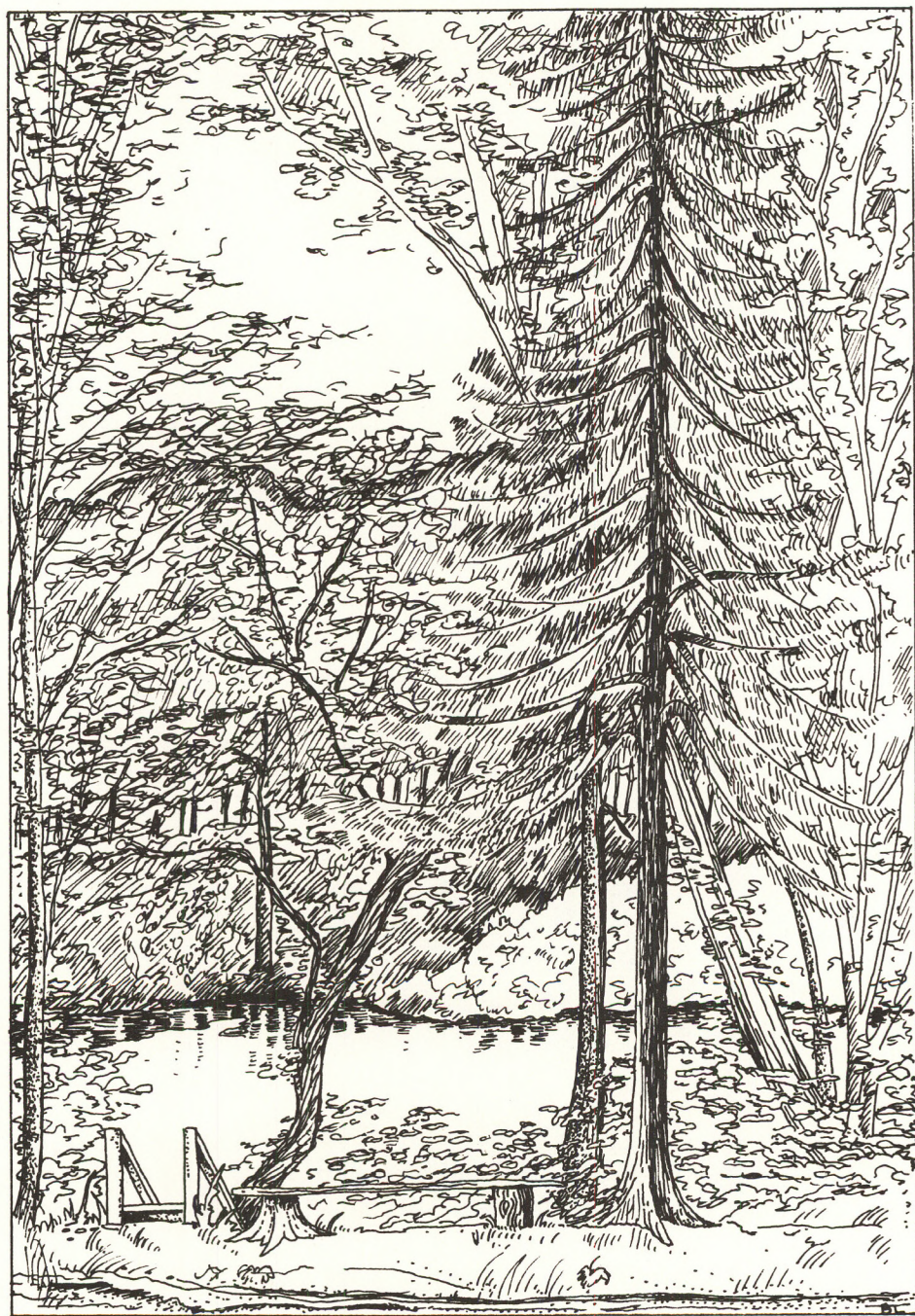
if you choose as your companion
the best friend, enjoyer,
the ruler of all.

Nothing else really matters—
jets, buses, oceans,
the enormous world of nondevotion
that's all illusion.
But He is the center,
and I am His servant.
That's all that matters:
surrender.

O Lord Jagannātha,
please save me,
please keep me,
take me home.
Keep me traveling.
Keep me sick.
Make me well.
Whatever You want.
Keep Your name on my mind.







Gītā-nāgarī, view of Tuscarora creek.

2

March 15

I felt heavy-hearted as we arrived at Gītā-nāgarī today. The austerity of what I am proposing to do weighed on me. Instead of coming for another visit with interesting preaching prospects ahead, I am coming to recover my health. I will be staying here resting for most of the year.

On the way, I listened to a tape of Śrīla Prabhupāda. He strongly condemned chanting alone in a secluded place. Preaching is the essence.

Once at the cabin, I busied myself rearranging drawers and unpacking. Dutifully I am entering the long-term stay.

Looking reverently
out my window
to the shaggy pine.
Health is so slowly improving,
it's not funny.
But I'll give it a try.

Is this also service?
Will it please my spiritual master,
to get well in a year?
If Kṛṣṇa desires.

March 17

Today is Sunday. Winds, but not so frigid. Water moving swiftly. Earlier I saw canoers paddling by in bright orange life jackets.

Devotees have made a gravel path for my daily walks. I feel guilty about taking this time to recuperate, but I should kick these feelings out. I do need to recover. I do need to take care of my health. No one else will do it for me.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has said that we should learn to see

Kṛṣṇa in nature. “From nature we can study so many things, very instructive. Kṛṣṇa has made the nature in such a way that any intelligent man, if he studies simply the nature without going to school or college, he becomes a very learned man. If he has got the capacities to study nature.” (Lecture on *Bhāg.* 6.1.10 in Los Angeles) Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has also stressed attaining God consciousness by reading the book of nature. The pure devotee sees the form of Kṛṣṇa everywhere and always thinks of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes. Even while in the material world a devotee who is trying to advance also understands that everything is Kṛṣṇa’s energy.

In the seventh and tenth chapters of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa instructs us to see everything as His energy. There we read that Kṛṣṇa is the light of the sun and that He is the taste of water. “Therefore,” Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “persons who profess to belong to some religious sect but who do not feel the presence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in every living entity, and everywhere else, are in the mode of ignorance.” (*Bhāg.* 3.29.22)

Nature does not work automatically; we should see Kṛṣṇa’s intelligence and artistry at play in nature. He makes the flower bloom. And just as an ordinary person uses brushes and paint to create an artistic flower on the wall of the temple, so certainly are the roses of nature products of Kṛṣṇa’s art.

In a prayer by the demigods there is further evidence that all varieties of existence come from Kṛṣṇa:

The demigods said: Let us offer our respectful obeisances unto the transcendental Personality of Godhead, who created as His external energy this cosmic manifestation, which is situated in Him as the air and clouds are situated in space, and who has now appeared in the form of Nara-Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi in the house of Dharma.

—*Bhāg.* 4.1.56

The whole universe is full of innumerable varieties. They are all the energy of the Supreme Lord, and they are situated in Him. In addition to these material energies, Kṛṣṇa Himself sometimes appears within the universe, thus adding the most



Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the source of all energies.

auspicious variety to the already existing varieties, all of which are nondifferent from Him.

So we should not reject any specimen of existence by thinking, “*This* is false.” Nothing is ultimately void; and illusion is only a covering which makes us forget Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda writes:

Because the energy is nondifferent from the Godhead, the varieties are also factual. The material varieties may be temporary, but they are not false. They are a reflection of the spiritual varieties.

We fail to see Kṛṣṇa conscious varieties because of our covered senses, our false self-identification. In a 1966 lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted the verse, *sarvopādhi-vinirmuktam*, and then said that we cannot see Kṛṣṇa with our present senses. But there is a process to purify the senses. “The easiest process,” said Śrīla Prabhupāda, “is this chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. If you regularly chant with devotion and without any offense, this very simple process will help you to purify your senses and appreciate the presence of God and God consciousness will develop in you.”

Japa and *kīrtana* are thus linked directly to seeing Kṛṣṇa. The holy name will purify our vision and with clear senses we can see Kṛṣṇa in everything. The way to attain this is not through mental adjustment but by chanting.

March 18

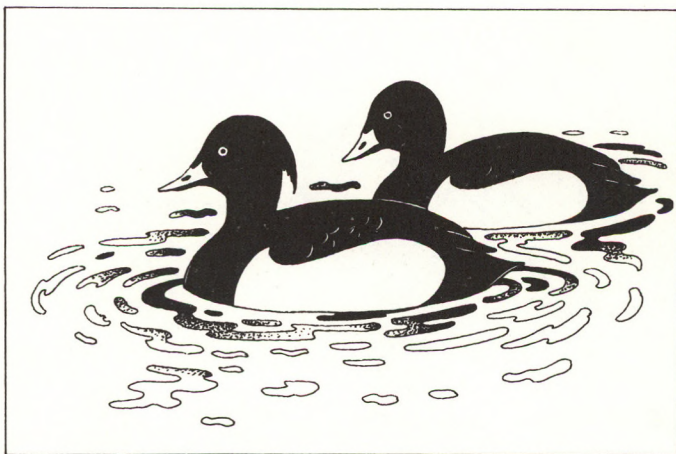
Black and white is often thought of as bland and colorless. For instance, a black-and-white television set is usually felt to be without color and therefore less appealing. But the black and white duck I saw this morning startled me with its beauty. So white! So black! And the colors so cleanly divided on each section of his body. He had a red beak, and he was accompanied by his mate. (Devotees later told me the ducks are called Tufted ducks.)

The two ducks were lively. They swam here and there, sometimes stretching their bodies straight and stiff, leaving behind

a rippling wake. They dove underwater head first and I had to guess where they might surface. The show continued for several minutes as they moved downstream. I hurried from window to window to catch the last sight of them as they went around the bend. The morning sun was just coming out. No one was around. It was a few degrees above freezing.

In His most intimate, original feature, Kṛṣṇa chooses to live in a natural, rural setting. Vṛndāvana is not a big city like Dvārakā. It is in the forest groves, by the river Yamunā, and in the grazing pastures and on Govardhana Hill. Here Kṛṣṇa enjoys His most intimate *līlā*. Our own attraction for rural peace and beauty is actually an expression of the spirit soul's original desire to live in Vṛndāvana.

But Vṛndāvana is not simply "rural." All the living creatures there are glorifying Kṛṣṇa. In the material world, we like to wake up in the country where we can hear the songs of the birds or watch the ducks in the water. But this pleasure is only the faintest indication of the pleasure of seeing and hearing the ducks, birds, and bees directly glorifying Kṛṣṇa in Kṛṣṇaloka. When the sky is bright and clear, we say, "It's a nice day." But that appreciation is increased a millionfold when we see not only the blue of space but the blue, all-beautiful form of the Personality of Godhead.



Why do the purple and yellow crocuses come up so early? They are almost sure to be trapped by a late freeze or even a snowstorm. Are they a species doomed to be tricked into coming too early? But all flowers are doomed to perish soon after they bloom. It is a way to have flowers for the Deities as early as possible. As they bloom amidst snow we can take their lovely purple blossoms and give them to Lord Jagannātha. *Pūjārīs* can go to an early blooming garden, even in cold weather, and find blossoms for the Lord. Then all is perfect.

“In the pure state there is nothing but God,” said Śrīla Prabhupāda. Also Kṛṣṇa told the *gopīs*, “I am everything, so you are never apart from Me. *Whatever* you think, that thinking of the mind is also Me.” There is nothing non-Kṛṣṇa. What we think of as non-Kṛṣṇa is only illusion or forgetfulness of Him. When Kṛṣṇa had grown up and was about to go live with His real father, Vasudeva, Nanda Mahārāja prayed, “My dear Kṛṣṇa, You are everything. You are all the letters in the alphabet. Everything is You.”

“Can you show me God?” the atheist challenges. Yes, He is there in the old leaves, in the smallest bit of matter, the closed buds, the wind, the heavens, the living, the dead—all these things and everything that be exists only because of Him.



March 19

In a hallway of our Potomac temple there is a picture which might be easily misunderstood by a guest. It shows a solitary, peaceful sage embracing a fawn. A person with some initial attraction for spiritual life might think that here is depicted an ideal setting and relationship: the saintly ascetic communing with the innocent creature of nature. The setting is certainly in the mode of goodness—the sage's simple straw cottage stands in the forest on the bank of a clean, flowing river. The sage's embracing the baby deer may evoke God conscious feelings of unity with all creatures, as exemplified by St. Francis. Or it may call to mind the nonviolence of Lord Buddha or the *yogī's* equality of vision as described by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

But what the unfamiliar guest to the temple would not know is that this painting actually depicts Mahārāja Bharata's fall from spiritual life. Mahārāja Bharata had given up all worldly attachments at a young age and had almost achieved perfection by meditating in solitude on Kṛṣṇa. But he became overly attached to a fawn whom he would feed and protect. Gradually, Mahārāja Bharata became so distracted by the deer that he gave up meditating on the Supreme Lord. He had become an infatuated fool. When the fawn disappeared one day, Mahārāja Bharata was driven mad by the loss. Seeing the footprints of his precious deer, he exclaimed, "By these footprints, this land has become a proper place for *brāhmaṇas* who desire heavenly planets or liberation to execute sacrifices to the demigods." Unfortunately, at the time of his death Mahārāja Bharata was absorbed in thoughts of the deer and so had to take his next birth as a stag.

Although at first glance the painting of Mahārāja Bharata seems to depict a praiseworthy quality in the sage, it must be studied with discrimination. Similarly, as we attempt to see God in all things we must also use discrimination.

According to Lord Caitanya's philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*, by which we see God as inconceivably, simultaneously one with and different from all things, every spirit

soul is Kṛṣṇa. And yet Kṛṣṇa in His original form is different from the individual soul. In a similar way, material nature is nothing but Kṛṣṇa, being His energy. But at the same time it is different from Him. To see the divine unity of all things, we have to concentrate on Kṛṣṇa as the cause of all causes and see all things in relation to Him.

According to *acintya-bhedābheda*, different living beings must be understood in different ways. Animals such as the deer or the cow are especially dear to Kṛṣṇa and should always be protected. And no creature should be killed unnecessarily. All living entities are eternal spirit souls, and in each material body dwells Lord Viṣṇu as Paramātmā. Therefore, animals should be treated favorably, their lives spared. And if possible they should be fed the Lord's *prasādam*. (But *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva* does not mean that we should consider the animals—or even human beings—as equal in all respects to God. Nor should we be like Mahārāja Bharata and become so distracted by our meditation on nature that we forget Kṛṣṇa.)

March 20

READING

For the first twenty-six years of my life I felt apart from this world. Sometimes I would think, "Why are there trees? Why is the sky just the way it is?" I wasn't satisfied with scientific explanations. "Why? Why am I suffering? Why are others suffering?" Vedic knowledge from Śrīla Prabhupāda has satisfied me. It explains as no other. And now we want others to accept this in order to be relieved of their sufferings.

I read, therefore I experience. Therefore, I know. No longer do I know just with these eyes and skin, perceiving cold and hot, soft and hard. No longer is life made up just of the affairs of men and women, of my body and your body, of my lust and your lust, of your love-seeking and mine. That is all skin trade, mental trade. But now my knowledge extends beyond that, beyond just my guess and yours, like Huck Finn and Jim guessing together where the stars come from, ". . . the moon could 'a' laid them." No longer just Darwin's guess or Nietzsche's



Mahārāja Bharata

guess; not just speculation; not just sense perception.

I accept the *Bhāgavatam* as the Absolute Truth, and step by step enter its complete knowledge. When I look up from the book and see birds quickly spanning over the skypatch, black specks against blue, that perception is inchoate. For its meaning, I turn back to the *Bhāgavatam*'s pages. This reading provides the greatest vista. Emily Dickinson states, "There is no frigate like a book." But *this* book sails us to the Absolute, and not on wings of fancy or by imperfect construction.

I am grateful for this early morning session with the *Bhāgavatam*. It makes me feel firm and resolute, and as I read of the hellish punishments, I nod in agreement.

A genuine session with Śrīla Prabhupāda, a *bhakti-yoga* trance—the immortal sages in *paramparā* and myself here and now reading, considering, noting down, getting a firmer hold on the transcendental facts. I am the Lord's servant. Prabhupāda has freed me of sinful habits. I have a duty to preach.

Everything is firmer now. I am grateful for the reading session and I pray to go deeper, to continue this always through my short life's duration.

It may be a mistake to seek deep, immediate, and measurable improvement in one's reading habits. It takes time. I have been trying to improve for years, but I have been negligent even longer.

Habit is second nature. My habit is to do *some* reading, although not daily. And my habit also is to read without full attention or full absorption in the transcendental message.

But it's so valuable! Even if my only service was reading, that would be very wonderful. But just as we see no one but Haridāsa Ṭhākura who could only chant, we see no one who can only read.

Reading requires patience. One should note with satisfaction that he is regularly entering the rare, sacred realm of transcendental hearing and chanting, and one should be aware that he is getting immeasurable benefit, even if it is not

always a perceivable sensation. (Actually, the benefit is perceivable, but it is not a material thing like sense gratification. Rather, the benefit can be noted *by a waning of the desire for sense gratification.*)

In one sense it *is* sufficient to read and serve daily in a humble way and not be overly concerned with how expertly one is reading. We are tiny. We should admit this and then try to deepen the appreciation.

Think, “By reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* I am hearing what is most important. All non-Kṛṣṇa conscious hearing is nonsense. Let me go on always doing this.”

Reading produces reading. Let our goal be to read. Kṛṣṇa will see us and be pleased.

Without feeling guilty that reading is not practical or that it is useless, due to the poor quality of one’s reading, we should apply whatever powers of attention and devotion we have available to reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. And while reading we should pray for the resolve to be better devotees, more conscious of the need to think of Kṛṣṇa always and to help others on His behalf. As He advises in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *man-manā bhava mad-bhaktō*: “Engage your mind always in thinking of Me, become My devotee, offer obeisances to Me and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me.” (Bg. 9.34)

March 21

JAPA

In *The Nectar of Instruction*, Rūpa Gosvāmī compares an offensive chanter to a person suffering from jaundice. Just as a jaundice patient cannot taste anything sweet, similarly one who chants offensively cannot taste the sweetness of the holy name. To cure the disease of offensive chanting, Rūpa Gosvāmī advises working directly to improve one’s *japa*: “By carefully chanting these sweet names every day, a natural relish awakens within one’s tongue, and one’s disease is gradually destroyed at the root.” (NOI, Text 7)

Vigorously chanting extra rounds of *japa* seems incompati-

ble with my recuperation plan, and I find this depressing. Will I ever improve my *japa* in this lifetime? Will I ever advance beyond my present platform? Will my chanting ever go beyond this? Elsewhere in *The Nectar of Instruction* Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Such a recovery of spiritual health is possible only by the regular cultivation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” My only hope is to serve Kṛṣṇa and to preach.

I tend to think improving my rounds is hopeless because of the considerable length of time I have been chanting mechanical, inattentive rounds. But I shouldn’t think of the fifteen or twenty years I have been chanting as very, very long. And I shouldn’t underestimate the stubbornness of my wayward mind or the detrimental effects of my past sinful activities. I do have bad *japa* habits. Yet, admitting this, I, one middle-aged dog, should not give up. There is still life. Therefore, there is still hope. Do consider it important. Do give it time and loving concern. Give it prime time, and arrange your life so that *japa* is not at the bottom of your priorities.

Whether I chant sixteen or twenty-five rounds is not so much the point. I was at one time working on the theory that if I could not improve the quality of my rounds, then let me increase the number. But what good is *more* mechanical chanting?

Prabhupāda said that we are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and Haridāsa Ṭhākura is also chanting, but the difference is that he is a supreme expert. What ordinary devotee could withstand the temptations of the beautiful young prostitute who came in the middle of the night to the cell of Haridāsa Ṭhākura? So it is not only the *mantra* itself but the way that one receives it and chants it.

Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is not a hobby or superfluous thing. One has to chant avoiding the ten offenses. If one actually can chant in that way, then his chanting becomes very powerful. The name of Kṛṣṇa is Kṛṣṇa Himself. By chanting properly one comes in touch with the Supreme Lord. One can only imagine the benefits of being able to actually associate always with Kṛṣṇa, but it is possible through offenseless chanting of

the holy name. So it is not simply a matter of knowing the *mantra*, but one must receive it and chant it expertly.

Prabhupāda also explained how Haridāsa Ṭhākura and the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana all maintained a numerical strength in their *japa*. Some, like Rūpa Gosvāmī, also wrote many books and so could not chant as many rounds as Haridāsa did. Nevertheless, they all kept their vows to chant their respective numbers of rounds.

Prabhupāda knew that Westerners could not chant ten million names in a month as Haridāsa Ṭhākura did, and therefore he minimized the number of required rounds for his followers to sixteen a day. It is sufficient if one just follows what the spiritual master has given and chants nicely. To be an expert chanter, one should therefore be very serious about his chanting and never think of it as a trifling thing or as a ritual. There is benefit even if one chants neglectfully, but progress will be very slow. But if one chants under the order of the spiritual master and becomes expert, then he can go back to Godhead in this very lifetime. If, however, one fails in this and does not go back to Godhead in this lifetime, then he runs the risk of taking another human birth. That risk is very great and so we should chant with utmost seriousness. We have been fortunate to receive the *mahā-mantra* from the perfect spiritual master, and with a quota we can all handle.

March 22

In a Third Canto purport, Prabhupāda discusses how the intelligence can be our best friend. While elaborating on “friendly consciousness,” Prabhupāda cites the importance of chanting:

Absorption of intelligence in the personal service of Kṛṣṇa and in full consciousness of Kṛṣṇa are always the path of self-realization and liberation. Without being unnecessarily agitated, if we take to the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness by constantly chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, the cycle of birth and death will be stopped for good. . .

One can cultivate Kṛṣṇa consciousness anywhere and everywhere, provided he can always think of Kṛṣṇa. The *mahā-mantra*, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, can be chanted even while within the abdomen of one's mother. One can chant while sleeping, while working, while imprisoned in the womb or while outside. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness cannot be checked in any circumstance.

— *Bhāg.* 3.31.21

Certainly in my present condition of ill health I should not think that the body is simply for the time being giving me trouble but that eventually everything will be fine. Even if one disease is cured, the body is ready with many others. In time we must succumb to the inconvenience of old age, and finally we must suffer the most severe disturbance of all. Death is unavoidable. It punishes us greatly and then afterwards most souls have to take birth again in another painful condition. Why don't I accept this and avoid such unnecessary suffering? The presence of material inconvenience should spur an intelligent person to turn to his friend, clear consciousness, and then by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa become rightly situated.

Argument Against Taking any Extra Time to Improve the Chanting of Japa

"In normal health, a devotee should chant his sixteen rounds and then be prepared to do anything and everything all day in the service of Kṛṣṇa. So if you are recovering your health, then any action which contributes to that, such as exercise or extra rest, is in a sense more important than any added attention to chanting."

Reply from a japa booster:

"But one of these days I had better learn to chant expertly. And I have to do this before it's too late. With all respects to your gradual health recovery, preparation for the time of death is top priority."

Japa is such a basic and profound indication of one's

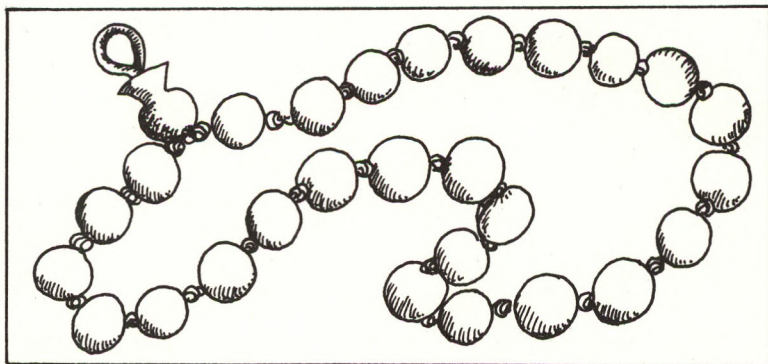
spiritual life! One cannot force its progress suddenly by instant reform. It's like trying to turn oneself into a pure devotee at once. Enthusiasm and patience. The cycle of improvement may take years in my case.

One big problem with *japa* is an obvious one: the same short *mantra* is repeated constantly. The unfriendly mind tends to reject this as an unsatisfying engagement and thinks it must do much more than simply pay attention to the repetitive sounds. So it is a battle, and there is no question who wins—just by creating a battle, the unfriendly mind disturbs successful chanting.

Remedies: With intelligence we have to regularly cultivate philosophical appreciation of the powers and benefits of chanting. Thus we can fight back and sometimes drive away the atheistic challenge that the chanting is not sufficient engagement. Intelligence gives discrimination; we must remember our constitutional position as eternal, blissful souls and how we have lost this position. We must now recognize our dangerous predicament, how we are liable to die at any moment.

We should hear accounts of great chanters like Haridāsa Ṭhākura and their appreciations of the holy name.

We should chant at the best times of the day—primarily early morning, but at other times when circumstances are favorable, even if only for brief times. We should arrange our lives so that chanting has a chance to flourish.



The Pains of Chanting

Child in the womb,
 enlightened while suffering—
 I envy you.
 I'd like to talk with God,
 but I am afraid of pain.
 So, if I had to choose
 between pain in enlightenment
 or "comfort" in darkness,
 which would I take?
 Now, by Lord Caitanya's grace,
 enlightenment is easy
 by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.
 Is that too painful still?

*March 23*

PRABHUPĀDA'S PREACHING

On a 1976 tape Prabhupāda is speaking in Vṛndāvana with an Indian doctor who works with the U.N. Prabhupāda asks him if he thinks the U.N. is really doing anything. The man defends the U.N., saying that at least it is a step in the right direction. If people are talking, he says, then they won't fight. But Prabhupāda very strongly denies any good in that talking. Since they do not understand the real point of progressive life, but like the animals are absorbed in problems of eating, sleeping, mating, and defending, Prabhupāda compares their talking to the barking of dogs.

Hearing this, I am again impressed how even in his last days Prabhupāda would so strongly preach to a worldly man on a very worldly issue. This is Śrīla Prabhupāda's preaching spirit. Prabhupāda was expert at applying eternal spiritual truths to solve the problems of material existence. We also have to have the courage and the conviction to address the world's problems with the fundamental tenets of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In talking with this U.N. man, Prabhupāda was disturbed that people at the U.N. did not take the real solution. If others

don't take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then they won't succeed—that is the real conviction of the preacher. How can one preach if he is not convinced that the Kṛṣṇa conscious solution is the only remedy?

From the gospel according to St. John: Jesus was once talking to a Samaritan woman drawing water from a well. Thinking he was hungry, his disciples approached him and encouraged him to eat. "I have food to eat of which you know nothing," said Jesus. "It is food and drink for me to do the will of Him who sent me until I have finished His work."

Śrīla Prabhupāda was also like that. He would work tirelessly and sometimes go without eating. He worked with full dedication throughout his very last days despite many bodily difficulties and extended fasting. Although these great examples of empowered persons cannot be imitated, we should follow them with fiery dedication.

It surprises me how much Jesus taught by performing miracles. He himself did not take them as all-important, it seems. He showed them so frequently because only in this way would the faithless and dull people come to accept him and hear from him submissively. "Will none of you ever believe," said Jesus, "without seeing signs and portents?" Śrīla Prabhupāda did not show such miracles, although we know that as an expert *yogī* he could have done so. But Śrīla Prabhupāda's greater miracle was to convert Western *mlecchas* into bona fide devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

My Vision of Kṛṣṇa

1

No *haṭha-yogī* introduced me
to Kṛṣṇa's form or the *mahā-mantra*.
I first woke to the sound
from the lips of His pure devotee—
unalloyed, powerful, *paramparā*—
Prabhupāda sitting on the thin straw mat.

Even that took time.

I knew words like Christ,
 cruller, cripes, Kris Kringle,
 and at first all the sounds had to sort out
 through an abused brain.
 I had to get an inkling who I was.

That's why the Name has to be heard
 from one who is a worshiper,
 an expert to free you.
 Otherwise the sound—Hare Kṛṣṇa
 —may pass you by.

2

Then His form appeared.
 God is a cowherd boy.
 He is not Indian, but He appeared there,
 a beautiful young boy,
 the flute to His lips.
 He sports in the fields;
 He stands by Rādhārāṇī,
 His youthful best devotee.
 It all made sense
 in Prabhupāda's presence.

One day walking to the office
 enjoying summer breezes,
 my shirt open, my tie in my back pocket,
 I was thinking how Kṛṣṇa
 goes to the fields to play.
 Like Swamiji described,
 the true stories, the facts—
 in the morning Kṛṣṇa gets ready to go out.
 The boys are waiting.
 His mother is dressing Him,
 while playfully He hits His pals.
 He swallows dirt.
 "No! Look in My mouth, mother!"
 And she sees there all the universes,



“And she saw all the universes, all time and space in the mouth of her son.”

all time and space
in the mouth of her son.

Then came devotees' paintings,
crude but sublime, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.
Even Prabhupāda said it wasn't expert,
but it was Kṛṣṇa,
our Supreme Personality of Godhead.
We began to tell others:
"He married sixteen thousand wives."

He spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā*,
He lifted Govardhana Hill,
He is the greatest, Yogeśvara,
master of Śiva and Brahmā.
Prabhupāda told us,
and we chanted,
offered Him *prasādam*
in ISKCON.

Now it is steady-going
but also slow,
difficult to fully surrender.
Now I'm latched onto Him,
by grace of Prabhupāda,
but how to get closer?
How to plunge beyond my fears,
beyond ridiculous sense gratification?
And the doubts—
I thought they were so easily overcome,
and the sinful acts committed—
I thought I could easily forget them
but they haunt me now
as I try to clear from my vision
the last garbage.

Proposal to Return to Second Avenue

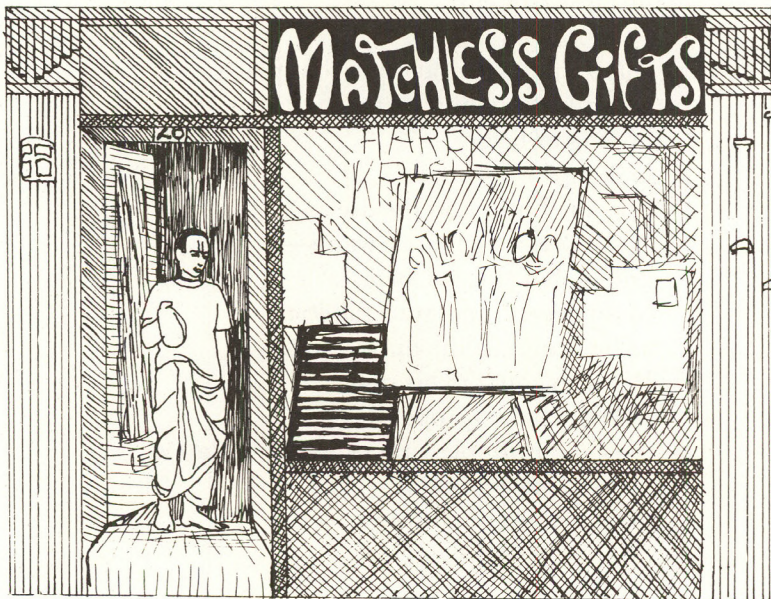
Now Brahmānanda is trying
 to buy that old building.
 Maybe we can go back.
 Twenty years later,
 we are still Swamiji's men,
 but we're also still his babies.
 Maybe we can go back
 and sit with him
 in his transcendental, sun-lit room
 on 26 Second Avenue.

To remember him
 and to serve his order
 is like *prāṇa* in the body,
 but can we go back
 to "Matchless Gifts" days?
 And why bother to try?
 Are the good old days
 just a sentiment?

But even if you don't buy that place,
 we will keep going there
 hoping as before,
 looking for his name
 over the buzzer on the door—
 A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami—
 and looking for his form,
 in turtleneck and graceful *dhoti*
 as he stands in the dim-lit hallway.
 We keep going to his door
 to knock, and he opens,
 inviting us in, blessing us with his glance.
 He was always open,
 and we need him always,

because to see, to touch, and to hear
a pure devotee
is very rare.

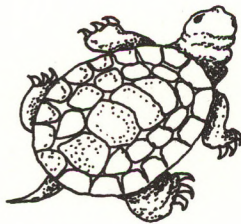
Better a sentiment for *him*
than for some former flame
or tomorrow's fame.
We're doing duty now,
but let's also go back
and make a shrine there
and invite everyone
to glorify Prabhupāda
who started all alone,
and if we serve Love Feasts again,
and awaken *kīrtanas* on that holy block,
then let's do it—
and live in the meaning
of ISKCON's beginning.



March 24

The Vaiṣṇava preacher sees God in nature, and he makes analogies between the phenomena of nature and the precepts of Vedic knowledge. The twentieth chapter of the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* comprises such analogies. For example, in that chapter (entitled, "Description of Autumn"), the limitlessly expansive sky is compared to the Absolute Truth, and a cloud covering a small portion of the sky is compared to the living being's ignorance of his real nature. In his essay, *Light of the Bhāgavata*, Śrīla Prabhupāda presented forty-eight of these analogies from nature. He wished to have the essay illustrated in Japan with a painting for each analogy. (The book has recently been published with illustrations by the Hong Kong branch of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.)

Prabhupāda sometimes became very enthusiastic about the wealth of such Kṛṣṇa conscious analogies that could be seen in nature, and he encouraged his disciples not to be dull-headed but to see how Kṛṣṇa is constantly before our eyes. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, for example, Lord Kṛṣṇa compares a self-controlled *yogī*, to a tortoise. Just as the tortoise extends or withdraws his limbs for his own purposes, so a devotee uses his own senses only for the service of Kṛṣṇa. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* even compares the lowly spider's web-building abilities to the creative potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As a spider first creates a web from its own body and later winds up the web when its purpose has been fulfilled, so the Supreme Lord creates the entire material existence out of Himself, sustains it for some time, and then absorbs it back into Himself. A



preacher well-acquainted with the many natural analogies in the Vedic literatures and alert to see new analogies around him can make Vedic knowledge very interesting, especially for persons not inclined to extensive philosophical discussion.

A devotee who sees around him the lessons of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Bhāgavatam* is said to be *śāstra-cakṣuḥ*, or one who sees through the eyes of the scriptures. Not only in primordial nature but also in the worldly life of the city, in family life, in politics or business, an intelligent person can see the eternal precepts of Vedic knowledge constantly being confirmed before his eyes.

Since the Vedic literatures provide so many useful Kṛṣṇa conscious analogies from nature, one might ask why I want to describe my own fledgling attempts to see Kṛṣṇa through nature. My hope is that the genuine attempt of an aspiring devotee to perceive the world with his own senses in a Kṛṣṇa conscious way will be helpful and inspiring to others, especially to those who are also striving to come to the stage of spontaneous Kṛṣṇa conscious vision. Yes, we should always recite the examples given in *śāstra*. We should memorize them and aptly apply them to situations in our own life and in our lecturing and writing. But we should also *realize* the analogies for ourselves, as deeply and as spontaneously as possible. We should strive to *be* Kṛṣṇa conscious at all times, in all places, so that there are no odd spaces in our lives in which we are forgetful or out of touch with the Truth.

March 25

Dattātreyā brought me published diaries, some with a mixture of prose and poems. If I read them all I would be ruined. At a glance, so many blasphemies. “We live in a world where no one, neither God nor Caesar, is in charge” . . . “Mozart’s life and work express a pure and more efficacious benevolence to humankind than the life and work of God.” Smug, atheistic, mad, demoniac (or at least speculative), ignorant . . . why bother to read them, even in small doses? Erotic, wordy, powerful, enchanting, boring, time-consuming—everything but

pure devotional service. Why bother with them? Talent-beyond-me, completely mundane, obscure, wrong, foolish, mad—I would waste time and gain nothing. I look at them for their use of language, and because they are diaries, or so I tell myself. But do I need so much evidence that someone else has written a combination of prose and poetry or that a journal can be interesting literature? But I already know that. I should be careful.

Two full days of rain have ended. Sky and fresh air. The creek is flowing swiftly, the water level up. Little islands and peninsulas have disappeared under flowing water. Tributary creeks are also flowing strongly. (This will last for about a day or two, then it will calm down.)

Still no grass growing. Underbrush is simply a few stick-like thorny branches. Some agricultural fields have a light green covering (“cover crops”). Except for the evergreens, the trees are as bare as in winter, but when I look very closely I can see small, tight buds on the branches. Green moss is growing in some places.

Śāstric references about seeing God: “Every place, every space, and everything belongs to Viṣṇu, but where He personally lives is *tad dhāma paramam*, His supreme abode. One has to make one’s destination the supreme abode of the Lord.” (*Bhāg.* 3.32.26, purport)

Since “every place, every space, and everything” is Viṣṇu, we can therefore discuss anything in its relationship to Kṛṣṇa. Even in the lower stages we should develop this ability to see Kṛṣṇa everywhere. But it is also clear that the Lord is much more present in His own personal form. So although we should discuss how Kṛṣṇa is present everywhere, we should not neglect direct discussion of His name, fame, devotees, pastimes, paraphernalia, and abode.

It is wrong to think that we are not qualified to discuss

Kṛṣṇa directly. Although we may prefer to discuss what we can actually see and hear with our senses (and therefore the tendency to “see God in nature”), it is a fact that at present we cannot see Kṛṣṇa by direct perception. Our senses have to be purified by hearing from the scriptures and by seeing the Deity. But our chanting and hearing is itself a form of “seeing God.” Hearing the holy name is itself a direct perception. It is also very personal, and it is as good as—or rather *better*—than so-called direct perceptions of God in nature that we make “on our own.”

Yet another reference confirming the presence of Kṛṣṇa everywhere states the following: “But Vaiṣṇava philosophers do not accept the different manifestations as false; they accept them as nondifferent from the Supreme Personality of Godhead because they are a display of His diverse energies.” (*Bhāg.* 3.32.29)

Again, it is not false to think that Kṛṣṇa can be seen everywhere, even in the material elements, and we should talk about Kṛṣṇa’s form in nature. But to avoid being a *prākṛta-sahajiyā* and taking things cheaply, we should first understand the preliminary lessons of Kṛṣṇa consciousness through the practice of chanting Kṛṣṇa’s holy name and hearing about Him through bona fide scriptures. Kṛṣṇa will reveal Himself in nature only to one whose heart has been purified by strictly following the principles of *sādhana-bhakti* and by submissively hearing Kṛṣṇa’s instructions through *paramparā*.

March 26

Gītā-nāgarī sits amid wooded hills, a setting in the material mode of goodness. But at the same time it is a spiritual community because Rādhā-Dāmodara reside here. The devotees who live here are engaged in an important preaching project created by Śrīla Prabhupāda, and they are guided by his instruction.

