

ELECTRIONIC BOOK

By Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami

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Every Day, Just Write

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Choosing

to be Alone

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Also by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

Srila Prabhupada Lilamrita

Handbook for Krishna Consciousness

Readings in Vedic Literature: The Tradition Speaks for Itself

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May 19, 1997

4:50 a.m.

Hey, I just read that the demigods were afraid of the darkness that was pervading the universe, so they approached Lord Brahma, who explained the situation to them. He also informed them that Lord Visnu would appear to kill both of Diti's demoniac sons. So we should approach an authority when we are afraid.

And when we are bored?

What about when we want to goof off (i.e., be in *maya*)?

Okay, okay.

As I write this, I hear a shuddering sound. Is it that goat butting against the house again or something else? My life, which appears so easy, can be interrupted or even disrupted at any moment, even at this moment in late May with the birds singing outside. My life is like a drop of water on a lotus leaf. It can glide off and be over at any moment.

M. says if you want to be a musician, you have to practice. That's true of anything. You also have to practice to be a devotee. You have to practice even when you can't seem to make "music," even when you're stuck. Therefore, a devotee always prays for the determination never to give up.

* * *

This volume of the *Bhagavatam* is thick. I run my finger down the spine and then glance at the illustrations. I will read it all, and I refuse to get angry at myself when I can't enter it deeply. It's a wonder Vyasadeva and Srila Prabhupada prepared it for us since we are so incapable of relishing it. But to reciprocate with them "just to please them" I will read what they have given. And because Krishna is the goal of this book. Hare Krishna. Leave behind anyone who doesn't share your interest. We all have to make choices in life. We can become musicians or scholars or athletes or bums, but we each have the duty to become mad after Krishna. That madness is a rare gift. I can't claim to possess it, but I'll keep reading.

* * *

8:25 p.m.

Images of that *Guitar Handbook* someone gave Madhu passing through my mind "the passion and ignorance of famous rock musicians, their music, and their fans. This has been going on for fifty years or more.

Crumbled to dust, he died in his spit,
in a fit, in old age after he
couldn't play anymore. In the
two years while his case was on
trial, before he went to jail,
Chuck Berry wrote a batch
of good songs.

Why does this live on in my mind? What do I know of Krishna instead? Can you speak about anything besides what you just read? Something you care about?

Krishna dove into the Yamuna from a *kadamba* tree. His fist in the KeSi's mouth was red-hot. He danced with the *gopis*. These are mantras "what I've heard of His pastimes. He is great (*aiSvarya*), but even more, He is *bhakta-vatsala*.

Bhakta-vatsala.

This body is not getting better.
Use your freedom while you have it and
springboard
but be careful
high diving.
Don't break your neck
in a half gainer. I mean,
can't you just sing
"Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna"?
No, I've got to do it this way.
O Krishna
Krishna
Hare Krishna. I'll try again to rest.
Heard Madhu let himself in. Pain today.

May 20
12:20 a.m.

Hiranyaksa was feared throughout the universe. He dove into the ocean and challenged Varuna, who said he was now too old to fight. Varuna told Hiranyaksa to pick a fight with Lord Visnu and thus get himself destroyed. Hiranyaksa met Varaha lifting the earth from the ocean and challenged Him. Demons are always anxious to kill God so they can enjoy sense gratification in a godless society.

* * *

I'm sitting here worrying about pain. Did I get up early to think about *that*? Well, it's simple. I made a mistake when I came into this world. Living outside of direct Krishna consciousness won't help. Srila Prabhupada destroyed that ignorance in us.

O Lord, I am going to have to give up my body. I don't really want another one. I prefer to join You in the spiritual world. But I'm so much afraid and too much seeking my own liberation. I know that's not the mentality of a pure devotee. How can I please You? How can I remember You always? All the *acaryas* pray to remember You life after life. May I pray like that too?

One thing these thoughts lead me to is that I want to be at peace with Krishna and to understand His dominance over all things, including my own physical demise and my transference to a next life. He is the sweetest loving person, and I pray to feel more and more devotion for Him. May I learn to serve His devotees.

The Supreme Lord was dissatisfied with the demon's insulting words. Therefore, He rested the earth planet on the surface of the water and turned to fight Hiranyaksa. O Lord, please destroy the demon!

* * *

Hare Krishna. Lord Varaha will kill him according to His own will. His devotees are anxious that it take place soon, but no one can control the Lord. Thus the devotees learn tolerance, patience, and ultimate dependence on Krishna.

We know the Lord came to enjoy the fight. After all, that was the point in arranging for Jaya and Vijaya to descend. When the demon swings his mace at Varaha, the Lord dodges it, "just as an accomplished *yogi* would elude death."

Srila Prabhupada was dealt a death blow in 1967, not long after which he wrote this purport. Krishna kept Prabhupada in this world so that he could develop the Krishna consciousness movement. Prabhupada's followers should therefore not rain blows upon all-valuable ISKCON, but help it fight its enemies. I mean, its enemies in the form of our own illusion and impurity. If we each become a fit member of the Krishna consciousness movement, then the movement can fulfill the purpose for which it was created.

We become fit by chanting attentively. Hare Krishna: each mantra is another opportunity to notice the features of the holy name "its length and breadth, its shape and texture. Notice what it does to your mind. If you can't perceive its action, then pretend you can. Feel something for the holy name. Hare Krishna.

* * *

Just a few more minutes for this session. Give us words "capillary, capsule "quick and evasive. Due to etiquette, you don't always speak directly but in slips and slides.

Oh, you are not this body
nor a fan of musicians long dead.
Give it up.

Go to the heart of Krishna consciousness and leave all else behind. The Hiranyaksas may scream, "You coward, stand and fight!" Don't give in.

The mind hollers to us to come and enjoy the past "women, sex, other memories and sentiments. The mind rants and raves, and when that doesn't work, criticizes the devotees, or simply worries. I don't listen. I chant and hear and write to purify myself.

May 21

I had a terrible headache yesterday. It came on strong by 9 a.m. and closed down my day. I found myself asking, "Why me?" That seems to be a question I should have already understood. I even read a letter I wrote saying that I become ill because I did something terrible in my past life. It's my token reaction. Sometimes, though, I find myself emotionally frustrated. So much pain! And it leaves me so little time to hear and chant and write. But it's what my life is like. It's how I'm meant to improve myself as a

devotee. I am meant to serve only Krishna's pleasure and not my own. I am learning these lessons.

At certain points in the day I came to understand that there was nothing else I was meant to be doing but surviving the pain. I had to simply give up all my plans and face what was happening. I sat and faced Prabhupada on my altar, and although I couldn't really focus on him, I knew there was nothing else I could do but accept the situation. Sometimes I think I'm not capable of accepting this limitation. I continue to plan my service in my mind.

I took rest at 4 p.m. and slept on and off. The pain persisted until about 2 a.m.

But I had this dream while the pain was still with me:

I was returning to the U.S.S. sankirtana with my little office group. We were supposed to dance and march around. Hare Krishna. I had to learn everything again, especially how to endure pain.

I woke up, then dozed and had a related dream:

I somehow got out of the Navy without having to fulfill that long service stretch after all. I was on my own, trying to go home to where my mother and sister lived. But it wasn't Staten Island; it was the house where I lived before moving to Staten Island, on 76th Street, off Atlantic Avenue in Queens. I got lost and wandered around Brooklyn. Someone suggested I call them and have them send me a cab. I also distributed some beautiful Japanese *Krishna* books outside the subway. Still, there was one difficulty after another.

When I awoke again, the worst of the headache was gone. I began to search my life to understand the meaning of the searching in the dream. Although I was searching for things in which I am no longer interested, I couldn't help but see it as a symbol for the great search of my life, and the desire for a "home" of peace far away from the dangerous material world. I want to go back to Godhead.

* * *

5:45 a.m.

I went for a walk, but couldn't go the full route because of a lingering twinge behind my right eye. Still, it's nice to walk this early in the morning when the dew is still on the grass. A deer ran in front of me across the logging road. If I was a hunter, I could have easily shot him.

Literary thoughts today. A devotee will call at 6:30, and I will tell him my idea that he and a friend should start a literary periodical for devotee writers. I'm trying to encourage young writers.

I would like to do so many things, but again I'm reminded that my energy is limited. I would like to at least learn the names of the flowers here, and I need to answer my mail. I also need to pay attention to the holy name and get back into my routine of reading the *Bhagavatam*. I also have to not over-endeavor. I'll be lucky if I can count today as a recovery day after yesterday's smash. I feel like I'm limping, a little cub devotee on this, Lord Nrsimhadeva's appearance day.

* * *

8:45 a.m.

Hare Krishna dasi picked wildflowers for me, and Uddhava delivered them in a vase. I asked her to identify them, and she sent me a letter introducing each flower. Here's what she sent (recorded at the risk that the reader may not find it as interesting as I do):

Aquilegia: rather large wildflowers, blue with five large outer petals and five white-edged inner petals. Also known as columbine or granny's bonnet.

Yellow fumitory: pleasant little yellow flowers. There are so many such yellow wildflowers that one tends to think they're all the same. But they're not. They're each individuals. Yellow fumitory has tiny yellow flowers on a pinkish stem, and furry leaves.

The real pleasure in flowers, I guess, is in growing them and getting to know them personally. At any rate, to touch them while knowing their names is nice enough for me.

Bluebell: of course, I have seen bluebells in North America, especially at Gita-nagari. The variety growing here is a Spanish variety "rather big, and a light violet-colored.

Cowslip: these are supposedly rare in these parts, although I have heard their name before. They are yellow trumpet-shaped flowers with orange markings inside. The flower heads are clustered on a thick stem. Native to Britain and Ireland.

Broom: pink and orange pea-type flowers on a dark green stem. Tiny leaves. A close relative to yellow gorse, which grows wild in the hedgerows. Broom doesn't have thorns, though. Maybe it's called broom because it's stiff and looks like it could be used as a broom.

Irish tatting fern: tiny frill-edged leaves arranged alternately on either side of a straight stem. (Tatting is a type of lace-making, so perhaps this is named after lace because the leaves are lacy.)

The other varieties are not so much flowery, but there is an astilbe with its bright green, shiny leaves, eucalyptus, golden sedge (which is just ordinary grass seed heads), and fern leaves.

That was a nice thing to do as I recover from yesterday's headache. Madhu and I could have been reading the GBC resolutions or discussing how to satisfy a dissatisfied disciple, but flowers are docile and cooperative. After we handled them, they even sat in their vase beside Prabhupada and looked gorgeous, although I knew they were dying.

* * *

9:15 a.m.

Glancing out the window at a sound, I saw a big truck. It's filled with "livestock" "just-shorn sheep returning to pasture. They look like recruits at boot camp. They're bleating, pissing, looking around, their udders full. They're probably glad to be back in the green meadow. They also look fat. I didn't get a look at the man who was manipulating their lives.

I could read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* now, but I feel a warning twinge behind my eye. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* takes effort. Try at least a little.

* * *

Hiranyaksa (Srila Prabhupada used to pronounce it "Hiranyaka," Bengali style) is fighting with Lord Varaha. No, this is not a myth. If "myths" describe similar fights, maybe they're not all make-believe either. It doesn't matter to me. All I know is that I'm following the *Bhagavatam* as the *acaryas* taught it. They took it literally. The point in this story is clear: God sometimes wants to fight, so He chooses a devotee with which to enjoy His pastimes. In this case, they fought for the sake of the world just as two bulls fight for the possession of a cow.

While the fight goes on, Lord Brahma speaks to the Supreme Lord: "I gave this demon a boon, but now he's causing trouble everywhere." Srila Prabhupada mentions that the Lord's devotees don't ask for boons. "Even if they are offered liberation, they refuse it. They are happy simply engaging in the transcendental loving service of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 3.18.22 - 23, purport)

Lord Brahma asked the Lord not to play with the demon but to kill him immediately. Srila Prabhupada writes, "He was playing with Hiranyaksa the way village children play with a snake before killing it."

The Lord was pleased with Lord Brahma's prayers. He laughed and glanced at him with love. The Lord swung His mace, but when the demon hit the Lord's mace, it slipped from His hand. Hiranyaksa obeyed *ksatriya* etiquette and did not strike an unarmed foe. The Lord then picked up His SudarSana-cakra. The fighting continued. The demon swung his mace, but was repeatedly frustrated. Then he threw a trident, but the Lord's discus torn it to pieces. The Lord did not finish the demon immediately as Lord Brahma had requested; He was enjoying his sport.