I have to apply discrimination as I try to draw my attention and that of the readers into Gītā-nāgarī. One question is whether the seasonal changes of the plants and flowers and the

activities of birds and animals are in themselves a subject of spiritual contemplation. I have discussed how every place and space is both Viṣṇu, and yet at the same time is not Viṣṇu. I have also mentioned how meditation on nature's creatures can be a diversion and yet, if rightly done, it can be a way to realize the *śāstra* via analogies connected to the Absolute Truth. And I have been to some degree expressing my own desire to see Kṛṣṇa in the daily sights and seasonal changes of the farm where I now live in a somewhat non-participatory way.

In the West, material nature seems less spiritually alive than in India, especially when you compare the West with holy places like Vṛndāvana and Māyāpur. Vṛndāvana is so intensely associated with Kṛṣṇa that devotees think at once of Kṛṣṇa just by hearing the peacocks or seeing them in their Vṛndāvana habitat. Even creatures that are not ordinarily pleasing, like the monkeys of Vṛndāvana, also remind you of Kṛṣṇa because of His *līlā* with them. Vṛndāvana's natural life is so attractive to devotees that they sometimes bring peacocks to their ISKCON temples in the West, and of course the *tulasī* plant is well-established as a resident in all our temples. Unfortunately, I am not a resident of Vraja, but I aim to make the best use of my situation here.

But what about the opinion that the West is spiritually dead? Does that apply to this forest place, this land and sky of Gītā-nāgarī? It sounds awful to say you live in a dead place, like living in a cemetery. Is the Western world doomed to be dead? But I think it must depend on one's consciousness, especially for a devotee engaged at a place like Gītā-nāgarī. His particular involvement with the land—cultivating it, thinking of how to use it to serve Kṛṣṇa and to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness—this gives the land spiritual life. And the temple and its compound, no matter where on the earth they appear, are to be taken as *cintāmaṇi*, Vaikuṇṭha-dhāma.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes beautiful natural settings enjoyed by saints and sages as especially favorable for meditation. One such description is of the holy lake Bindu-sarovara, a pilgrimage place worshiped by great saints and sages and the



Holy *ghāṭas* of Vṛndāvana scenically located on the River Yamunā.

place where Kardama Muni had his hermitage:

The shore of the lake was surrounded by clusters of pious trees and creepers, rich in fruits and flowers of all seasons, that afforded shelter to pious animals and birds, which uttered various cries. It was adorned by the beauty of groves of forest trees.

—*Bhāg.* 3.21.40

If one cannot see Kṛṣṇa, then the most beautiful places in the world seem void. When Lord Kapiladeva left His mother, Queen Devahūti, the beauty of her palace with all its fragrant gardens could not interest her:

O Vidura, thus always meditating upon her son, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kapiladeva, she very soon became unattached to her nicely decorated home.

—*Bhāg.* 3.33.22

And even if I am unqualified to live and write in Vṛndāvana, even if I am myself half-dead and living in the deadened West, I may yet be able to think of Kṛṣṇa. If we can realize that indeed Kṛṣṇa consciousness of the fullest kind can be experienced anywhere, even in nature, then that will be a considerable victory for all of us.

Like every Kṛṣṇa temple, Gītā-nāgarī is special. It is a holy *dhāma*, a spiritual abode in a condemned land. This particular location, rural Pennsylvania, is far removed from the land of Lord Caitanya. He never walked here. The countryside freezes for months at a time, and the *mlecchas* use it for cow slaughter. It is a land suffering under the weight of Kali-yuga. Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda came here and established this farm, thus giving a chance to those who would otherwise have no hope.

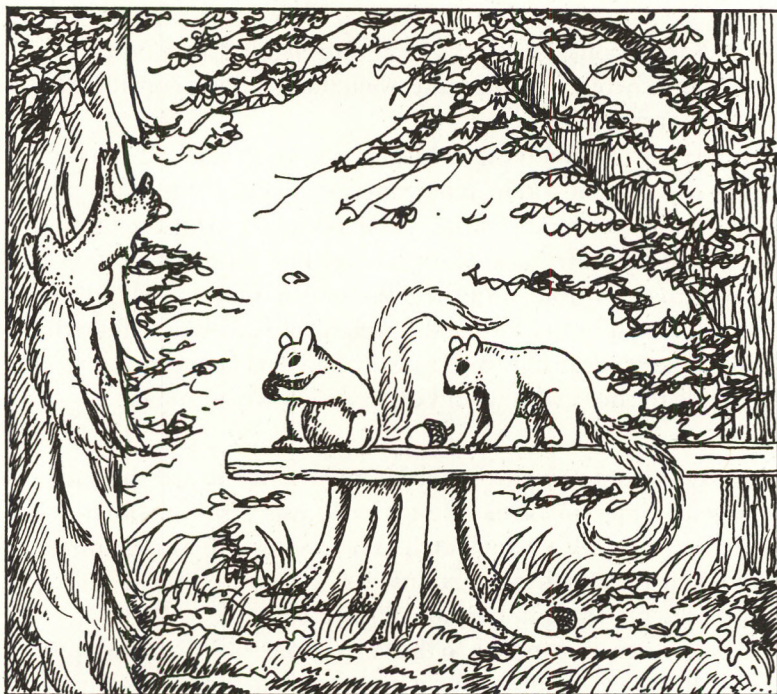
Early this morning from within my room I heard the songs of several different birds. One I knew was a robin. Baladeva said there was also a nuthatch. Their songs lifted my spirits, and when I opened the curtains, I saw a pair of ducks sailing swiftly downstream in the rain-filled creek.

My feelings in response to the calls of the robin and the sight of the ducks are spontaneous with me due to my conditioning.

I will not refuse these feelings or become callous toward them. I am reaching out for what is closest at hand and seeing how it can be transformed. (The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* also lifts one's spirits, but in a deeper, even unconscious way.)

I should be careful that I do not become a worshiper of the Universal Form (seeing flowers as Kṛṣṇa's smile, birds as His song, etc.). Beyond the *viśva-rūpa* conception is the topmost spiritual engagement of chanting the holy name as given by Lord Caitanya. So in an ultimate sense, endeavoring to see God in nature is supplementary to these other spiritual activities. Yet, even now, in this very body, at my very door, I am seeing little bits of Kṛṣṇa, and that should not be discounted.

Hoping for the best, I go on collecting
a tiny servant's view
of Lord Kṛṣṇa's nature.



Squirrels use a patch of the tin roof of my cabin for their sports. They jump from a nearby tree—thud—and scurry across the sloping, slippery roof in a matter of seconds. Guests are sometimes startled, but I'm used to it. Sometimes a squirrel running up the shaggy hickory tree near my window will pause, tail twitching, and glare intently at me at my desk.

We can have very little commerce, the squirrels and I. Neither do I want any commerce. They don't want commerce with me either, not in the slightest, and they always move fearfully when I come near. I mostly only tolerate them, although their aerial somersaults in flying from one branch to another sometimes draw my begrudging appreciation. But I don't much care for their beastliness, always with an acorn in their mouth, resembling rats somewhat, and one mate running after another. They stay in their space in nature and I stay in mine. My lack of ready affection for these creatures reveals to me, however, how "civilized" and city-bred I actually am. Yet we live here side by side, and I felt remorse when three of them lay dead on the ground after one rainstorm.

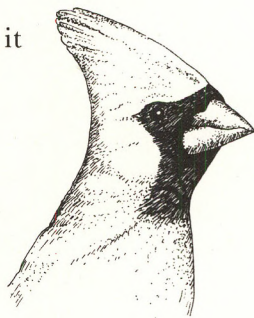
The local mice are bolder than the squirrels. They sometimes intrude into my cabin, and at present one is waging a war with us. He has repeatedly gone onto the altar of Lord Jagannātha and knocked over the water cups; he even stole a flower I put there for the pleasure of Lord Balarāma. I could speculate and say the mouse is special for his insistence in going after Lord Jagannātha, but even if I note that he has attraction for the Lord, it is certainly the attraction of an adversary, an offender. Again and again, even in daylight while I am sitting and watching, he crawls over the body of the Deity. I remember reading that Devananda Sarasvati, who started the atheistic Ārya Samāj movement in India, said that he became an atheist when one day he saw a rat crawling over a Deity in the temple. He thought, "How can this actually be God if He cannot defend Himself?"

That attitude is rascaldom. A devotee is the protector of the Deity. The Lord has kindly consented to come as *arcā-vigraha*. By His grace, we who cannot see Him in His original form can

see Him as He fully manifests His form in wood, stone, or metal. Therefore, if we see a rodent abuse the Deity, our response should be to defend the Lord, not to decry Him. So this mouse will have to go.

We first tried setting a “Have a Heart” trap, which is supposed to capture mice alive. This mouse was so clever, however, he managed to reach inside the trap and escape with the nuts we had placed as bait. Even when I moved the Deities from Their beautiful *simhāsana* and placed Them in another part of the room, he again went to Them and desecrated Their altar by knocking over the cups. Now we are resorting to poison.

Cardinal is red sensation
picking up grass stuff, discarding it
by the pond. But up close
he shows a vicious, cruel head,
black eyemask, axe-beak
as up close all birds must be
to their prey—made that way
by cruel nature:
one living entity is the food
for another.



Cardinals are sometimes seen even in winter, but today I saw a real sign that spring is here—a butterfly. Small, tight buds are also appearing on the trees and bushes. Some are red. The old leaves from the past season may now be seen lying in the muddy paths in slowly rotting bunches.



March 27

Go on faith. I want to start walking around more. The main thing is to do something that will help me get well. So if leisurely walking doesn't hurt why not? And I will come to know Gītā-nāgarī more.

Sometimes I want it to be as quiet as possible, no sounds, no trouble . . . I know such peace will be interrupted, yet I seek it even for a little while. It is a way of healing, and afterwards I can more willingly enter needful exchanges with people. This solitude has its attractions. And it is not harmful, as long as I am ready to give it up when Kṛṣṇa asks. Kṛṣṇa gives us so many nice things and by certain tendencies we are drawn to some more than others—either quiet forest settings, hearth and home and family, or the excitement and glitter of the city. But whatever it is we like, we have to be ready to give it up when Kṛṣṇa's service sends us in a different direction. Therefore, I am not here at Gītā-nāgarī in this mood for my enjoyment, but to rest and regain health. And I am willing to go as soon as I am able to travel and preach.

Sometimes I seem to forget my illness and become restless, but yesterday I had a relapse in my condition and was again dragged down to the platform of physical pain. I wanted to read, hear, and write, but the veins in my head expanded and there was pain. I tried wishing it away, ignoring it, reducing my activities in one way or another. I tried hearing a tape of my disciples reading *The Teachings of Lord Caitanya* while I walked slowly outside wearing sunglasses against the light. But the invader headache had its way. Eventually I had to lie down. But I felt a satisfaction in the midst of the growing headache: "Yes, now I can see clearly my proposed stay here at Gītā-nāgarī is not an overly cautious plan. It is sensible; it is necessary. I *cannot* do otherwise." But my perspective is that of a less intelligent person who suffers some pain and then one hour later forgets the cause of the pain and acts in a way to bring it on again.

Śrīla Prabhupāda describes this in terms of the pain a child feels within the womb, the pain a mother experiences during

childbirth, or the pain of undergoing an operation for venereal disease. In the throes of such pain, we promise we will not again act to come under its control: the child promises to become a pure devotee and not have to take birth again; the mother vows not to have a child again; and the sex-monger says he will abstain from prostitutes. In difficulty we remember God—"Please save me!" But when the pain is gone we forget. I sampled this foolishness myself and now I am thankful, in a way, to be reminded of the bitter truth.

My disciple Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma dāsa has come here from Puerto Rico to be my servant for a few weeks. He knows the importance of engaging in devotional service, but most in this world do not know. They think, "Why is he serving like that? And why is the other letting someone serve him? What do the words Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma mean anyway?" They do not understand why others should serve Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's devotee.

The nondevotees need to have so much explained! Most have no knowledge of the soul and at best only speculate about it. If they are not openly atheistic and say God is dead, then they speculate about Him in a whimsical way. They are like silkworms trapped in their own cocoons. They are like persons bound up in ropes (and their leaders are no better off than they are). They are like he-elephants who have been lured to fall into a covered well by a she-elephant. They are like little animals praising a big animal. They are like logs drifting forever down a river. But sometimes, as if by chance, a log goes on shore. Somehow or other a covered soul gets the association of a pure devotee and hears with some faith. Maybe it is due to a past life in which they accidentally performed some pious activity. Or it may just be the causeless mercy of the empowered pure devotee that brings about the auspicious meeting. But only by the grace of the pure devotee can one come out of the prison of illusion and ignorance.

Śrīla Prabhupāda pulled me out of that prison, as he did thousands of others. Like reverberating waves from his force,

or like stars reflecting his original light, we are able to reach out to others and give them the message unchanged, the chanting and the hearing of the holy name.

I went with Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa and Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma dāsa up the hill to the forest where I hardly ever go. Śrī Kṛṣṇa showed me various types of trees, including elm, hickory, pine (whose roots are shallow and who fall over easily in a high wind), oak (which have distinctive leaves even I can recognize), and ash (whose branches Śrī Kṛṣṇa says “grow out opposite”). He says that from working the land, the men now know the usefulness of all the trees on our land. Locust and cedar are good for fence posts. We looked up at the big, quiet, hard trees. It felt like spring had arrived, but it’s still fifty days before the cows go out pasturing again.

We climbed to the place where the young boys camped out last summer. On the way we passed a rock pile where a farm meadow used to be long ago. We saw a tree being attacked by poison ivy. The ivy had grown all the way to the top of the tree, where it bushed out and choked the tree from sunlight.

What is the use of the forest? For lumber—tons of wood for warming Rādhā-Dāmodara and Their servants, and for pasturing the retired cows.

We returned to the temple by 4:30 P.M., in time to see Rādhā-Dāmodara. Devotees were honoring *prasādam* as we walked in. A partition separates the women and children from the men. Some children had pasted stars on their foreheads, and they were eating cake with carob icing.

I sat in my rocker in the temple room and chanted two rounds of *japa* while beholding the Deities of Rādhā-Dāmodara—Their golden, sharp elbows, beautiful clean lines of body, red lips, sprightliness, and nice shining clothes. Also small black Rādhā-Kālachandajī, the Prabhupāda deity, the *paramparā* pictures. My own photograph stood on the far left. What right have I to be connected to great *ācāryas* of the past such as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura,

and the ascetic Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī? I am very tiny next to them. I cannot say, "They are spiritual masters and so am I." I have no claim to be in line with them. They are in a different, greater league. And yet the one spiritual master among them who did the most to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness is there beside me, and this is logical. I am his direct disciple. But I must never think, "Yes, I am just like Śrīla Prabhupāda. I am equal to him." I am not. Yet my disciples see me in the disciplic line. I cannot see from the viewpoint of my disciples, nor can they see how I am always the disciple in the eyes of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

March 28

We do not accept sophisticated replies as to why one doesn't surrender to Viṣṇu, nor do we accept the rationalizations from an initiated devotee who repeatedly breaks the rules and violates his vows.

An intellectual editor of an underground newspaper once spoke with Śrīla Prabhupāda in Boston. Prabhupāda asked the man why he himself didn't join Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The man replied, "My way is very difficult."

"Get serious," Prabhupāda replied.

I remember once speaking to my Godbrother Baradrāja dāsa after he left Kṛṣṇa consciousness and abandoned his vows. I reminded him that we had both taken lifelong vows and had to fulfill them for Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Baradrāja said, "But we were so young when we took those vows."

"Nevertheless," I said, "we took them for life."

"I wish it was so simple," he said.

Those who say that life is very complicated cannot give any good argument as to why they do not surrender. And the fallen devotees cannot really explain away why they have given up the path of surrender.

"Well, I guess I'm just a bum," admits a misbehaving devotee after being caught smoking marijuana. But where is the repentance? Where is the resolve not to do it again?

“I wish it was so simple.”

“My way is difficult.”

“I took the weed because I was so miserable.”

But we can't accept these as valid reasons. If we do the right thing Kṛṣṇa will always help us. In this way Lord Caitanya helped Jagāi and Mādhāi, forgetting their sins. And also Jesus said to the adulterous woman: “Nor do I condemn. You may go; do not sin again.”

No one is exempt from the responsibility to free oneself from entanglement in sinful actions and reactions, and no one is doomed as a permanent outcast from the spiritual world.

Tārksya called from Trinidad. Although we discussed how certain devotees down there are having difficulties, the main tone of his talk was assuring. He said he would be content to work with me for his whole life. I felt a spark to go there, but of course I am confined here. So let me accept it.

Reading an anthology of diaries. One excerpt was by a man who lived through the Hiroshima A-bombing. Another was by a man who suffered great pain through a terminal illness but who did not indulge in self-pity. After a while the book got confusing, but it did impress upon me the need to be very truthful.

There was a remark in a diary excerpt by John Quincy Adams which I thought important. He had been reading the memoirs of Thomas Jefferson, and he comments, “There are no confessions. He tells nothing but what redounds to his own credit . . . always in the right. This is not uncommon to writers of their own lives.”

I think in his writings a devotee should be careful about making confessions. He should certainly be candid and admit his failures, but if he were to, say, confess a stray thought of illicit sex, what would be the benefit of that? Such a confession could benefit no one, including the confessor.

Another reason why there are not “juicy” confessions in a devotee's writings is that a decent devotee will not commit

gross falldowns against the four regulative principles. As I write this I wonder if I am not being too confident. Am I even now writing in the manner abhorred by Adams, trying to draw a good picture of myself as one who is humble and willing to admit failures, provided those failures do not make me look bad? Who knows the tricks of the faithless mind? Therefore, why allow it free play in “confessions”?

In my writing I want to be honest and admit my failures. But I also want to help others in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The scriptures state that one should not speak of the previous life of a Vaiṣṇava or attempt to know his mind. With senses and mind controlled, we push on in spiritual life and represent our spiritual master.

In court, judges and juries have difficulty assessing the actions of a devotee because they do not know his inner motives. Nowadays people don't even know why one should refrain from illicit sex life or meat-eating, and they especially do not appreciate the devotee's absolute obedience to his spiritual master. Neither can a psychoanalyst understand our thoughts and actions (unless he is himself a devotee). So just as we avoid the psychoanalyst's couch, we should also avoid indulging in confessions.

Confess what? I have already confessed that I was a fallen fool until I met His Divine Grace. Since then, I have been hanging onto his *dhotī* cloth and praying to remain faithful and not to deviate. I have my shortcomings, but by Kṛṣṇa's grace I am still his man.

When challenged as to whether he was a great devotee, Prabhupāda would sometimes say to the challenger, “That you should judge for yourself. We are repeating the message of Kṛṣṇa and we are following the rules and regulations. That much we are doing. As to whether or not we fail or what degree of holiness we attain, that you can judge for yourself. Kṛṣṇa is also seeing and judging, but He is not obliged to you.” So there is a limit to the benefit or need of disclosures of private life.

This may seem to contradict the fact that I am immersed in a personal form of writing. But personal writing does not mean

one's attempts at every turn to raise doubts or to push oneself into sensual and mental muck. (After all, thinking is followed by feeling and willing. One should not meditate on the lower nature.) Suffice to say we are faulty, so all may know it once and for all; I know it too. But we have better things, more important things to say. And as long as we remain faithful in spiritual life by following the regulative principles, even though we are fallen we are qualified to speak about Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that one symptom of love is to refrain from killing. Obedience to God—"Thou shalt not kill"—is a preliminary form of devotion to the Supreme. But all over the world even religious leaders indulge in killing. Christian evangelist Jerry Falwell poses for photos while sitting astride a Texas longhorn, giving his moral support to its slaughter. Cardinal Danielou argues with Śrīla Prabhupāda that animals have no soul because they cannot understand metaphysics. Lord Buddha rejected such so-called religious followers and their false use of the scriptures, and he asserted first and foremost *compassion for all creatures*. Ignorance is no excuse, and therefore the Vaiṣṇava tries to relieve the killers from their future sufferings by teaching *ahimsā*. As Nārada Muni informed the hunter, "If you leave the animals half-dead, you are purposefully giving them pain. Therefore, you will have to suffer in retaliation." (Cc. *Madhya* 24.249)

Ahimsā

1

Green head, yellow beak,
brown and white shades of down;
better arrayed than any man.
Who made them so?

Why kill them?
What's the need?
Eat corn with butter,
cups of milk,

juicy melons,
soft potatoes cooked by fire—
no need to kill
the cows, the birds,
the innocent.

But you hunt, shoot,
tear out their vitals,
eat their inner parts.

Gliding backwards,
carried by the stream,
graceful on the water,
the duck rides on,
by God's grace.
But you kill him.
And you too will ride
on the dangerous waters.

2

Floating downstream,
swimming deer stroke, fast-moving—
is he being carried away in panic?
Or is it sport?
routine travel?—
I thought it was a log—
a swimming deer!
If you had been here, hunter,
you would have shot him.
But try to understand:
he has a soul as good as you.
Ahimsā.

March 29

Diary accounts may pause when prayers arrive;

Two Prayers

I

Tired of me,
I am seeking Thee,
Lord of the universe.

Tired of me,
I am seeking Thee,
guru of the universe.

But You seem far away.

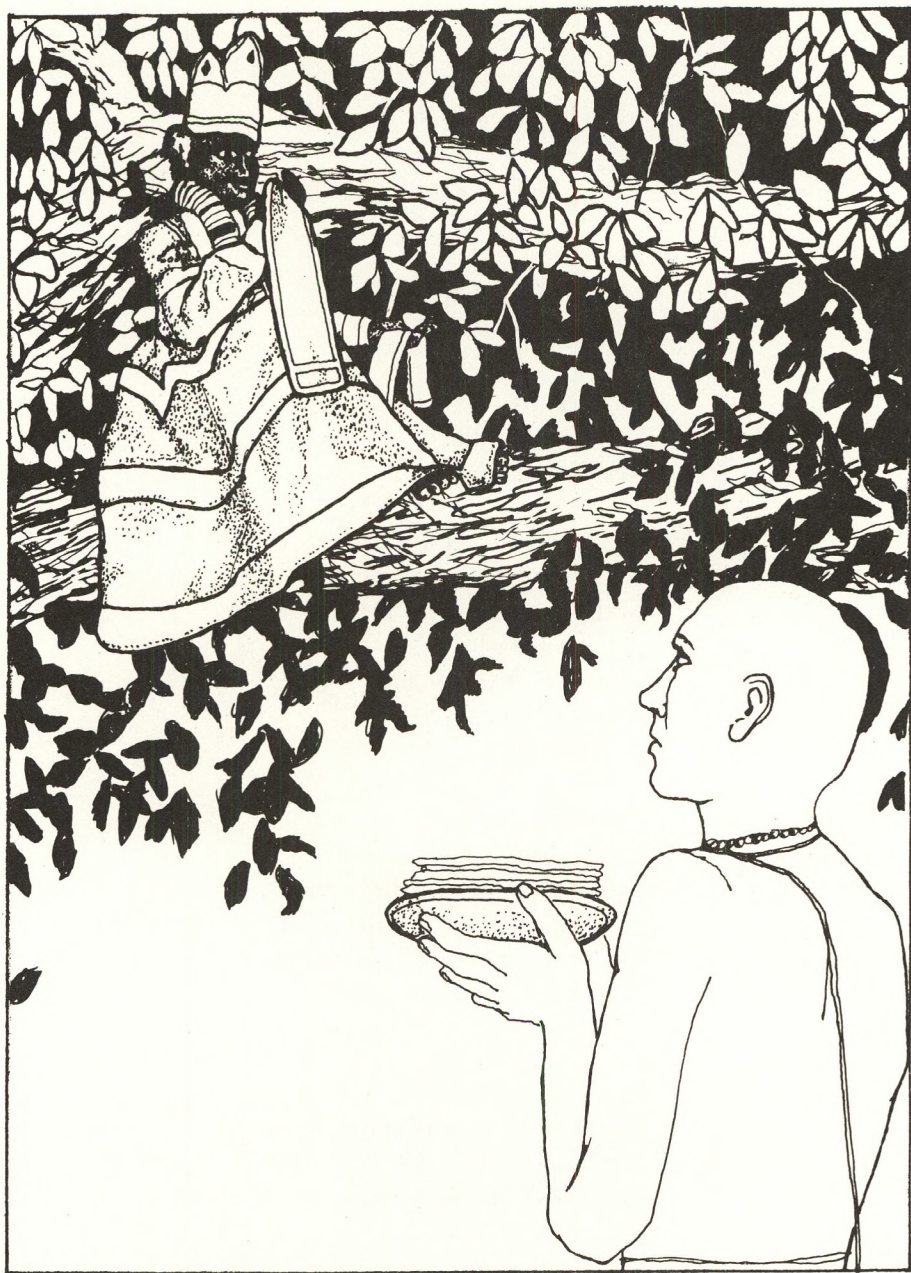
God is in His book,
guru in his order.
Why can't I touch You?
How can You save me
if I'm so far away?

I know:
it's my fault if I am distant.
You've given me the holy name,
and I may serve Your devotees.
But I seem to need more help;
I can't lift myself.

2

Saints speak to God,
sometimes joke with Him
like Sanātana Gosvāmī:
"Just take this dry *capātī*,
it is all that I have."

"Do as you like with me,"
sings Bhaktivinoda.



“Just take this *capāṭī*, it is all that I have.”

And Narottama dāsa cries,
“I do not love You,
but now I will love You.”

But what can I say,
and why do I insist on trying?
I tried being silent.
That won't work.
And I've tried repeating others',
but still I want more.

But I don't own Rūpa's price—
the desire to attain You.

I am praying for power,
patience, insight.

Let me see with inner vision.
But make me a soldier.
Give me what I need
to go over the top.

I've come thus far,
carried on the order
of Śrīla Prabhupāda.
Now how further?



3

April 3

My mind brings many doubts. For example, the proposal put before me is that if I rest for as much as a year, then I can gain twenty to forty years of active service. The headaches have broken down my health so much that if this condition keeps up, I will be too debilitated to serve at all. My program, therefore, is to temporarily remove myself from service so that I can take up full service again. This has been very difficult because I feel there is no guarantee of success. I want a guarantee that if I do rest for a year, then I will definitely get twenty years of active service in return. But of course I cannot get such a guarantee. Physical health is precarious; if it were not headaches it would be something else. However, I have to go forward, even without a guarantee from Kṛṣṇa. I really have no choice. It is a risk, but it is a sensible risk at this point. If I try to drag on with an exhausted physical system, these headaches will lead to other breakdowns.

When a devotee-doctor told to me that I have worked too hard over the last twenty years in my devotional service and have exhausted my system, I again had doubts. I have not really worked as hard as other devotees on *saṅkīrtana* and at other activities. Yet the stress and strain I have taken on as a manager is considerable. I have to see it in perspective. I am not a super-human who deserves rest because he has sacrificed himself like a martyr. Rather, I am a person of limited physical and mental capabilities who has used these capabilities to the point of overload. Even if I regain my health, I have to watch my limitations.

When my head is not actually throbbing, in my mind I sometimes think, "This sickness is just in my mind." But it is not just in my mind. It is a physical reality and I have to deal with it.

I am not the only one ill, and other devotees are not being given such full facility to recover. But without feeling guilty I should get well and then serve others. The reason I am being

given this facility is because I am expected to be in the forefront of those who are spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore I should recover my health and fully engage myself in Kṛṣṇa's service without any distraction or deviation. This should be my program.

But in different, subtle ways my mind tries to bewilder me and lead me to avoid the austerity of recovering. I have to be patient and allow myself to get better.

I have special dietary restrictions, and although I might like to take this time to memorize many verses or read as many of Prabhupāda's books as possible, I should for the most part refrain from these things. (I do, however, continue to read at least something from Prabhupāda's books every day.) Similarly, I should not in the guise of recuperation make this a year of prodigious literary output. I do think my books are important, and it is my life and soul to write some lines about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But I should show restraint here as well. Even in terms of literary output, I will be able to produce more books when I am healthy. But if I cheat on my recuperation program by sneaking out another book, I may delay indefinitely the time to full recovery.

So although I cannot expect to be ideal in anything, I will at least try to be a good patient.

Too Late

I waited too long
before picking the crocuses
for Lord Jagannātha.
In yellow, white, and violet bunches
they bloomed along my way
for only a few days.
"Let them live," I thought,
"and enjoy the sun."
But a rainstorm
has smashed them all.
I did not realize
that to die a few days early

at Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet,
was better than prolonged duration.

April 4

An Āyur Vedic doctor is coming from South India. His specialty is oil massage therapy and he will also see to it that I don't exert myself. I met him briefly in Calcutta, and he smilingly remarked that I should refrain completely from reading or writing for forty days. I could hardly believe *that* was possible, and so I just laughed.

Now Baladeva, who acts as my nurse, suggests that I get ready for the doctor by curtailing reading and writing. Baladeva wrote me a note:

Perhaps this quiet time in your life can be taken on as an "enforced" *samādhi*. We are acting on the principle of work now, *samādhi* later. But your "work" is all being taken away . . . Maybe you should not be afraid to completely enter a more meditative state for the next several months . . . Perhaps you could even practice the austerity of *mauna-vrata* [vow of silence] . . .

After thinking it over I rejected the idea of *mauna-vrata*. It seems somehow artificial. I have already come to appreciate that spiritual life for me means management, travel, writing, and *sādhana*. At present I am receiving messages every day of the activities in my G.B.C. zone. I am also answering letters, and sometimes I speak on the telephone. I do not see a spiritual advantage in giving these things up. If the doctor insists I do so for medical reasons, that is a different thing, but so far he has not.

I am not interested in spiritual recreation—"samādhi" or *bhajan*s—while recuperating. I am not that advanced in spiritual life. Kṛṣṇa consciousness without reading and writing? Without devotees' association and preaching in the temples? Even to consider the possibility of *mauna-vrata* and seclusion makes me more inclined to just the opposite—to return in full strength to the front lines where I belong.

But it's a fact that for now there is not much I can do.

Baladeva's note suggests a way to make the restrictions more spiritually interesting, but my plan is different. Although I am restricting myself and my day is mostly dedicated to physical recovery, I'm still plugged into the world of ISKCON. My interest in writing is also undying; I still aspire to sometimes catch and share a glimpse of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

April Snow

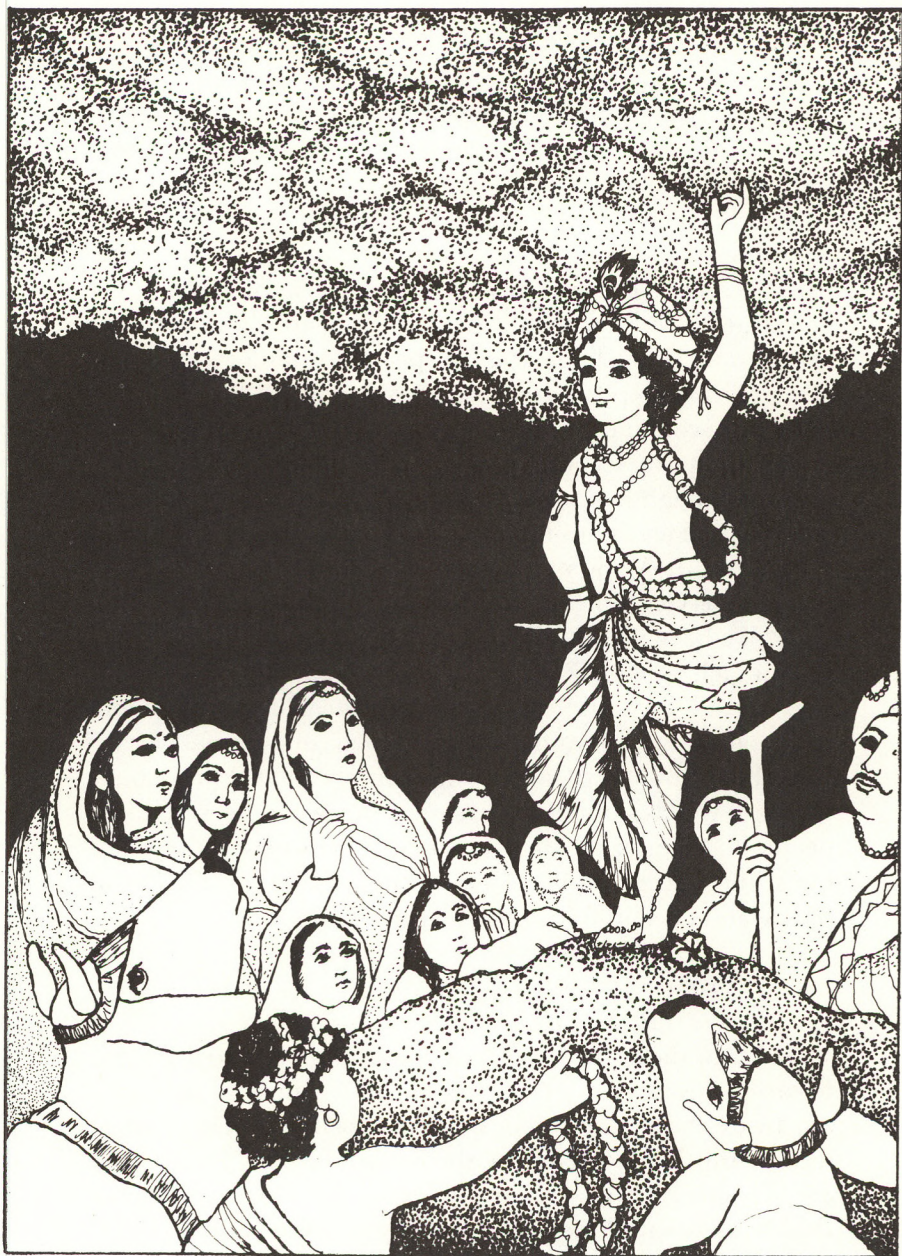
An April snowstorm covers
every path and branch,
but no one takes it seriously.
By afternoon not a drop remains.
We recommence spring.
Why don't I see fearlessly
that everything is come-and-go
as I saw in that storm?

Appreciation

Reading out loud
Prabhupāda's *Light of the Bhāgavata*,
my disciple exclaimed,
"This is a wonderful book!
Prabhupāda makes it so attractive
for devotees and nondevotees too!
The examples from the land and the people!"

I also appreciate Prabhupāda's books. I am impressed with how he establishes the historical truth of the accounts in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The most important thing for the neophyte reader is to accept the existence of Kṛṣṇa in a literal way. Otherwise, even if nectarean *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa or advanced states of devotional service are described, the hearer will think it is mythology. Prabhupāda writes,

They accept the statements of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to be allegorical, and they try to interpret them in their own way. But factually the Lord lifted the hill in the presence of all the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, as corroborated by great *ācāryas* and authors like



“Factually the Lord lifted the Govardhana in the presence of all the residents of Vṛndāvana.”

Vyāsadeva and Nārada. Everything about the Lord—His activities, pastimes, and uncommon features—should be accepted as is, and in this way, even in our present condition we can understand the Lord.

Prabhupāda's constant effort to convince us of the literal truth of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* makes his presentation great and powerful. Especially in Kali-yuga people are slow and faithless, and there is a huge army of speculators and atheists who are conditioning people to disbelieve. Prabhupāda's clear purports have convinced many intelligent persons—even in Kali-yuga—that the seemingly fantastic events of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, although beyond material conception, are reality. Unless spiritual teachings have this potency to convince people of the truth of the Vedic statements and of the need to practice devotional service, they are useless, like ornaments on a dead body. We have yet to fully appreciate how Śrīla Prabhupāda has singlehandedly gone against the predominant atheistic tide of Kali-yuga and effectively presented Kṛṣṇa. We sometimes glibly say, "Prabhupāda preached all over the world." But the astounding fact is not simply that Prabhupāda traveled widely, but that wherever he went he convinced people to give up all their previously held material conceptions and accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This he did by his purity and his faithfulness to the *paramparā*.

THOUGHTS WHILE HEARING A READING FROM THE NECTAR OF DEVOTION

As I hear the narration of how Nārada cursed two demigods to take birth as trees in the courtyard of Nanda Mahārāja, I am aware that nondevotees would not believe it. Do I believe it? Yes. But how to convince the agnostics? The nondevotees are all suffering in the well of ignorance (as was I until Prabhupāda saved me). It is my duty to extend a rope to save them. So I write my essays and poems, and they become a rope from devotional service connecting me to the agnostic world. Prahlāda Mahārāja said, "I do not wish to be liberated alone,

leaving aside all these poor fools and rascals.” (*Bhāg.* 7.9.44) And so in that mood I try to connect them to Kṛṣṇa with the rope of devotional service.

More questions: What does it mean to believe? Here come the intellectual, philosophical arguments. Epistemology enters and we logically reply that knowledge received through *paramparā* is the firmest form of knowledge, superior to speculation, sense perception, and theories postulated by imperfect minds. I have repeated these answers before gatherings of college students and faculty and have seen first-hand how Prabhupāda’s books turn back the skeptics’ opposition. The best the atheists can do is reach a stand-off—they with their authorities, we with ours. When I see the choice I immediately favor our side, the great sages in *paramparā*. Prabhupāda is right; he and Vyāsadeva are true. Although I hold onto the rope connecting me to the world of agnostic reasoning, at the same time I enter more the mellows of hearing *Nectar of Devotion*, learning, relishing, and praying to be more appreciative. I hope as a result to become more convinced, more attracted to *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, better able to make a convincing, attractive presentation of this knowledge to the world.

Anyone can see I am a person of Kali-yuga. I was born at the beginning of World War II, grew up tending to victory gardens in public school in Queens, went to high school when Elvis Presley was king, entered the U.S. Navy—I know the people and they know me. I am like them. I talk like them (my language is regular New York City speech), and I know what they know. They can see who I am, but the fact is I have experienced a major change. A spiritual transformation has taken place (and it is not something crazy like “snapping”). When others hear from me, they hear from a person like themselves going further into Kṛṣṇa consciousness, struggling, achieving, mixing in the waters of devotional service, receiving the causeless blessings of the genuine spiritual master, becoming saved from the worst features of this age. And a few of them may decide to follow.

Recuperation

School bell rings
as I sit here.
Walk later
chanting—hearing,
patience, waiting.

Daily News

The latest news:
my Deities
wore silver crowns,
blue-silver dresses;
a strong wind knocked
branches onto the roof;
I wrote in the morning,
“I’m getting a little better,”
but by afternoon I relapsed.
My desire is to work:
Journal and Poems,
Back to Godhead,
but my head says, “No.”

April 7

Baladeva and the other devotees supply me with many gadgets and amenities. I have only to mention that I might like to have something and they come up with it. I have to be careful of this since a spiritual master should never use his disciples to gain material things.