* * *

Now another truckload of bleating sheep. This time I can see the driver. He's wearing a grimy outfit "what we would call a suit jacket and a flat cap. He's really ugly. He thinks he's the master, but he's the servant of these sheep, the servant of the modes.

He's letting down the tailgate to unload the sheep in just the right way that they can't escape. Although there's room for them to run away, they are more attracted to the opening leading into the pasture.

Looking closer, the guy's suit jacket is tattered. It makes you feel sorry for him. He's not making much money from this, obviously. Down comes the gate and out come the sheep, each one stamped with blue-dye "TO" in capitals on their backs. First the bottom layer exits, then a guy goes up and punches a few back so they don't become too eager to get out. Then they file down and the truck is empty. They enter the field unceremoniously, look around, make some noise, shake themselves, glad to be back, I guess. A few of the very small ones are unshorn. They were taken along for the ride. Their tails will also later be cut.

* * *

12:04 a.m.

He finally hit him at the root of the ear, and that was it. The liberation of Hiranyaksa. (Never the end.)

Electric heater going. I've got no use for Pound's *Cantos*, although I have them here. Too much street talk for historical accounts of the world. I don't want to talk like that, but in my own way.

Not, "This guy, this here demon, ya see, approached the Lord as a Hog." Not like that. But still, as you are.

I want language to be a bit out of my control. That's why I'm always looking for books like mine that have been published, something to inspire me. Srila Prabhupada has already written the books I want to worship, so I'm not looking for that kind of inspiration. More something literary to point me to my voice.

* * *

Guess what? The mail package was sent to the wrong city. They traced it to Belfast, but it has been traveling for over seven days. I hope they don't lose it "it contains those letters from all the people who wrote me over the last few weeks. It made me feel suddenly how important it is that I respond to those letters.

Then thinking of those who write, I wondered what those people would think when *Songs of a Hare Krishna Man* comes out. I'm sure it will mostly fall into the pit of silence that every book falls into. Gradually, a few replies surface, usually not what I expect. It doesn't matter, though. I'll always keep writing.

* * *

Cars come and go and I wonder if it's that wonderful package I didn't receive yet. What else could I want?

I really liked hearing Prabhupada this morning. He said that Radha and Krishna are serious. They're not for *sahajiyas*. He hit *so* hard, *so* straight, with every word. It overwhelmed me a little, his lack of compromise. That's why sometimes we either take him for granted or think he's too heavy. But when you are ready "and receptive "you simply think he's great. There's no one like him.

* * *

Today is Nrsimhadeva's appearance day, and it's a bit of a let-down not to be celebrating it. It's also the day I took *sannyasa* so many years ago. But okay, take it in stride. At least I heard Madhu singing to Lord Narahari, and I read of Hiranyaksa, who is, after all, HiranyakaSipu's brother.

* * *

Read a little T. S. Eliot that someone sent me. Waste of time. But it reminded me of stray lines still stored in my memory from my teenage years. In those days, I read and thought, "So this is poetry . . ." Eliot was stylish at that time, and his poetry captured a certain mood. Or maybe it didn't. Maybe we captured the mood our high school English teacher wanted us to capture. But he was singing in a minor key, melancholic, secular, city fog, and ordinary in his elegant, civilized, educated way. "HURRY UP PLEASE,

IT'S TIME. Mistuh Kurtz, he dead. A penny for the old guy." It needed footnotes to explain it, but then you knew. Later I learned that some poets didn't like Mr. Eliot. It didn't matter. I already had my own ironic voice that spilled my boredom and disappointment with life. I let it out on my exams. My English prof thought he was clumsy ""Let us go then, you and I,/ When the evening is spread out against the sky/ Like a patient etherised upon a table . . . " She thought it was *too* much. (She also said that Eliot used the name "Doris" for a coarse, lusty, and stupid woman, but that was her name . . .)

O Krishna

it's a quiet day with not much happening,
but Lord Nrsimha's appearance day
with no observance.

"Do I dare disturb the universe?"

No, I'll return to another session, at least a small one, of reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and I'll shake off Eliot's disappointed, twilight melancholy.

* * *

After he died, the demon's face did not fade because he had been killed by the Supreme Lord. Brahma said, "Oh, who could meet such a blessed death?"

Raining. M. will interview me for the letters project. Maybe he thought he was drifting away from our regular life. Solitary life can be dangerous sometimes. You can cut yourself off from reality. A whole afternoon can seem empty; you can feel dull. You begin to wonder what "they" are doing "those whose lives are full of interaction.

"I grow old

I shall wear the bottoms of
my trousers rolled."

* * *

But a little distance is safer. I certainly don't want to be part of the controversy brewing. Everyone is so strongly opinionated. What did Hamlet say? "Man interests me not, nor do women, neither Horatio . . . " Concentration on the form of the Lord is topmost, and if you can do it at the time of death, you will attain perfection. It's not easy. You can see the *arca-vigraha*, but you must see with faith, simplicity, concentration, and love.

I'm on this path, although I appear to digress. I set up my own detours. The Lord killed a demon and he became perfect. There's hope for me.

The shorn sheep have returned to the field. They shake themselves of the stupor and misery they felt in being confined in the truck. Are they better off now? Yes, at least for awhile, although it's raining and a little cold. But the field is broad and the grass green, and they can live until that guy decides to slaughter them. "I have heard the mermaids singing each to each.

* * *

I do not think that they will sing to me."
Poor Prufrock.

* * *

5:35 p.m.

Watching "Images of Srila Prabhupada." He was seen in New York, 1973, playing the gong. Then he was filmed in private, speaking into the dictaphone his *Srimad-Bhagavatam* purports. Suddenly a commercial appeared. It lasted five or ten minutes and showed the ISKCON 1993 second generation reunion held in Atlanta. Four hundred and fifty former *gurukula* children attended. They looked so young still, and I felt older. They wanted devotees to come to the next reunion and help out in some way.

Well, I live in Ireland. It's a "quiet, beautiful, rainy country," and if you live here, you have to accept the whole package. A legendary American feminist poet visited Ireland when she was almost seventy and loved it. She especially liked the cattle gates that made you slow down.