Today while Paramahansa and Baladeva were massaging me I fell silent and again thought of the many comforts and services they give me. But rather than feeling guilty, I felt grave and considered the responsibilities that I have as spiritual master. As long as I represent Kṛṣṇa, my disciples are actually benefiting by offering these services. Without a spiritual master they would offer their services to some mundane object or person, so there is nothing wrong with accepting their services. But everything has to be used to glorify Kṛṣṇa.

While walking I heard a tape of Prabhupāda discussing this. He said very proudly and confidently that the devotee gets the very best things because he is working for Kṛṣṇa. He gave the example of how in America his devotees are sometimes criticized for having bright faces, new cars, and good food. But why not? Prabhupāda said. Why shouldn't they have the best? They're Kṛṣṇa's devotees and Kṛṣṇa gives them the best. He protects them.

Poverty is not a requisite for becoming a spiritual master so if they wish, let the disciples bring nice things; let the *guru* use them. But everything must factually be used in service to Kṛṣṇa. And what is actually service to Kṛṣṇa? That has to be ascertained by following the example of Prabhupāda and by preaching to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

April 8

BEYOND DOGMATICS

To the nondevotees a *guru* is a monstrosity. They object to seeing someone being worshiped whom they think is like them. Some even argue that a person advocating a particular theology should not try to convince others. Some writers and thinkers question the honesty and artistic sensibilities of anyone who advocates one position absolutely. As Howard Nemerov states in *Journal of the Fictive Life*: "I have been twenty years in the poetry business without, so far as I can say, telling people what they ought to think; good art tells you only what you do in fact think."

I have also come upon a phrase, "more piety than poesy," to describe religious-minded poets. Again, the idea is that if one is a dedicated religionist, then he cannot produce real poetry because he is always thinking of ways to drive his message home.

Atheists and humanists also question whether a religious practitioner can undergo self-scrutiny. In his book *At a Journal Workshop*, Ira Progoff purportedly teaches how to keep a journal that can lead one to self-actualization. But he several times advises abandoning any particular theological conclusion one might hold. Progoff thinks that if a person already has set con-

clusions, he will always be merely thinking of how to follow those doctrines already accepted and he will not be able to search for or express his true self. "How can you search for yourself if you claim that you already know the truth?" Progoff might say. So if an ordinary spiritualist is decried as being unable to face himself and reality, how much more so the *guru* will be decried by these critics, since the spiritual master is the living personification of scriptural truths and because he allows himself to be worshiped like God.

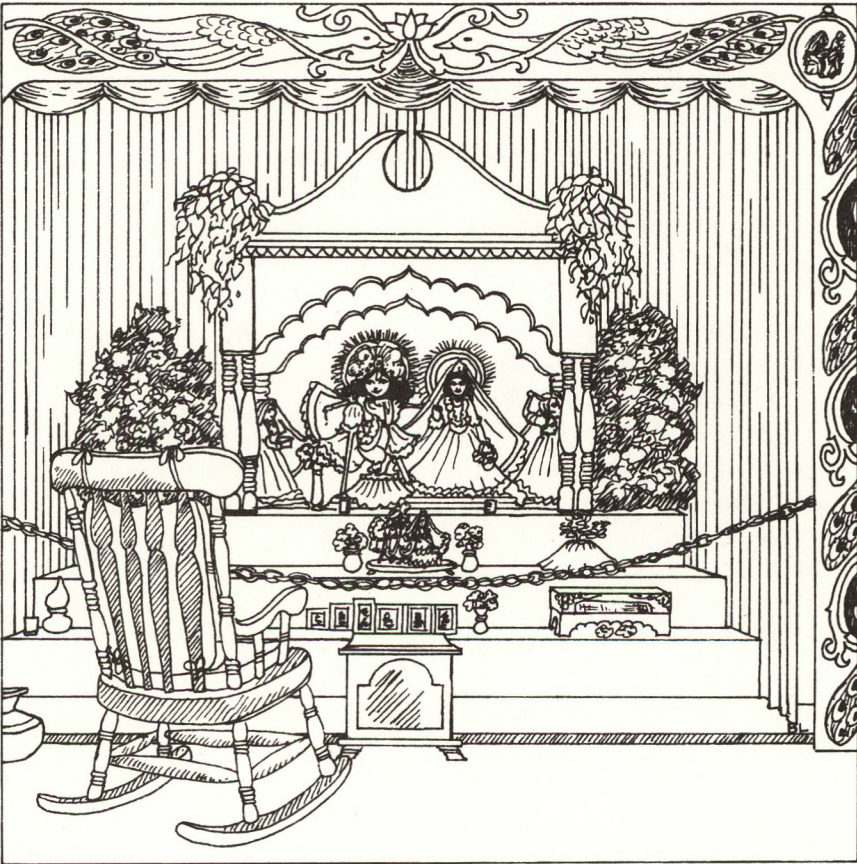
Most of these attacks are based on misconceptions of spiritual life. I recall reading a letter by Vincent van Gogh in which he describes an incident where he declared himself to be "an artist," but a friend of his became offended by this presumption. Van Gogh explains that when he said he was an artist it did not mean that he claimed all perfection in art or that he had himself arrived at the truth. In saying he was an artist he meant, "I am trying." He thus humbly asserts his dedication to art. Similarly, a spiritual master or devotee can acknowledge the existence of the Absolute Truth without claiming to be a perfect devotee. But a devotee should not be condemned for speaking the Absolute Truth as revealed in scripture. And to say that no one can have absolute knowledge is to become an absolutist oneself.

We should look upon the criticisms of the agnostic intellectuals as a challenge. Let us not ourselves be dogmatic or fanatical. Rather, let us prove in our life and works that we can see the world as it is and with fresh, individual vision. Let us assert that we are trying to see Kṛṣṇa in all things, and let us explain logically and philosophically why He is actually the Ultimate Truth. And as we advocate our cause, let it be by works of art. Let us honestly express our own failings while at the same time explaining why we are committed to Kṛṣṇa conscious truth.

On April 8th

In the afternoon I walked with Baladeva
to the entrance of the *dhāma*
then back to Rādhā-Dāmodara,

fingering my beads.
Imagine, in some temples like Tirupati,
I could never go alone in my own rocking chair
to sit before the Deity as long as I liked—
just to travel to India would cost me half my life.
But here in this decorated room,
at 5 P.M., I'm the only one present
beholding Their red-gold and green,
I sit at Their feet
and intend to come each day now,
walking to the *darśana*.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Why don't you pray to God for better health if you're so God conscious? Don't you know any kind of faith healing, like laying on of hands? Why don't you try that?

Answer: We don't want to beg something material from Kṛṣṇa.

Question: But I thought everything was spiritual. So your desire to get well must be spiritual.

Answer: First of all, if I have an illness, it's due to my past sins. In fact, since I am engaged in devotional service, whatever I'm suffering from now is just a token reaction and not the full *karma* for what I've done. But suppose I ask and He cures. Then I've taken some service from Kṛṣṇa. But I should serve Him. Prayers should be, "Let me serve You and love You."

Question: Well, that's why you want to get better isn't it, to serve Him?

Answer: But I can serve Him in any condition. I don't have to be rich or strong or free of pain. Also there are so many diseases and maladies. If I pray today to be cured of a headache, then shall I pray to be cured of pyorrhea tomorrow? Then for backache? Where will it end? When we go to Kṛṣṇa, it should be to surrender and serve. That will automatically include freedom from all miseries as a by-product. So pray to serve.

Question: Do *you* do that?

Answer: A little. I am serving Kṛṣṇa by waiting and seeing what He wants, and I want to get well so I can serve more. I am showing Kṛṣṇa that I am trying to get well by every available means, and I am depending on Him. Everything is up to Him.

Question: May I ask a question?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Why do you always insert Kṛṣṇa consciousness in your answers?

Answer: Because I'm a devotee.

Question: But how is that different from repeating a party line?

Answer: This *is* a party line—Kṛṣṇa's. We are sold out to Him. Whatever He likes, we want to like. But that doesn't make me less of a person, less of an individual, just because I am committed to Kṛṣṇa. Why *shouldn't* I assert Kṛṣṇa consciousness? He is the object of my worship and service.

Question: But you have already admitted you are not completely absorbed in spontaneous love of Kṛṣṇa. I am interested in the wedge between your declared surrender to Kṛṣṇa and where you are actually at.

Answer: Are you trying to create a wedge?

Question: No, I am just asking. Don't you want to know the truth?

Answer: The sad truth is I lack spontaneous love. But Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that if one doesn't have spontaneous thoughts of Kṛṣṇa all the time, then one should at least follow the rules and regulations and in time come to the higher stage.

Question: But if you're only in that rules and regulations stage, then why do you act as *guru*? I thought a *guru* had to be on the topmost platform.

Answer: Where there are no trees, a small tree is a big tree. And as long as I follow the rules and regulations strictly and speak exactly what Kṛṣṇa says and what I have heard my spiritual master say, then it's perfect and I can be *guru*. Nothing else is required.

Question: You've really got the party line down.

Answer: It's Kṛṣṇa's party line.

Question: But who are *you*?

Answer: I am Kṛṣṇa's servant, or the servant of His servant. And your doubt is helping me to establish the fact. But who are you?

April 9

THE MIND'S HABITS

While lying in bed early this morning, it occurred to me more clearly how essential is controlling the mind. My *intelligence* is steady, committed to Kṛṣṇa consciousness by so many serious decisions and considerations. It is not likely that the intelli-

gence will be influenced to give up Kṛṣṇa consciousness or commit sinful activities. But the mind is different. At every moment it is prone to whimsy, to going in the wrong direction. Unless the mind is carefully controlled, it can immediately lead even the steady intelligence down the wrong path.

It starts with any object that comes to its attention. From that object the mind sets out on a path back through memory to previous material life or some other destination far, far away from Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So many *anarthas* can be traced back to the devious activities of the mind. Although we aspire to read and chant purely, to preach boldly and to develop a steady, positive Kṛṣṇa conscious attitude, it is usually the bad habit of the mind to distract us and lead us astray. Reforming mental habits is not easy, but *bhakti-yoga* gives us the way. *Sa vai manah kṛṣṇa padāravindayoh.*

“SURRENDER IS ALL INDIVIDUAL”

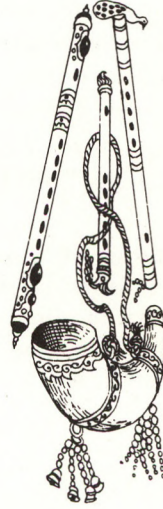
Quotation from Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Neither by conference, by meeting, by passing resolution, if we want to become Kṛṣṇa conscious—that is not possible. It is all individual. I have to surrender to Kṛṣṇa individually. Just like when you go to the sky on aeroplane, it is all individual. If one aeroplane is in danger, other aeroplane cannot save me—that is not possible. Similarly it is all individual. It is all *parataḥ svato vā*. One has to take it seriously, personally—that Kṛṣṇa wants—so I’ll surrender. Kṛṣṇa says, *sarva dharmān parityajya/ mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*. So I’ll do. Not that when my father shall do, then I will do—or when my husband will do, then I shall do, or my wife will do—no. It is all individual. It is all individual. And there is no restraint. *Ahaituky apratihata*—if you want to surrender to Kṛṣṇa nobody can check it. *Ahaituky apratihata/ jayātmā su-prasīdati*. When you do that individually—collectively when it is done it is good—but it has to be done individually.” (Lecture in Vṛndāvana, 9/21/76)

Causes of Ecstasy

Kṛṣṇa’s flutes, one small, called *veṇu*,

another, bigger, called *muralī*,
and the great favorite of the boys,
the big *vamsulī*,
the buffalo horn used for bugling!
I am hearing them all.

One time a *gopī* saw from a distance
Kṛṣṇa and Subala talking and smiling
and tears came to her eyes.
Sitting back, hearing tape after tape
from *Nectar of Devotion*—
of the body of Kṛṣṇa
of the devotees of Kṛṣṇa,
and of causes of ecstatic love.
It cleans my mind
from the ingrained dirt
of hundreds of lifetimes.



AN ĀCĀRYA OF ILLNESS

The doctor says that rest should not be simply sedentary. He says I should also engage in nonstressful activities. I wish it were as simple as that, “Just become more relaxed, less worried, more physical, less sedentary, and health for service will return.” But it may be a small part, at least, of the whole puzzle.

Nirañjana wrote and asked for advice now that he is sidelined for a few weeks with an injured leg. Other devotees have also written asking how to remain Kṛṣṇa conscious while inactive and how to tolerate pain. Am I becoming an “*ācārya* of illness”?

It is not unusual for devotees to feel guilty when they become ill; they want to do their part and not be maintained by others. *Bhakti-yogīs* are normally so active that they may become at first morose when their physical activities are limited. They suspect themselves of hypochondria, and only when forced do they accept restrictions. When I get better I think I

will understand better the consciousness of the physically indisposed devotee.

The recommended attitude seems to be a plain, straightforward one: do the needful by taking whatever rest and treatment is required to get better. On reaching forty or fifty years and over, we can expect there will always be one malady or another threatening. So we should increasingly apply the philosophy Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

O son of Kuntī, the nonpermanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, O scion of Bharata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.

—Bg. 2.14

April 10

HUMAN INTELLIGENCE

I wrote in a poem about an April snowstorm, “no one takes it seriously,” but last night when the temperature dropped to twenty degrees, at least those *jīvas* in the plant kingdom took it seriously. Some of them, like the tulips and daffodils outside my door, perished. It was also difficult for the birds who came up North thinking it would be spring. This morning I saw a downy woodpecker busily moving from tree to frozen tree looking for something to eat. The birds and beasts survive better than the flowers, but the human being has the greater intelli-



gence to know how to adjust to cold climate.

We weren't very disturbed last night despite the freeze because of our wood-burning stove and well-constructed house. With our intelligence we should make a *simple* arrangement for survival and then concentrate on chanting and hearing.

My Way Is Easy

I know life is hell
in Afghanistan, Iran-Iraq,
El Salvador—
everywhere is war.
The rat kills the mouse,
and the hawk kills the rat.
The man kills the cow,
& the man kills the man.
And time kills them all.
Everywhere killing—
killing and war.

But our way is easy
by the grace of the Lord.
And if it gets hard,
then it will be easy
to remember His name.
Prabhupāda said
it would be that way:
the Lord takes care
of His devotee.

We have topmost knowledge.
Let us show our thanks:
broadcast His glories.

“OUR BODY IS FOR SERVICE TO KṚṢṆA”

An embarrassing aspect of my recovery programs thus far is that I have too little to show for them, even after taking considerable time off, such as the two months in Puerto Rico. The

failure is not mine personally, but a failure of physical health. Yet one cannot help but feel disappointed. Of course, I have to take it philosophically and see that the frail body is up against the powerful material nature which is finally going to win out. One cannot remain healthy indefinitely, and you cannot conquer disease every time.

When Colonel Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken contracted a terminal disease, he remarked that if there was a way to beat the disease, he would find it. Similarly, when Mohammed Ali developed a brain disease, he remarked that he would beat it. But these are pitiful statements. It is not within man's power to beat these things. So at times like these we have to put our philosophy into practice—submit to the force of time (*kāla*), but demonstrate a victorious will to go on serving Kṛṣṇa.

My friends advise me to rest now so I can gain twenty years of active service later. This reveals an appealing, dynamic aspect of *bhakti-yoga*. The *bhakti-yogī* is not interested in giving up the temporary material body and going to the eternal spiritual world. He is *interested*, but that is not his highest goal. The idea of personal salvation contains some selfishness. But the *bhakti-yogī*'s goal is to serve Kṛṣṇa eternally in either a material or spiritual body. He simply wants to serve Kṛṣṇa in any condition. So with that in mind, devotees are encouraging me to recover my health and serve in this body for another twenty or thirty years.

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is such a serious movement for saving people! If we can salvage a preacher, give him his temporary health, that will be important for the furtherance of this mission.

When Sanātana Gosvāmī attempted to give up his life, Lord Caitanya said, "Your body belongs to Me." So my body belongs to Prabhupāda's movement, ISKCON, and to my disciples. Therefore I should take care.

April 12

Paramānanda came over today to make a video film in the



Spring planting and plowing.

cabin. It was a very pleasant exchange. There was no controversy or opposition or strain. But just because some extra lights were turned on and because I had to wait while devotees got the camera ready, I began to get a headache. By the time the performance was over it had gotten pretty bad. After everyone left I had to forego my usual noonday walk and lie down. Another grim reminder of my actual physical condition.

The devotees who are reading to me on tapes from *The Nectar of Devotion* seem to be especially enjoying the chapter on the fraternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Baladeva said that he particularly likes the spirit of frolicking with the boys rather than with the girls. Nītāi dāsa spoke nicely today at the end of his reading, appreciating my drawing them into the network of these amazing pastimes by asking them to read to me. He said that in the whole world, no one but the Vaiṣṇavas are able to relish the extraordinary transcendental subject matter of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His intimate exchanges with pure devotees.

I am also enjoying hearing the tapes. By practice we can learn to hear nicely and in this way enter more deeply into Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. We tend to be so external and impatient that for enjoyment we have to do something to agitate our senses, just as when watching television, the *karmīs* are only moved by sex or violence. To calm down, to sit and hear or read about the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa is outwardly a rather unexciting proposal. But if we can calm our mind and senses, we can enter the most exciting and blissful realm of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

This is More Like Spring

Squirrels, frisky in mating games,
 race through last year's leaves,
 and just today the tulips bloom,
 yellow- and red-striped, open to the sun.
 Bits of green grow here and there,
 and neighbor Hoover's out in his tractor.
 Our men also are planting and plowing,

two teams of oxen underway.
 Where is Kṛṣṇa?
 In *all* these things!
 Don't you see Him?

Dāmodara Daṇḍavat

There is no reason to be round-about,
 to speak of It or Thee
 (God as The Bridge,
 Almighty as the Whale)
 since You have come as Kṛṣṇa.
 Let me go direct to You,
 a rod thrown down
 before Your feet.

April 13

On a tape, a devotee read to me from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* about the condition of the *jīva* soul. He read from a purport about how the minute soul falls into the material world. I was dozing while listening to this section, and my mind drifted. I began to think Prabhupāda was describing how I got ill. Yes, I had health once, but due to some misbehavior I have now become ill. Thus I saw my illness as a microcosm of the larger spiritual illness, the spirit soul's taking on a material body due to material desires. The fallen state of the soul is not permanent, yet once we are in the material world it appears to be the all-in-all, and it is very difficult to get out.

April 14

PERSONAL HAPPINESS

Sitting outdoors. Everywhere around me poison ivy grows. I notice the branch of an ash tree has grown against a peeling sycamore. At the rubbing point, it has completely worn away the sycamore's outer bark. Whenever there is a wind I can hear the branches squeaking. The trees are actually fighting to reach the open portion of the sky so that their topmost branches can receive the sun. At the top level high above the

forest floor there is a final grappling for space. Thus the trees vie with and torture each other, but because they are dull, their pain is not as sharp.

The intricate ways in which the material energy gives advantages as well as disadvantages to each species of life and sets them against each other is very complicated. What we define as happiness is mostly a temporary offsetting of some miserable condition. Some people may even derive aesthetic enjoyment in perceiving the miserable condition of the upward grappling trees or the multi-colored birds as they hop from branch to branch preying on lesser creatures. One man's food is another's poison.

Earlier as I sat here I began to come under the spell of the moving water in the creek and the pleasing sounds of the rapids as it passes over the shallows. I spotted robins and woodpeckers and other songbirds whose names I don't know. Soft breezes added to the enchantment, and I considered entering a peaceful, lazy flow of oneness with the natural surroundings. For a while I even stopped chanting my *japa* and allowed myself to enter this mood. But I can see that such lulls are temporary. To think of such a mood as being some ultimate state is illusion. The slightest change in temperature and the breeze becomes chilling; or my "meditation" is broken by the scurrying of a nearby squirrel or by an extra-loud squeak from the contending tree branches in the wind. These things remind me that I don't belong in an impersonal oneness of material elements and that even if I attempt to enter there, it is not possible to be happy for long.

And my hours and days in this lifetime are constantly diminishing. What is actually accomplished in this day? According to the *Bhāgavatam*, all that happens between the rising and the setting of the sun is that we simply lose another day from our life's duration. Except for those who use their time in hearing the glories of the Lord.

At least this woodland retreat is a soothing, healing place as I continue my slow battle to control my headache syndrome. Twice in the last three days I could not control my headaches

and they ruined my normal activities. Once during the film-making session with Paramānanda and when, as a member of the Privilege Committee, I heard a blasphemous letter from an ISKCON attacker and replied to it with a letter of my own. It is disappointing that even brief forays into the world of management and normal affairs produces more headaches. I intend to strictly follow my recuperation program, but I cannot exclude from my life all normal ISKCON activities in hopes of getting better. I expected that by now my body would have built up enough strength to endure occasional action, and so it is disappointing. So in times like these, the healing features of the creekside are a blessing and I don't deny it, even while I cautiously note that such peaceful moods are just a temporary medicine.

I read in Walt Whitman's prose journal, *Specimen Days*, how near the end of his life he often entered into woodland solitude. While sitting on a tree stump he would glorify in writing the peace of the woods and try to enter a vague, impersonal beatitude. Like the woods themselves, his prose sketches are enchanting, but in the end all impersonal meditation will come to naught. We are always persons, and our only real happiness is to revive our personal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Sitting in the woodside, I apply the soothing balm of solitude to my brows and hope that Kṛṣṇa will find me sincere enough to allow me to return one day to an active life of devotional service.

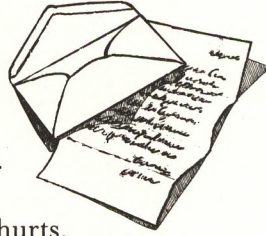
In the Mail

There are poison pens
that attack the heart.
One arrived today.

Digging up the muck,
envying the leaders,
trying to replace them.

Walk in the woods

to forget it.
Take action
against it.
Doing right is
the antidote
and the defense.



Yes, the poison hurts,
but it's not fatal.
"Only Kṛṣṇa can kill me."

April 15

The artist or diarist shares himself. But this doesn't mean he should tell facts about everyone else in his life, for such disclosures might hurt people. In this regard I was thinking that as spiritual master I have to protect my disciples by not telling them things about myself which would jeopardize their spiritual lives. Yet as much as possible I want to tell them things about my private life, my "secret self." I think it will actually help them to develop faith in me and in this process. I want to tell them honestly that just as they are persons, I am a person. And I want to relate to them my conviction in my position as spiritual master, as representative of God, based on my conviction of Prabhupāda's empowering me to do this through *paramparā*. I can admit things about myself in such a way that it will not hurt our relationship but will actually strengthen it. At least that's the premise that I am going on in trying to write a diary and give it to others. I admit that this diary is not a total revelation of all secrets. Some private thoughts are merely petty and some may be harmful to others. But there should be a trust. We should be as open as possible.

Why do I strive so much for honest expressions through personal writing? Because honesty is rare in Kali-yuga. In a world of cheaters and cheated, it's imperative, therefore, that devotees not abandon this last remaining principle of religion.

The nondevotees will gloat if they see hypocrisy or dishon-

esty in a devotee, but they may sympathize with us if we are always honest with them. Only the devotee knows how to be honest in the absolute sense. Only he knows that he is the tiny part and parcel of the Lord.

I may not be one hundred percent honest with either myself or others, yet with all my faults I should go ahead and function as the servitor of the Lord's devotees. That is real truthfulness.

Dāmodara Darśana

Our garden's
pale yellow daffodils
we offer to You,
while from the kitchen plays
a '66 *kīrtana*.
Upstairs, children thump.
Two men chant *japa* behind me,
as I gaze upon You.

You know well my failure
to love You,
though my intellect is satisfied
with śāstric explanation
& though You are my worshipable Lord.
I believe in the mystery of Your forms,
appearing on the altar
to bless us as Rādhā-Dāmodara.

All-auspicious Person,
Supreme Enjoyer,
Personality of Godhead,
please save me
from mediocre *bhajana*.
Or what shall I do?
I know: just continue.

I have been thinking about taking a world tour, visiting all ISKCON temples, giving lectures there about Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa consciousness and writing about my experiences in

a “Journal and Poems” format. This may seem like a crazy plan to be hatching while at the same time I am supposed to be simply resting to get rid of headaches. But when I think of what I’d really like to do, this kind of plan occurs.

WORLD PILGRIMAGE PROPOSAL

I have an idea for a book, a travelog of all the ISKCON centers around the world. One objection might be that in some of the places it would be hard to disregard all the controversies and schisms that exist. And in some places there are obvious discrepancies. How to deal with that? The purpose of the book would be to glorify Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa and ISKCON in its many branches. Therefore, I could seek out what is good and glorious while not dwelling on the many bad things. In the mood of Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, I would see only the good. And there is much good to see. And even when I see the deficiencies, I will not dwell on them but write about them in a philosophical, nonpolitical way. I would be openly going for the honey in each place rather than being like a fly and going to the sore.

I would not attempt to write a travelog in the usual sense. I would not, for example, tell about all the different sights of New Vrindaban. Rather, I would give some impressions of my visit there in the “Journal and Poems” style. So my purposes would be: to make a world pilgrimage; to glorify Prabhupāda; to show that ISKCON is alive; to share the nectar by telling everyone about the different centers; and to make poems about different places in ISKCON. In this way I dream for the future.

Everyone Knows Rādhā-Dāmodara

Everyone knows
Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are stone,
brought to Vṛndāvana from Jaipur.
But thousands come to worship Them.
Everyone knows
Jagannātha in Purī



Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara

is made of wood.
 But thousands flock to see Him.
 And Tirupati's Bārajī—
 everyone knows He's stone.
 Yet He is Bhagavān.

And here at Gītā-nāgarī
 everyone knows Rādhā-Dāmodara.

Pink-and-blue dressed, playful boy,
 You are Kṛṣṇa—
 whether here or in Your gorgeous Mandirs.
 As I behold You today
 with Your silver crown and flute,
 Your soft, pleated silks,
 this prayer comes to mind:
 "Please don't grant me my material desires.
 I want to be detached.
 Please take my lust away."

April 17

They say that the nuclear bombs could destroy everything. If so, Śrīla Prabhupāda's books would not be available. But they cannot destroy everything. Everything is within the control of Kṛṣṇa, and they cannot control or destroy Him. He allows them their childish, demonic ways (by which they may tear down part of this planet) just as a father allows his child to build and destroy sand castles along the shore.

True, our bodies will eventually be destroyed. And for most people, that is everything. Most people don't know of the soul, how it will survive the death of the mortal body and go on to another body. People think that unless they *feel* the soul, it doesn't exist. Or unless the scientists or the poets certify it, then it is a myth. But these things don't have to be felt "within one's bones" to be confirmed. The soul doesn't depend on my own or someone else's speculations. No one can know the soul by ordinary methods of intuition or measurement.

Spiritual knowledge comes to us from *śāstra*, just as light and heat come down to us from the sun. *Śāstra* says the soul is very small and is materially inconceivable. And the Supreme Soul, which is unlimitedly great, is also inconceivable for a tiny human being. He is the all-pervading fact. He is the Absolute Truth. We can understand Him to some small degree when He reveals Himself to us in reciprocation with our devotion.

Love for Kṛṣṇa

“The flower is there,
the consciousness is there,
the love is there.
Just change it
to Kṛṣṇa.”

Where is love?
Within—
past your desires
go in.
But all I see is mixed.
Go in further.
I can't, I'm blocked.

If I have to see from here,
let my outer vision be magnified,
to see more clearly
Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā and, beside Them, the *gopīs*,
& Their sincere, human servants,
and this farm *dhāma*,
living here, the plough and oxen,
these I can see.

I can also see
green flat leaves of *tulasī*.
And I can sense
love for Kṛṣṇa
is all there is:

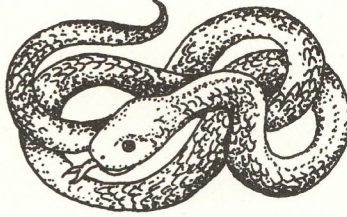
tho You I fail
it's You I crave.

April 18

NEW ARRIVALS

Wriggling garter snake on the path; bugs, spiderwebs stretched across the path mostly unseen until you walk into them. So far, there is no invasion of mosquitoes or ants, although it is inevitable that they will come. Especially the mosquitoes will change everything when they arrive.

I am not content to write like a naturalist. The real need is to be Kṛṣṇa conscious and to tell others about it. Yet, since nature is all around us, it is logical and natural that I seek Kṛṣṇa consciousness here. And the *ācāryas* are inviting us to read about Kṛṣṇa not only in the Sanskrit texts but in this book of outdoor days and nights.



Warm, dusty wind; temperature climbing fifty degrees from morning to afternoon. The sun disc sets behind the silo. The land—manure is dumped in and then ploughed under by oxen. “Who is running the teams?” I asked Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa. A car goes by filled with Vaiṣṇava mothers and their children.

The temple windows are open and the aroma of the cooks’ next offering to the Deities comes from the kitchen. The bright altar of Rādhā-Dāmodara in Their Thursday outfit, “multi-colored Gaṅgā-Yamunā” (so called because it contains both gold and silver *jāri* sewing). The *tulasī* plant wears a bright pink skirt. These are the mixtures that lift my spirits and give

intimations of well-being. So what if physical health eludes me? This is perfect, for now.

Kālachandajī

Kālachandajī, small black moon,
and Vṛṣabhānu's bright gold Daughter,
You two dance in Your own pleasure
beyond all philosophies.
You are the center of all things,
known only to the dearest.
You appear as humans
but hold supreme dominion over all.
You kindly allow us
to care for You, to call You "mine."
You are my Deity.
You blackish,
gorgeously-dressed actor,
You are not an aid to meditation
but the goal is Yourself
with Your flute and cowherd rod.
Please never leave us; give us *utsāha*!



NEGATIVES

"The spiritual world is stupid," said a small boy at the playground where Trilokeśvara's five-year old son, Narottama dāsa, played. But Narottama gave the boy an apple.

Behind spectacles, the glinty, unfriendly eyes of a neighbor passing us in his Ford pick-up truck, cigarette dangling in his mouth. But I might look unfriendly and strange to him as I pedal by.

The down-glancing daughter leaving the Beaver house. If she had looked up I would have said, "Good morning." Was she instructed not to speak to us? I should have greeted her anyway.

The tied-up dog who *always* runs after us as we pass, lunging to the length of his rope, growling and barking, then retreating to his "Beware of the Dog" hovel. What can I say of him? Good guard.

I avoid the sight of the Spruce Hill Luncheonette at the bottom of the hill. Maybe it is me. I am not so open.

But what is truly "negative"? Is it all in the mind? Ah, negative—that's my offensive chanting, lackadaisical attitude, bodily attachment, lack of devotion. You need positive *bhakti* if you want to get free.

April 19

THE REAL WORLD

As we were carrying the canoe down to the creek early this morning, it occurred to me that I am not living in what most people consider "the real world." Today's heroes are not our heroes. We don't relate to what most people are trying to enjoy or what most people are suffering from. And as we disregard the world, so worldly persons disregard us. Many see Kṛṣṇa consciousness as a narrow religious experience, a denial of life.

Those who are intensely engaged in crucial worldly concerns are actually being dragged along in illusion, controlled by the modes of material nature. Today's heroes—Ronald Reagan, Clint Eastwood, Michael Jackson, Jane Fonda, Tina Turner, and on and on—whom millions follow and adore, will soon be forgotten, their fame extinguished like the light of a

firefly that appears and disappears within a moment.

The plight of worldly people is described elaborately in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. After a misspent lifetime, the souls of such worldly people are dragged down into forms of life filled with ignorance and suffering. To be famous within a lifetime devoid of real spiritual inquiry or knowledge is to be a big animal praised by small animals. But to devote one's life to Kṛṣṇa and to endeavor to bring this enlightenment to others is the greatest activity for a human being. But the fruitive workers disregard all this. Even if they maintain religious sentiments, their activities show that they are serious only about worldly matters.

At the present time it is very difficult for Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees to be influential or to provide leadership in government, education, or the arts. We are mostly shut out, although we make our own attempts as best we can to influence others in these fields. And we can create devotees among the innocent persons.

I was thinking this morning, somewhat regretfully, that many people will not be interested in the kind of life that I am describing. They will see my life as that of a spiritualist, quiet and insulated. Devotees (and some aspiring devotees) will be interested—but I cannot change my journal in order to increase my fame and popularity. When preachers try to do this, they risk losing the spiritual essence. Besides, I don't regret being left out of a life of miserable work for temporary, illusory results.

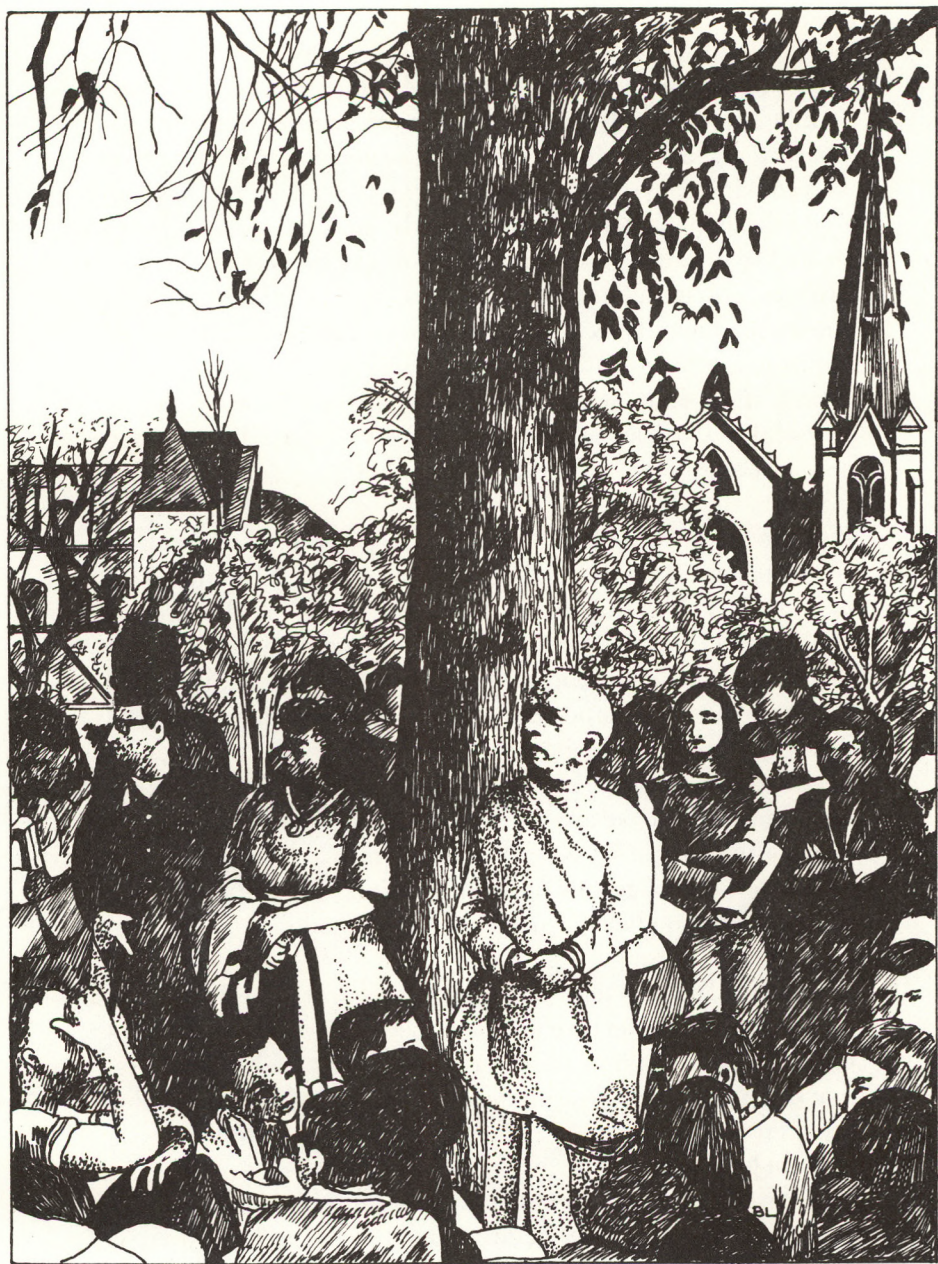
As we pushed our small canoe into the creek and began paddling against the stream, I felt grateful to be living in the shelter of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but regretful that the world's madness is taken to be real and that so few will know spiritual happiness.

MEMORIES OF ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA

The other day I was speaking with devotees about how physically strong and vigorous Prabhupāda was when he first started his movement in New York City. After his stroke in

1967, that physical vigor was never quite the same. Although as the years went by he continued to manifest more and more beauty and wisdom and potency to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, those who were with him in the first days in New York City saw a level of physical vigor that was never quite the same after the stroke. A prominent sign of Prabhupāda's youthful vigor was that he always led the *kīrtanas* himself, and once a week during the autumn season he would sing loudly in Tompkins Square Park. Anyone who has performed *kīrtana* outdoors, projecting one's voice hour after hour so the crowd can hear, knows how much energy it takes. Prabhupāda would chant for two hours, stop and give a short speech, and then chant again for an hour. Afterwards he would walk back to the temple and give a lecture, then go on and on talking in his room. Also in those days there was no secretary to screen visitors. It was not unusual for Prabhupāda to talk throughout the day and night with few breaks and little rest.

I have described in *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* Volume Three how I was once talking to Prabhupāda when suddenly there sprang into my mind the images of iron nails and a bull. I thought of these things not in any offensive way, but they sprang to my mind as symbols of virility and vital presence. We have heard how in the past centuries Madhvācārya combined a manly physical strength with saintliness and mental power. So the combination is not incompatible. And although Prabhupāda was seventy years old, he also had this kind of strength and presence, especially in the early days. After his stroke in 1967, it became obvious to all his disciples that *they* also had to work to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The waning of Prabhupāda's physical strength acted to make the devotees mature quickly. Prior to that, we had a tendency to look with glee upon Prabhupāda's pastimes, as if we were just little children watching the adventures of our father-hero without a thought that we were supposed to follow in his footsteps. And from the time of Prabhupāda's '67 illness, for the first time his disciples approached him to do the more tender loving services of nursing and caring for him and sometimes trying to caution



Śrīla Prabhupāda in Tompkins Square Park, autumn, 1966

him from too much work. In the beginning, the disciples were indifferent to Prabhupāda's doing even menial duties in his apartment, such as cleaning up after a sacrifice, housecleaning and cooking. But gradually they began to realize that they had to do these things for Prabhupāda. His sudden delicate health helped to impress this on them. Prabhupāda was to be served. He was not someone to take service from. Prabhupāda continued to show physical strength even in his last days, and he continued to travel by plane. And in his last years he showed even further opulences of spirituality, driving himself despite physical maladies and continuing the work of a healthy person, although his health was diminishing.