Of course, she didn't understand what they were for. They signify the death of so many animals. But they do provide charm for tourists. I can never forget what they mean. That's what I mean about accepting the whole package. Yes, it's a quiet, beautiful, rainy country, yes, the sheep bleat peacefully in the green meadows, yes, the cows walk quietly home, and yes, the whole country is going to hell because of the slaughter. And the drinking, which is not so quiet. Still, it is quiet and meditative when you need a place to chant Hare Krishna.

I told M. that some writing teachers and poets say that we should not imitate ourselves. Don't think, "I will write a Satsvarupa poem," then follow a formula. Try to be fresh; write something new.

But you know, all the writing theories begin to sound stale after awhile. So much writer's talk. Better just to be and to live and to try to read and chant and record what happens.

Prabhupada was speaking about Krishna and it was very nice. We took it up. We learned to hear from him constantly. Otherwise, we cannot retain our conviction. We need to hear from Prabhupada daily. It's no different than breathing. Hearing is a spiritual function.

A new law from the GBC: no ISKCON guru can appear in *murti* form in an ISKCON temple. Prabhupada is the last one.

Okay, good. We won't have to look at something that won't be appreciated by everyone. That's a relief. Imagine the frozen image of a brother and how he would look as a statue. Imagine what it would be like if you really didn't love that person? No, I'm glad they made that law. Let Prabhupada be the last.

* * *

Dear Krishna, I use my paints to ask to become a devotee. I bleed that request onto a background of color, then close my eyes in sleep and see a nightmare. They say it's only a dream, that I'll wake up safe, but I don't feel safe yet. Next life I may be born in a devotee family in this world, I may go to *gurukula* with other the beautiful boys and

girls, and I may even own a collie dog like the one at Inis rath. I'll still have to learn sad truths about the body, though, and start all over trying to understand Krishna, the Supreme. I'll have to be a baby again, a first generation-er moving into another generation. No, I'm not safe yet because coming back means anything can happen.

* * *

May 22, 1997

12:10 a.m.

Akandita utsavam "an uninterrupted festival is being celebrated in the spiritual world where the Supreme Lord lives with His eternal servitors. These are the words. More words: "I believe". More: "doubt". Beneath a word and beyond words is conviction and emotion. Of course, words are not meaningless; they are signposts of the inner and outer realities. They can be fragrant, like flowers, or have hidden thorns. We use them in Krishna's service, something we learned by hearing the words of the spiritual master. We don't scorn language, but use it to discern the truth and to hear it spoken.

Not all words are true and not all are false. We can speak (or write) eternal and absolute words or not. When Krishna speaks, however, that's always real. His word is sacred.

He speaks in *sastra*, so we can learn to be aware of Him and His abode. If His words are real and absolute, then He too is a real and absolute person in our lives. To simply understand this guarantees us the complete happiness found in the Lord's abode. We say a devotee doesn't want to become liberated or even to go to the spiritual world after this life; he wants only devotional service life after life. Yet we do want to leave this world to be with Krishna. I "know" the answer to this apparent contradiction, but I don't know it fully.

"Unless received by this bona fide process of hearing from a spiritual master, the statement of an *acarya* or preceptor cannot be valid." Maitreya: "This has been narrated to me as I heard from my predecessor spiritual master." (*Bhag.* 3.19.32)

More words: *hetu*, cause. Sanskrit. Sheaffer. Baseball. Bat. root. Good morning. Goat's nipples (useless). Sheep shorn. rid of bad things. Watching video. Madhu. Storm. ranch. reagan. Sinatra dead. Coffins. Ashes. Wrench. Muscle. Pain ahead. Bad guys do bad things. Sainly persons tolerate, think of God, forgive. One saintly person said, "Just because the demons are killing doesn't mean I have to give up my principle of brahminical forgiveness." He was about to kill them all and desisted on the advice that he should be forgiving.

Powerful lessons. Words line up into sequences by inspiration from God. Fragments.

* * *

Suta Gosvami spoke at this point and said, "My dear *brahmana*, Ksatta (Vidura), the great devotee of the Lord achieved transcendental bliss by hearing the narration of the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead from the authoritative source of the sage Maitreya, and he was very pleased." (*Bhag.* 3.19.33)

"What to speak of hearing the pastimes of the Lord . . . people may take transcendental pleasure even in hearing of the works and deeds of the devotee whose fame is immortal." (*Bhag.*3.19.34) The devotee reminds us of Krishna by his words and deeds. "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna." He vibrates the name. He teaches *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. He lives and suffers for Krishna and Krishna consciousness, like Prahlada. He talks to the Lord, as did Dhruva and Maharaja Amarisa. All devotees. If I do as they did in my own way, then I can become at least a small transmitter of Krishna's glory, His kindness.

Now I feel my receptivity wearing thin and my mind becoming diverted. It's amazing how quickly that happens. It's not merely a lack of physical or mental energy; it's a lack of devotion. I have a low fuel level. I stare at the words and they stare back at me. I can't assemble them in my heart and understand their essence. I start to paraphrase like a schoolboy: A grateful soul renders service to the great master, the Personality of Godhead. And to quote: "The Lord can be easily pleased by spotless devotees who resort exclusively to Him for protection, though the unrighteous man finds it difficult to propitiate Him." (*Bhag.* 3.19.36)

"If one continues to hear *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, which is full of narratives of the pastimes of the Lord, at the end of his life one will be sure to be transferred to the eternal, transcendental abode of the Lord."

Yes, simply hear
from the right source.

* * *

4:40 a.m.

Srila Prabhupada lecturing says perhaps we are the only group in the world who are teaching the science of God, the soul in the body, transmigration, and *bhakti*. The important thing is not merely that this is a sublime and interesting philosophy but that it's true: we will die, we will have to suffer again, and there is no other remedy but Krishna consciousness. We have to give Krishna consciousness *all* our attention. Nothing else matters. This is why Srila Prabhupada was so heavy, so insistent, so determined to make people hear.

Get it?

Saunaka wants to hear more about Vidura's inquiries of Maitreya, and he openly offers praise. So, get set for another round of discussions.

* * *

4:42 a.m.

Yeah, so I'm not a sophisticated litterateur. I don't like having to unscramble a poet's line that doesn't seem to make sense: "When will we learn, what should be clear as day,/ We cannot choose what we are free to love?" I'd rather have it clearly stated. Even when you do unscramble it, it's usually not worth so much. Don't be cheated again.

I prefer to write plain. Makes me think of that jazz piece, "Straight, No Chaser," but I don't want to write like Monk or Mulligan or go back to those days where I was looking for Sound. Those were the historic days of jazz, the '50s and '60s, when artists began to

play free. My freedom arrived with Prabhupada, who brought the cowherd boy from Vrndavana. That's no poet's creation.

No, I don't need to go back to those bop artist priests. I am chanting Hare Krishna and hearing that sound. Those old drums sound tired to me now, and the solos don't move me as they used to because they're only blood and spit and semen and grief and joy grounded in the body. Occasionally there's an ecstatic search for God, but basically blind. No direction where to go except on drugs or off.

I don't need Adrienne rich and she doesn't need me. I am the preacher for everyone, didn't you know? Ireland and Wetfalls, Virginia "that's my territory "and if you don't believe me, if you're a renegade from Lord Brahma's party and you think I'm a fink, then do your own thing and I'll do mine.

My thing is to declaim the whole show behind history and literature, but at the same time, I too have to pass the human tests. rich says poets are invited to live in a world of music and perception, but she thinks they shouldn't do that. She says they have to remain open to human suffering. They have to express it in their poetry.

We all share the questions, but we have different answers. I know I can't hide from the world in the name of being a devotee; a devotee's response to human suffering is to give Krishna consciousness. That's the risk we take "in our lives *and* in our poetry.

Even hermits say they take human suffering with them into their contemplation. They take it into their prayer. Activists may have a hard time with that, but I think I understand it.

The world is full of injustice. We are just about to end the twentieth century and what has changed? The poor are still exploited by the rich, the women are still exploited by men, and we have not broken any of the bonds of tyranny of which they speak. We cannot become free from those bonds without recognizing our innate God consciousness. We need that kind of education.

Oh, God. They're sick of hearing it. All those religious fanatics who have spent just as much time as the rest of the world killing each other off. This world is so misled.

Swami, when I write nowadays
sheep bleat behind me
in the field. Do you still
accept me in the
millions of ways I fall short?
I want to please you and
give you this
poem
written by a person.

* * *

"You'll recognize me wearing a white rose when I get off the plane in Sligo."

"Oh, we'd know you from your photograph," she said. "You're going to be the only 70-year-old poet from America on that plane."

Yeah, but you could still mistake her for any old woman. Me you can't miss, although you could confuse me with Madhu. Still, that's not so bad. You could walk up to us both and say, "Stephen? Which one of you has the energy problem?"

"Oh, we both do, but he's allergic to milk products whereas I'm allergic to sugar."

Then we will begin to dance, and in the evening I will read from my works and speak on *sastra*.

"But how can the soul be in the heart if we don't see it?"

You see by hearing.

"Isn't that dogmatic?"

No, it's the only way to know this sort of thing. Direct perception is faulty. Your scientists are bluffing.

"I know," she says, "but you sound as if you have all the answers down pat. Still, you don't answer my questions in a way I can accept. Besides, I know what your leader says about women."

* * *

Turpitude, inertia, centipede poet. You take on too much, young man. You ought to decide what you want to do and go for it. All this sprawling all over the place is hard on the reader. Do you expect the reader, even *one* reader, to follow you?

"Well," says I, "don't follow unless you love me."

"Listen, you are asking too much respect. You've gotten this in your head from those eleven-only-guru days and still think that your words are to be worshiped."

He (me) stretches his legs, hears the cows lowing, and goes into another room to splash paint, leaving the critic to wonder about this Hare Krishna movement and if this guy is going to be allowed to remain on its list of members in good standing. He's got work to do.

* * *

9 a.m.

My reflective walk was interrupted on the way back by the appearance of two men in two vehicles on a logging road. One rode a little scooter, and the other drove an oversized van. They hadn't started work yet, but looked like they might be about to load up rocks they had gathered on the road there. As I approached, I saw that one of them was wearing a red hard hat and that they were both rather short and stocky. Just as I came near they stopped their examination of a wheel and turned toward me. I spoke first, "Good morning," and they replied with the same words. Then I shyly held my smile, but kept moving on, not wanting to talk anymore. I suspected they saw me as a spiffy object with my new, dark green, shiny Wellington boots, my first-time-out walking cane, and my North American winter coat (what to speak of my bright saffron sweat pants). Anyway, now I'm not sure I'll want to take my walk so late in the morning. I may have to come out before breakfast. After all, I want my solitude, don't I?

Yesterday I wrote to Hare Krishna dasi thanking her for sending me the wildflowers. I commented on how silent and docile they are, and to be introduced to them, especially on a day when I was recovering from a headache, was a manageable confrontation.

The boots are a good fit, and so is the cane, but I think they're best used in a solitary way. If I hadn't met those men, I might have had something else to say. Of course, I want to be grateful for whatever appears on my path and to see Krishna therein.

* * *

9:05 a.m.

"Please narrate the activities of the Lord, which are all magnanimous and worth glorifying. What sort of devotee can be satiated by hearing the nectarean pastimes of the Lord?" (*Bhag.* 3.20.6) Srila Prabhupada writes, "The narrations of *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam* may be read thousands and thousands of times and still, without fail, new aspects of the subject matter will be relished by the devotee."

What sort of a devotee quits hearing it?

Not me! I keep reading as long as I can. I can't claim I remember much for long, but at least I can remember enough to write some of it down. I pray to pick it up again in my next life.

Vidura addressed Maitreya as *avyakta-marga-vit*, "One who knows matters beyond one's perception." Materialists deny that anything can exist beyond what they can perceive with their senses. Once we open the doors of perception beyond matter, then it becomes possible to accept the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* topics as truth. I like how Sadaputa Prabhu opens that door by using scientific examples. It leads us to ask how we can get knowledge of ultimate truth from which all mystery emanates. We have to hear from "the knower of that which we do not know." There are such persons, the *avyakta-marga-vit*.

I was walking in the woods when I came upon the workers ready to carry off rocks. I was there first, on my gentleman's walk. Yes, it is a fine day, but I won't walk there again if I think I'll meet them. There are two other possible paths to take, although neither is as nice as the one I've been walking.