During a November 1966 lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed that all human beings are imperfect, no matter how expert they pretend to be. In the midst of his lecture Prabhupāda began to cough, and he paused to drink water. While the evening crowd watched him, Śrīla Prabhupāda remarked, "See our imperfectness. We have got imperfectness! Talking something. So how we can become perfect?" Then he began to cough again, and he continued to give his own case as an example: "So, we are under the stringent rules and regulations of the nature." Even while in the midst of an apparently uncontrollable coughing fit, Prabhupāda proved himself liberated from the body as he used his "imperfection" to enlighten us.

Prabhupāda also used his coughing as part of his preaching during a morning lecture in December 1966. After several prolonged interruptions by severe coughing, Prabhupāda remarked, "Just see how material entanglement, *karma*, this body. At any moment. At any moment you can be finished. *You* will not be finished, but your activities. Therefore we should be very careful, because we have to pull on with this body. Because unless you are perfect in understanding Kṛṣṇa, there is no relief from this body." Prabhupāda then went on to say how one could never be free of the material body, even by suicide. But it was another magical display of preaching dexterity. Al-

though in the grips of a bad winter cough, Prabhupāda delivered his transcendental lesson about material frailties.

EARLY MORNING CLASSES WITH ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA 1966

What was it that was so special about them? On the tapes, the only sounds to be heard are morning sounds—Prabhupāda’s voice and the light early morning traffic outside the storefront. Six or seven o’clock, not as intense or passionate as at night. And we who gathered, we weren’t guests; we were the serious ones. “Out of thousands of millions of people in the city, some of you have kindly come to hear,” Prabhupāda would say. By gathering in the morning we felt more of a bond. We were hearing seriously, being trained. And the lectures were on *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* instead of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Prabhupāda introduced us to the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* by saying, “Now since you are more advanced . . .” Out of millions who came, only a few could know God.

Prabhupāda inspired us to come forward, surrender and take up *bhakti-yoga*. For the evening meetings, we were Prabhupāda’s supporters, and we were excited by the social event—seeing how many people had come, seeing if it would be a success, if there would be a challenge. It was evening excitement, with electric lights, more activity outside on the streets and Prabhupāda “on stage.”

But in the morning, Prabhupāda was more confidential. His voice was quiet, but deep, softer but with more intimate resonance. And he even looked more at home.

MISCONCEPTIONS

When I pick up a non-*paramparā* book that deals with Vedic literature and philosophy, I very often immediately open to a place where the author specifically shows his ignorance. When I received *The Dictionary of Religion and Philosophy*, I looked up “Kṛṣṇa,” and I’ve not been able to refer to the book since. The author horribly misunderstands Lord Kṛṣṇa to be a Rajputa chief who was made out to be God by His followers. (To this

view Prabhupāda would reply, "If He's just an aborigine chief, how could He have spoken the *Bhagavad-gītā*?"

When I picked up a copy of *The Journey of the Pilgrim* (which even some Godbrothers said contained spiritual inspiration for devotees because of the emphasis on reciting the Jesus prayer), I somehow immediately found an anti-Vedic pulse. At one point in the book the pilgrim is defending the Jesus prayer to a skeptic. The skeptic says, "Oh, reciting the names of God? That's followed by the Indians, isn't it?" And the pilgrim says, "No, the Indians got it from the Christians and ruined it."

I realize that a lot of such foolish criticism has to do with the critics' failure to contact a bona fide *guru*. They lack real understanding and so think of Vedic knowledge as "Hindu religion." But whatever the reason, when there is real ignorance as to even the historicity of Vedic knowledge, how can I accept the idea that the author has wisdom?

Similarly, while reading a collection of teachings by the ancient Christian ascetics, the *Philokalia*, I very soon stumbled upon letters to Christian missionaries in India. Seeing the monks' serious attempts to convert the "ignorant heathens of India," how could I read on reverently and take intimate spiritual guidance from those who know less than I know? Even though I am not an ascetic, I can teach the grave monastics the highest spiritual knowledge. This miracle has been described by Śrīla Prabhupāda in *The Nectar of Devotion* where he explains that even an uneducated boy can become Kṛṣṇa conscious and free himself of all sinful habits despite the activities of big, big philosophers who oppose devotional service to the Lord.

When a copy of Thoreau's journals arrived here, I almost immediately opened to a page where Thoreau had something sarcastic to say about the temple worship of "the Hindoos." Thoreau describes hearing a churchbell, and he associates it with all kinds of ancient primitive religious rites the like of which he has rejected. To him, the churchbell he hears in Massachusettes is no different from the "clanging of bells by Hindoos in a subterranean temple." Although he never saw a

Hindu temple, he imagined them to be places of superstition and barbarism. (A more vicious, modern counterpart is the portrayal of Hinduism in the Hollywood movie, "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom.") Thoreau* in many ways appreciated Vedic scriptures like the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and he also can be excused on the grounds that he never met a genuine spiritual master. He had a hand-me-down misconception about Deity worship. But, again, while we can have a forgiving attitude, we cannot accept such a person as our teacher.

In recent centuries, India itself has been the greatest spawning ground of misconceptions about Vedic life. The doctrine of impersonal monism and the plethora of self-styled incarnations and *gurus* cannot be blamed on the Mongul or British invaders or on speculative Westerners. Prabhupāda used to say that millions of people in India claim to have read the *Bhagavad-gītā* three hundred times, and yet they don't understand a word of it.

So it is not an exaggeration to say that the highest knowledge contained in the Vedic scriptures was for many centuries known and practiced only by a relatively few devotees within this world. Only by the vision of magnanimous benefactors like Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura did the universal science of love of God come to be introduced to countries all over the world. And it was His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda who, like a modern equivalent of the Matsya incarnation, carried the almost forgotten message of Lord Caitanya and Lord Kṛṣṇa across the oceans. Through his efforts, new generations of devotees are now establishing and preserving Kṛṣṇa consciousness as a transcultural way of life. Real appreciation of Kṛṣṇa's teachings has still hardly even

*Thoreau held misconceptions of Indian spiritual philosophy more basic than his ignorance of temple worship. Yet at the same time, he had an attraction for the depth of the *Vedas*. "The Hindoos are more serenely and thoughtfully religious," wrote Thoreau in his journal, "than the Hebrews. They have perhaps a purer, more independent and impersonal knowledge of God." Thoreau was eclectic, and he always included Hinduism within his mixture: "I like Brahma, Hari, Buddha, The Great Spirit, as well as God."

begun, but at least the land is “plowed and planted,” and even now fruits are in evidence. There is no chance that Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be simply rejected by those who are actually searching for the truth. If there are any modern day Thoreaus, they can receive bona fide knowledge about Deity worship and the history of Vedic culture. Knowledge of the facts is more available and despite so many seemingly impending apocalypses, there is more hope in Kali-yuga than ever before.

THE ATTRACTIONS OF PRABHUPĀDA'S PREACHING

I was listening to a tape of Prabhupāda explaining to an M.A. philosophy student the nature of *ātmā*. Prabhupāda explained it so nicely that I became very happy just hearing it. He explained that the *ātmā* is *sac-cid-ānanda*. The nature of the self is to feel blissful. “Why do I like this flower?” Prabhupāda said. “Because I enjoy it. And why have you become a philosophy student? For knowledge. And why don't we want to die? Because we're eternal.” Prabhupāda's masterfully attractive handling of the questions and his gravity as *guru* made me very proud and happy to be his disciple. When the philosophy student interjected and tried to ask more questions, Prabhupāda said, “Just hear, just hear.”

Certainly I cannot explain anything as expertly as Prabhupāda. But on the other hand, hearing from him makes me confident that my duty is to go on explaining things as he has taught me, just as long as I don't act as if I am actually surpassing him. Prabhupāda surely didn't want us to be silent but to expand the message as he taught it. So I have to continue writing in that mood, explaining the nature of *ātmā*, *sac-cid-ānanda*, in Prabhupāda's footsteps, and whenever possible reminding others of the particular attractiveness of His Divine Grace, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śubhānanda sent me an essay of his to review. At the end of his letter, he wrote, “I hope this finds you well, and if not, tolerating it with good cheer.”

Yes, I am cheerful, especially at certain times of the day.

Today after my morning exercise I felt “good.” I felt a sense of accomplishment when I dictated a rough version of my monthly column, “Notes from the Editor,” for *Back to Godhead*, and while on my noon walk I spoke into a tape recorder some thoughts about Kṛṣṇa consciousness and other religions that also left me in good spirits. That’s how I feel, but how does Kṛṣṇa feel about me? How does Śrīla Prabhupāda feel about me? I can’t say, “When I’m pleased, They are pleased.” But what is true is that if by my actions They are pleased, then I’ll be pleased to such a degree there will be no mistaking it. And all other desires will vanish. *Svāmin kṛtārtho ’smi varam na yāce*: “My dear Lord Viṣṇu, now that I see You, I have no other desires. I am completely satisfied.”

At around 5:00 every afternoon for the past week I have been walking to the temple, sitting before Rādhā-Dāmodara and writing rough notes for a daily poem about Their Lordships. I then go back to the cabin and type up a draft of a poem. But yesterday the flow of words stopped, nor could I write anything today. It occurred to me that maybe I was in too much of a *karma-kāṇḍīya* mood toward the Lord, expecting Him to deliver me a poem in exchange for my kindly coming to see Him.

Seasonal signs: patches of wildflowers in the forest and meadows, white and purple Spring Beauties, Virginia



bluebells. On the new forest land, a delicious pink-purple bloom, the Judas tree. Dandelions starting. Anthills. The groundhog who lives by the riverbank has been coming up more. But he's very timid about showing himself, unlike the squirrels, probably because he can't move so fast. Today no less than six canoes filled with Boy Scouts cruised by as part of a weekend outing. Some men on the farm worked bare-chested, as the temperature rose to ninety. Radio predicted that over the weekend most of the fruit trees will blossom.

THE TIGER OF TIME

Recurring dream: Traveling somewhere, being frustrated by various obstacles, transportation difficulties, lost, detained. Sometimes I forget my destination or the purpose of my travels. I take this as a symbol of the soul's attempt to travel back to home, back to Godhead. In lower species, we become completely distracted and have no idea even where we're supposed to be going. In human life we have an idea, but there are distractions.

Another recurring dream: Attacks by vicious animals, like tigers. The mystic philosopher Durkheim, who met Prabhupāda in Hamburg, mentioned to him a recurring dream about a tiger. When Durkheim began to explain his dream, Prabhupāda said we are all pursued by the tiger of time. This means death.

April 20

Today Advaita Ācārya came to give me a medical check-up and consultation. He's coming again on Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva's appearance day in a couple of weeks, and bringing with him a busload of fifty members of the Hindu community. Although Advaita Ācārya has been very strict that I not give any classes, he asked if I could speak to the group when he comes on May 4th.

A few devotees with terminal diseases have gone to live in our Vṛndāvana temple in order to pass their last days in the

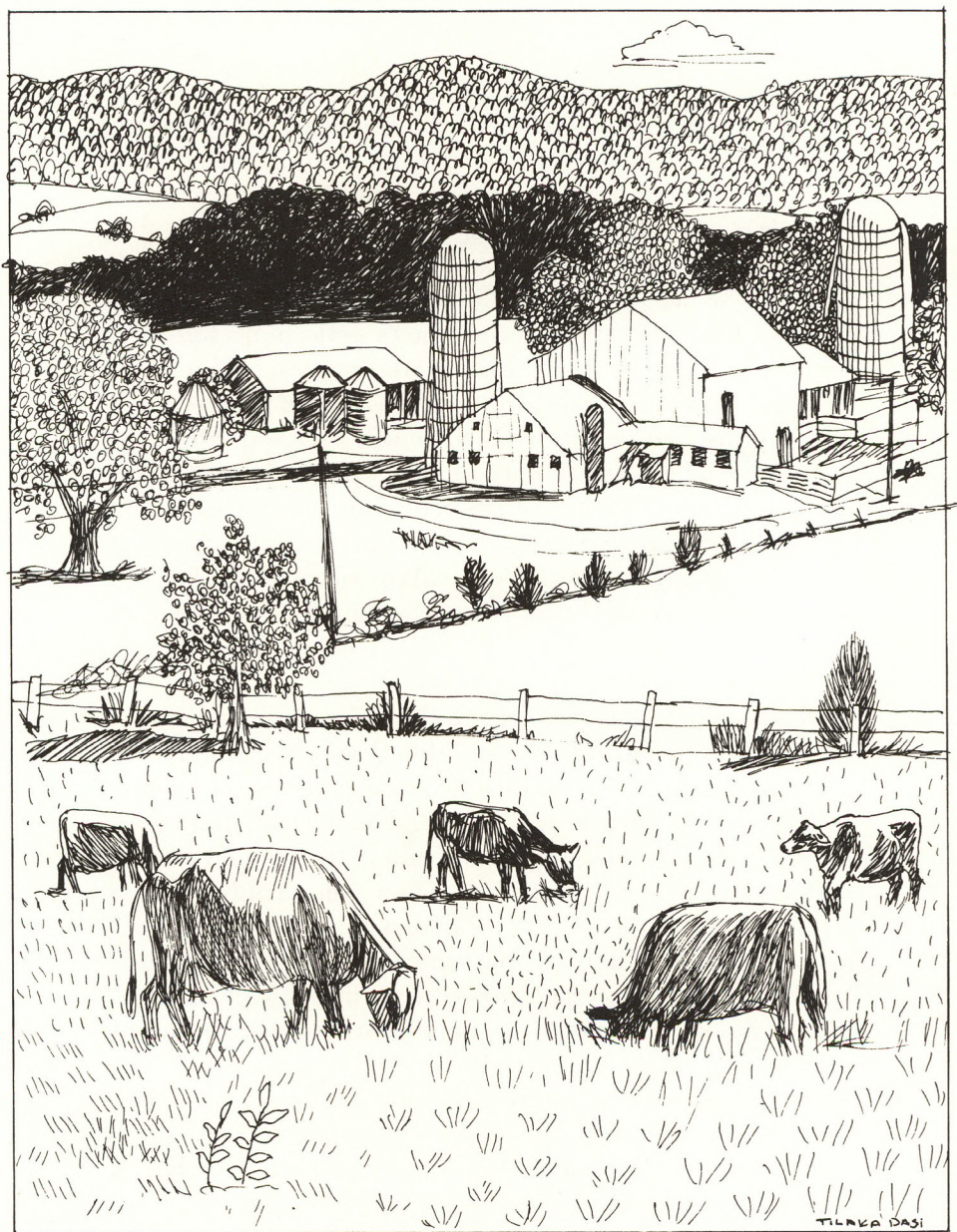
holy *dhāma*. After seeing these devotees, a young boy in Vṛndāvana *gurukula* wrote me a letter saying he realizes death can occur at any moment. There are other reminders of death in the same batch of mail. One girl died in a car accident. A *gurukula* teacher wrote a letter to me saying that this girl often used to inquire about what would happen at the time of death and how we could continue our devotional consciousness. Another letter described how devotees performing *hari-nāma saṅkīrtana* at the beach in Miami were attacked, but some friendly nondevotees defended them. In another letter, I heard how my disciple Gaura-Nitāi dāsa was attacked while distributing *Back to Godhead* magazines in a parking lot. He went into the hospital with a concussion but is now out. Hearing on all sides of danger and death, no one can seriously think that he will be spared or that his way will be simply peaceful. But we can help ourselves and help others by soberly acting in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

My disciple Janmāṣṭamī gave a class which I heard over the speaker in my cabin. He stressed that devotees should not be afraid to wear *dhotīs*, shave their heads, and have some contact with the public. He said even if they get laughed at, that's good for their false ego, and out of compassion they should preach. Although he presented these ideas in a gentlemanly, humble way, the lecture was also provocative and pushy. I thought of my own present situation, how retired I am, hardly ever leaving the *dhāma*. (Of course, I'm preaching through my writings, and my daily exercises and rest are a form of preaching, since I need health and strength to travel.)

I don't want to be criticized by our super-preachers for just talking about the birds, the changes of season at Gītā-nāgarī, and about seeing Kṛṣṇa, yet we all have to learn to be Kṛṣṇa conscious *wherever* we are.

First Day to the Pasture

Pent-up all winter
eating silo hay,



Cows in spring clover

the cows broke out today
for the lower pasture.
It was a billed event:
men, women, children
gathered at barn-side,
the cowbells clanging
around the cows' big necks,
a symphony of Swiss chimes.
Śrī Kṛṣṇa opened the gate,
and they filed out all right,
but when they reach the field—
cavorts, leaps, twists-in-air,
stampedes through the dandelions,
too excited to eat—just smelling it
was intoxication!

The cows in clover are
green and brown brilliance.
But wanting more action
Nirmala runs among them
blowing through a hose,
and trailing a white cloth—
to titillate the herd
for racing and bucking
in spring initiation.
After a half-hour in the hot sun,
they settled down to eating
the fresh grass.

And when matriarch Cintāmaṇi
the champion milker,
made her late entrance,
the devotees cheered.

While canoeing down the middle of the creek, I got a good view of all the bankside trees. The banks have eroded to an alarming degree. I asked Baladeva, "Does this mean that

eventually they'll fall into the creek?" He made the obvious reply that that would happen, since we could see their bare roots. The frequent heavy rains work away at the roots, although the trees attempt to hang on to whatever land is available. I couldn't help but consider the eventual loss of these trees in a personal way. It was like being reminded that all my friends and acquaintances will die. These trees mean the difference between living in a charming forest and living on a barren bank. Other trees more inland are also imperiled. For instance, the pines seem unable to withstand a strong windstorm. I also noticed that a family of squirrels are burrowing more and more into the stout oak right outside my window. They have just given birth to a new generation and six of them live in a hole midway up the tree. Although the tree is their domicile, I guessed that they are utilizing it much as the humans exploit nature, without caring much for the tree itself.

On closer inspection, I see everything is dying. Śrīla Prabhupāda has pointed out that even signs of life are also ultimately signs of death. A one-year old child has died one year, and when he is five-years old, he is five years on the way to death. These are facts and do not depend on whether one's attitude is optimistic or morbid. We are advised to energetically apply our time to *sādhana-bhakti* while always being aware that life is temporary and ends in death.

"IN EVERYTHING LEARN SOMETHING"

I took a critical look at *Journal and Poems* and discussed it with Baladeva. He reassured me about my dwelling on topics of nature at Gītā-nāgarī by saying that I was demonstrating how to be Kṛṣṇa conscious wherever one is. This particular year I happen to be confined to the woodland setting, but next year may find me moving through the cities or who knows where. But wherever one is, a devotee has to think of Kṛṣṇa and see Kṛṣṇa everywhere. This is the broadest understanding of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, applicable both for beginners as well as for surrendered devotees. The beginner should be encouraged that even within his family or his job—wherever he may

be, heaven or hell—he can start his Kṛṣṇa consciousness and see Kṛṣṇa there. Similarly, the initiated devotee should not have a narrow vision of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, as if God is not existing outside the temple room. But he has to understand God in everyone's heart and raise himself.

I heard this confirmed in a lecture by Prabhupāda. He was describing how the Vaiṣṇava should learn from the dog to be very faithful to the master. “In everything you can learn something,” said Śrīla Prabhupāda. “Therefore, the *mahā-bhāgavatas* accept everyone as *guru*. To learn something. Actually, from the dog, you can learn this art of how to become faithful even at the risk of life.” And in the Eleventh Canto, chapter seven of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the *avadhūta* instructs us that we have 24 *gurus*, including the serpent, the honeybee, the spider, the deer, and the moth.



April 24

Thoreau writes, “My journal is a record of my love.” In my case, I find it hard to say what I love. I feel mostly love-lacking. While walking at noon, I certainly liked the sight of the Virginia bluebells blooming, but I don’t know if that qualifies for love. I am much attached to writing, and I’m attached to living. (Like anyone, I resist death with all of my energies.) But this is not a very clear indication of love. My greatest desire is to cultivate my original love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead under the direction of my spiritual master. But I have been covered for so long by unwholesome habits that this

is not so easily attained. So my fear is that within this lifetime I will always fail to love.

Sometimes I think about the time of death. That time is approaching, but I cannot yet grasp its fearsomeness. Yet, in practical ways, I try to make all arrangements so that I will not fail utterly in the purpose of human life. I am convinced in mind and heart that human life is meant for avoiding the miseries of repeated birth and death, and this is attained through practice of devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. But I go on in the *practice* stages, and cannot really say that I love anyone or anything.

I remember one of my *guru*-Godbrothers lecturing to the devotees and saying that we should stand up for our love of Kṛṣṇa. He said that if anyone tells us that we don't love Kṛṣṇa, we should "punch him in the nose." In other words, humility aside, we should recognize that a good loving sentiment has developed in our hearts through the mercy of Kṛṣṇa and *guru* and through our regular practices. We *do* love Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda, but that love is expressed in different moods.

Lord Caitanya said, "I do not see Kṛṣṇa and therefore the whole world is void to Me." But those are the very highest sentiments of *mahābhāva*. I would like to follow Rūpa Gosvāmī, who humbly stated that he was "hoping against hope" to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. If I like to see the flowering bluebells or if I am attached to life itself, to living and breathing, then let me wed this to progressive Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And if I am still only in the practicing stages, then let me practice more strongly. Let me be a sincere apprentice and work daily at the processes of devotional service. True humility for me will be to admit that I am still in the practicing stages, and yet to enthusiastically apply my energy to those practices, year after year.

We should not demand to have love, or else we will quit our service. Love will come one day when we are actually deserving.

Today is a cold, gray Wednesday. The summer-like hot spell is over. It looks like rain, but the rain doesn't come. In the mail,

more tapes of devotees reading the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* arrived. I had gone some days without them but now I can listen again to the literature which discloses the highest loving affairs of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to whoever will listen carefully.

A Hero for Kṛṣṇa

I am supposed to get better
but Gaura-Nitāi dāsa,
visiting Gītā-nāgarī,
can hardly speak.

He was knocked down
like Jaṭāyu by Rāvaṇa,
a hero for Kṛṣṇa.

“I can’t chant 16 rounds,” he says.
I don’t know how he suffers,
but I know it’s worse than I.
Let me get better and rally them.

Life is more dangerous now than ever before. We are more easily wrecked in car and in plane, mugged, broken by drugs, by illicit love affairs, by pressure to conform in work and career—and now our total existence is threatened by war as never imagined in past centuries. Of course, the basics—old age, death, disease—were always there and always will be.

I am a surrendered, obedient soul. I have taken refuge from the fearful storms of life. People who fancy themselves rebels against all superior control deride surrender to Kṛṣṇa.

I remember in 1966 some boys dropped by the storefront and after hearing from us, they said that Kṛṣṇa consciousness sounded like a “cop-out,” escapism. I replied that to be a devotee took courage. Are you willing to shave your head and appear before your fellow men so strangely dressed as proof of your conviction of the truth? Both conservatives and radicals think devotees are odd. Therefore we have to become callous to their opinions.

I am not impressed by anyone's thought even a fraction as much as I am impressed by the teachings of the sages in *param-parā*, all of whom are personified in my spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Thinkers do not come to grips with death or with spiritual reality. They say there is no spirit, or they are vague, or they blindly follow some dogma. They become disgusted when the devotees demand so much surrender. People are also envious of our knowledge about God. They think He should remain unknown. "If you don't accept Kṛṣṇa is God," says Śrīla Prabhupāda, "then bring forward who you say is God. But if you admit that you don't know, then accept Kṛṣṇa."

There is no science of the soul beyond Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and all speculators are finally vanquished.

LISTENING TO ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA

I have been listening to Śrīla Prabhupāda's lectures from Māyāpur 1977, the last days he spoke in public. One can listen carefully and always gain more. Prabhupāda is praising Prahlāda Mahārāja, saying that he is a *mahā-bhāgavata* and that we shouldn't imitate him. He repeatedly said that, and I thought, "Why is Prabhupāda repeating this? Is this really important that Prahlāda Mahārāja is a pure devotee and we shouldn't imitate him? What is the question of imitating him?"

But as with many of Prabhupāda's instructions, if you do not at first understand what he meant, later you may understand. It must be that we have some tendency to imitate Prahlāda Mahārāja.

Prabhupāda said that Prahlāda Mahārāja was able to listen with full attention to Kṛṣṇa and that for us it may take thousands and thousands of lifetimes before we can actually listen with full attention. I have described in *Japa Reform Notebook* the struggle to pay attention. Of course, this means submissive attention, and it is actually the worshipful attainment. Despite the distractions, if you can just hear the holy

name or just hear the *Bhāgavatam* with full attention, then everything is attained and there are no other desires, no room for anything else.

I'm aware that these '77 talks are the very last addresses that Prabhupāda made to his assembled devotees, and I can sense in the air the tremendous confidence and enthusiasm which Prabhupāda evoked in his disciples during this time. Although there were undercurrents of differences among some of his followers, as the undisputed leader Prabhupāda kept them in check. Now there tends to be more disputes. It's a fact, but service to Prabhupāda in separation and keeping his principles is our only hope. And he has assured us that by this method we will survive.

Just as Prabhupāda said we can't imitate Prahlāda Mahārāja, neither can we imitate him. But at the same time, new devotees can draw on that same strength of having a living *guru* before them who inspires them and directs them and who can solve all problems brought to him. The *guru* cannot be self-made, but he has to actually be qualified by following in Prabhupāda's footsteps (even if he is not as qualified as Prabhupāda himself). Prabhupāda said that the *guru* must be authorized—*evam paramparā-prāptam*. As soon as the *paramparā* is lost, then the spiritual potency is finished. He said, "You can dress like a *guru*, you can talk big, big words, but it will never be effective."

April 27

In the material world, the Supreme Personality of Godhead is not manifested by His personal presence, but the presence of the cosmic manifestation in different varieties is the proof that everything has been created under His direction.

—Cc. *Ādi* 6.14–15, purport

The beauty of the flowers indicates the beauty of Kṛṣṇa. And nature's punishing aspect is the presence of His material law. The whole forest is in the mode of goodness, yet by itself it does not provide us access to the transcendental world beyond



Bhaja Govindam! Bhaja Govindam! Bhaja Govindam!

the senses. For that, we also need more than our native intelligence and more than speculation. We need to hear information from outside this nature and this universe, beyond our own wits or home-grown mysticism. Absolute knowledge will explain to us the meaning of all we see manifested. Otherwise, while we may be able to have insights and appreciations and sometimes become ecstatic from breathing fresh air, by contemplating the hue of the sky, or by sensing a quietness resting beneath the sounds of all things, yet we will fall completely short of understanding what is what.

For that information, we have to hear. That knowledge is coming down to us, carried by saintly persons. The speculator, however, keeps himself outside of this knowledge, preferring to go his own way. He's afraid he will be tricked or exploited by an imperfect religion with its gods created by man, afraid he will lose his true self. But there is a false pride in his alienated stance, and by his bad luck he is kept outside. Even though others consider him the foremost intelligent person, he gains only tiny light on things and is soon vanquished by time, never to appear again in the same bodily identity.

We bring charges against all poets, writers, and philosophers who are not Kṛṣṇa conscious. All their literary endeavors are like decorations on a dead body. As Śaṅkarācārya said to his students of logic, so we say to all creative artists and thinkers: What good will your grammatic jugglery do you at the time of death? Better worship Govinda, worship Govinda, worship Govinda. It is bad enough to mislead oneself, but to make a big hullabaloo out of one's imaginings and gropings, to lead others into darkness, is a great disservice. The *Isopaniṣad* condemns such cultural leaders, stating that the so-called educators of humanity are worse than the merely ignorant sense gratifiers. The challenge is not whether a devotee can be an artist. The real challenge is whether an artist can be a devotee. The burden is on the "artist" to learn to surrender at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and then write for Him, paint for Him, praise His glories. Otherwise, the artist and his patrons and audience will all be vanquished. Who will not be

vanquished? And who can say at the end of his life that he has actually contributed to the liberation of humanity? And if he has not contributed, what was his use?

4

May 1

TEMPORARY NATURE

The flowers come and go in waves. Now is the time for violets, dogwood and viburnum. The daffodils and tulips have already shriveled and gone. Lilacs are just beginning to show promise. Dandelions have entered with their weedy splendor, and some have already turned into ghosts. Maple leaves first appear yellow and then turn green. Gradually all trees are coming to full foliage. In the fields timothy, clover, and alfalfa form a rippling sea of green.

Sitting here quietly in the woods, I heard a faint crackle. I turned and saw a deer, and then following it a smaller one, and then yet another, even smaller. Each was wagging his white tail, whisking off flies. Usually all I see is a white tail bouncing away through the woods, and I'm not sure whether it's a rabbit or deer. But this time I saw them clearly. They were tawny; none of them had horns. After a few seconds they disappeared into the trees, and now I can only hear the sound of leaves and branches crackling in the distance.

Deer are mentioned in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as creatures of the spiritual world, and sometimes they get intimate association with Kṛṣṇa in the forest of Vṛndāvana. But in the material world these creatures move in covert, frightened ways, trying to avoid predators. They are spirit souls far away from Kṛṣṇa.

May 2

Gour Hari Prabhu gave a class today in which he read different passages from the scriptures and spoke about compassion. He said that it is not enough that a devotee is enthusiastic only about his own devotional service, but he has to go beyond that and be compassionate toward others. He spoke of how it is actually an impurity if one wants to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa just for his own advancement. To exemplify Vaiṣṇava compassion, he read passages about Vāsudeva Daṭṭa, who was willing to ac-

cept the sinful reactions of all living entities in the universe. In response, Lord Caitanya's heart became very soft and He trembled. Nothing is more pleasing to Kṛṣṇa than when His servants act compassionately for others. Being reminded that the real purpose of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to help others, I feel like a new dimension has opened before me, and I ask myself whether I'm developing this compassion.

PREACHING ABOUT PREACHING

Many people have a negative attitude toward preachers and preaching. Consider, for example, the following dictionary definition of "preaching": "to give religious or moral instruction, especially in a drawn-out, tiresome manner." Bearing this in mind, future generations in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement may want to de-emphasize the words *preacher* and *preaching*. But those who follow in the footsteps of Śrīla Prabhupāda regard preaching in a positive way. To them, a preacher in ISKCON has a divine spark given him by his spiritual master, a spark of desire and power to spread the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

For the devotees, the word "preaching" denotes glorious, selfless adventures on behalf of the Supreme Lord. Preaching is the compassionate work of giving Kṛṣṇa to others. The devotees will never, therefore, give up their understanding of the word in favor of the more commonly held view.

On a level deeper than that of word usage, many people in the world today abhor the very idea of propagating spiritual knowledge. They think that if spiritual lessons must be taught at all, they should be restricted to the temple or church, to those who voluntarily submit themselves to such sermonizing sessions. They say spiritual instructors should not intrude on the hallowed ground of art, philosophy, or entertainment.

A friend recently recommended I read *The Art of Fiction*, by John Gardner, for new perspectives on the craft of writing. In his book, Gardner makes the point that all writers have a serious responsibility toward their readers.

To write so that no one commits suicide, no one despairs; to

write, as Shakespeare wrote, so that people understand, sympathize, see the universality of pain, and feel strengthened, if not directly encouraged to live on.

Good advice. Gardner goes on to say, however, "It does not mean . . . that writers should write moralistically, like preachers."

Granted, every writer needn't get on a soap box to deliver his message. But if a writer has received from good authority and with personal realization information that can free one from death and suffering, should he not in all honesty present that knowledge to others? Gardner himself admits that life is a predicament: "All human beings have the same root experience (we're born, we suffer, we die, to put it grimly)"—so why should writers be advised that they should not "like preachers" tell people how to live?

Elsewhere in his book, Gardner warns writers to be very careful not to merely use straw men "as preachers do" to make their points. Here Gardner seems to have made "the preacher" into a straw man. Inadvertently, he has failed to follow his own advice, becoming like one of the very "preachers" he disdains. A preacher, however, is not a puppet to be set up and knocked down for a good laugh. There are preachers, and there are preachers. Kṛṣṇa was a preacher; Buddha was a preacher; Christ was a preacher. Their discourses, meditations, and sermons are worthy of the best in art and philosophy, despite the fact that those discourses are infused with compassionate messages meant to direct peoples' lives. So just as there are good writers and artists as well as bad ones, so too are there varieties of preachers. And if a writer's moral instructions can deliver others from suffering and death, why regard such lessons as if they were a cardinal defect?

Granted, Gardner was specifically giving advice for writers of fiction, and if we consider the elements and methods of fiction writing, his advice is essentially sound. But in the process of advising us on the writer's craft, he has insensitively stereotyped the preacher as one who makes up slow argu-

ments, who uses words artlessly, and who is excessively moralistic. This is a common misconception about preachers and preaching.

Perhaps at the root of much of this kind of criticism is a distrust of anyone who claims his message is absolutely true. I asked Śrīla Prabhupāda some questions on this subject one morning in January of 1977 in Bhubaneswar, India. His answers were conclusive.

“We have to give life its meaning,” I said, trying to paraphrase the existentialist’s position. “That’s the glory of man. They say he finds no meaning in life but gives his own meaning to what is actually meaningless. They say that man should face up to that uncertainty and just live his life without taking meaning from the scriptures or from anybody.”

“Why then are they distributing meaning?” said Śrīla Prabhupāda. “Let people live in their own way. Why are you anxious to give some meaning? If by taking your instruction I stop following others, that means I’ll have to follow you. So what is the benefit? I stop following others, but I have to follow you.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda continued to point out the inherent hypocrisy and contradiction of one person advising others to reject *prima facie* all claims to authority. When I told him that many people thought it dangerous to accept the authority of the spiritual master, he said, “But you ask me to surrender to you. So why shall I not surrender to a spiritual master instead?” He pointed out that in either case one must accept the opinions and viewpoints of another. Śrīla Prabhupāda concluded, “Too much authority may be wrong if the authority is wrong. But if the authority is right, then it is better to accept.”

Another devotee told Śrīla Prabhupāda that many people seem to prefer the eclectic method of learning, consulting many authorities without surrendering fully to any one. But Śrīla Prabhupāda replied that if you could get everything in one place, just like a shopper who fulfills all his needs at a supermarket, then why object to only one authority?

So the Kṛṣṇa conscious preacher speaks only on behalf of

the Supreme Lord and His bona fide representative, and he speaks only what he has received from them. In this way the sanctity and integrity of his message is preserved. And far from delivering a dry lesson in morality, the Kṛṣṇa conscious preacher invites everyone to approach Kṛṣṇa, who is All-attractive, and to enjoy transcendental exchanges with Him in a consciousness far beyond the anomalies and disturbances of material life. Through the words of His preachers, Kṛṣṇa Himself is appealing to those who have forgotten Him. He is reviving their memories of who they are and who He is and inviting them to return to their original position in spiritual life and pure consciousness. Delivering this wisdom to all is the compassionate work of all Lord Kṛṣṇa's preachers.

May 3

I used to have health like a wealthy man has riches. I was so rich in health I didn't even know how much of it I possessed. I would spend a rainy day like this working intensely under the lamp without interruption, and I would produce a completed manuscript in one sitting. Or I would take many phone calls.

A Poem-Report from Gītā-nāgarī

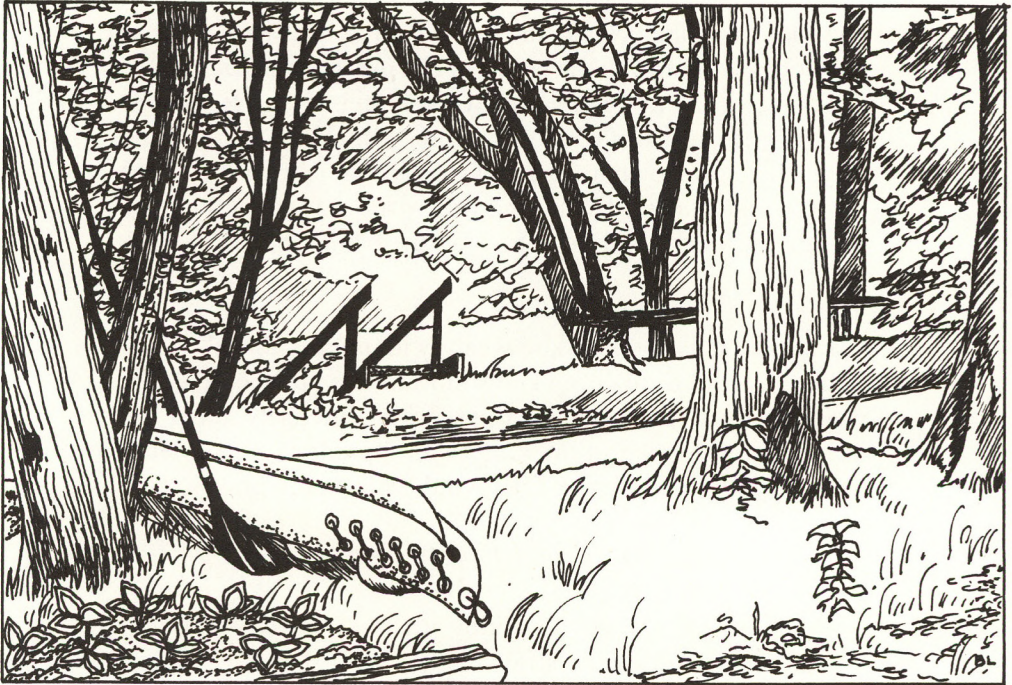
How it looks:

You've got a walking stick?
 You wear a straw hat?
 You ride a blue bike?
 You paddle a canoe?
 Well, ain't you a vacationing *guru*!

How it is:

Active *bhaktas* move,
 while I yearn.
 Every few days
 I'm knocked out.
 Listening to *śāstra*,
 and listening to the thrush,
 but even that gets pushed aside

when *prakṛti* rules,
and *parā-prakṛti* waits.
Promising to serve,
I paddle my canoe.



Tired of being indoors all day with the rain beating down, I took a walk and sang *kīrtana* outloud. Rain was pouring down onto my umbrella, and new streams rushed through the pipes and gulleys leading into the main creek. Outloud, I made fun of myself as a crybaby, a sick one, a self-absorbed one who is always talking about his headaches, and then I again sang Hare Kṛṣṇa as if I were never sick. I did not walk for very long, and I did not really accomplish much. The bright white dogwoods were outstanding. Viburnum is not as striking but it has its own lacy beauty.

May 4

After thirty-six hours the rain has finally stopped. The squirrels, who had mostly been staying home, are now out. The creek has changed from clear to muddy, and reflects silhouettes of trees and spaces of sky. Swelling its banks, the river moves rapidly. All vegetation is still dripping. I can only imagine how much of a boost this rain has given the plants.