* * *

I read two or three pages nicely, then couldn't continue. Mind flitting, slipping. Something about creation. I find it hard to be interested in that subject. I like straight glorification of hearing. Subtle-to-gross creation is a stickler. Let's try again.

The Visnus start *prakrti* going because the *jivas* desire material enjoyment. "The creative power, therefore, of every living entity is not his own; it is by the grace of the Lord that one can create." (*Bhag.* 3.20.17, purport) Brahma received intelligence from the Supreme Lord in his heart.

I remember first reading and typing out the five coverings of the soul. I memorized them and spoke them in a class at our Allston storefront to the small group of devotees there. It held their attention because they hadn't heard it before. Here they are:

Tamisra "anger or envy of God. "I'm as good as Krishna, so why shouldn't I enjoy like Him? Why worship Him?"

Andhatamisra "considering death to be the ultimate end. Therefore, let us enjoy as long as we live, as Carvaka propounds.

Tamas "not knowing the spirit soul.

Moha "the illusion of the bodily conception of life. Nations fight over designations.
Maha-moha "being mad after material enjoyment.

We are covered, we eternal spirit souls.

Brahma then created living beings, some demons and some demigods. Demons are strongly inclined toward sex enjoyment.

* * *

4:20 p.m.

The Lord advised Brahma to cast off his body when he was harassed by demons interested in sex. Lord Brahma's body became the evening twilight. The demons then imagined the twilight to be an alluring girl. When I read this for the first time, I wrote to Srila Prabhupada and asked if this girl were real or imaginary. As I recall now, he said she was real. But real or unreal, he said, a girl of this world is unreal. She's like the mannequin of a woman in the store window. You really can't enjoy her. "real" means eternal spirit, and matter is *asat*. remember? Did it lessen my lust to hear it? A devotee who has knowledge knows a woman's beauty is illusory. "The real beauty is Krishna and Radha. One who is attracted by the beauty of radha and Krishna cannot be attracted by the false beauty of this material world." (*Bhag.* 3.20.31)

* * *

Give up sex pleasure and become eligible for unending spiritual life. How does this writing look? Like John Lennon or better? Fat like Elvis? Skinny like Merinque? Does it look like it will make it into a form that will hold? Does it lead you on? Like the *maya* form promising, "Come to me and I'll give you a good time in thirty-five cantos, a book, an oeuvre. It will be great."

"Foolish creatures are enamored by the beauty of matter and think that the enjoyment it offers is real, but actually that is not real enjoyment." (*Bhag.* 3.20.35)

* * *

Sometimes Lord Brahma laid down, stretched, and yawned, and snakes were created. One day he felt that the purpose of his life had been fulfilled. From that sense of satisfaction, the Manus were created. Equipping himself with penance, Brahma evolved great sages, who became his beloved sons.

* * *

5:50 p.m.

Watching the video, "Images of Srila Prabhupada" again. Lots of footage of Srila Prabhupada in the temple *kirtana* in Paris. Hamsaduta was singing, and Bhagavan had hair. Bhagavan looked serious and worried "a manager. I tried to imagine what they were thinking. The shots of Prabhupada were easier to see. I had no trouble understanding his motives. But I remember those days. Prabhupada was pushing the movement forward, but by then it already had its own momentum. Prabhupada flowed

with it, accepted our worship, and remained in the center. He sat on the *vyasasana*, gave the lectures, met the leaders and told them what to do, met the public. He had to be there to accept those heavy garlands one after another.

In one shot in L.A., I saw myself come forward in an orange sweatshirt and place a garland around Srila Prabhupada's neck. I'm glad they gave me that chance. Only a year later I became his servant. I was glad to see Srutakirti in this film. He was so nonenvious. He only wanted to serve Prabhupada. I found him congenial. But those days "all those people trying to climb to the top leadership. Why? Those days "we couldn't avoid our karma. We used Prabhupada to climb to the top, then he used us to serve Krishna.

Walking in the park in Paris swinging his cane (which was too long for him). There is Bhagavan and YogeSvara, then an awkward, official reception in the Paris government palace under chandeliers. Srila Prabhupada always seemed to be making the best of each situation. He didn't seem to be put out by anything. He just accepted everything as if it was another garland. He wore so many at this temple that when he bowed before the Deities, some of them fell off.

Young mothers with babies coming forward to receive a cookie from his hand. Then traveling to New York, L.A., Paris . . . All those young beauties with fresh, unwrinkled skin, in their early twenties. It didn't last. I saw a scantily dressed women standing beside a *brahmacari* at the official reception in Paris. I was glad when the footage changed to show Srila Prabhupada walking alone beside a lake. He was wearing a sweater and *dhoti*, our graceful spiritual master.

These films bring back memories. Karandhara sober and physically powerful, standing beside Srila Prabhupada. Ramesvara looking ecstatic as he used to do. Tripurari clapping his hands. I don't know everyone on these films, but I point out to Madhu the devotees I know "Indradyumna playing the drum . . .

Now it's 6 p.m. and the day is nearly gone. So much has been preserved in books and films, all kept by the archives in underground vaults and safes. I only wish that we can each imbibe Prabhupada's spirit and become devotees of Krishna. I hope we will each remain faithful to Prabhupada. Yes, that is the point of watching these films. remember Prabhupada. Hare Krishna.

* * *

Such a light-hearted book, that *Sketchbooks of Joy*. I'm surprised a serious person like that could publish such a book.

Yes, that's what I wanted, a book so light it would float up and carry you into Krishna consciousness.

* * *

The past is dead. The present is mounting. I can't breathe, someone said, but that was only a dream. We don't associate with nondevotees. When he heard that he said the nondevotees will consider us a cult. I was chanting *japa* when he said it, and he thought that looked good. He said he liked to see me chanting. Then he asked, "What does it feel

like inside? What are you going through?" That's the epitome of brotherly love, to ask someone those questions.

* * *

Back to the *Bhagavatam*. The evening twilight, in the form of a woman, was playing with a ball. She had nice breasts and big hips, and she increased the demons' appetite for sex. "What a beauty you are! What are you doing wandering here?" Where did she go? Was she captured or did she simply disappear?