Their outer skins shining, the trees now bask in the sunshine after their delicious bath. The weeds and trees revive and reach upward. In the fields, the oats and wheat, planted only a few days ago, are beginning to poke through the ground. Every path shines with full spring strength. First week of May.

I just went out with Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa and Bhakti-mārga dāśī and learned the names of many different wildflowers and little plants and herbs. Bhakti-mārga has a good knowledge of all these things. She pointed out that because of the early hot spell this year, many spring flowers have come and gone more quickly than usual. Lilacs, for example, which usually bloom





Violets, impatience, and arrowhead alongside the creek.

in front of the *brahmacārī* house and also by my cabin, produced only a few flowers and now are finished. Similarly, Virginia bluebells and dogwood usually last longer.

The large leafy plant I see everywhere is called May-apple or mandrake. It produces an obscure waxy flower which usually hides under the large leaves. These wildflowers are very lowly, and their blossoms are sometimes obscure—one could call them humble. They are not very beautiful or even noticeable. At the moment the most prominent, blossoming flowers are rockcrest—tiny, star-shaped flowers covering the rocks. Also prominent are bluets, or Quaker-ladies, a tinier version of the Spring Beauties. Some of the wildflowers have unusual shapes, like the fiddle-head fern and the jack-in-the-pulpit.

These wild plants have a practical utility that I know little of. Almost every one of them has some use. I remember hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda discuss this in a lecture—how knowledgeable people in India can go into the jungle and bring back large numbers of herbs and weeds to use as medicines. Around here we have blue violets (now blooming), which are sometimes used for headaches. And the yarrow and horsetail are filled with vitamins. The cleaver-weed, which adheres to the body and can be used as a poultice, has medicinal elements useful in kidney treatment. And the roots and leaves of the lobelia, dock, and ladies' slippers also have various medicinal uses.

Bhakti-mārga made an analogy between one's knowledge of the usefulness of these humble plants and a devotee's attitude while out distributing books. An inexperienced *saṅkīrtana* devotee may pass over unattractive or very unlikely-looking people, thinking they will never buy a book or give a donation. But a more experienced or determined devotee knows that somehow each and every person has some potential to give for Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, the complete herbalist and knower of the wildflowers finds a use in every insignificant-looking weed along the path, and in fact some of the more obscure ones with unimposing little flowers have potent uses. Knowing and using these plants is part of the self-sufficiency program of a

Kṛṣṇa conscious farm community.

May 5

*tad aśmasāraṁ hṛdayaṁ batedaṁ
yad gṛhyamānair hari-nāma-dheyaiḥ*

“Certainly that heart is steel-framed which, in spite of chanting the holy name of the Lord with concentration, does not change when ecstasy takes place and tears fill the eyes and hairs stand on end.” (*Bhāg.* 2.3.24)

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-līlā*, chapter eight, Śrīla Prabhupāda discusses the tenth offense in chanting. He writes that an advanced devotee sometimes does not cry in ecstasy while chanting, although a neophyte may show these symptoms by imitation. The real test is whether one becomes free from material desires. This helps me to further understand that one cannot test one’s chanting merely by trying to gauge immediate symptoms while uttering the *mahā-mantra*. We have to gauge by our overall activities whether we are becoming detached from the material world. That happens not by chance or by our own strength, but by association with the holy name of God. Thus we can be encouraged by desirelessness, understanding that it is integrally linked to our practice of *jaṇa* and *kīrtana*.

May 6

Woke last night at midnight and listened to a tape of devotees reading *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* to me. The beginning of chapter seven of *Ādi-līlā* is one of my favorite sections. It stresses the chanting of the holy name and obedience to the spiritual master. As the years go by, I am able to hear this chapter again and again, and I continue to relish it more.

I once read this section aloud in a company of devotees on the roof of the ISKCON temple in New Delhi. Now I hear it read to me while I lie in darkness. Like river water flowing past, the purport is here, then gone.

“Prabhupāda,” I once said in England 1973, after hearing

him speak, "I can't retain it!" He laughed, "Go on hearing."

I admit, the early chapters of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* are heavy in philosophy, whereas hearing about the many devotees of Lord Caitanya as I am now doing is less demanding and very enlivening. Hundreds of them, all with wonderful qualities pleasing to the Lord. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote that Lord Caitanya's devotees were mainly from Bengal and Orissa but that now we are spread throughout the world.

HEARING ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA

I was just hearing a tape of Prabhupāda lecturing in Stockholm. I listened carefully as he criticized governments that make people work in the factories but don't teach them anything about God. People should live simply, depending on the land and the cow. And they should worship Kṛṣṇa in His Deity form and in His holy name. Prabhupāda said that the government is sapping the people's energies and diverting them from the real purpose of life. He said that maybe they would take action against him for speaking in such a revolutionary way.

What is that quality whereby at certain times I become more receptive to Prabhupāda's sound vibration? Sometimes it's the hour of the day, sometimes it's my physical condition. I have found that I become especially attentive when I'm not in too much pain, but too weak to take up other activities. So there are different conditions.

On this tape, Prabhupāda also discussed different stages of advancement. In the beginning stage (which could last a long time) a devotee doesn't understand that Kṛṣṇa is actually in His picture, whereas in the advanced stage he does see in this way. So it takes time to reach that stage, and it takes time to come to the platform of attentive hearing.

May 6

WHAT I WANT TO BE

Yesterday we had a potato-planting festival. All devotees took part, including the *gurukula* children. I went also. The

fields had been ploughed in long deep furrows. Prabhānu supplied us with buckets of potatoes cut in half and showed us how to plant them—a foot apart with the eye-sprout pointing upwards. It was blissful to see everyone, including the teenage boys and even the nursery-aged children, working in the fields.

The next day I received from the young boys' *āśrama* crayon drawings of the potato-planting. In each drawing I was depicted wearing my straw hat, sunglasses, and carrying a walking stick. One drawing I particularly like, and I've taped it onto my bathroom wall. My clothes are bright red and my right hand looks like a large fist. It reminds me a little of Superman. Bursting with vitality, smiling, super-strong, a bright red *sannyāsī* planting a hundred potatoes a minute—what I want to be.

One of the heaviest realizations that I'm having is that there is no health.

In 1977 when Prabhupāda was quite ill, he attended a big *paṇḍāl* in Bombay. He had to be carried onto the stage and the audience could see that he was physically diminished. Yet Prabhupāda never preached more powerfully. At one of those programs, a man asked, "What about health?" Prabhupāda replied, "What is health? You're going to die, so how can you be considered healthy?" So one of the things I seem to be gaining during this recuperation period is the deepening realization that I'm going to die. I'm trying to recoup a little strength so that I can go on for many more years, but there's no question of reversing the incurable process of aging unto death. Although this truth should be commonly understood, many have not realized it.

While sitting in the forest I suddenly heard a noise that sounded like the approach of a distant train. It was the wind moving through the leaves of the trees. It was not a particularly strong wind, but now that the trees are so filled with leaves even a breeze produces much noise.

Lately I have twice come upon praises of trees—once in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and once in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Lord Balarāma praises Vṛndāvana and mentions the trees as most munificent. Trees give fruits and shade, and if they are abused they do not protest. Even after they are felled and dragged away, they continue to give valuable resources as fuel, pulp, lumber, and so on.

In a *Bhāgavatam* purport, Prabhupāda condemns the cutting down of trees for use in nonsense literature, and Lord Caitanya instructs us to become as tolerant as the trees.

Paramānanda pointed out in a recent *Bhāgavatam* class that we cannot really preach to lower living entities such as the trees. Our mission is meant to develop relationships with human beings who are advanced enough to seriously receive Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Although we cannot preach to the trees, the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* mentions how even trees benefit by our chanting. So I am eager to become fit, to leave the forest having learned lessons from the trees, and to preach to humanity.

NEW HAPPENINGS

Many seeds from the maple tree are falling and gathering on the ground and in the creek. This means that the tree has already flowered. We used to call these seeds “helicopters” because of the way they whirl and twist as they float to the ground. Where I grew up they were also known as “polly-noses” because we used to cut open the seed part and place it over our noses like a parrot’s beak.



Today I heard big bass frogs croak for the first time. Prabhupāda says that the frog is croaking very contentedly, but the predator snake hears that sound. So all mundaners who are proud of their bass croaks or their musical trills are

simply calling upon death. Now we can expect to hear the bass frogs through spring and summer—another voice in nature's orchestra, another living lesson.

Bike Ride

Bumping over the shale and puddles,
I know the inclines well,
and the depressions.
Brace for them,
and shift the gears.

Past the boys' school,
past the barn,
up the longest incline of the farm,
downhill out the gate,
left turn in the evening,
heading for the house with the barking dog.

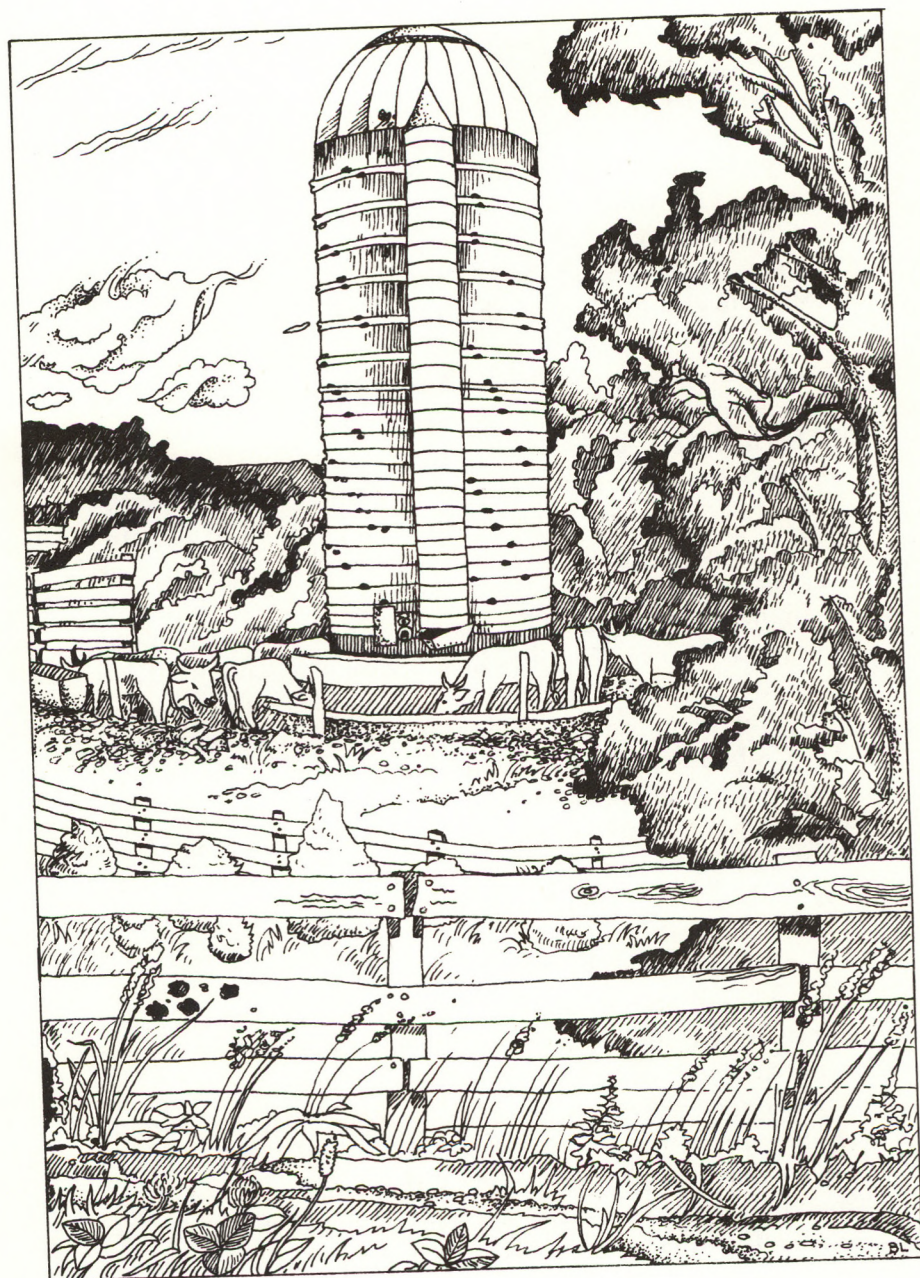
Riding with Nārāyaṇa Kavaca
making confidential plans
how to sell more books
while a bluebird flits across.

Past the *gṛhasthas*' house.
Puṣṭabāṇa is cutting grass
and we breeze by.
"Bike to Godhead,"
Sureśvara jokes,
as we come rattling home.
My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,
this ride is not a prayer
but count it please as something;
I am happy to ride for You.

May 7

THE WORLD OF MĀYĀ

A *U. S. News and World Report* arrives on my desk and the



mighty world of *māyā* explodes in my brain. This week's issue features a quick history of some of the tremendous events following World War II: the defeat of the Nazis; the threat of the Soviets; Churchill writes to Truman saying that the Soviets could soon overrun all of Europe; America responds with the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, sending billions of dollars to rebuild Europe; the Berlin blockade and the threat of A-bombs; Moscow backs down; and America establishes a worldwide link-up of allies and commitments and the Cold War begins. Then in 1950, the Korean War.

Each of these events comes upon the stage with tremendous drama and power. From the worldly point of view, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is but an insignificant blip compared to these events. There is no mention at all of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in these descriptions.

In the same magazine I read an article about the rise of violent attacks upon minorities in America. The Ku Klux Klan and other extremists have been attacking different minority institutions, killing and bombing. But who are those minorities? The Catholics, the blacks, the Jews. Again, from the worldly or sociological point of view, Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not even "a minority." Compared to us, the Catholic Church is a very powerful religious institution. The Jews are also powerful and influential, as are the blacks. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is again not even mentioned.

Yet we know the affairs and concerns of these groups and their enemies are all illusory. They are but the play of *māyā* (that which is not). They are tales "told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

The *Vedas* say there are innumerable material universes, and compares each to a single mustard seed in a huge bag containing millions of such seeds. And all these universes are but a small part of the energy of God, Lord Kṛṣṇa. From *this* viewpoint, all the material worlds taken together are of no consequence.

Even if the materialist develops his technology to the foremost degree and stretches his imagination as far as possi-

ble, his “Star Wars” conceptions are puny when contrasted to the transcendental reality.

A devotee is not awed by the politicians and their tiny powers. He considers even Lord Brahmā, the biggest material controller in the universe, to be insignificant. The devotee remembers Kṛṣṇa and knows this material body is always perishable.

In *Walden*, Thoreau describes an epic-like battle between two species of ants. From the Vedic perspective, mankind’s struggles are something like that. While still contending with material nature, a devotee sometimes becomes affected by the material powers. Even the staunch Arjuna was overcome by powerful material emotions on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra. But when we are swept up by such external events and emotions, we have only to turn within and remember the holy name of Kṛṣṇa and remember our true identity as an eternal, imperishable part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa. If we remember Kṛṣṇa, then we are always victorious.

KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE COW

Just as Baladeva and I were going out for our bike ride, rain-drops started falling. But judging from the patches of clear and cloudy sky, we thought we could get in our twenty-five minutes of exercise. The sky did hold up, but it was gray. As we returned onto the farm property, I saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa herding a cow toward the pasture on the hill. I could hear the neck bells of the cows already grazing in the upper pasture. The cow Śrī Kṛṣṇa was herding is named Lalitā, but she is commonly known here as “Dumb-dumb.” This cow is mentally retarded and ornery and will not move along with the other cows as they naturally herd from place to place.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa herded the cow along by riding behind her on his bike, but after awhile she stopped moving altogether. Śrī Kṛṣṇa then got a stick and hit her lightly on the rump until finally she moved up the road. “Now take a left turn, Dumb-dumb,” he said, and she finally made it into the pasture, which is where she really wanted to go. Now they are all up there

grazing and making milk.

I just heard a tape of Prabhupāda lecturing about how special are our Kṛṣṇa conscious cows. He said that the cows at New Vrindaban give twice the milk of ordinary cows because they know they will not be slaughtered. Other cows, he said, even if they are well-fed, know that this man who is feeding me will eventually slaughter me. But cows on Kṛṣṇa conscious farms are protected and loved. Even cows like Dumb-dumb are well fed and fully protected.

Last Saturday, while speaking to the busload of Indians, I said that it is easy to appreciate how peaceful and picturesque Gītā-nāgarī is, but that it takes realization to appreciate the meaning of cow protection and utilizing the bulls to till the land. This program is actually the solution of all economic problems for humanity. A man can live on a small plot of land with the bulls and solve all the problems of life. Unless we adopt Kṛṣṇa conscious farming, it will not be possible to bring the world to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I admitted to our guests that although I had been living at Gītā-nāgarī for years, I myself have not fully realized the Kṛṣṇa conscious significance of everything here. But I do know that the most exalted goal a transcendentalist may aspire for is to live with Kṛṣṇa in His spiritual farm community.

PRABHUPĀDA'S '66 DAYS

Listening to a '66 tape. Prabhupāda is saying that everyone belongs to some particular party. He challenges his audience: "I ask you. Is there anyone here who can say they don't belong to a party? Is there anyone here?" As if in reply, someone outside walks by the door whistling. Prabhupāda is vying for the attention of the few people who at least have come to the program. Brahmānanda tries to help: "If you'll move to the front you'll be able to hear better. Come forward."

"We Kṛṣṇa conscious people," Prabhupāda says, "we say the materialist is crazy. They say that Swamiji's men are crazy. So who will decide it? Can any of you suggest a way? Who will settle it up? Who will settle it up?" As he speaks he drops his hand on his podium and looks to the audience.

It's not easy to control New Yorkers, but Prabhupāda is courageous. He invites them to speculate, and he is ready to handle all kinds of wild answers. He is ready with philosophy and reason. And if they don't accept the clear reason and logic, Prabhupāda will resort to whatever he can use, sometimes raising the voice and attracting their attention by his argument, sometimes taking the lecturer's prerogative and demanding civil order. His ultimate weapon: purity. He is a pure, empowered devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

"If you identify with something you are not, are you not crazy?" Prabhupāda challenges. "One who identifies with this body is crazy. This is a challenge to the world. Anyone who takes his body to be his self is crazy, and one who considers that he is spirit, yet thinks he will lose his individuality, is also a crazy person."

Prabhupāda is driving home the points and glorifying *bhakti-yoga*. He gives the practical example of his own fledgling Society: "Here we have manufactured some duties," says Prabhupāda, "just so that we can always think of Kṛṣṇa. How do we think of Kṛṣṇa? By service." He invites everyone to come at any time and they will see that he and his followers are engaged in service. "There are innumerable literatures," says Prabhupāda. "You could not read them all if you were to read for twenty-four hours a day. So somebody is typewriting, someone is dispatching, someone is cooking, twenty-four hours we are thinking of Kṛṣṇa."

"What is the difference between material and spiritual?" Prabhupāda concludes, "The same mimeograph is there, the same ink is there, the same paper is there, the same hand is there—but use it for Kṛṣṇa. In this way the *whole world* can be transformed from material to spiritual!"

May 8

HANDS-ON MANAGEMENT

After the rains, canoeing against the rapids is difficult, but I went out with Nārāyaṇa Kavaca. At one point, when the rapids became too great, Nārāyaṇa jumped out of the canoe

and began to pull it through the rapids. Later when Baladeva heard this he said it was not what a purist canoer would do. But then he said, “I guess that’s why Nārāyaṇa is a successful temple president at Potomac.”

So now I like to think of Nārāyaṇa Kavaca pulling the problematic Potomac temple behind him as he pulled me in the canoe through the overwhelming rapids.

N.K. went back to the Potomac temple last night. Personal problems among devotees and financial deals there are so intricate they demand his personal presence. So he had to give up being my servant, although he was scheduled to do it for a couple of weeks. Once again he is jumping out of the canoe to pull it by hand. I am impressed at his youthful energy, and grateful that I have a disciple who is so “hands-on” to work on our behalf.

Similarly, all over the zone able Godbrothers are commandeering the different temples. They are giving me my required rest time, but there is no slackening in duties. We are all going forward with our work.

The groundhog comes up more now. He likes to sit on his haunches and nibble big grasses; he seems to favor the weeds over the flowers. Parts of his coat and tail are ripped; he looks like someone beat him up. He must have put up a good fight—he looks like he could be fierce. But I don’t like the fact that he is becoming so familiar. He nibbles at the edge of my porch as if to eat the wood or sharpen his teeth. I rap on the window and he runs away, but then soon comes back. It looks like I’ll have to see his ugly face all summer. I certainly can’t kill him; after all, he has a right to his quota. As Śrīla Prabhupāda says, if a successful son says to his father, “Your other son is ugly and stupid. May we kill him?” the father will never say yes.

“A devotee should always be alert, keeping his mind in a sanguine state so that he can always remember Lord Kṛṣṇa. But association with pounds-and-shillings men, or *viṣayīs*,

materialists who are simply interested in sense gratification, pollutes one's mind and hampers such continuous remembrance of Lord Kṛṣṇa . . . One can avoid such association simply by always remembering Kṛṣṇa within his heart." (Cc. *Ādi* 12.51, purport)

Ācāryadeva recently called and suggested that I might have a heart prolapse as he did. He insisted that we check it out. Otherwise, he said, I might spend a whole year resting without getting any better. So Baladeva and I went to the hospital today.

In the waiting room the T.V. was on. A woman was interviewing an actress who had just had a baby. One of Prabhupāda's purports which I had heard that morning explained how a devotee does not break his continuous meditation on Kṛṣṇa. The actress was making dumb replies to the interviewer's questions, telling how she went to the hospital in a taxi at the last minute. I was amazed at how readily she described the banal details. A total lacking of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The woman interviewing her was the same—all chewing the chewed. I tried turning away, but there was nothing to turn to but magazines.

Upstairs, a young lady took me to a room with the fabulous machine that does the ECHO heart test. Baladeva asked to come in "to see the machine work." I laid down and she put something like a microphone on my chest. The machine responded by showing a video display and recording data on a scroll of graph paper. I tried chanting to myself in my mind.

When it was over, I asked Baladeva if he had seen on the screen signs of my chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. He laughed and said, "Yes." But of course, spiritual things cannot really be detached and measured by machines.

This hospital visit comes under the category of "no stone unturned."

May 9

When you are really preaching, you feel as if you are swimming strongly into deep water. Today, for the first time in

weeks, I felt I was preaching in this way. A *sannyāsī* friend was in difficulty, and I wanted to convince him that he and all of us devotees must keep our initiation vows. To convince him—and he was stubbornly set on a wayward course—I repeated the words of the scripture. But then I saw that in addition to reciting, I had to believe; I had to think and feel and act in accordance with the *siddhānta*. By recommending the right course of action, I myself became more committed to follow it. I felt useful and sincere.

I hope my preaching will have some practical effect. He is thinking over what I said, and he will decide for himself. If he still decides to break his vows, I will be ready with more arguments. It is very satisfying to work on Kṛṣṇa's behalf, but a preacher should not be puffed up with self-importance.

Devotees are sometimes depicted as following vows unthinkingly. Sometimes people deride us by saying that we are like robots. The truth is, we follow out of love for our spiritual master. He has come into this world to deliver us from great suffering, and we have promised to follow him for our own safety. As Prahlāda Mahārāja says of his spiritual master, Nārada, “My first duty is to serve him. How could I leave his service?”

In the second week of May, the two most common wildflowers are the wild geranium (a pale purple, five-petaled country cousin of the house geranium and whose root is good for sore gums), and the spindly-looking golden alexander (wild parsnip). As the viburnum start to fade, the wild blackcherry is white-flowering. “Helicopters” cover the ground, and the squirrels occasionally pick them up buffet-style and nibble out the tender part of the seed. The paths close in more like tunnels, the trees arching overhead in dense foliage and the footpath narrowing beneath the weeds and plants.

Today for the second day in a row I was drawn into management as zonal leaders visited the farm and consulted with me about their responsibilities.

Two new books, *Prabhupāda Nectar*, Vol. 3, and *Reading Reform*,

arrived from the Gītā-nāgarī Press. I attended *maṅgala-ārati* to watch the books being offered on the altar of Rādhā-Dāmodara and Śrīla Prabhupāda. After taking part in a few more activities than usual, I'm reminded how previously my normal days were filled with activity every hour of the day. I have wound down, and I can't see how I will wind up again.

KṚṢṆA SMARAṆAM

For pure devotees of Kṛṣṇa, specific sights in nature are so saturated with *kṛṣṇa-līlā* that the devotee becomes uncontrollably ecstatic when he sees them. Murāri Gupta, Lord Caitanya's physician, fell from a high platform upon seeing peacock plumes in a fan, and Akrūra jumped out of his chariot on seeing the dust on the ground of Vṛndāvana. Lord Caitanya, the most ecstatic devotee of all, sometimes mistook a sand dune for the Govardhana Hill, and He was liable to mistake any river for the Yamunā and rush to it in the mood of a loving *gopī*.

Sometimes I experience a material counterpart of this (and even the spiritual version is not inaccessible to devotees who give their lives to the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness). I regularly hear the cries of many birds in this forest, but when I hear the bluejay, I sometimes become immersed in memories of childhood. I grew up on Staten Island, and there were many bluejays in the oak trees of our yard. The bluejays' cry—less raucous than the crow but not at all a melodious song—stirs up memories of my mother and father and my days growing up in spiritual blindness. But if one dedicates his life to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, even if one becomes separated from the temples and the devotees, the sound of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa or even the sight of a cow or of a fresh raincloud may rush one back to remembrance of Him. At least while these things are in our control, we should fill our mind and senses with *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, so that we will be prepared for future separations or calamities.

May 10

New flower starlets: two varieties of daisies, one white and one pinkish; and groundsell, a delicate yellow bud on a tall weed stem. In these days when flowers are catching my attention, I was pleased to see a full-page portrait in the latest *Back to Godhead* of Śrīla Prabhupāda looking fondly upon a small flower held in his hand. This is a photo taken at the temple of Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva near Visakhapatnam in India. Prabhupāda's affectionate glance at the flower indicates to me that he sees this humble little plant as another wondrous creation of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It encouraged me to see how Śrīla Prabhupāda saw Kṛṣṇa in even the smallest things. This morning the devotees read from the newly-published third volume of *Prabhupāda Nectar*, and I heard the anecdote of Prabhupāda examining very closely the movements of a mosquito. This was in Vṛndāvana. When a man asked him what he was thinking, Prabhupāda said, "I was studying these mosquitoes. I was looking at how wonderful Kṛṣṇa has created these things. Every mosquito looks the same, so I was looking at the legs and wings . . ."

My friend who is deciding whether or not to follow his vows has gone into seclusion for a few days to make his decision. I argued as best I could in favor of renunciation, and the girl he is romantically involved with has tried her best from the other side. It seems to be a choice between Kṛṣṇa and Māyā. One of the devotees asked, "How could he really be seriously deliberating? Isn't it obvious that he should choose Kṛṣṇa?" But although Kṛṣṇa is the Lord of His servant Māyā, her specialty is to delude a person into thinking that she is more attractive than Kṛṣṇa Himself. Thus we have the phenomenon of a serious, intelligent devotee deliberating intensely whether to choose Kṛṣṇa or Māyā.

Mental agitation as we wait for him to make a final move. Thoughts of my friend have dominated the day. Maybe I should put it all out of my mind, file it away, not keep chewing at it or letting it chew at me.

I made a poem and sent it to him with a note.

In Praise of Sannyāsa

Happy to renounce,
aware I am renouncing nothing,
because I own nothing—
in *sannyāsa* I rejoice.

Best love, “best girl,” best job
is renunciation of these
for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa
& the pleasure of my spiritual master.

Sannyāsī brothers,
I am happy to be among you,
in the highest, final order
of human life.
Fools of this world don’t know it,
clinging to *māyā* ’til the end.

Better than king or president,
more blissful than conjugal spouse,
on his own with the Lord in the heart,
healer for all the world’s sickness,
Prabhupāda’s *sannyāsīs*
are glorious.

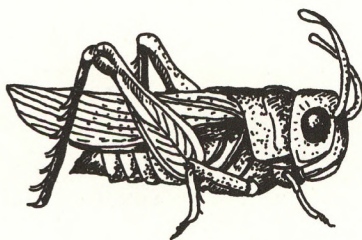
And once you have taken it,
guard it with all your life.
To give it up
is stooping to eat
your own vomit.

Proclaiming my own
satisfaction with this order,
help me brothers and
let me help you;

keeping honor
let us preach for Prabhupāda.

FIGHTING AGAINST MĀYĀ

“What’s that bird?” I ask. “And that—is that the cricket?”



But do you think I’m only listening to birds and trying to name flowers? No. I’m also hearing the bad news, the struggling news, and the good news and trying to help push on this great movement. As Harikeśa Swami has written to me, the world is sick and polluted, and devotees especially are affected by the vibrations of demoniac persons who surround us with their inimical consciousness. Yet we do not abandon the world. We do not seek peace in retirement. We are meant to battle the demoniac forces and rescue the innocent. We are meant to peacefully spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement seems small and insignificant, but we know it is great. We take seriously its intense struggles, and the loss of a single devotee is a great mishap. As Prabhupāda said, we take the loss of a single trained devotee as seriously as the English took the loss of an airplane during World War II.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura said, “Some of the soldiers will fall.” But despite losses, we laugh and play and go on working together in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Someone will hear us. Someone will take a book. Someone will take *prasādam*. And sometimes someone becomes an angelic devotee, a sincere worker.

Let us make our farm and city plans. And as far as we are

able, let us face the difficult task of talking with the dissatisfied, the domineering, the dull. That's our austerity. I say these things with a will for action. That will is not strong yet, but I am trying.

It is still hard to accept the fact that we are losing a *sannyāsī*. I know I will be able to accept it later, but now it is disturbing to everyone. I try not to constantly think of it. We have to be compassionate and forgiving, and yet no one should take this casually.

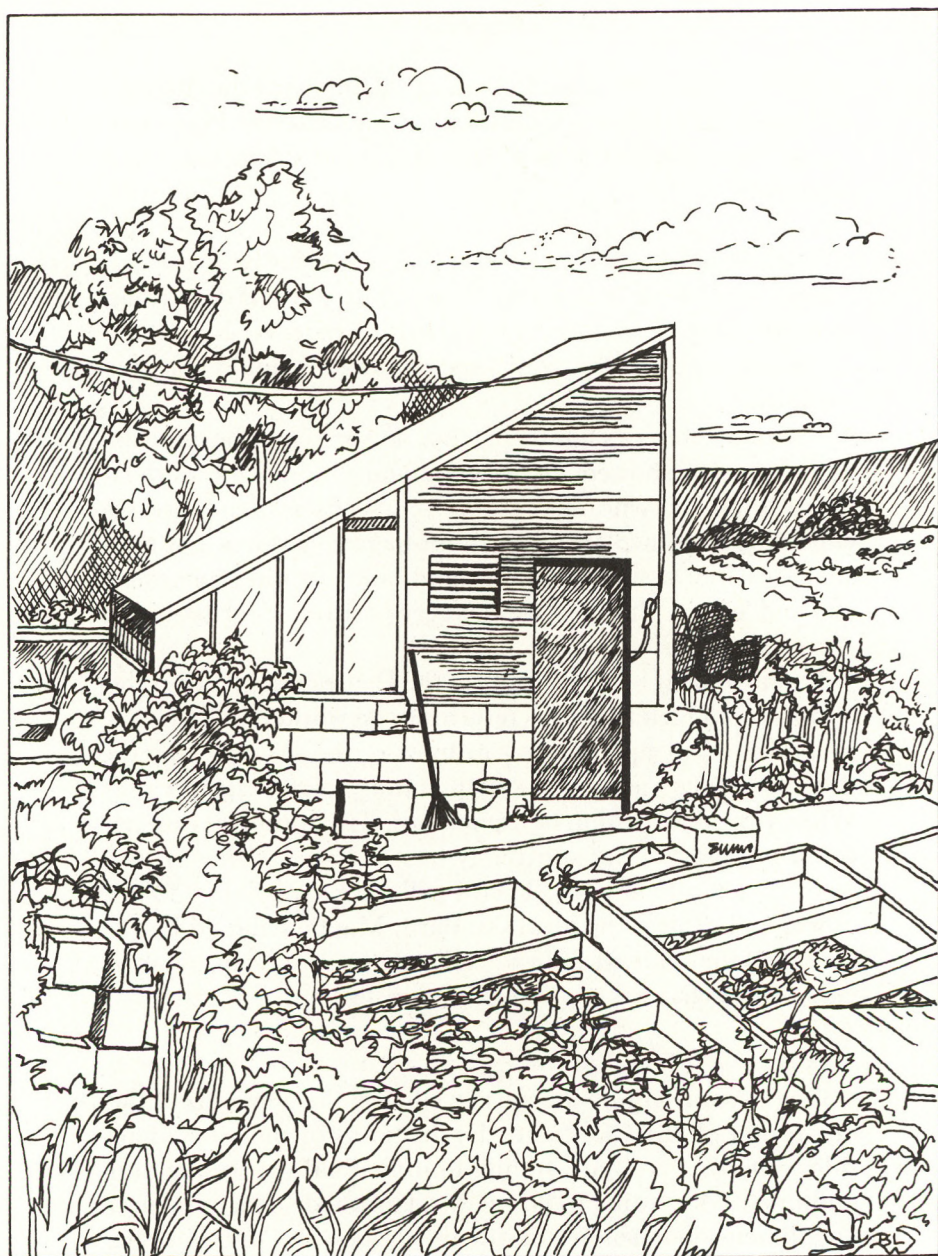
I went to Dhruva's house, partly to forget about the unpleasant news. He showed us his greenhouse and seed gardens where he and his wife nurse plants from seeds until they are big enough to be transplanted into Gītā-nāgarī's garden. The sunshine was hot as we walked around, and my questions were stiff and formal. But their work is very positive: ideal use of the green thumb for Kṛṣṇa.

Later we went to take *darśana* of the Deities. As I entered the temple room I felt like I was returning to a world that had been lost to me. But upon sitting in front of the Deities, I again thought of my friend who was planning to give up *sannyāsa*. When I speak with him, he argues back. His arguments are becoming sophistic, not spiritually based. I am waiting for the worst to actually happen. Then I will have to explain it to the others and protect the ideal standard. Maybe I should be encouraged that at least I am actively engaged again in zonal affairs. And I chanted my *japa* with more feeling.

May 14

One devious argument runs as follows: the demands of the institution of ISKCON and the demands of the vows (four rules, *sannyāsa*, etc.) are stifling to individual expression and fulfillment. According to this view, a faithful disciple is seen as one-dimensional, soldier-like or even robot-like, and in order to function, he has to de-emphasize his loving, personal, sociable nature. This is bogus.

Although on the field of battle the devotee is soldier-like, his



Greenhouse and coldbeds at Dhruva Mahārāja dāsa's house.

whole life is motivated by personal loving feelings. Primarily, we are serving in a loving relationship with our spiritual master. I can feel this just by thinking about Śrīla Prabhupāda or by looking at his picture. He kindly came from the spiritual world to this world to deliver Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Anyone who has accepted him has already come out of the ocean of birth and death into the boat of liberation. Prabhupāda's loving act melts our own hearts and so we serve him in this way. He has done what no one else could do, and so our obligation to him is genuine. It is not to be likened to the force exerted by governments and institutions. "I was gradually falling into a blind well full of snakes, following the general populace. But your servant Nārada Muni, kindly accepted me as his disciple . . . Therefore, my first duty is to serve him. How could I leave his service?" (*Bhāg.* 7.9.28)

It is a false claim, therefore, that life within the institution of ISKCON and within the bounds of its rules and regulations is personally stifling. One leaves ISKCON motivated only by forces of illusion, epitomized by attraction to women. The non-devotee can never understand devotional life, even theoretically, and thus he falls into stereotyped criticism and completely mistaken notions. The fact is that devotees lack nothing—either spiritually or materially.

MAMA-TEJAS

Chanting *japa* by the creek, I suddenly heard sounds of loud splashing and then saw a body leaping from the water. I bent down close to try to see clearly. I thought it must be a water mammal, like a beaver, but then I saw three large fish leaping and swimming. Across the creek I heard other splashes and through the shallow water I saw several groups of fish, their bodies each more than two feet long, swimming together in strange ways. I followed them for awhile and then ran back to the cabin to get the other devotees. Baladeva and Mahāmantra followed me and we ran down to the creek. At first I couldn't see them, but as we ran along the shore we spotted



them again. Baladeva said the fish were carp, and he thought they were having trouble in the shallow rapids. While we were down at the edge of the creek, we also saw a turtle, sandpiper, and clams, and we heard the deep strumming of two bull frogs.

On thinking over this morning's excitement, my main impression is of *how eager I was to share* the sight of the fish. Now as

spiritual master, let me remain in that serving mood and bring all my disciples to the shores of the ocean of love of Godhead and point out to them some of the wonders of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Later, Śrī Kṛṣṇa informed us that the *gurukula* boys had seen these big fish last winter under the ice. They named the fish “*mama-tejas*,” based on a *Bhagavad-gītā* verse they had been memorizing in their scripture class. (This is from the tenth chapter where Kṛṣṇa indicates that anything large or wonderful in nature is a manifestation of Himself.) Often when the boys see anything wonderful or big to their eyes, they call out “*mama-tejas!*”

While rowing, we saw four newly born ducklings vigorously swimming. I guessed their parents were hiding nearby. The ducklings were smaller than my hand and probably just a few days old, and yet by Kṛṣṇa’s inconceivable *śakti* they were able to float and stroke. One of the ducklings swam about twenty feet ahead of the others and then suddenly panicked, realizing that he was alone. Making frightened cheeping sounds, he turned and with desperate leaps, swam back to the other three.

They were pretty little babies, but pitiful to see, so small and unprotected. Almost any predator could have swooped and killed them. And even if their parents returned, how much protection could they afford them against the ravages of nature? Some of nature’s creatures appear powerfully endowed and can even outdo man in their strength and ferocity. But actually we are all as pitiful and helpless as the ducklings, and we are all being hunted down by the predator Time.

Stanzas of Hope Against Hope

1

Today it rained,
and we will be boating.
I will ask for hard news
while rowing.

It seems to diminish
 the worry
 to cruise the creek
 while hearing the unresolved—
 friends fighting and distressed
 and little progress for me.

2

I wish I could hear
 in my quiet room
 the tape recorded message
 of Śrīla Prabhupāda.
 All I need is here:
 cabin, leisure, recorded speech,
 but my attention flits
 like a titmouse on a post:
 my inner ear is lacking.
 But I am determined
 not to deviate.
 Even if I progress little
 I'll be eligible to say,
 "I could not serve Kṛṣṇa
 although I tried."