The best part is when Brahma creates the sages and devotees. We already have enough fools and lusty women and 8,400,000 creepers and plants and joints and sinews and living and dying. But the sages . . .

Prabhupada lectured on the *Bhagavatam* from a lotus-shaped *vyasasana*. On some seats he didn't look as comfortable. I recognized the temple just by seeing how his seat was upholstered. I can say proudly, "That's Los Angeles," or, "That's New York, 1973."

There, that's me! I'm dancing and playing the *mrdanga*, hamming it up.

May 23

12:10 a.m.

Now gentle reader, we will hear of the conversation between Svayambhuva Manu and Kardama Muni. It began because Vidura inquired about Kardama and Devahuti. Shall we hear what the sages say? I know there are other things our minds would rather hear, but we ought to at least try to pay attention to what the *sastra* has to teach. Call your mind back from all its distractions. The mind is always flickering like lightning striking through various clouds. Fortunately, if we're practicing Krishna consciousness, many of our thoughts will be concerned with Krishna conscious topics or service. Still, we bounce here and there and don't quite make it, always, to direct *Krishna-katha*. We're no *yogis*. So we have our anchor in *Bhagavatam* and tether our minds to that pole. We can always return.

* * *

In this section of the *Bhagavatam* Srila Prabhupada criticizes rascals who prescribe daily fifteen-minute meditations to attain perfection, and neither do the followers have to restrict their senses. Sometimes he's referring to TM in his comments, and sometimes other groups: "Enjoying sense gratification at one's whims and at the same time become a great meditator by paying a rascal some money."

Kardama practiced for 10,000 years. His penance was focused on pleasing the Personality of Godhead. All transcendentalists must reach that goal eventually, but *bhakti* is the most direct method. Chanting the Hare Krishna mantra cuts through all else. The Supreme Lord revealed Himself to Kardama. The Lord's transcendental form "can be understood only through the *Vedas (Sabda brahma)*."

"They [real devotees practicing *bhakti-yoga*] are prepared to undergo all kinds of tribulations, provided they can make progress in the realization of the Personality of Godhead." (*Bhag.3.21.12*)

Well, we may not be able to go through all tribulations yet, but at least we shouldn't resent the principle or lose our focused aspirations.

* * *

4:37 a.m.

I've got some time now, say twenty minutes, before I fall apart, before it gets too late. In this time I can tell you.

I read about Krishna, the source of all. He is *prakrti-para*, the controller of matter. Therefore, how can matter control Him? It's not possible.

I accept that argument. It's theology from *sastra*, the foundation of our faith. I want to wake up and pay attention to such statements. They are important to me.

For example, someone asked, "Did you have trouble believing in the Deity since you are from a Western upbringing?" No, I didn't. Prabhupada gave such intellectually satisfying explanations that I always felt assured about what he said. He explained about the government post box, and how mail will be delivered properly if it is deposited in the authorized place. There was another example, too, about electricity. I accepted everything he said.

I'm already tired. rest? Maybe, yes. But then dreams come to take me away. Maybe I could grab one and bring it forward into coherent expression the way Rilke said his writing came to him, but only after weeks of penance. Mozart allowed his dream life to flow, and he would ride with it in his waking state until he could hear the rhythmic melodies playing in his head and was able to write them down.

* * *

The mind. The Kumaras traveled down from the higher planets through the celestial Ganges and the hair on their heads was wet. I heard it, but not entirely. Can you please pay more attention? Make it come together like dreams that integrate into seamless stories.

Remember eating blintzes on that chair in the store where they made them? They actually cooked them in the basement and sent them up on the dumb waiter. The guy would take them out and present them to you to eat, pastry blended with cheese and cream and fruit flavor. Delicious, but sense gratification meant merely to keep your spirits up since you had no girlfriend except one and you didn't know that she couldn't satisfy you "that no one could. No one wants the same old thing, though, so you would go to a restaurant for blintzes for a change. That's the material world. It takes a while to understand it. One thinks he's missing out on all the fun, but there *is* no fun. Just the attempt to prove yourself a man (or a woman), and that's not fun, it's foolish. You tried to save yourself, but didn't know what for, and you had no teacher and no clear vision. LSD was certainly not the answer, although you tried that too. Coltrane couldn't bring you anything. It's all a semblance of love and solace while you remain gnashing your teeth over blintzes.

O mind! Please stay in your place and be happy in Krishna consciousness. That's all I want.

But off you go again to examine your calendar engagements. That, instead of diving deep into this moment to surrender. Poems tell of times, they say, when "I was here and I felt this thing." They describe the sensuous details that surround a moment of brief enlightenment or sometimes polemics.

O Krishna. I can't go on, but I want to tell the story and flow while I still have the song. The Tuscarora creek is cold. It borders obligations. Listen, that's life.

The sheep are cold in their just-shorn bodies, fat and stout. The leader is going on a walk alone. His head is not jammed with ideas, but empty. He thinks he's more peaceful that way.

* * *

8:30 a.m.

To avoid meeting the rock men and their trucks, I walked up the main road to the second logging road. I had to climb a steep hill, and that set my heart beating loud enough for me to hear. The second road is a short one, which means to make the walk last, I have to walk back and forth on it. At the end of it, I found the ribs of a sheep and a trail of wool leading to the remains of its carcass. O Krishna.

O Prabhupada, A few years ago I walked this road back and forth and spoke to you.

Prabhupada, you are my guru. I watch your movements now on old 8 mm films. You climbed the *vyasanas* and covered your bare knee with your *dhoti*. You walked with a cane, fingered your beads. I imitate some of those habits now, or at least I remember you when I do things my own way.

Prabhupada, these silent movies silently enter my heart and give me hope.

* * *

9:30 a.m.

Trying to calm down to read. The courier said he'll deliver from Dublin today (the package that was wrongly sent to Belfast). I'm hearing every passing car as the possible one to stop and deliver. Then there is my head. Not completely peaceful after the walk. And other botherations.

Kardama Muni says the perfection of eyesight is attained in seeing Krishna, the reservoir of all goodness. Try to take it in and put it somewhere in myself. I'm afraid of a headache. reading is taxing. Pain feels ready to erupt any minute. Maybe I should lay down a little while. See if that helps.