May 16

A short surprise visit to Gītā-nāgarī by Girirāja Swami. He says he takes it as Kṛṣṇa's desire that the government of India is not allowing him a visa to reenter. He is using this time to develop his preaching skills in Mauritius, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Whenever Kṛṣṇa desires, he will return to his assigned duties in Bombay. Hearing Girirāja Swami explain his difficulties in this way, I became encouraged to think that my illness is also Kṛṣṇa's will. Just as Girirāja cannot return to India, despite all my efforts I cannot return to full action. Therefore, I must accept this as the will of Kṛṣṇa.

While Girirāja Swami was visiting, *The Worshipable Deity* arrived from the printer. We went to the noon *ārati* of Rādhā-

Dāmodara and I beheld the new book on the altar at the feet of Their Lordships. The cover photo is very pleasing and reveals the special mercy of my Prabhupāda *mūrti*.

Seeing Cardinals

The female has stylish plumage—
gray-tan and red, with a trim tail.
The male is red—sharp head.
They have discovered our seeds.
He comes and goes in nervous flits,
she stays more often.
Now if they will only try our feeder.

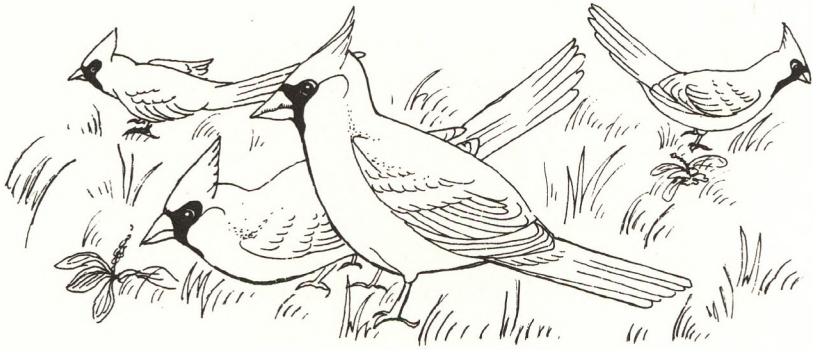
I point out the cardinals
to get relief from heavy news—
a *sannyāsī*'s getting married,
a zonal leader's invading our town,
and another quips, "I don't like *Back to Godhead*."

"Don't you love your duties?"
asked a brother
when he detected in my books
a love for writing, reading,
and walks in the woods.

But it's not true:
I love commanding and protecting,
'tho I'm no *mahā-ratha*.
Somehow I've been given charge,
and if I ever get my head free
I'll travel fast again,
I'll preach a storm,
see everyone, and try
to solve a hundred problems.

But even then,
while managing men and money,

I'll rejoice in Kṛṣṇa's artistry:
cardinals on the lawn.



May 17

DEVOTIONAL SERVICE

When Paramānanda was pressed by a devotee to discuss the relative importance between the quality of one's devotional feelings and how effective or expert one is in one's service, he brought out some realizations. He said that we should appreciate a devotee who was clean and quiet and pure in heart, but that there is an even more advanced stage where a devotee meditates ambitiously to do great things for his spiritual master. And there is an even further advanced stage where he is empowered to carry out those tasks. He gave the example of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is outstanding among all his Vaiṣṇava contemporaries, even though some of them may have been pure devotees of Kṛṣṇa. Only Śrīla Prabhupāda was roused by transcendental compassion and invested with *kṛṣṇa-śakti* to leave India and deliver Kṛṣṇa consciousness to people all over the world.

One of the devotees then made the point that Lord Rāmacandra was equally pleased with the spider who flicked dust into the ocean as well as with Hanumān who threw in big boulders. Paramānanda gave new light on this by saying that although the spider is praised equally by Lord Rāma, nevertheless, he is not as exalted and has not been as glorified throughout the ages as the devotee Hanumānjī.

Hearing this discussion, I was encouraged to aspire to do great things for Prabhupāda. That is what he wants.

There is no shame in admitting that life is a struggle. And there is certainly no shame in admitting that I am a devotee writing to inspire others in devotional service. We should not be shy about being Kṛṣṇa conscious, and I should keep this in mind while writing my diary. If a diary honestly helps one, then it can be used in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Beyond that, if some of the diary writings can help others, then they are a way of sharing spiritual life. *Kathayantaś ca mām nityam, tusyanti ca ramanti ca*: “. . . the devotees enjoy conversing about Me and talking with one another in bliss.” (Bg. 10.9)

May 18

FREEDOM FROM MATERIAL ENJOYMENT

I have been trying to show how one can see Kṛṣṇa in nature. This is prompted by the fact that I am confined to a natural setting. Along with this, I would like to show how one can be Kṛṣṇa conscious even when living a very quiet, inactive life. The real point is to be Kṛṣṇa conscious in any circumstance, and seeing Kṛṣṇa in nature is a version of this. If one were isolated to a place with just four walls, as in a prison, he would somehow have to be Kṛṣṇa conscious in those surroundings. The triumph will be to find every setting to be abundantly full of Kṛṣṇa conscious opportunities, no matter how limited that setting may appear externally. Regardless of his circumstances, a devotee should be able to fill his days and nights with progressive, even relishable states of being. Especially in our reflections on *śāstra* we carry ourselves beyond mundane settings. The advantage of a materially-deprived situation is that one is free of all distractions or illusions of enjoyment, and can focus on the transcendental essence.

COMPETITION

At this time of year it is not uncommon to find dead young birds on the ground. This is because they have been pushed

out of the nest by stronger brothers in the competition for limited food. The strongest and most persistent gets the most worms. As for the push, the competition, Prabhupāda liked to see his disciples competing to distribute the most books. I don't think I'll fall down dead on the ground from the transcendental competition, and neither will my Godbrothers. But I'm also opening my mouth.

All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda, who simultaneously urged his American disciples to “do something wonderful” and at the same time quelled our fighting spirit. He inspired us to see unity in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

May 19

Śrīla Agrāṇī Swami visited today. We fully discussed the progress of the temples in the Caribbean, and we lamented about our Godbrother's falldown from *sannyāsa*.

Spending time with a dedicated traveling preacher, I became more aware of my own confinement. But let me not exaggerate. Association occurs in consciousness and in shared activities; mine is with the holy name, the scriptures and with visiting devotees.

Agrāṇī Swami asked me, half humorously, if there are any secrets to being a *guru*. I showed him Rūpanuga's letter: “We should not try to appear infallible externally but [rather] transparent internally.” I told him also how I was trying to become more aware of the difference between imitating and following Prabhupāda. For example, I cannot imitate Prabhupāda's transcendental neglect of health, although I try not to place undue importance upon it. In all cases I should be careful not to imitate him.

Chanting to Ant

Ant on rotting stump,
as you crawl into your hole,
hear the holy name.



By the Pond

This tall-stemmed flower,
white and purple-crowned
is it iris or gladiola?
I'll find the name tomorrow,
but for now I call it
"Kṛṣṇa's smile."

May 23

AFTER RAIN VIEWS

In an overgrown meadow, old-time farm machinery rusts while waiting for the future when all farming will be by oxen. All quiet except for three crows screeching and diving at a tree. Since I've been kept indoors all day, I can sympathize with these ants now coming out from under the rocks.

Puddles are small reflections of sky. Water drips from upper leaves. New varieties of leafy weeds and plants show up on the forest floor. Each possesses a unique crafted shape.



One of my disciples just told me that Śrīla Bhaktipāda has received a donation of granite to build the Temple of Understanding. Worth two million dollars, it's enough to build the whole thing. My response to this is envy. All *I* am trying for is to get through the day without a headache, but Bhaktipāda is building a tremendous temple and also writing books. I am glad for Bhaktipāda and New Vrindaban, and I acknowledge their tremendous energy and achievement. How they work together! It moves me, snail that I am, to do something.

As I write, the male and female cardinals are out getting the seeds off the ground. They are as familiar as pets to that spot right outside my window.

Cardinal, why are you so red?

Why the black mask like a robber?

Why is your wife always hopping with you?

These are not questions, just exclamations.

Kṛṣṇa is the answer. In Him reside all contradictions, and in Him I can also find satisfaction for my foolish enviousness, my hesitancy, my desire for expression.

I'd like to go to Potomac in strong body and mind, rally the devotees from whatever depression has followed the falldown of their *sannyāsī* leader there, and encourage them to continue with our plans for expansion. Maybe we can't get two million dollars' worth of granite, but we can build a temple. In Washington there is tremendous book distribution already going on, and in Philadelphia there are many plans, including one for a brahminical school run by Ravindra-svarūpa. Mahānidhi Swami's plans in Baltimore are very promising, and just his presence in our zone is a source of encouragement for all of us. ISKCON Boston is always an inspiration with their book distribution and preaching programs. The whole Caribbean is ripe, and Ireland is ecstatically expanding with Prthu's restaurants, temples, and islands . . . But I can't go more than fifteen minutes in any direction without being checked by the STOP sign of this body. *That* is why I speak of cardinals, groundhogs, green grasses and the creek. I must speak of my world, and that is my world.

May 24

Śamīka Ṛṣi is frustrated because, although he is a doctor, he can't help me. As I lay in bed and he sat on the floor, I explained to him my factual situation and my own frustration. We both concluded that *I have no alternative* to my present course of action. In this connection, I am feeling very grateful that I can write things down and try to make a Kṛṣṇa conscious record of my experience.

Every seasonal change is like a personal note from Kṛṣṇa. Nature's beauty indicates the beauty of Kṛṣṇa. Everything is full of symbols and recorded messages. The hopping toad, the birds at dawn, the rain on the roof—everything is teeming with poignant music and pure Kṛṣṇa conscious expressions, and it only requires a sensitive receiver to understand it. As we become submissive to the scriptures, we will also become receptive to all things and be directed both in mind and heart to what Kṛṣṇa wants us to do. As we advance, Kṛṣṇa consciousness becomes more natural, not just a matter of classroom theories or ritual practices. As Prabhupāda says, "It is not an artificial imposition. It is the original consciousness of the living being."

May 26

On a tape, devotees are reading an inspiring section from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, the talks of Lord Caitanya with Rāmānanda Rāya. How blind and foolish are those who criticize Śrīla Prabhupāda by saying that he only discusses the very basic, elementary points of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In these and other sections of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Prabhupāda fully describes the most sublime love of God as displayed in conjugal relationship between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Repeatedly, Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasizes that the *mādhurya-rasa* is superior to the other relationships with Kṛṣṇa. But Prabhupāda refrains from taking the relationship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa cheaply as the *prākṛta-sahajiyās* do. In a purport he mentions that one rascal claimed that whenever he heard the name "Rādhā" he thought of the wife of a barber he knew who

was also named Rādhā. Prabhupāda said this is a typical example of how people will misunderstand the *rāsa-līlā*, and therefore it should not be discussed except with confidential devotees.

Prabhupāda did not like to talk about his own *rāsa* with Kṛṣṇa, nor did he encourage his disciples to dream of such advanced relationships. He stressed that as long as we are in this world, our absolute service is to the spiritual master, to preach in this *sāṅkīrtana* movement. When our material desires have all been burned away and we are fully surrendered—like Arjuna, fighting for Kṛṣṇa and rendering body, mind, and words in the service of the spiritual master—then Kṛṣṇa will be kind enough to show us our eternal relationship with Him. Premature talks of the *rasas* may be satisfying for those who are impetuous enough to imagine they are on the topmost platform, but Prabhupāda always showed careful restraint in this matter. Prabhupāda is Kṛṣṇa's topmost devotee, and his re-



straint should never be misinterpreted as lack of advancement or an inability to lead us to the highest point.

Especially relishable are the verses spoken by Lord Caitanya after Rāmānanda Rāya saw that Lord Caitanya was Kṛṣṇa Himself. Lord Caitanya said that Rāmānanda Rāya, being in the highest standard of devotional service, was able to see Kṛṣṇa everywhere and that was why he thought that Lord Caitanya was also Kṛṣṇa. Lord Caitanya then gave examples of *mahā-bhāgavata* devotees who saw Kṛṣṇa everywhere.

The *gopīs* see the plants and creepers of Vṛndāvana not as ordinary shrubs, but as related intimately with Kṛṣṇa. Upon reading this I am encouraged. I am not a *mahā-bhāgavata* searching through these Pennsylvania woods in pursuit of Śyāmasundara, but at least I am on the right track. Kṛṣṇa is in every atom, and even the most elementary instruction by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā* invites us all to see Him in the taste of water and the light of the sun and the sound in the air.

May 27

MEMORIAL DAY

Bad day for the fish. How many will be hooked today due to others' uncontrolled tongues? As we rode past the bridge we saw two fishermen. One looked mean, moustached, tattooed, wearing denim. He had already caught about six carp. I waved, but he didn't wave back. Later we saw two other men go by in a boat, one wearing a camouflaged vest and sporting a beard.

Fish are one of the last creatures spared. Ecologists and naturalists object to fishing only if an entire species is in danger of so-called extinction. Otherwise who cares about the slimy, glassy-eyed, edible, "soul-less" fish? It is difficult to make propaganda to save them. People will say, "What about the humans in Soviet-oppressed countries? What about the aborted babies in the womb?" But everything is connected by an intricate and irremovable web of *karma*, and the fisherman himself suffers for the pain he causes to the hapless "*mama-tejas*."

Even when the *karmī* thinks he is acting peacefully, by habit he still acts horrendously. Sitting back quietly in a boat, smoking a cigarette, fishing—what’s wrong with that? Something even the President of the United States might do if he could get a day off.

“The doctor is coming Saturday,” said Baladeva.

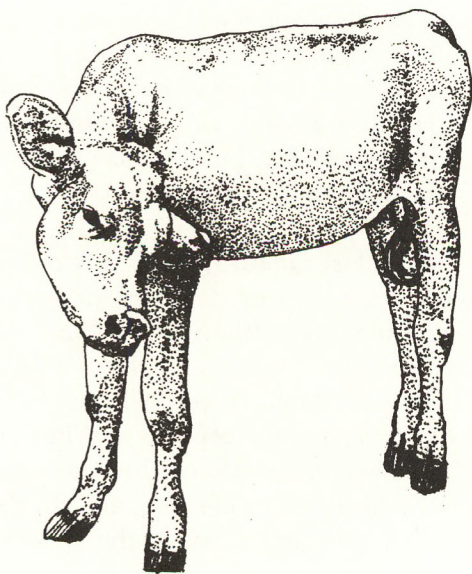
“Which doctor?” I asked.

“I think they’re both witch-doctors,” Baladeva joked.

“You mean the doctor from South India?” I asked. Yes, finally he’s coming. This seems like my last big chance to be cured by medical science. Since I’ve tried most of the other methods, now a full course in Āyur Vedic treatment.

GATHERING HAY

Today the devotees are gathering hay. Hail is predicted for the late afternoon, so they are racing to get the hay into the barn. The alfalfa, timothy, and wheat stand several feet high and cover thirty acres. A few days ago the ox team pulled the



mower which cut the hay and left it to dry. Yesterday the oxen did the tedding, pulling a machine which had what looked like metal fingers that turned the hay over to dry on the other side. Then the tractor came and raked the hay into long rows. Now comes the baling.

Vaiṣṇava drives the large tractor hooked up to an automatic baler. As Vaiṣṇava drives up and down the rows, the baler quickly gathers up the hay, packs it into a fifty pound bale, ties two rows of twine around it, and then throws the bale in a high arc, like a basketball player making a long shot. The bale then lands in a tall wagon hooked up behind. As soon as the big cart is filled, Śrī Kṛṣṇa comes out with another tractor, hooked to an empty cart. He takes the full cart and races back to the barn, followed by barking Dubhi and with six-year old Arjuna riding high on the bales.

Back at the barn, half-a-dozen men quickly unload the bales onto a conveyor that carries the hay up to the second floor of the barn. The devotees then return another empty cart out to the field.

All this is to provide nutritious feed for the cows. The devotees are pleased to work hard and pull the hay in before the rain comes. Even a single day's delay can ruin the food value of the hay. Now the barn is loading up with first-class bales.

Coming from the fields, we went to the barn to see the one-day-old calf. He was standing motionless in his stall and didn't respond much to petting. The big cows and heifers were all eating fresh hay and would occasionally poke their noses in their water machines to take a drink. The better the hay, the better they eat. And then they give more milk, the best food for spiritual brains.

Signs of the times: today the first rose bloomed in the garden and I offered it to Lord Jagannātha. Every day now He is getting fresh flowers. Squirrels and rabbits hop all over the paths. Dragonflies land on the rocks by the pond. Waterstriders skate across the pond's surface on their pontoon legs. Our strawberries are ready to pick. Lord Dāmodara is bare-armed.

Sickroom Darśana

A single light
cuts sickroom gloom
revealing my Lord Jagannātha.



May 29

The duck couple who I have been observing for a few weeks has now successfully produced offspring. I used to see the full-grown male and female feeding, bathing, and preening, and sitting in the sunshine. But yesterday I saw the female, now a mother, swimming with her seven ducklings lined up behind her. It was during the rainfall and they were all swimming expertly against the stream. When I pointed them out to Baladeva, he said that probably the ducklings would soon be reduced to six, then five. He has personally seen a snapping turtle rise from the bottom of the creek and pull down an unsuspecting duckling to its death.

As I write this, it is almost dawn and dozens of nearby birds are playing on their natural flutes, pipes, and whistles. Their happiest moment is but a fleeting song between struggle and death. And we also may descend to that.

After several bad days with frequent headaches, today started out better. I was able to do my *haṭha-yoga* exercises, and Baladeva and I went for a bike ride. Returning to the farm, I saw Lalitā dāsī and about a dozen small *gurukula* children just starting down the trail from my cabin. I had written them a note asking them to pick up the sticks on the path. It was a little unusual for them to see me riding a bicycle and wearing *yogī* pants. I joked with them that some of the sticks they would find on the path were very big and looked like snakes, and so it would be a test of bravery for them to pick them up. They were all very excited and loveable. About four of the boys are all of

the same age and are now losing their front teeth. Some of the girls are also missing a few front teeth, and I thought that if I soon lose one, I'll look like them.

After this meeting with the children I again began to feel a headache coming. Taking a few more pills, I managed to subdue it until lunchtime, but after lunch I took a dive and had to lie on the bed with pain behind the right eye. The frequency is beginning to remind me of low days such as when I was in the Calcutta hotel after leaving Māyāpur. Not until six o'clock did it let up and I was able to listen for an hour to devotees reading the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* about Lord Caitanya cleaning the Guṇḍicā temple.

May 30

BEYOND ATHEISTIC DOGMA

Most modern writers are agnostics or atheists, but in many cases they never discuss deeply how they have arrived at this important decision. They make a grand *a priori* assumption that there is no God. They accept Darwinism, secular psychology, atheistic scientism, sometimes seeing the faults in these processes but at last accepting almost as a by-product the conclusion that there is no God. Dogmatists only add to the intellectuals' disgust with organized religions. But on an individual basis, if you talk to these various atheists, you mostly find a shallow, dogmatic conviction.

"If God is within me, why am I so miserable?" "If there is God, why is there evil?" "Did He create cancer?" Whether posed as genuine doubts or snide jokes, these questions are answered by the ABC beginnings of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. But after wandering through the speculative mazes of universities, or after reading for oneself the great thinkers of Western culture, by the time one gets to the *Bhagavad-gītā* he is spiritually paralyzed and unable to hear Lord Kṛṣṇa's words. The Vedic philosophy, therefore, rightly prescribes that we require the extra mercy of the devotee of the Lord, who is even more merciful than Kṛṣṇa in that he extends to us Kṛṣṇa's knowledge by his pure example and his intelligent convictions. Everyone

who has come to spiritual life has come in this way. *Chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava sevā, nistāra pāyeche kebā.*

WE WRITE FOR THE LIVING

You are going to die! Be Kṛṣṇa conscious! When will you pick up *that* insight, Mr. Diarist? And if you really knew your death was imminent, would you be content to write of the flowers?

Reply: Death we have heard of, and we see it in others. But living we know directly. Why do we write at all except for the living, those present and in the future? While they have human life, they have the greatest opportunity to hear about devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. So we write to those sleeping, but living souls, hoping to awaken them. And we write to those already awake and living in the shelter at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, to encourage them further. To give them sufficient, attractive literature in Kṛṣṇa consciousness so they don't think they have to go elsewhere. (And for our own purification we create literature; therefore, it is the kindness of others that they read it and find pleasure in it.)

From a letter by a disciple: "Even if I get a common cold or a stiff neck from carrying my bookbag, I get so affected. Will you tell us at some point later on how you are handling your illness, how you are thinking and praying, how your devotional service attitude remains uninterrupted? Because all of us are going to have to go through this old age and disease and, personally, I feel unprepared to cope with it even when a little failing of health disturbs me so much. Thank you."

ON THE LAST DAY OF MAY

There was midnight thunder, flashes of light, but not much rain. In the early hours I dreamt I was with several ISKCON leaders talking with another leader who we feared might be defecting from ISKCON. This leader was claiming he was doing his own substantial preaching and it wasn't important whether he was part of ISKCON, as long as he was pleasing

Śrīla Prabhupāda. I woke thinking: 1. Śrīla Prabhupāda is pleased not just by our remaining within his institution, but by our substantial work to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness; 2. It is essential to maintain worldwide unity under the G.B.C. for the ultimate spreading of Lord Caitanya's movement as it issues from Prabhupāda.

This dream also made me anxious about whether I am pleasing Śrīla Prabhupāda. I see the danger of my passing through life in a too "low profile" way and coming to the end with little attempted and thus little achieved. Ventures in this world may seem dangerous, and therefore we may hesitate to embark on them due to various fears. Yet it is more dangerous (*mahā-bhaya*) to come to the end of this brief existence and to face Śrīla Prabhupāda with little attempted and little achieved.

On this last day of May, Lord Jagannātha is wearing light blue and silver and standing on a light blue altar cloth. Balarāma carries a small silver plough. At Their feet is a large pink peony from Dhruva's garden, and an American Beauty rose from my backyard. I'm just beginning to understand what it means to offer flowers to the Deity—how it helps our devotional attitude. It is not a waste of flowers and money; it is not something unimportant.

While out walking on the last day of May, I saw twice, within a minute, deer flashing through the trees, their bodies yellow-tan against the forest green. The woods are tightly packed with foliage, and although I know the deer are there, like so many other creatures they move like phantoms beyond our sight and hearing. But a chipmunk, with tail erect, the first I've seen this year, has just arrived at my door. Running hither and thither, like everyone else he's chirping, "Where's food? Where's food?"

On this day, I am not only watching deer but managing and preaching. I'm trying to start a new center in Virginia, mediating an issue between two temple presidents, trying to bring back a wandering disciple, pushing book distribution. Through messages and letters, I'm staying in the center of



Rare sight along the back path.



things as much as possible, even in this remote country location.

But mostly I continue the lay-low routine, doing little in a dark room, a test of patience while throbbing mounts behind the eyes.

And I continue my prayer that despite the closed-in repetitive nature of these days, I may render helpful Kṛṣṇa conscious offerings to the reader of *Journal and Poems*.

May we use and offer everything in Lord Kṛṣṇa's service.

5

June 1

From time to time I'm reminded of and embarrassed by the limitations of my existence here. In a *Bhāgavatam* class, Prabhānu dāsa spoke about the rare opportunity of human life. He said that now at Gītā-nāgarī one can see so many forms of life, and yet very, very few of them are able to receive Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Only the human being is qualified to receive knowledge of Kṛṣṇa. Yet I have been spending much time communing with the lower species of nature—forest animals, birds, and flowers. Sometimes I rejoice in this communing, which I have not done previously in my life, but at other times I'm reminded that it is not the business of the preacher to commune with creatures who cannot perceive the message of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Of course, my present limited situation is imposed upon me by my illness, and I try to see the bright side of it. But as I wrote in my poem about cardinals, I am eager to return to the rigors and rewards of intense association with other people. Yet during this period, if I take solace in and learn some of the secrets of nature, that will also enhance my Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So although this year I am handicapped, I do have special advantages.

STEADINESS IN VARIETY

We are encouraged to pursue variety in spiritual life. But this is different than mere fickleness or a lust for novelty. In the spiritual world, the eternal associates of Kṛṣṇa see endless varieties in their worshipable friend and lover, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and thus life with Him is described as ever fresh and infinitely blissful.

Along with the infinite variety of experience in the spiritual world, life there is also infinitely steady. The cowherd boys and *gopīs* do not seek out a friend or lover other than Kṛṣṇa. In fact, the *gopīs* infinitely prefer Kṛṣṇa to stay in Vṛndāvana, and

when Kṛṣṇa goes to Dvārakā they are no longer attracted to Him in the same way. They want to be with Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, and they don't wish their life with Him there to be disrupted.

The boys also want Kṛṣṇa's constant association. When taking rest at night, they count on seeing Kṛṣṇa in the morning. They want to go to His house early in the morning and see Him dressed by mother Yaśodā, and then they want to go out to the cow pastures with Him and play and watch Him kill demons and take part with Him in all kinds of sports. Nor do they expect this life with Kṛṣṇa to be disrupted.

As we train ourselves in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we too should cultivate variety, steadiness, and loyalty in our devotional routine. A steady devotional routine is not necessarily cause for boredom or restlessness for a devotee. Rather, such a routine is a reflection of the blissful peace and security of Vaikuṇṭha, where Kṛṣṇa is always present and where one is always engaged in one's *rasa* with Him through infinite, diverse and yet familiar exchanges.

So I do not despise the fact that the same sun rises each morning, or that I am greeted by the same songs of the birds every day. And neither do I wish that a Deity other than Rādhā-Dāmodara appear on the altar at *maṅgala-ārati*. But what I despise is my own dullness and lack of devotion.

ĀYUR VEDIC MEDICINE

I've given a good try with both naturopathic and allopathic doctors and medicines. Now we try Āyur Veda. Prabhupāda accepts Āyur Veda as part of Vedic culture, and in his books he always refers respectfully to Āyur Vedic science. In one place, Prabhupāda writes, "The *Āyurveda-śāstra* recommends *auśadhi cintayet viṣṇum*: even while taking medicine one should remember Viṣṇu, because the medicine is not all-in-all and Lord Viṣṇu is the real protector." (*Bhāg.* 10.6.30, purport)

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* also refers authoritatively to the powers of Āyur Veda. Dhanvantari, an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, first gave the science to Brahmā, and Brahmā taught it to the

first physicians, the *Aśvinī-kumāras*. The *Bhāgavatam* describes how the *Aśvinī-kumāras* then rejuvenated the old sage Cyavana.

In his own life, Śrīla Prabhupāda preferred Āyur Vedic treatment, although he acknowledged that there are many quacks. When Prabhupāda suffered paralysis in 1967, he wrote to a friend in India asking for Āyur Vedic medicines, and he considered the possibility of sending tickets for a doctor to come to New York. "I may inform you that I am inclined toward Āyur Vedic treatment," he wrote. "You can consult the Āyur Vedic physician in Vṛndāvana who is a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava . . . Consult necessary physicians and let me know what to do. In Mathurā there are undoubtedly many Āyur Vedic physicians and many quacks also. Try to avoid the quacks."



Śrīla Prabhupāda's last physician was an Āyur Vedic *kavirāja*, and Prabhupāda much preferred him to the dreaded prospect of receiving allopathic treatment in a hospital. I recall how Prabhupāda would converse from his bed with his *kavirāja* in Vṛndāvana in those last days, and how they would both quote the *Bhāgavatam* phrase, *bhavauṣadāc chrotra-mano-bhirāmāt*. (*Bhāg.* 10.1.4) With this phrase, both *kavirāja* and Prabhupāda acknowledged that the real medicine was to chant and hear the holy name and also that even temporary cure was simply dependent on Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda often derided Western science, and he looked down upon a dying Godbrother's desperate technological attempts to recover his health by going to a hospital.

So Sananda Kumāra has arrived here with his tin trunk, straight from Kottakkal, Kerala. He is thirty years old, and is an initiated disciple of my Godbrother Śrīla Ācāryapāda. He described a treatment of medicines, oil inhalations, oil application, and massage of the head, and the entire treatment is to take four weeks. He doesn't seem to be making many demands on diet or other activities, while he is eliminating my bicycle rides and some *yoga-āsanas*. I was eagerly awaiting his arrival, but I realize that the treatment, even if successful, will work slowly. At least I'm enrolled in a Vedic program, and I may utter "Śrī Viṣṇu" with transcendental faith, while drinking down bitter combinations.

One of the biggest challenges before me is to gain self-control, to be patient, and to restrain myself from performing my normal activities. To restrain myself in body and mind from engaging in even the most common and natural services requires a special type of sense control.

This morning I received in the mail some editing of my writing by Maṇḍaleśvara, which I have been very eagerly looking forward to. As I was about to dive into the contents, I felt the beginnings of a headache. Now I have learned by painful experience that if I am not cautious at such times and refrain from acting on my spontaneous desires, I may be incapaci-

tated for the rest of the day as the headaches worsen and drive me to bed. It simply isn't worth it, and so I have to show restraint and ration my time.

To be so restricted by matter is a humiliation for the spirit soul. My experience with illness teaches me the value of maintaining my health in order to render service, and I am also realizing more how the body is limited and temporary.

We may always *desire* to serve Kṛṣṇa, but how that desire is expressed within this body is ultimately beyond our control. So although it is not egoistic of me to have a hearty desire to delve at once into today's mail, nevertheless, I have to acknowledge my weakness and surrender to Kṛṣṇa's will. This form of patient surrender is one of the main lessons I must learn, and developing such patience has been a major test of my Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Getting well also tests my ability to keep a balance, to not allow myself to swing like a pendulum from one mental extreme to another. When the *prakṛti* forces me to lie down, I must do so, but I must not be lulled into thinking that I cannot rise again and join the active fight of preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. For the time being, my preaching may be to quietly recover, but eventually I have to become active again. Prabhupāda in a simple way expressed this in a letter to an ailing devotee: "Take as much rest as you need and then return to *saṅkīrtana*." Simple words, but hard to put into practice.

Dr. Kumāra's trunk is filled with bottles of medicine, bags of chopped roots, and other interesting Āyur Vedic paraphernalia. I am optimistic about the prospects, and I should utilize every facility in attempting a cure. At the same time, it occurs to me that the body is a pitifully delicate mechanism and the material world is full of danger. So much care may be taken to gradually cure a patient, but with one bump or poke the life can be ended. But I won't let thoughts of the pitiful condition of material life overwhelm me. I wandered into the garden and noticed that the beetles and caterpillars are attacking the roses. Kṛṣṇa-kīrtana joined me, and we picked off many cater-

pillars. But many had burrowed into the unopened buds, and we saw eggs in many places. Nevertheless, we're not going to sit back and be overwhelmed by the ravages, but we will fight to save as many roses as possible to offer at the lotus feet of Lord Jagannātha. Let me also fight back.



June 2

BATTLES BIG AND SMALL

We have to fight real battles, not those we only imagine. My fight is to get well. That is the immediate task before me. This seems enough, but there is a tendency to worry about imaginary problems, imaginary battles, and how we may fare in them. Rather than mustering our efforts to fight the actual opposition before us, we become distracted. Even though this present battle is small and inglorious, I must be victorious here in order to take up grander battles with more glorious victories.

Arjuna wanted to go “beyond” the duties of a *kṣatriya* and to take on the difficult austerities of a wandering mendicant. But Kṛṣṇa told him to face the battle before him. So now I fight the battle of refraining from all reading, writing, and traveling.

June 3

I regularly have nagging feelings about not preaching. I'm confined now and can't preach, but even when I was healthy I didn't preach enough. I have to be careful to distinguish the two and not to feel guilty about being ill.

While listening to Baladeva read an earlier section of this work, I commented that some of our manager-preachers might say, “What kind of a book is this, all about plants and flowers? Where's the preaching?” But people in America are pluralistic. They do not all believe in the same thing. Even

those in the majority have many different tastes and feelings. And aside from the majority, only individual “majorities of one” become devotees. Because there are so many different kinds of people, our preaching has to be divided. Someone may preach to the scientists, someone may preach to the rock and roll kids, and someone may preach to the lowest common denominator. I think this book with a lot about nature and meditation will actually be popular. For instance, Baladeva’s sister visited yesterday and bought a poetry book. And she is an interesting kind of person. I can see that she would like to hear some of my reflections about wildflowers and how they relate to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We have to distinguish between different classes of people in material life, and we have to make Kṛṣṇa consciousness attractive to everyone individually.

An Offering to Kṛṣṇa

Bug-chewed rose bush,
give just one bloom,
and I’ll offer it to Kṛṣṇa.

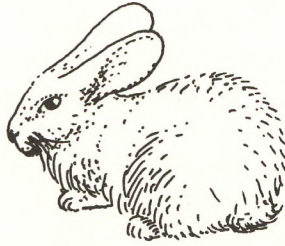


June 5

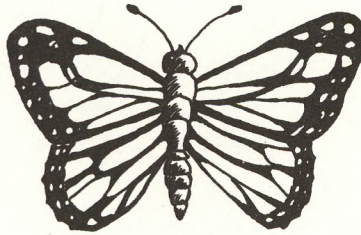
While I was talking on the phone, a large cat appeared just outside the window. He’s orange, black, and white, with the look of a real predator. I can hardly imagine the terror he must strike into the hearts of the various local creatures, such as the field mice and chipmunks who were recently foraging very nearby. The cat stalked by slow and deadly.

I have been seeing much wildlife of late. One of the most pitiful species is the rabbit. Thin-headed, timid, and without good instincts for survival, they often stop cold in plain view, alert, but easily captured, shot, or devoured. While walking the other day, I saw one freeze directly in my path until I was right on top of him. “Kill me if you like,” they seem to say. Śrīla Prabhupāda has many times given the example of the rabbit’s closing its eyes in danger. This is analogous to those people

who pathetically choose to ignore the dangers of material existence.



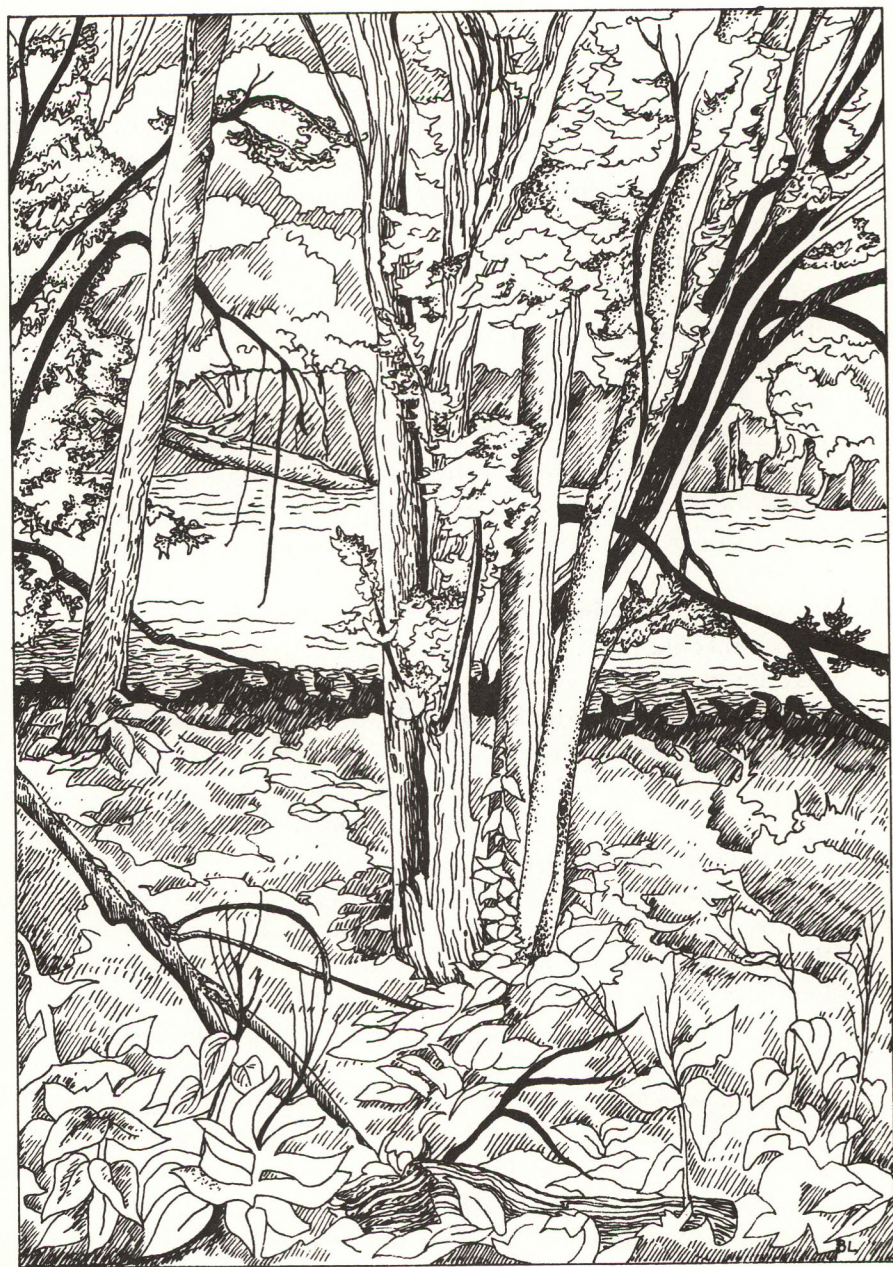
The butterflies twirl around, dizzily fulfilling their instincts, twirling and flying for a few weeks. The butterflies are an example of reincarnation in one lifetime. As caterpillars they build cocoons, meditate on flying, and come out with a new frail body.



As June begins, it's more evident that this is a time of great production, but also a time of death. As soon as the mosquitoes lay their eggs, the fish eat most of them. The mating of the frog produces hundreds of frog eggs, but most of them are eaten by the birds. And the orange cat is stalking. As the *Bhagavad-gītā* states, "For one who has taken his birth, death is certain."

How calmly and sweetly Dr. Kumārji informs me, with a South Indian wave of his head and hand, that I must now stop *all* reading and writing.

But I can still look at the plants. Most of the wildflowers are



gone now, except for the large angelica by the creek, little yellow money-worts that grow along the ground, and most profusely, the honeysuckle vines and wild snapdragons. The wild plants that blossomed last May have now produced some fruit, mostly insignificant. And the gypsy moths are eating the leaves and fruits. The creekside and the path leading from my cabin which a month ago were brightly spotted with light flowers, now more resemble a jungle or swamp with heavy green leafage. The most numerous plants are the stinging nettles, which are supposedly edible and are good medicine for stopping bleeding. Bhakti-mārga and her husband Dhruva have been so busy in our main fruit and flower gardens that they have not collected much of the wildflower fruits and leaves which can be used for medicine and cooking. I encouraged them to collect the different wild plants for use by the devotee community. With this in mind, we have marked the more valuable plants like milkweed, speedwell, and jewelweed (which is used for treating poison ivy).

Hearing of the prodigious work Dhruva and Bhakti-mārga are doing in our main garden, I realize how, even within Gītā-nāgarī, I am confined to a small area which is not, of course, the area of our serious agriculture. I mostly see what grows along Recuperation Way.

“Is it possible to have relationships or acquaintances with plants?” I thought. And then I remembered the story of how Prabhupāda grew familiar with the trees that grew on John Lennon’s estate. He went to them one last time before he left there, saying, “I want to say good-bye to a few friends first.”

In *Bhāgavatam* class this morning Paramānanda said that even if a person is crippled, he still can be fully Kṛṣṇa conscious. Having material facility taken away should not diminish one’s Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the least bit. To others it may appear that one is diminished, but if somehow one can act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he’s fully engaged.

So while taking intelligent measures to get well, I should remain detached from these measures. Medical procedures are

not my ultimate duty, nor are they the ultimate truth. Ultimate truth is to live as the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. Think of Him, hear His name, hear His words, aspire to His service.

There is going to be a meeting today at Gītā-nāgarī of the temple presidents in our Mid-Atlantic zone. I'm going to speak with them, although the doctor says I shouldn't meet with anyone for more than half an hour. It's eleven o'clock now, and a headache is already starting, but I hope to sneak in a half-hour or even an hour talk with my Godbrothers. I want to assure them that I'm eager to resume my full duties.

In one of the books that recommends keeping a private diary, the author says that diary keeping is a matter of survival. I'm only interested in the diary as a form of communicative literature, but I have known the relief of being able to think things out in writing, to admit my struggles in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Sometimes to write down one's thoughts gives one a direction and a firmness. I get a better grasp on reality and remind myself that Kṛṣṇa is in control and that I have nothing to fear. Just as when we chant the holy name, we are suddenly with Kṛṣṇa and we remember Him (*smaraṇam*), so writing is definitely a form of *viṣṇu-smaraṇam*. And this *viṣṇu-smaraṇam* is not only for the reader but also for the writer. Thus the primary motivation for a Kṛṣṇa conscious writer should be self-purification. In this world of danger at every step, if a devotee can write his way to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, that is the perfection of the writing media. Survival for us means to remember Kṛṣṇa.

THE PERFECTION OF CULTURE

I just remembered a phrase from a year-old newspaper article about devotees that appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. It was a Sunday magazine feature about the Philadelphia Hare Kṛṣṇa community, and the writer spent some time with Śubhānanda and his wife. The narrator related how even in a casual

conversation, Śubhānanda's wife, Sītārāṇī, took the opportunity to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Maybe they were riding together in an elevator and the neighbor asked a question, whereupon Sītārāṇī brought out a Kṛṣṇa conscious point. Anyway, the journalist's line was, "Always a missionary, Sītārāṇī said . . ." The writer seemed annoyed that Sītārāṇī couldn't be just plain-folks human being instead of always carrying out the mission of her spiritual master. Of course, there are abuses by those who claim to be missionaries, but often the criticism of missionaries by those who claim to be the "real folk" of the world is unfair and uninformed.

Even if a devotee suppresses certain features of his or her material personality to maximize the preaching, what is the harm of that? That is the truest expression of humanness and concern for others.

A full life need not include giving expression to the baser instincts, and a person who strives to attain the Absolute Truth is not less human for it. Actual social repression occurs when one withholds oneself or others from contact with the Supreme. Becoming God-realized is the highest prerogative of human life.

In Vedic culture, if a devotee humbly renounces various social customs (which may even include getting married and raising a family), he is held up as a model of human behavior. To chide the genuine monk for not participating in sinful activities or for being celibate is uncultured. Just the sight of a *sannyāsī* in his traditional saffron robes should compel a civilized person to bow down at the feet of the renunciant and then invite him to stay at one's home.

The *sannyāsī* is also a human being, but he has been blessed to live for a higher purpose. Thus he is like a wise elder within the family of humanity. He is not outside the family, and he should certainly not be derided as an incomplete man. But he serves within the family and is their spiritual leader.

If the devotee is "always the missionary," then that is to his or her credit. Always thinking of Kṛṣṇa and always spreading His glories is the aspiration of the devotee.

Stanzas for Lord Viṣṇu

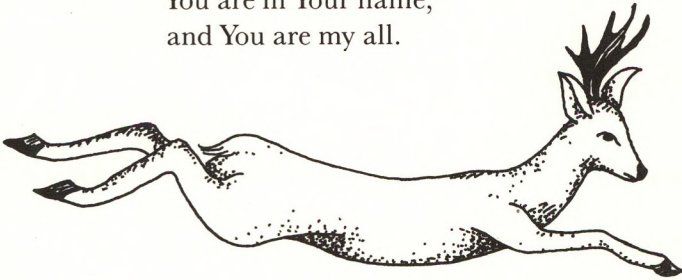
Lord of Vaikuṇṭha,
You are like the running deer:
I cannot reach You.

Lord of Vaikuṇṭha,
You are like the fir treetop:
I cannot reach You.

But
Lord of Vaikuṇṭha,
You are like the dawn:
I see You every day.

Lord of Vaikuṇṭha,
You are like the running creek:
You are always near.

Lord of Vaikuṇṭha,
there is no one else like You:
You are in Your name,
and You are my all.



June 8, 3:30 A.M.

This morning I am feeling a stronger will to return to duty. But it really requires intelligence to know when one should fight and when one should surrender to the superior force. The case of our Godsister Gaurī dāsī shows the force of unconditional surrender to Kṛṣṇa in the face of illness.

Gaurī was diagnosed as having a severe case of cancer, and

she understood this to be the hand of Kṛṣṇa. She decided to go to Vṛndāvana to pass her last days in the purifying atmosphere, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and preparing to go back to Godhead. She also began receiving treatments from a local Āyur Vedic doctor. During her first weeks in Vṛndāvana, she was so weak that she could only speak fifteen minutes a day, and it appeared that she was gradually approaching the end of her life. But then miraculously everything changed. The Āyur Vedic medicines seemed to take hold, and now she has recovered more than 75%.

The Kṛṣṇa conscious version of the will to live may also be expressed in a fighting spirit, in being determined not to stop serving and, by Kṛṣṇa's grace, in overcoming the illness. But this cannot be blindly done or else it can result in abuse of the body given to us by Kṛṣṇa. We cannot simply work day and night without eating properly and expect Kṛṣṇa to work miracles on our body. Yes, we should use our bodies to the limit in Kṛṣṇa's service, but intelligently, step-by-step, sometimes struggling and sometimes resting, but always trying to depend on Kṛṣṇa and His holy name.

Victory means depending on Kṛṣṇa in a practical way. The case of my Godbrother Nākādi dāsa was different than Gaurī dāsī's, although both devotees depended on Kṛṣṇa. Nākādi went to Vṛndāvana with cancer and prepared to spend his last days chanting and hearing in the holy *dhāma*. Day by day his body dwindled, he ate nothing, and he progressed toward the death of his material body. Everyone who saw him said his last days were blissful and peaceful as he merged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and prepared himself to do what every one of us has to do. In Nākādi's case there was no reversal of his physical health, and he passed away under the most auspicious circumstances. Like Gaurī dāsī's case, Nākādi's was one of miraculous success.

THE LITERARY YAJÑA

Walking and chanting in my room in front of the shrine of Lord Jagannātha, my mind is filled with urges to write. I feel

as if I am worshiping at the altar of *paramparā* literary creation as well as at the altar of Lord Jagannātha and the altar of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.

The previous *ācāryas* regard the creation of transcendental literature as the highest kind of service, particularly fitting for a *sannyāsī*. But doubts come when I think that my writing is egoistic.

How can such a tiny devotee on the one hand admit that he's humble and yet write so many books, especially since the books contain so much self-expression? I have to keep answering that question by producing objective Kṛṣṇa conscious literature. Writing is preaching, and my urge to write can also be purified.

PASSAGES

In a letter, Maṇḍaleśvara was appreciating the journal attempt, and he said that a life goes through different adventures, dangers, and "passages."

When traveling, one often has to pass through interesting or hazardous places. One thinks of Mādhavendra Purī's passage across the Muslim-ruled areas of India, in which the night was filled with thousands of watchmen. I also think of the life of Tu Fu, of how he and his family were driven by war to wander, uprooted throughout China. He has recorded in his poems the passages he had to make through very harsh weather and poverty and danger. Sometimes he had to pass along very narrow mountain trails where a slip could plunge one over the cliffs. And he describes passages across long rope bridges over tumultuous rivers. And sometimes, after long hardships, he happily describes passages into green, peaceful valleys.

As a representative of Śrīla Prabhupāda, I feel justified to write, from a personal perspective, of the historic events of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. As for passages, I am now going through the lonely, mountainous area of physical pain and weakness, forced to wander in the isolation of bodily disease. This is also a kind of passage. Although I don't ask others to join me on this journey, it is nevertheless interesting and val-

uable, if only as interesting and instructive reading. He is a hero who can control his senses and survive the passages in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And we should take instruction from the *gopāmi* hero, Mādhavendra Purī. The commentators remind us that Mādhavendra Purī endured all the difficulties of his travels just to render service to his beloved Gopāla Deity.

As for the travels of the nondevotees, they are almost entirely in vain. The nondevotee wanders life after life through different species and different planetary systems. Like Sisyphus in the Greek myth, over and over they roll their big stone up to the top of the hill, only to have it roll down again. There are millions of volumes of stories and histories recording the travels and inward passages of such wandering souls, but there are very few recordings of the truly worthwhile attempts of one to succeed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

June 10

PREACHING STRATEGIES— EAST AND WEST

Śeṣa has sent a memo to the *Back to Godhead* staff advocating that the magazine express more the urgency to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. There is an on-going debate among devotees about the best way to spread our movement. For the sake of discussion, we may consider two schools—that of the West Coast and that of the East. The West Coast school says that writers and editors must be preachers. They must be actively in contact with people by meeting them on book distribution, at festivals, or in other face-to-face encounters. Writers should also stay closely in touch with the trends of national consciousness such as described in public opinion polls and in the media. Kṛṣṇa conscious propaganda should stay current with these trends and especially play upon those aspects of our philosophy to which the public may at present be naturally inclined, such as vegetarianism and the subject of reincarnation. We must confront and give solutions to present social problems while making a very attractive cultural presentation. And all this propaganda should issue forth from our magazines, books, and programs in a very systematic method,

following propaganda techniques used by experts in advertising and elsewhere.

The East Coast school also advocates addressing and solving current social problems as well as making attractive presentations of the art and culture of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

However, the East Coast school feels that even introductory material should not smack of corporate thinking or cheap psychological tricks as used in mass media. Intelligent, sensitive people are turned away by such things. As one customer of *Back to Godhead* wrote to us, “*Back to Godhead* should not become another *Sports Illustrated* or *Time Magazine*. We have enough of these. Search your conscience and stay true to your message of Śrīla Prabhupāda.” In other words, the East Coast does not as faithfully accept the image of the masses as given by the media. It feels that honesty and purity make the most powerful propaganda, not pandering to public taste.

I am mostly an “East Coaster,” but I’m very aware of the presence of the West Coast contingency, as if they were peering over my shoulder. It is possible to arrive at a synthesis of the different viewpoints, but in any case we have to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness as given to us by Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous ācāryas.

Dr. Sananda Kumāra began his oil treatments today. He placed a leather, cylinder-shaped cap on my head, into which he poured heated oils. But the crown either wasn’t tight enough or wasn’t properly glued, and the oil leaked out. So we try again tomorrow.

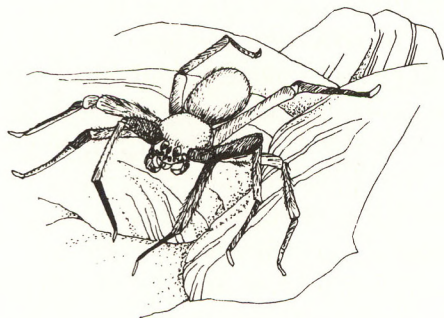
As we go through technical, philosophical sections in the teachings to Sanātana Gosvāmī in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, I find it hard to pay attention. It is especially difficult when there is pain, so I’ve taken to listening to Prabhupāda’s *kīrtanas*.

I’m looking forward to the time when I can work again on memoirs of Prabhupāda for the *Prabhupāda Nectar* series. It is sweet to deliver it up to the readers, and it is purifying for me. Affectionate closeness to Śrīla Prabhupāda is the ultimate situ-

ation to be in, and feeling distant from him produces sorry emptiness.

There is a coating of scummy green over part of the pond. A spider with an orange body walks along the rocks. His longest leg feels straight ahead, poking like the stick of a blind man. White clouds streak through the sunset sky, reminding me of cloudy marbles we used to play with. Today it took me all day to chant my sixteen rounds; it was the major effort of the day.

Unwillingly, I devoted today to disease. As Prabhupāda said, “No one wants to get disease, and yet it is forced upon us.” No one wants to grow old; no one wants to die.



My main purpose in writing is to give instruction from the *śāstra*, but in an especially interesting and relevant way. But I have to express my own realizations of the *śāstra*. I try to see my particular circumstances and the surroundings of Gītā-nāgarī in light of the scriptures. In this way, writing helps me to uplift my thoughts and sharpen my realizations.

In a talk about the nature of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, Śrīla Prabhupāda points out that the word “Harā” means the Supreme Lord’s internal energy. To make this clear, Prabhupāda describes the two energies, internal and external, but emphasizing that what we see as the external energy is also the *energy of Kṛṣṇa*. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave the example that the tape recording of his speech is certainly “Swamiji,” and yet it is also different from him.

While listening, I was thinking:

1. It is encouraging to be reminded why we are even interested in the activities of the material nature: it is also Kṛṣṇa's energy.

2. We should always remember that the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is not ordinary sound. The tendency is to find little difference between the sound vibration of Hare Kṛṣṇa and mundane sound vibrations, the external energy.

3. Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission on behalf of Lord Caitanya also urges the devotees to remain within the material world delivering the compassionate message. Thus the devotees have the strenuous duty of working with the material nature and with materialistic persons to deliver the message of Kṛṣṇa's higher energy. So the devotee has to strengthen himself by staying in the internal energy and tasting its higher relish. In this way he will be able to deal with the material energy and yet not succumb to it.

I am awed at the great work given to us by our Vaiṣṇava predecessors: to be spiritual, and yet to work within the material energy of Kali-yuga. And I have faith that the *ācāryas* have not only given us this difficult duty, but they have given us the full power to remain under the protection of Kṛṣṇa. The pure devotee is so sublime that he transcends even the desire to escape the material energy and to go back to Godhead. He attains perfection in spontaneous loving service to Kṛṣṇa, which he is willing to render either in heaven or hell.

June 11

The doctor told white lies. He never told me that it was a torture session, with the cap cutting off blood circulation. After fifteen minutes I began vomiting. When I asked how long I had been sitting, the doctor said ten minutes, when actually it had been twenty. In this way he induced me to stay the full forty minutes. Vomiting was actually a relief, distracting me from the pain in one part of the body to another. I asked, "Will this cause damage?" referring to the tightness of the cap upon my head. "No," he assured me, "it is temporary."

It's like a dunce cap, or a crown of thorns. "This is *karma*," my mind flashed, "and I am suffering for disciples."

If I had known this beforehand, I might have avoided the material world all together, with its top hats and vomit. But Māyā tricked me. "Take the good with the bad," she said. "When it's bad, you forget the good times, but when it's good, you'll forget the bad." All nonsense.

*'dvaite' bhadṛābhadrā-jñāna, saba—'manodharma'
'ei bhāla, ei manda,'—ei saba 'bhrama'*

"In the material world, conceptions of good and bad are all mental speculations. Therefore, saying, 'This is good and this is bad,' is all a mistake." (Cc. *Antya* 4.176)

June 12

Yesterday I heard Prabhupāda say on a tape that Māyā and Kṛṣṇa have the same intention: both want the living entities to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. Māyā kicks you and kicks you until you become Kṛṣṇa conscious. And Kṛṣṇa offers good instructions and blissful association, and He accepts our loving service.

I mostly lay low and prepare for the big moment when I go to sit in the dunce's corner.

While lying in bed earlier this morning, I composed the following poem:

Dawn

Frogs' last blasts,
robins' first whistles,
devotees' tongues pouring out *japa*.



From my windows:

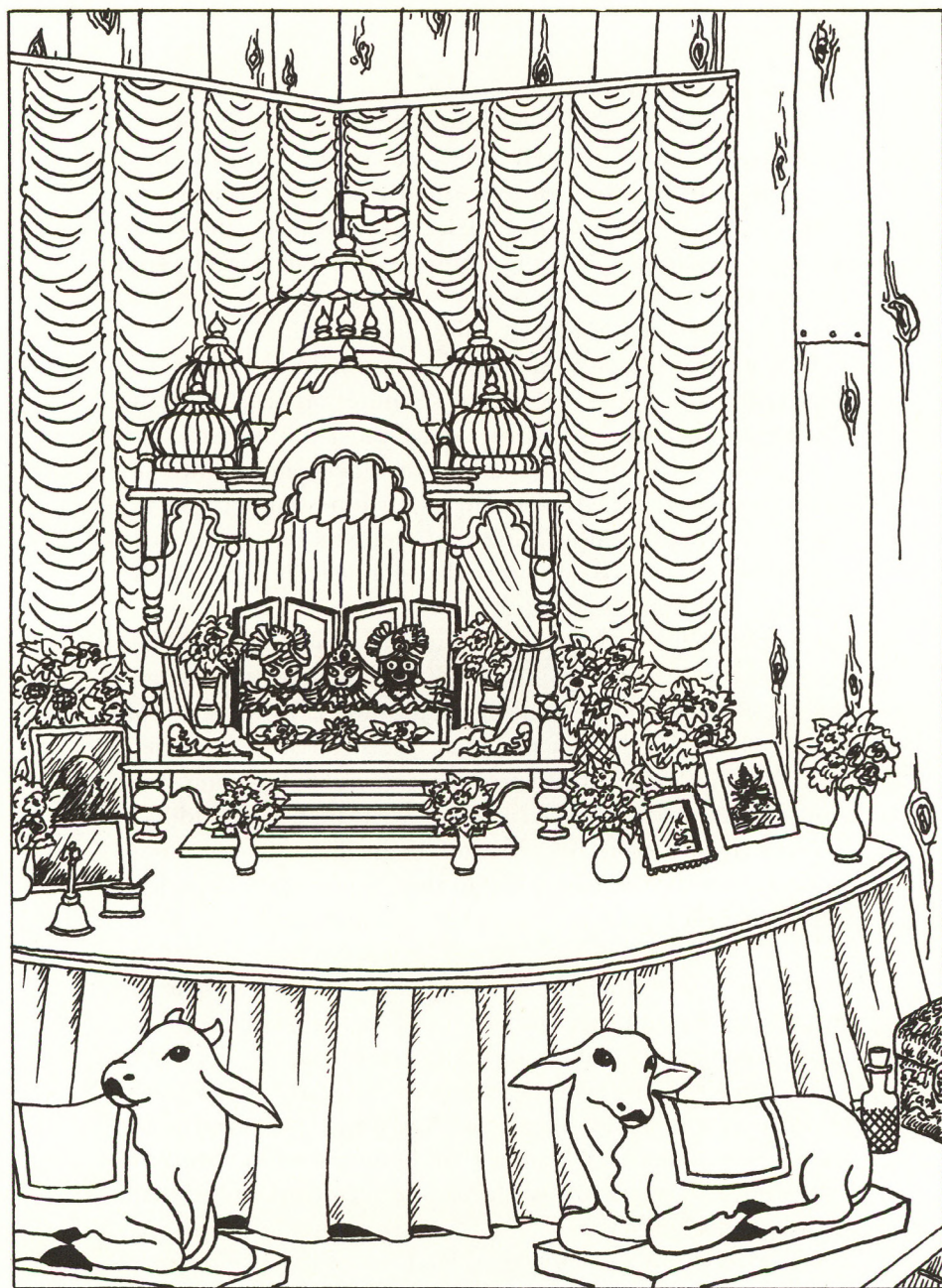
Today the wind blows strongly, and a large flotilla of mustard garlic leaves, yellowed and dead, moves downstream. I watch a delicate rabbit devour the leaves of a wild cabbage. The morning sky was overcast, but now the sun breaks through the clouds, creating dramatic lighting—bright sparkles on the rapids, shadows from the trees. Boughs are swaying, leaves dancing, and a rustling fills the air.

In the cabin, about a dozen vases, each with a single rose flower, are sitting in a row before Jagannātha, Subhadrā, and Baladeva, for Their pleasure. Going out for five minutes to pick flowers is one of the few things the doctor has allowed me to do this week. The doctor admits it's impossible to shut off the mind, but he doesn't like Baladeva to bring me earth-shaking news. Now Baladeva makes phone calls from another building so I don't hear much.

Of course, we could defy Dr. Kumārji, but that would be a personal insult, and it would not give his medical treatment its due seriousness. It would be like Prabhupāda's proverb about the girl who went onstage to dance, but then covered herself in shyness: "If you have come to dance, then why use your veil?" And if I am taking time out to get well, then I shouldn't be half-hearted about it. According to Vedic history, sometimes a wounded warrior would go off to the mountains and perform long austerities and then come back for another big bout.

Creating *Journal and Poems* from diary entries has been my secret source of upliftment. Because I have this one source of expression where I may remain connected with the world, I do not so much resent even the temporary reductions in travel, preaching, or going to the temple. And now I can't even go outside of the house. One by one I am being asked to reduce my activities, and yet I always have this secret undercurrent of joyful purpose.

Dissatisfaction with life may lead a worldly person to inquire into the truth. When supposedly a materialist, Sanātana Gosvāmī approached Lord Caitanya, saying, "Who am I?"



Why am I always in misery?" Similarly, it is a spiritual qualification to be dissatisfied with the quality of one's service and one's level of advancement.

Recently I heard a tape of Śrīla Prabhupāda lecturing in Seattle in 1968. A devotee asked him, "How can we render perfect devotional service?" Prabhupāda replied, "By your anxiety." He said that actually we cannot render *any* service to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is self-satisfied and has no need of our service, what to speak of our service being "perfect." But the more we are anxious to serve Kṛṣṇa, the more we will approach perfection.

The word "anxiety" implies worry and unhappiness, and also eagerness. Prabhupāda indicated that it is our eagerness to serve that will lead us to Kṛṣṇa.

Therefore, while it is honest for me to admit my imperfections and to reveal how my consciousness dwells in intermediate states, I should anxiously strive to be more Kṛṣṇa conscious. It is true that I cannot write verses like Rūpa Gosvāmī or see directly the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Yet I must not be complacent about my lack of advancement. If I am, I will only be tricking myself and whomever I associate with. By the nine-fold process of devotional service already given to me, I should be constantly fortifying my impoverished existence with enriched Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

My doctor says especially now I should not worry. But if I do not worry, I am dead. While I remain physically low, I must patiently strive upward spiritually by the regular practices, especially chanting and hearing.

CONSIDERATIONS ON KILLING A FLY

Baladeva smashed one, but with my permission. I wanted him to simply catch it in a cup, but that proved difficult. I had planned to rest in the morning to get rid of my headache so that I could be better prepared to enter the dunce cap treatment this afternoon. But this fly was repeatedly buzzing and landing on my head and hands. I know that the fly was only

doing what he was made to do, and I thought of some lines by William Blake:

Little Fly,
Thy summer's play
My thoughtless hand
Has brush'd away.

Am not I
A fly like thee?
Or art not thou
A man like me?

For I dance,
And drink & sing,
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.

Blake did not know that the hand which brushes our wing is not blind, but meting out the just reaction to our own sinful acts. The agents of Yamarāja threatened to pierce Maṇḍuka Rṣi with lances as a reaction to his wanton childhood act of piercing an ant. Prabhupāda talked about this in a recorded informal talk in Bombay in 1977. He said we should avoid killing insects. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami asked what if a mosquito is in the process of sucking blood from our body? Prabhupāda said that in that case, we are allowed to kill him—in “self-defense.” But Prabhupāda spoke against mass fumigations and said it was better to use preventative acts, like mosquito nets.

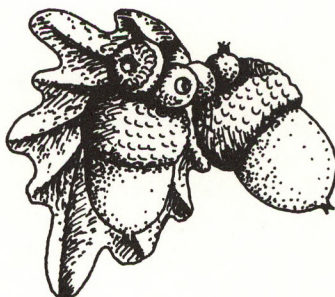
One of the devotees gave the example of the leper Vāsudeva, who never disturbed the worms eating at his body. Prabhupāda said that was exceptional. And he said that a Vaiṣṇava is in a different category than an ordinary person. In the course of his service, a Vaiṣṇava may be forgiven for such transgressions against insects. Therefore, I must practically dedicate my life in body, mind, and words to Kṛṣṇa's devotional service or else I will be subject to reactions from millions of sinful activities, both intentional or unintentional. Who

knows, but maybe I am currently suffering from some now forgotten, wanton act against a helpless creature? We should be careful to avoid injuring other living entities; the only real solution is chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and serving the Lord of the universe through His bona fide representative.

I've built up my tolerance to endure the leather hat and hot oil treatment. Practicing tolerance for Kṛṣṇa is so nice, and afterwards I felt jolly. I only wish I could extend this tolerance to all areas of my devotional life and dealings with both devotees and nondevotees. *Titikṣavaḥ kāruṇikāḥ suhṛdaḥ sarvadehinām*: "The symptoms of a *sādhū* are that he is tolerant, merciful, and friendly to all living entities." (*Bhāg.* 3.25.21)

Translating the Song of a Bird

From the punished oak
a robin sings
a familiar old song.
Is it *karma* and rebirth
or praise of the Lord?
Which shall it be?
Each truth's there to see.



On one extreme is *mauna* (self-imposed silence), which is inadvisable for a devotee. And at the other extreme is *prajalpa*, vain word-mongering.

I'm listening to Prabhupāda's 1977 talks in Hrsikeshā. While his voice sounds weak, his spiritual potency is very strong. He said no one should speak without authority. A boy in the room with Śrīla Prabhupāda said something about Jesus Christ not directly from the scripture, and Prabhupāda called this an example of unauthorized speaking.

While Prabhupāda was speaking, some of his disciples were standing outside and talking loudly among themselves.

Prabhupāda asked that the persons be told to talk quietly. Then he said that actually they should not speak at all. “What is the use of speaking?” But when there were vital questions and answers, *that* talking he encouraged. (Prabhupāda’s own statements were all directly authorized conclusions in *param-parā* as spoken by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself or His pure devotees.) Prabhupāda’s scornful remark rings in my ears: “What is the use of talking? Don’t talk at all.” My talk of patience and struggle for health, my own thoughts, descriptions from nature—what would Prabhupāda say about them? Let me stay in the inner circle, speaking to the point.

Lord Caitanya cried out that He saw the whole universe as void without Kṛṣṇa. This is the mood of the *gopīs* in separation from Kṛṣṇa. Since they could not see Kṛṣṇa or directly be with Him, they saw all varieties of existence—family life, their own bodily maintenance, or nature’s changes—as completely uninteresting. Unless they could see Kṛṣṇa in these settings, there was no use in them. The *gopīs* could not bring themselves to take up any idle amusement or occupation in the world without Kṛṣṇa.

And yet, as a compassionate teacher the Lord explains Kṛṣṇa consciousness even to those who have completely forgotten their original interest in the Supreme Lord. The materialists and the neophyte *bhaktas* are still interested in material varieties; therefore, sometimes the *ācāryas* descend and appear to identify with the interests of the common people. For example, in the *Mahābhārata*, Śrīla Vyāsadeva wrote of things that interested people: palace intrigues, battles, love affairs. But his point in describing these things was to bring people to Kṛṣṇa consciousness through the instructions of the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

June 15

Young Dr. Kumāra prefers that I call him by his spiritual name, Sananda Kumāra. I’m following his regimen and staying in the house all day. At twilight I went out for a few minutes to pick flowers, but it began to rain. Sananda stood at the door

and watched me disapprovingly. When I came inside, he asked me a philosophical question.

After distributing the Māyāpur magazine in his local town of Kottakkal, Kerala, some of the residents objected to the description of the *puṣpa-samādhi* in Māyāpur. Within the temple of the *samādhi* Prabhupāda will be seated as a large *mūrti*, and high on the ceiling all around him the demigods will be offering prayers and throwing flowers. The Kottakkal people particularly objected to a reference that Śiva and Pārvaṭī will be among the demigods. They believe that Śiva is supreme, so why should he be offering flowers to Śrīla Prabhupāda?

I explained to Sananda that there are many references to Vaiṣṇavas being praised as even greater than demigods. For example, there is the verse that begins, *ācāryaṁ mām vijānīyān*, and ends *sarva devamayo guruḥ*. Here it is said that no one should ever envy the spiritual master or think of him as an ordinary man; he is the sum total of all the demigods. Also, on different occasions demigods would throw down flowers and offer prayers to great *jīva* souls, including *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas*. This was done, for example, at the passing away of Bhīṣma. And even Lord Kṛṣṇa liked to bow at the feet of Sudāma *brāhmaṇa* and wash his feet. It does not demean the Lord or the demigods to praise other servants of the Lord.

Sananda kept describing how the people couldn't accept Lord Śiva's offering flowers to Prabhupāda. At one point I asked for a book, and I looked up a verse. Although Sananda has been very strict in not allowing me to read or write for a single minute during the day, he allowed me to read in this case. He's only human. And so am I.

Being ill and confined can be taxing on one's Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It's been occurring to me in the last few days that I'm really not very interested in nature or in the farm. But I can't simply stay indoors and continually hear Prabhupāda's tapes, as much as I like them. I cannot go so entirely within myself. I should remain as active as possible. I should find some interests that are allowable within my limitations, and I should stay jolly and spiritually enlivened. Although normally

I might not spend so much time observing nature, if I now do so to help me pass my time in illness, that is sensible spiritual survival.

If necessary, a devotee should be prepared to meditate while in bed all day, even if he were unable to finger his beads or hear books read to him, even if he had to stare at the ceiling. I remember Pradyumna dāsa relating to Prabhupāda how he was in so much difficulty in the hospital after his hernia operation that he couldn't even chant on his beads. Pradyumna said that he often thought simply of the form of Prabhupāda. It pleased Prabhupāda to hear this. By comparison, I have many things to do, and I am still connected to the active preaching field and hopeful of rejoining it. This week has been especially confining, however, and is testing the depth of my appreciation for the few remaining ways that Kṛṣṇa has allowed me to remember Him and to serve.

Why should I complain that all I can do is listen to Śrīla Prabhupāda's tapes? It's simply restlessness. I should be like the expert businessman: when the prices are up, he sells, and when prices are down, he purchases. So when I am well, I can travel and preach, and now that I am ill, I may hear Prabhupāda's tapes.

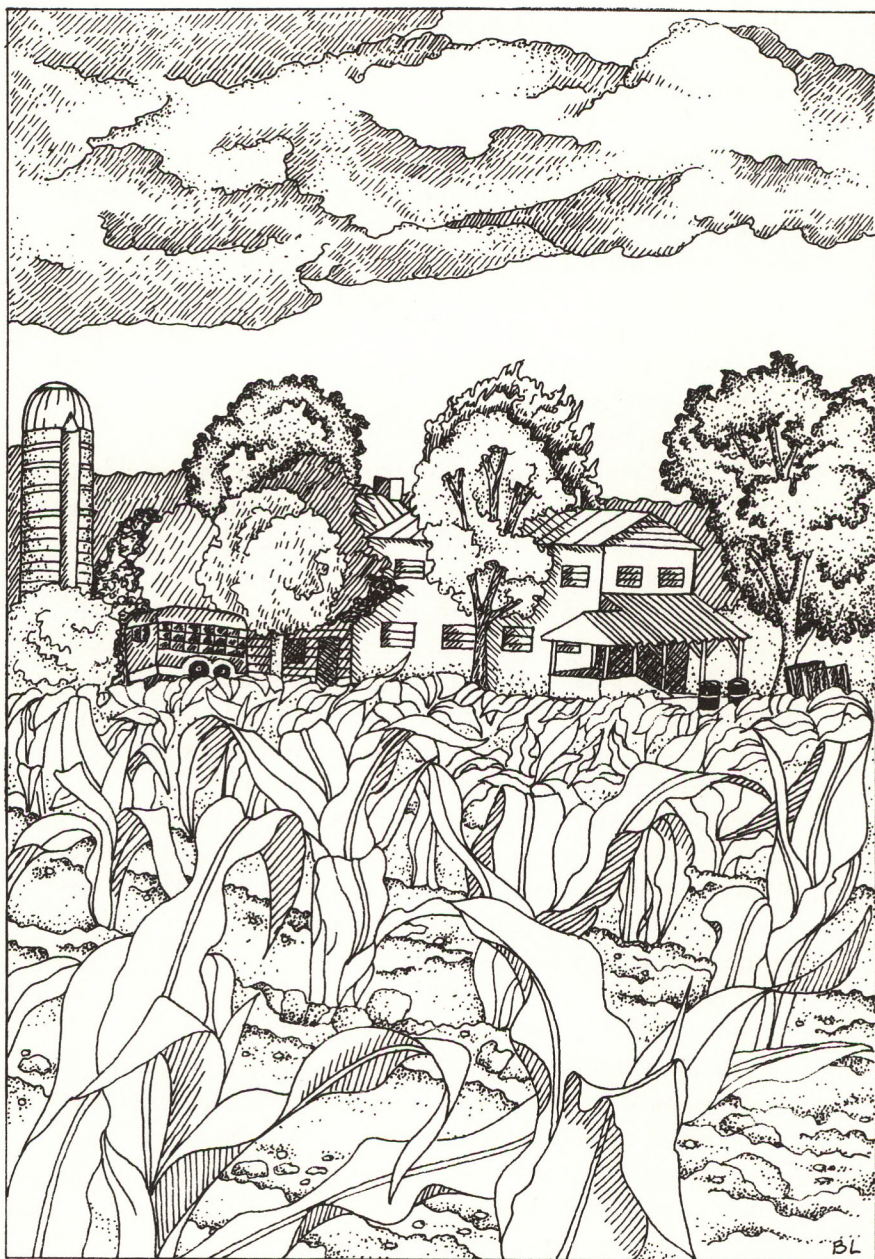
kṛṣṇa-sambandha vinā kāla vyartha nāhi yāya

"Not a moment should be lost. Every moment should be utilized for Kṛṣṇa or connected with Him." In the purport Prabhupāda writes: "Mahārāja Parīkṣit's expression of anxiety is explained in this verse. He says, 'Let whatever is destined to happen take place. It doesn't matter. Just let me see that not a moment of my time is wasted without a relationship with Kṛṣṇa.' One has to tolerate all obstacles on the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and one has to see that not a moment of his life is wasted outside of Kṛṣṇa's service." (Cc. *Madhya* 23.22)

NIGHT THOUGHTS

Dear Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara and Lalitā and Viśāhkā,

Please accept my humble obeisances. The doctor has said it is important that I sleep at night, but I cannot. As I lie here, fortunately, I am hearing from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and



Corn in June

there are some especially wonderful verses occurring in a chapter of *Madhya-līlā* called, "The Ultimate Goal of Life." There is a verse quoted from the *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta* which states that the body of Kṛṣṇa is very sweet, but His smiling face is even sweeter. When I heard this verse, I thought of You, and I could see You in my mind's eye, mildly smiling and holding Your flute.

I think of going to see You again. I think of Your temple room and the devotees. And I think of Your Pennsylvania farm. The activities here are similar in many ways to the activities in Vṛndāvana. Another verse describes that Your land, Vṛndāvana-*dhāma*, is as worshipable as You are. In Vṛndāvana, there are many, many cows. Each have individual names, and as they roam the pasturing ground they are so blissful that milk drips from their full udders.

The residents of Vṛndāvana have no outside engagements, and they only know You as their heart and soul. As they tend to the cows or work in the agricultural fields, they play with You and chant Your glories. It is said of the residents of Vṛndāvana that they do not even ascertain whether Kṛṣṇa is God, but they think of Him constantly, and love Him and serve Him. And if there is any difficulty, they go to Him.

Rādhā-Dāmodara, is not the land of Gītā-nāgarī also worshipable, even to us beginners? Please say it is so, oh mildly-smiling, brightly-dressed, best dancer. These thoughts of You are illuminating my mind, and in the morning I shall have to tell the doctor, "I could not sleep."

June 16

If I weren't ill, I might have carefully watched the coming of this afternoon's thunderstorm. It makes a difference when you watch things carefully. Now the storm is only in the background. The room is dark and I hear the rumbling, which is comforting and invites me to rest.

Prabhupāda said bodily health should be taken care of, but that it's superficial. The real life is the soul. When that lesson is realized then you're free. For now, take rest for Kṛṣṇa.

Talking with several devotees in Hrsikesha in 1977,

Prabhupāda scorned the notion of health. A guest had recently asked him, “What about health?” Remembering this, Prabhupāda began, “Health? What is your health, nonsense? You are going to die next moment. What is that? W.H.O.? That United Nations’ World Health Organization. Rascal, who is healthy? You’re all going to die. World Health Organization, they are manufacturing. They do not know where is health. Such foolish things are going on.”

11:00 P.M.

A MEETING

Jagadīśa Goswami and Bhūrijana visited the farm, and I arranged a short meeting. I put chairs out by the pond and gave them each a flower garland when they arrived.

“What’s *that* stuff?” asked Bhūrijana, referring to the Āyur Vedic paste smeared over my forehead. I was surprised he should ask. Wouldn’t he expect something like this while I am in the midst of my treatment?

As we sat together, I brought up the subject of our Godbrother who abandoned his *sannyāsa* vows. I gave my analysis of the reasons. Now, six hours later, it appears to me that this was exactly the kind of thing the doctor said not to talk about during these two weeks. At the end of our meeting, Jagadīśa Goswami suggested we meet again the next evening. He asked me if I was feeling pain. I said no, but did not explain that I had increased my regular medication so I could get through the week of oil treatments. In fact, I had laughed off the whole subject of my health and asked that we not speak about it during the few minutes that we could share together. But strictly speaking, we really shouldn’t meet two days in a row.

I can’t think of two more well-wishing or more encouraging Godbrothers than Jagadīśa Goswami and Bhūrijana. But they don’t understand what it costs me to meet with them for twenty minutes. They had the confident, relaxed air of persons who are physically well, who are a breed apart from those who are ill. They could not fully understand that I was bluffing and only acting as if I could keep up with them, as if I too had the easy luxury of good health and could talk of many subjects

while sitting by the pond. But this social strain of trying to keep up with others while at the same time feeling that one is not understood for being incapacitated—a strain I felt most strongly during the Māyāpur meetings—is, I think, a difficulty shared by all persons who go through a prolonged illness. We have to find a Kṛṣṇa conscious balance.

On the one hand, we should not exaggerate or resent the difference between ourselves and those who are physically well, since these are only bodily differences. But on the other hand, we have to strictly and faithfully follow the prescribed regimen for our recovery. In short: Don't get too mental about it, know your limits and stick to them, and don't over-worry about the opinions of others.

DESCRIPTION OF A DREAM

Last night I dreamed there occurred a great, popular movement that swept over the world and united all people. How this movement began, no one could say, although it was now flourishing everywhere.

The idea underlying this movement was that all the different religions and philosophies of the world should exist harmoniously with each other, each contributing its best ideas for the welfare of all. This movement was being promulgated all around the world through mass media and by word of mouth.

Wherever people met—in restaurants and theaters, in airports and train stations—they would discuss how to implement this philosophy in their lives. And although the details were still being worked out, everyone in the world was behind this movement. If you advocated a particular philosophy, like Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you were expected to contribute all that you had and at the same time accept all other philosophies.

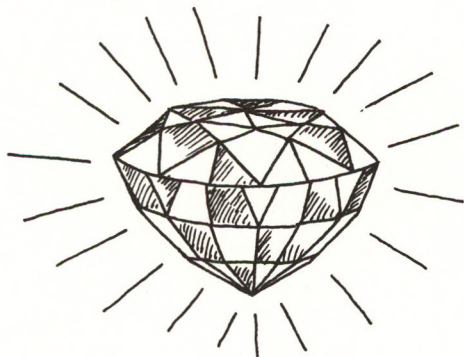
I would periodically wake from this dream, but upon falling back to sleep, I would enter the dream again. In the dream, whenever I would question the validity of this world unity movement different persons would assure me that it was good, and I would think within myself that maybe this was pleasing to Śrīla Prabhupāda. "After all," I thought, "this means that

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is being accepted by people all over the world, and there is promise of world peace.”

But our method of preaching very much opposes the kind of unity expressed in my dream. We preach that there is a falsity in all philosophies that do not establish Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is the way that Prabhupāda preaches.

When a *yogī* invited Prabhupāda to a “unity of man” conference, Prabhupāda said they could not achieve unity unless they first agreed on the identity of the soul and the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Prabhupāda told the *yogī* that he could note it down that there would be no such unity. Although invited twice, Prabhupāda never attended the conference.

I also recently listened to a tape of Prabhupāda saying that the material world is not *Vaikuṇṭha*. He said we cannot expect nonviolence here. He also made the point that we need not be widely popular in order to be successful. “We are selling a diamond,” he said. “There may only be a few customers, but we have to keep selling this best diamond.” Our mission is to preach this pure truth and not compromise. It would be better to remain a small movement and preserve our principles than to change our message in order to become popular. By remaining faithful to the *paramparā* the possibility will also be there that in the future others will become Kṛṣṇa conscious. So I will not yield to this temptation to be accepted by the public in exchange for our principles.



When I look out the window I often see squirrels copulating. Saubhari Muni became enticed by seeing fish copulating underwater, but I feel disgusted upon seeing the squirrels. The human beings' copulation is not much different than this and seems stupid and beastly, just like the squirrels scratching themselves for fleas, running up trees, or defecating.

Saubhari Muni was destined to fall down because of his offenses to a great Vaiṣṇava, and it is only by the blessings of Śrīla Prabhupāda that we can remain fixed and not enticed. To the *karmīs*, this is a great enjoyment, and they seek out pornographic pictures of the act and always want to do it, so much so that if they can't find a partner they do it with themselves. It is their greatest pleasure in life: *yan maithunādi-grhamedhi-sukhaṁ hi tuccham*. To be spared from such madness is to receive the blessings of Kṛṣṇa.

A Bad Afternoon

I hear my pulse beat
in left ear pillow
while right ear rides
on soothing currents
of Prabhupāda's *bhajana*
with voice and harmonium,
“*Parama karuṇa*.”

Night Vigil

Awake each minute,
I hear an owl's *whoo-whoo*,
a distant gun shot,
mice in the attic,
but mostly silence.
My mind drags up
pre-Kṛṣṇa conscious scenes.
But wherever it goes
I bring it back.
Mahā-mantra,

prayer of the mind,
 prayer of the heart,
 prayer-in-breath,
 I hold to You.

June 18

BAD DAYS

Illness reminds us we are limited. But within those limits we can stay in contact with the Unlimited. Of the nine processes of devotional service, we only have to perform a single one. If I can't walk, maybe I can talk. If I can't talk, maybe I can worship. If I can't bow down, maybe I can hear. All it takes is one. And all it takes is surrender.

I have one more week of being confined by doctor's order to stay indoors. Don't worry, Mr. Wiggle-tooth, the world will still be waiting when you emerge. Or if the world is gone by then, then what is the loss? Try to repair your head. And when you can't chant and you can't hear? Then wait. "They also serve who only stand and wait."

June 19

The Āyur Vedic treatments have temporarily made things worse. To counter this, I am taking more allopathic medicine than usual, and this is also making things worse. Besides this, I had already gone into a natural relapse. All I can do is wait for a turn to the better. Thus, the body is a *guru*, teaching me direct realization of the secrets of material life. But will the patient learn the lesson once and for all?

How frustrating to "cure" the syphilitic patient if he again goes back to the house of prostitution. If he thinks, "I can still defy God, I just have to be more careful," then he is a fool. The only physical cure is to reject the bodily conception, to give up activities which promote rebirth. The case of the devotee is different. He is like a sidelined soldier. His desire to heal, even temporarily, and to reenter the field of danger for the right cause, is admirable.

Another way to see this is by the startling revelation Śrīla Prabhupāda gave about his own illness in 1967: “Don’t be afraid of my being attacked by Māyā. When there is a fight between two belligerent parties, it is always expected that there will sometimes be reverses. Your country and the Western



world is mostly under the grip of Māyā and the modes of nature in passion and ignorance, and my declaration of war against the Māyā is certainly a great battle. Māyā saw me very successful within one year, so that I got so many sincere young followers like yourself and others, so it was a great defeat to the activities of Māyā: Western country youngsters giving up illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating, and gambling is certainly a great reverse in the activities of Māyā. Therefore she took advantage of my old-age weakness and gave me a death dash. But Kṛṣṇa saved me; therefore we should thank more Kṛṣṇa than eulogize Māyā. So far as my present health is concerned I think I am improving . . .” (Letter to Brahmānanda dāsa, 8/14/67) For us, as followers of Prabhupāda, Māyā will always be looking to give us considerable trouble. But Kṛṣṇa will always protect us. “My devotee will never be vanquished.” One way or another we win, as long as we never give up our Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

June 20

Too tired to speak.

Medication, lack of sleep, intense medical programs. As Prahāda Mahārāja says, disease was bad enough, but the cure is worse.

June 21

LONG DAYS

When a few days pass and I don't record events, it makes me think that life is not worth recording. I blame the medicine for reducing my consciousness, or I blame the medical regimen which confines me to the house. Or I blame myself for not transcending my limits. Prabhupāda once said in a letter that his composing of the *Bhāgavatam* was like anything else in that it had a rhythm—sometimes the translating would proceed in a very intense way, and sometimes it would be relaxed. I feel a real sense of accomplishment when within a day I can compose a poem or record events in a meaningful, Kṛṣṇa conscious way.

Prabhodānanda Sarasvatī wrote that a devotee sees the whole world as *Vaikuṇṭha*: *viśvaṁ pūrṇa-sukhāyate*. “The whole world is full of happiness,” he says. From that viewpoint, it is natural that a devotee wants to sing praises of *Vaikuṇṭha* and the Lord of *Vaikuṇṭha*.

The first week of this two-week Āyur Vedic intensive treatment passed more quickly for me because I found it worth recording. Now time seems to be dragging. I think more about my illness, and I don’t record. But when one is inspired, even suffering seems to be an advantage. Śrīla Prabhupāda joked ironically about his own illnesses and pointed out the advantage of being able to compose *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* during the times he could not sleep or even eat. For us disciples this was painful to hear, and yet we could also share with him the joy of his continued work, his eternal victory.

The quality of my hearing is similarly diminished. Sometimes days go by and I am not able to hear Prabhupāda’s lectures or read his books. Maybe I will feel more appreciation when I finally return, but I wish I was never away.

This morning I dreamed that I was preaching in a Muslim country. I spoke in the shrine of some hero and was able to answer all challenges. Some people there tried to exert mystic influences over me, but I began to remember Prabhupāda’s lectures verbatim and spoke exactly the way Prabhupāda did. Kṛṣṇa’s potency defeated the mystic influences, and all the people were converted. Even the pictures in their shrine then bowed down to Kṛṣṇa, convincing all the people. After this, on the way to the airport, all my luggage was lost. Then Baladeva was hit by a car, but he was not seriously injured. I woke thinking that there are great challenges and victories ahead if I can recover and go out again, but only if I carefully follow Prabhupāda’s words.

I have many countries to travel to, many persons to meet, and many lectures to deliver on behalf of Śrīla Prabhupāda. But today my goal is to rise from bed within the next few hours and take lunch. It will not be easy, but I am inching my way to-



ward that goal. And if I make it, then in the afternoon the next goal is to take medicine. To chant the required sixteen rounds also remains a big hill ahead in this day. Struggling to achieve the present goals, I think of travels and preaching confrontations as dreams. For the present, they are as unattainable as my conquest of the Muslims during this morning's slumber. For now, Prabhupāda's lecture is a strain to follow, and the turn-off button on the tape recorder makes too loud a click. Discretion is the better part of valor.

June 22

WAITING

Each day has been getting worse. Today I spent all afternoon lying down in a dark room. I have to remain Kṛṣṇa conscious as far as possible, but it has to be by the easiest method. *Japa* and hearing tapes are too difficult. At times like this I try to recite in my mind the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, not continually, but occasionally, very slowly. And by Prabhupāda's grace, I maintain the simple identity of a devotee, which he has imprinted in my heart; I am a devotee waiting. Just as a devotee may wait after a day of book distribution to be picked up by other devotees in the van, so I am lying here waiting for the end of the day. I am a devotee, and I am waiting. That's all I need to know.

Outside my window a small frog is making buzzing electric-like sounds. And there's the familiar sound of raindrops on the tin roof of the cabin. I am locked inside the limits of my headache, yet I am also feeling content. Things could be far worse.

I wish my mind didn't wander so much, but now and then I have enough Kṛṣṇa conscious thoughts. Even the mundane thoughts can be converted.

The words of a folk song keep drifting into my mind: "We shall overcome, we shall overcome/ we shall overcome one day/ Deep in my heart I do believe/ we shall overcome one day." On the one hand, it's exasperating that such old songs

still come to mind, and yet that song has no meaning to me except in spiritual terms. I shall overcome my headache, my *māyā*, my material desires, and all devotees singing and working together may see the day when all the lost souls of Kali-yuga shall overcome these demoniac days.

I can't concentrate. Soon I will have been lying here for twelve hours. Tomorrow I get another chance, and so I am basically content, hearing and waiting.

June 23

PRABHUPĀDA'S DIARY

I thought I would be feeling better today, and I wanted to quote from the diary Śrīla Prabhupāda kept during his illness on the ship en route to America. I was looking for the line, "Today the ship is plying very smoothly. I feel today better." But then I read the whole diary.

I have been studying published diaries, but how could I have missed this one! Prabhupāda wrote the diary in a small notebook during the thirty days of his intense voyage. He kept it during a time when he was very much alone and when there was no great immediate preaching opportunity. Because of his illness and the conditions of the ship, it appears that Prabhupāda did not spend time composing his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* translations and purports at this time. As he records in the diary, he mostly read the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. He thought of the Vṛndāvana he was leaving, and of the city he was approaching. And he recorded some of these thoughts in his diary.

Once in New York, Prabhupāda occupied himself with the more important writing tasks of translating *Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā*, and he hardly ever wrote more than a few pages more of diary during the rest of his life. But his short sea journal is itself a wondrous revelation of the mind and heart of a pure devotee.

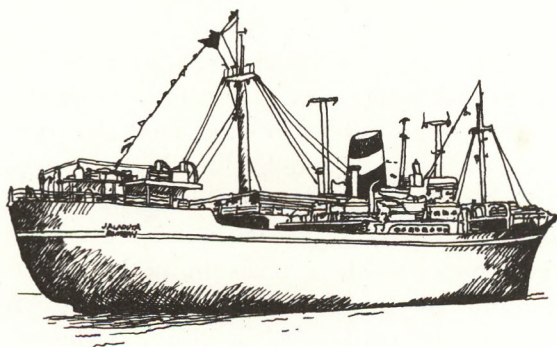
The diary begins with a crisis in health: "Seasickness, dizziness, vomiting—Bay of Bengal. Heavy rains. More sickness." Prabhupāda records in the quick noting-down style of a

diarist. He notes briefly their stop in Ceylon and then again terse but grave recording of his health: "Rain, seasickness, dizziness, headache, no appetite, vomiting." Seasickness led to heart attacks, and in the midst of the third night of attacks Prabhupāda had a direct vision of Kṛṣṇa, who encouraged him to persevere. After this crisis, the diary records smoother times: "I am struggling and the nectarine of life is Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, the source of all my vitality."

How foolishly I searched through centuries of mundane literature to see which authors combined journal entries and poems. Prabhupāda's diary is a "journal and poems"!

"Today," he wrote on September 13, 1965, "I disclosed my mind to my companion, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. There is a Bengali poem made by me in this connection." Scholars of diaries and diarists themselves often ponder the question of to whom a diary is addressed. In Prabhupāda's diary, it appears that he is sometimes writing just for the sake of keeping a record of his voyage. Sometimes he speaks of the Deities of Vṛndāvana, referring to Them as "Their Lordships," and he sometimes speaks of his spiritual master in the third person. But sometimes, especially in the poetry, Prabhupāda writes directly to Lord Kṛṣṇa:

Today remembrance of You came to me in a very nice way. Because I have a great longing I called to You. I'm Your eternal servant, and therefore I desire Your association so much. O Lord Kṛṣṇa, except for You there is no means of success.



Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes spoke with his disciples in a similarly confidential way, telling of personal experiences, and sometimes mentioning his prayers to Kṛṣṇa. In his letters he also expressed these things. But the little diary from August to September, 1965, is unique. I am grateful to have remembered it today. His illness makes mine seem insignificant, and his intimate relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa, who empowered him to act as *śaktyāveśa-avatāra*, reminds me of my own tiny place within the mission of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Within the few pages of his diary and in two poems Prabhupāda demonstrated that he was entrusted by Kṛṣṇa to save the whole world. But after hundreds of pages and dozens of poems, I am still struggling to qualify myself as a faithful servant of Prabhupāda and his mission. My eventual success may serve as an encouraging lesson. Others may think, “If someone like that can succeed in spiritual life, then so can I.”

June 24

For the past two weeks I have not been allowed to read or even hear the newspapers and news magazines, so today I asked Baladeva to give me a few scoops. He told me that Shiite Muslim terrorists had hijacked a TWA airplane with one-hundred and forty Americans on board. I also heard of the mid-air explosion of an Air-India 747 jet en route from Toronto to India. It was believed to have been the work of Sikh terrorists. All this serves to remind me what a dangerous place we live in, just in case I may have forgotten. The destructibility of our bodies, especially the suddenness with which it may occur, exposes the futility and pettiness of all temporary pursuits.

Śrīla Prabhupāda once said, “Philosophy means to keep death always in your front”—and to take shelter in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. While slowly coming out of my cocoon of bodily illness, it is frightening to hear what is going on in the world at large. Again I am reminded that I am recuperating to reenter the fight against ignorance. The imminence of death also reminds me that my main readiness must be even beyond physical strength. Let me gain ten pounds, ability to face stress, and

headache-free blood vessels. But most of all, let me be ready to die serving Kṛṣṇa.

In terms of the total cosmos, earthly phenomena are fleeting and insignificant. I heard this today in the Twelfth Canto. Śukadeva Gosvāmī was assuring Parīkṣit Mahārāja, who was about to die. He said that since everything is doomed to annihilation, Mahārāja Parīkṣit should not be anxious about his own passing away. At first I wondered whether this meant that all my own attempts to see Kṛṣṇa throughout the day and to advance my own cause are insignificant. But no—everything is insignificant *except* Kṛṣṇa conscious life. Engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service, everything has significance, and details are important. When the servant of Lord Jagannātha touched the dusty doorway and then touched the coconut about to be offered to the Lord, Rāghava Paṇḍita said the coconut could not be offered. Even a little dust was significant, because they were dealing with Kṛṣṇa.

June 25

A LITTLE BETTER

When you are really in the pits, then there is no doubt or hesitancy. You lie down, try to tolerate, and wait for things to get a little better. But when you are a little improved, then you have to surrender more of your will and to restrain yourself. You have to admit it is a quiet time and you cannot do many things you'd like to do and are supposed to.

Since today marks the official end of the intensive Āyur Vedic treatment, I made up a schedule of half a dozen exciting events for the morning, including a vigorous morning walk into the woods, reading a book with my own eyes, hearing my manuscripts read to me by others, and receiving news again from the temples in my zone. But my guides here have reminded me why most of these things are still not possible. In order to get through the recent low point, I had to increase medicine. Since I am still taking these medicines, how can I presume to return to a normal level of activity? So again, the quiet life.

But I did take a short walk. They are planting poles and running the electric fence through the woods. This means that soon the retired cows will be let loose to pasture in the woods. But I wasn't much interested. After an interruption in my regular visits with nature, I find it hard to resume such a close relationship.

When Śeṣa dāsa was my secretary, he would occasionally have to go away on some travels for a week or two. When he came back, he found that the keen intimacy of our relationship had been lost and that it took a week or more for it to be regained. He said it irritated him to the point that he either didn't want to travel anymore, or he didn't want to be my secretary. What was the use if the intimacy wasn't steady? Of course, we are always going through changes, so it takes time to get to know one another again. Anyway, the woods mostly looked like a bunch of insignificant green plants, and I barely listened or looked up to see.

GREATNESS

I have to confess I'm not GREAT at anything. I'm not a great lover of nature, I'm not a great lover of Kṛṣṇa and His devotional service or His devotees. I'm not greatly ill. I'm certainly not a great manager, and I'm not a great hermit or great diarist or poet. I am somewhat self-controlled, and therefore I'm not a great self-pitier. I'm not a great eater or sleeper. I'm a mediocre egotist, and a moderately humble man. Nor am I greatly honest enough to face all these things and make some great reform. Nor will I ever be a great sinner. Yet I do have a great spiritual master, and he is maintaining me because he is greatly merciful and I have shown some small sincerity in the past. We say, "Become great by serving the great." But even that greatness may be contaminated by thinking, "I am a great devotee of Śrīla Prabhupāda." Sincere energy applied in his service seems important. And also the willingness to be corrected by my peers. Greatness may be far away, but loving obedience is here and now.

I go into the garden for my routine flower-picking. I usually

pick the blooms that have reached the point of “It’s now or never.” While I’m outside, I notice the rustling of the summer leaves in the trees. It doesn’t put me in some ecstatic emotion, either for nature or for God, but at least I notice it. I stop and notice and *that’s* a genuine moment. I should be careful not to exalt this mood into a moment beyond what I actually felt. Thinking like this, my five minutes are up, and I return to my indoors routine.

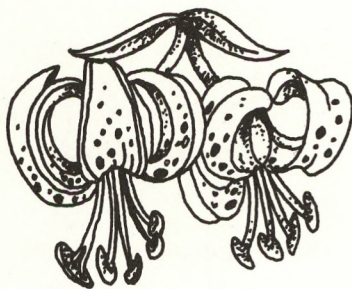
Actually, I noticed many things.

How Quickly It Passes

My calendar is left at May
'tho June is almost over.

Maybe July,
the month of Rātha-yātrā,
will be my comeback,
or August or September.

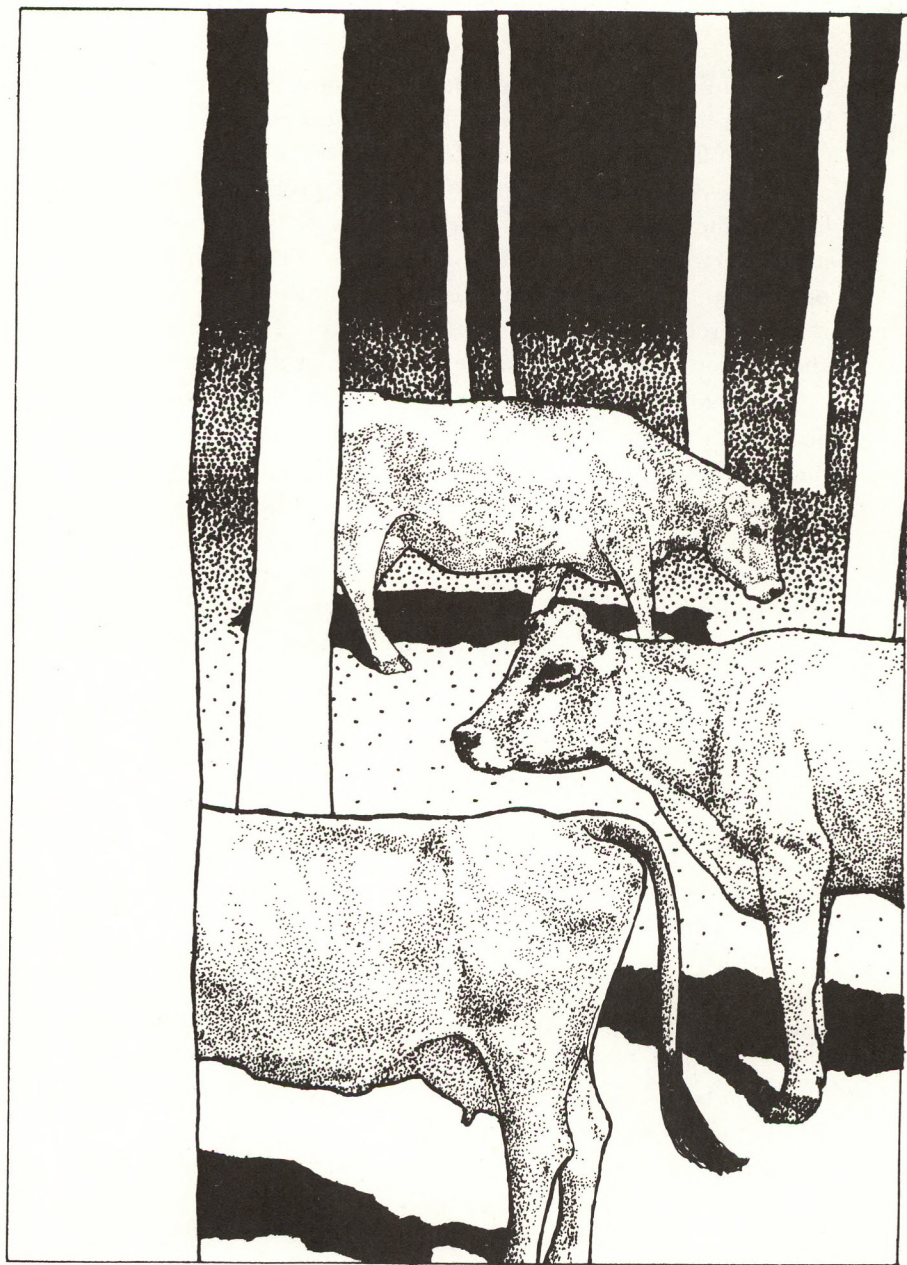
What prevents me
in the meantime
from thinking of Kṛṣṇa?
That is my disease.



Devotees have brought a large vase full of wild tiger lilies into my room. It’s not the same as being able to see them for yourself growing by the road while you bicycle by, but you take what you are offered.

I watched the old cows and oxen go into their new pasturing grounds, the forests. This year the devotees encircled three miles of forest land with wire fence, so there’s plenty of room for the cows to move, drink, and eat. The road to the forest passes right by my cabin, and we were out in the backyard like onlookers waiting for the parade.

First came Manu dāsa on a bicycle. And you could hear the cowherdsmen behind him hooting the cows along. Next came a devotee in a pick-up truck, and then the herd of twenty-three cows. They were moving rather slowly because they had just



Retired cows in the forest.

eaten a full meal. Just in case he didn't know it, I explained to Sananda how *karmī* dairy farmers kill their cows. They don't even wait for them to go completely dry, but kill them as soon as the cows begin to let up in their milk production. For the local farmers, our care for these retired cows is a kind of sentimental madness, a waste of money. This is the meaning of cow protection, and anyone with humane feelings can understand it. After receiving perhaps fourteen years of excellent milk, should a farmer not have some gratitude for the old cow?

The devotees placed me near a tree in case there was a stampede, but the old mothers and oxen plodded by gently, some of them veering left and right out of curiosity. After they disappeared from sight, we got into our jalopy Cadillac and followed them down the road to the entrance of the forest. They seemed to remember the spot from the previous year, and they quickly disappeared into the woods. In a few weeks, if I am well enough, I hope to go up the hill and see them there. Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa says the deer regularly mingle with them and you can walk up quite close to the deer before they become afraid.

I admire the cowherd devotees here who are absorbed in this work and satisfied to tend to Kṛṣṇa's cows.

Short poems have been coming naturally. Recently, Baladeva and I have begun to investigate other samples of the genre, particularly haiku. Baladeva phoned a published haiku poet, Nick Virgilio. Mr. Virgilio acknowledged the influence of spiritual India on haiku and said he admired the *Bhagavad-gītā*, "although I only read it second-hand through Thoreau." Virgilio also recommended a study of haiku by R. H. Blythe. Blythe acknowledges that the haiku form was brought from India by Daruda, a Buddhist. Blythe also quotes the *Upaniṣads* in describing the origins of the haiku spirit as found in the all-pervading impersonal Brahman. The haiku's condensed expression might also have roots in the Vedic *mantras* and *sūtras*, although this is not mentioned by Blythe.

Despite its spiritual origins, haiku is at best impersonal in

spirit and more usually reflects the voidism of Buddhist and Taoist philosophies. I certainly don't want to become influenced in that way, but I admire the piety and simplicity in the haikus' descriptions of birds, beasts, and the ways of man. But in the spirit of protest I wrote a kind of anti-haiku in seventeen syllables* and gave it to Baladeva with the following note:

B,

If you like you can keep this haiku as memento. It may be "sacriligious" and unpoetic in terms of the art, but I think it puts a pretty good finger on where they are at, at their worst. Now maybe I can learn better how to appreciate their version and yet make a school of short poetry going back to Godhead.

—SDG

A rose with drops of dew:
the atheists admire
no mention of God.



Midnight Mantra

Lying awake thinking
how to fit Kṛṣṇa
into seventeen syllables.
But what's the use?
He's perfect in two,
and Prabhupāda's inviting line:
"Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa
and your life will be sublime."

FIREFLIES

First fireflies tonight. Not just one or two, but all over the creek, little lanterns. The time and temperature must be just right. I can't think of a more typical summer sign. Birds and

*Haiku are traditionally comprised of seventeen syllables.

flowers have been here for months, and even a few hot days—but glowworms!

Considered as lights, they are insignificant and even mentioned several times in the *Kṛṣṇa* book as puny luminaries. For example, in the “Descriptions of Autumn,” Kali-yuga is compared to a dark night in which fireflies, who are compared to bogus *gurus*, provide the only light and thus impress ignorant people. But the full moon of Lord Caitanya’s mercy exposes the glowworms as mere nothings.

But considered as Kṛṣṇa’s artistry, as tiny yellow lanterns, like lights strung at an outdoor summer party, they are a rural wonder.



June 27

I am so careful about the slow recovery of this body so that I can return to full action. My services are already waiting in the temples and on the preaching field. But if I asked myself, “What about the recovery of your spirit?” The answer is, “I know it’s defective, but it’s serviceable.” A devotee following the regulative principles can do tremendous good for the world even while imperfect and maintaining material desires. And return to full action is also the best, quickest way for the imperfect devotee to accelerate his purification. This is another reason to be enthusiastic to return to health. We may even conclude that “spiritual perfection” is beyond us in this lifetime, but to be able to fully contribute to our spiritual master’s great plan for establishing the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is itself the perfection of the imperfect-but-serviceable devotee.

Therefore, throwing off sloth and dreams, rise very early in

the morning, bathe, apply *tilaka*, wake the Deities, and take to the chanting of your *mantras*.

DESCRIPTION OF A DREAM

I dreamed that Gargamuni dāsa, a disciple of mine in Boston, had insulted some gypsies and there was a threat of reprisal from them. I approached the gypsies and tried to appease them. I explained that the insult was the misbehavior of a young devotee, but it became a nightmare, as I wandered throughout the gypsies' large city. I had to avoid being captured by women, and sometimes I was almost taken into custody by gangs of thugs or so-called police. Some of the children in the streets seemed well-meaning, but the directions they gave me were misleading. I was told to go seek out the top leader and try to reason with him, but I could never find him.

It was a variation of the same dream I have so often, of trying to find my way out of the maze, traveling, trying to catch the right transportation out of the trap, and falling into dangerous situations. (I consider them nightmares of *samsāra*.) I tried preaching to the inhabitants of the gypsy city, but they weren't interested. But in the dream at least my identity was always that of a devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

When I awoke I thought that I had gone much too far in trying to appease the threatening gypsies. I never got to meet with any of them to discuss the insult of my disciple. I should have let them do their worst. How far can you go to appease demons?

THE BHAKTI PATH

Slowly, slowly, slowly. My big achievement for today was to reduce the pill intake by one. It's now 7:30 P. M. and it looks like I will do it successfully. In order to achieve this I had to restrain myself in all other activities. Little drops of water wear away the stone. For the next two days I am supposed to keep at this medicine level and then try to reduce by another pill. If all goes well, then in a week I may be back to where I was about a month ago. This is called recovering from a relapse.

Only myself and one or two friends are even aware of these details and consider them important. But if others want to see me take up my work again and sing and dance with them in *kīrtana*, then I must give serious attention to these miniscule steps forward. This is Kṛṣṇa's pace for me, at least at present, so how can I judge that it is slow or fast? It is the way of good fortune, the *bhakti* path.

I just spoke with Sananda Kumāra about the need for a Hare Kṛṣṇa hospital. He confirmed the horror of being a patient in large, impersonal hospitals. He himself had a lung operation in such a hospital, and afterwards, when he complained of a paralysis in his left arm, no one took him seriously for a week. We also spoke of the difficulty for a devotee who gets ill in a busy ISKCON temple and how he is liable to be neglected.

While smiling, Sananda said that persons who are well cannot understand a person who is ill. But it seems so far off before the formation of an ideal Kṛṣṇa conscious sanitarium. As soon as possible, we should at least promote better understanding of the ill and of how to care for them, even within our limited financial means or medical training.

MONTH IN REVIEW

We have duly applied the Āyur Vedic process, and now we will have to wait two months to see if it works. I enjoyed Dr. Sananda Kumāra's quiet association, watching him come and go from the cabin. The weather was cold for him, and he almost always wore the gray hooded sweatshirt issued to him by Baladeva. I mostly stayed indoors and have lost touch with the life and language of the plants, birds, and the earth. Mostly I counted headaches and pills, feeling cut off more than ever from the dealings of the outside world. I am hearing the *Antya-līlā* of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Unfortunately, I cannot chant *japa* vigorously, so I allow the silent rounds to go as part of my quota. Despite the ill effects, I feel more confident and resolved about my duty. I am prepared to stay here for as long as it takes and gradually recover. I hope to keep a record of how to suc-

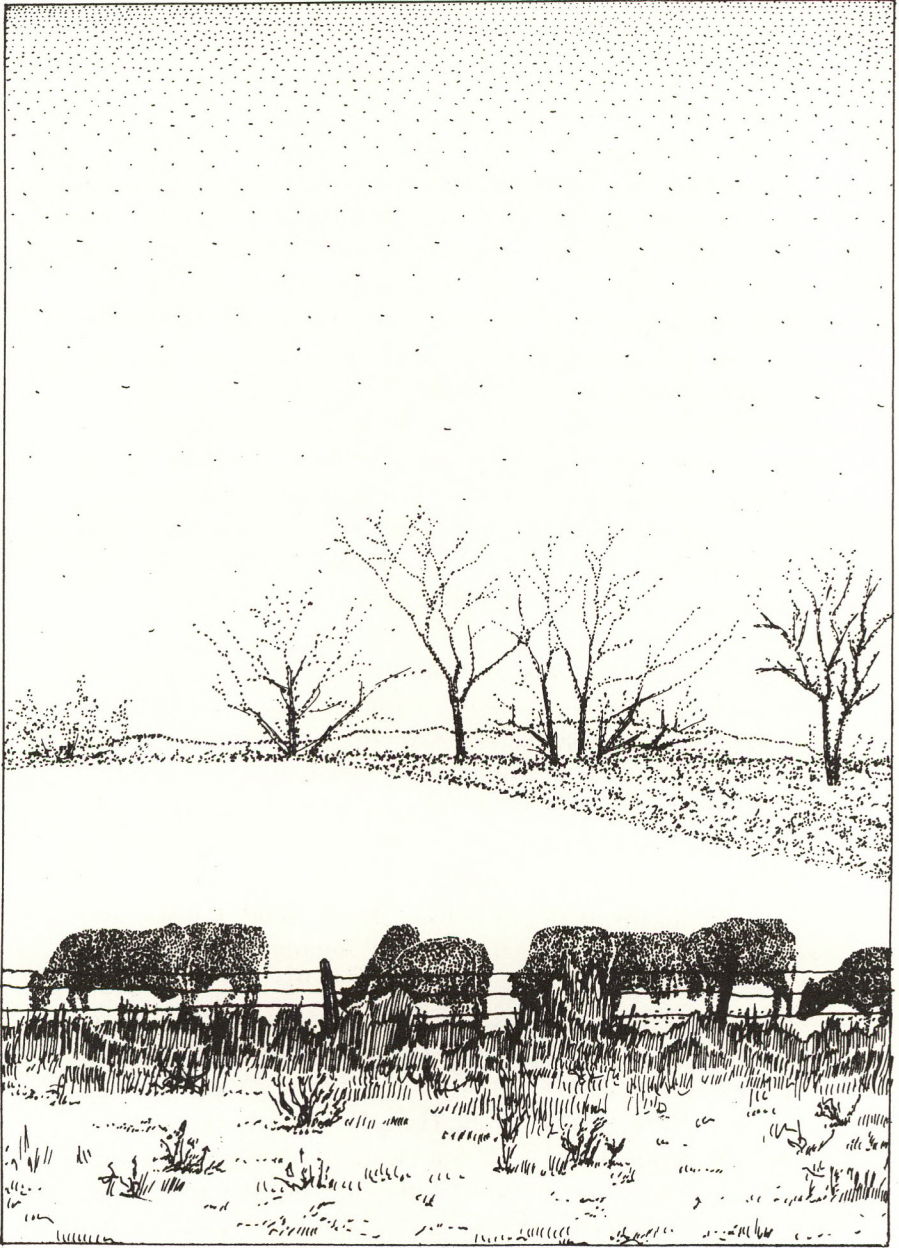
cessfully cope with illness while maintaining some Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I just plunged into a flurry of zonal management. Although the temple presidents had formed a committee to meet and deal with zonal issues, time went by and they didn't meet. I became quite worked up and wrote a letter and tried to step things up so that they'll get together and meet. I also became emotionally and mentally involved in some of the different issues they are to deal with, such as whether we are to allow a divorce, and how to deal with some accusations of misconduct toward a senior devotee in the zone. Actually I want to be involved in all these things, but so far I lack the health to simply bounce back. Anyway, it's good to feel the fire of managerial desire and participation. It's hard to admit I'm a kind of wheelchair general. Maybe July will be something different.

I just had a very frightening dream. (I have lots of dreams and don't always believe them.) I was being mishandled and kidnapped and passed from one rough, crazy group of people to another in the city of Philadelphia. There was no way out of it. "Just don't be afraid; God is in your heart," I thought. And then in the dream I got the idea that I should go away to Vṛndāvana and chant constantly.

But right now I am thinking, "How could I just go to Vṛndāvana and leave my zone?" Prabhupāda doesn't want us to go off and only chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. And Prabhupāda wasn't in this dream to tell me that. There were only different kinds of crazy, rough people. For confirmation you have to talk to the devotees.

"Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa." Is that what I would like to do, like a *bābājī*? No, I want to write and I do want to return to my duties, to travel in the car, and encourage those devotees to collect money and sell books. That's what Prabhupāda wants. If I doubt it, I can read his books—that's what he says. But the dream acts to bewilder me. Should I just go on like this, trying to get better very steadily and quietly?



Gītā-nāgarī's wealth, land and cows.

This dream is going to fade away. What should I really do?

Within an hour after my nightmare, when the more emotional terrors had subsided, I had already resolved that I should not give up my duties and go to Vṛndāvana on the advice of a hoodlum in a nightmare. My duty is to stay here in my zone and gradually get better, so I am waiting patiently.

I met with Paramānanda, and he confirmed that I should not attempt some radical break. He said I had to deal with the reality of my material body and not expect that a radical move to Vṛndāvana would bring about a cure. Hearing from Paramānanda gave me strength, and within a few minutes we were soon discussing Gītā-nāgarī issues and also philosophy.

When I mentioned my nightmare, Paramānanda said that he also had a nightmare last night. He dreamt that the huge Gītā-nāgarī bull, Vṛndāvana, had somehow taken up residence in Paramānanda's house. Then the bull got agitated and broke loose and was terrorizing the household. Just hearing and talking about someone else's nightmare besides mine was a relief, and we shared a laugh.

Rain on the roof. Thank You, Lord. Thank You for Gītā-nāgarī. Thank You for teaching me in various ways. Thank You especially for Śrīla Prabhupāda. Thank You for correcting me. Thank You for protecting me from *māyā*. Thank You for allowing me to see Your beauty through nature at Gītā-nāgarī. Thank You for giving me devotional service and strength to perform it. And thank You for whatever is ahead.

Please let me pray. Let me always be thankful and let me see You working in everything. Let me give myself to Your pure devotee's service, and let me be an effective instrument. I am far short in courage, devotion, and knowledge. Please give me at least enough so that I do not fall and fail. When my life is over, I pray to somehow or other remember You at that time. Let me not try to avoid the suffering but pass through it and by Your guidance not opt for something less than Your pure devotional

service life after life. On my own there is no possibility for me to attain to such pure and high desires, but if You let me always work for Śrīla Prabhupāda, he will guide me unerringly.

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