I heard a cry and looked out the window. It's that goat. They've got a rope around his neck. Praghosa, Daruka, Praghosa's two boys, and Madhu are out there. I guess they'll put him in the car. I could look more "see how they actually do it. Will they attempt to tie its legs? Will it kick them? Will Madhu say, "Take it easy on him"? I don't want to embarrass them or appear too curious.

* * *

5:30 p.m.

The letters package finally arrived. I don't want to write out of a diarist persona in Ireland, an expatriate hermit-who's-not-a-hermit type guy who knows he's contributing to ISKCON in his own way. Too much I'm made up of these issues and nothing else.

Then who are you and who writes?

The letters weary me. I want to write them, but I want to return to this gentler outpouring too, and my reading routine. I can't just ration out a few letters every day. I seem to have to do them all at once. A man is in prison; how can I cheer him, encourage him? Some letters are harder to penetrate. I feel my shortcomings. I lack more powerful intelligence, even physical capacity, and the ability to love deeply.

* * *

6:05 p.m.

Watched more "Images of Srila Prabhupada." Prabhupada was relishing eating and distributing *prasadam*. We saw him first at the installation of radha-Paris-iSvara, then walking at the ratha-yatra in London (1973). Then he was installing radha-Gokulananda and dancing with his arms upraised. Then we saw him installing the Sesa cornerstone in Bombay. One thing after another. Yes, Prabhupada and his men and women. There was a huge crowd at Trafalgar Square.

O Krishna,

You are our Lord and Prabhupada
is our only master.

The film provided a nice break in the late afternoon. My feeble words with tail ends and heads and necks and sentences dangling and strung out and wondering, "Where do we go now? What do we say?" feel different. Prabhupada can sustain us, even when he has so many things to do. But I'm tired. It's the mail, you see. All that stuff lives on in the brain. A mental patient says she hallucinated and saw three wheelchair patients, although there was only one. Said she read *Photo Preaching* and "I couldn't understand it. Should I have taken it literally?" Oh well, I have come to expect that. Take in the mail and respond.

May 24, 1997

12:06 a.m.

A devotee was impressed that I said I was not in control when I start and stop PMrB, that it comes from inspiration. She took it as a sign that Krishna is controlling me.

Lately I've been dreaming on themes that say Art is important to me. I may tend to play it down or to think it goes against the imperatives of a preacher, but I know it's not. right now I have this easy-going combination of writing and reading. The "writing while reading" method assures that I don't neglect *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and become absorbed only in writing. reading grounds me in the transcendental science and keeps me faithful and chaste to Srila Prabhupada. It also gives me a hope that I might come to know the Supreme Person.

Yet I feel the pull of art. recently I told myself to try to develop an art in this combination of reading notes and free-writing. Should I try fiction again? Something

with more creative tension, such as *Photo Preaching*? Or an extended autobiography, as in *Memories*?

Better to let it build, this pressure to make art. It can come in its own way as an inevitable explosion.

My point in writing all this is to tell myself not to suppress it as if it's not part of a Krishna conscious preacher's life. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* states that the perfection of the senses is their direct engagement in Krishna consciousness "to see the Lord's form, hear the Lord's glories, touch the Lord in His Deity form. "Art is long and life is short," Conrad said. He dedicated himself to art. Does the choice between art and direct Krishna consciousness have to be an either/ or decision? "Perfection in Krishna consciousness (*Krishna-prema*) is long and human life is short." It doesn't have to be either/ or, but I shouldn't waste a moment.

I may have to improvise. There's little precedent for what I am doing. But I don't want to be cheated at the end "as Basho felt cheated "trading poetry for eternal life. I have to find art as an expression of my Krishna consciousness, not at the expense of my Krishna consciousness. It sounds simple, but it's not.

* * *

Kardama was not making it up. "He was not a fictitious *yogi*. Those who are actually on the advanced path aspire only to see the eternal form of the Lord. "(*Bhag.* 3.21.13, purport)

Kardama surprises us "after attaining the Lord's *darSana* after 10,000 years of yoga practice, he says he wants a wife. Srila Prabhupada comments that not everyone is competent to attain liberation, so he should "enjoy according to his present position, but under the direction of the Lord or the *Vedas*." (*Bhag.* 3.21.16, purport)

In the next verse, Kardama asserts that marriage is a stereotyped regulation for persons addicted to sense gratification. He advises that one give it up to become a real devotee, one who takes shelter of drinking the intoxicating nectar of Krishna's qualities and activities in discussions with other pure devotees.

I used to wonder whether Kardama was pure or what. It seems he's aware of the highest goal, and that he is creating progeny only on Brahma's order. He doesn't appear to ever forget Krishna. And he teaches that marriage, and certainly material desire, is a detour on the journey back to Godhead. Maybe he's like Arjuna, acting in *maha-maya* while liberated in order to bring out the Lord's teachings to conditioned souls. I needn't judge him. Better I hear his instructions about chanting and hearing, and about honesty.

* * *

Noon

I hear there's a new challenging paper out. I haven't read it yet. Maybe I'll go through it. This paper is arguing in favor of absorbing ourselves in *raganuga* aspirations with a *Siksa-guru*, and it apparently asserts that this is what Srila Prabhupada wanted of us. The author apparently has many quotes from Prabhupada to support his claims.

I don't like it when people pull quotes out of context to support their causes. We have to read all of Prabhupada's books to understand his overall teachings and his main emphasis. We don't have to pull out quotes and place them into a different focus, even one given by other gurus or *acaryas*. Srila Prabhupada supplied us with the focus by which we can see all others.

* * *

Now we are proposing to stay in Ireland until after Janmastami. Then what about my preaching? We'll still give the same number of classes in Spain and Italy, but instead of going to Spain and back to Ireland, and then a couple of months later go to Italy and back to Ireland (too expensive), we'll just make one trip to Europe in September - October.

And England? Okay.

But won't you get mossy just sitting in Ireland?

No, I'll read and write and pray to Krishna to be allowed to serve wherever I am.

* * *

"The time factor cannot affect the span of life of the devotees." (*Bhag.* 3.21.18) A devotee prays to God. The *Bhagavatam* describes God as a spider who creates a web out of his own energy (saliva). The Supreme Lord alone creates the universes. "The very prayer suggests that God is sentient and can hear the prayers and fulfill the desires of the devotee."

* * *

There *is* a mood or an exact way of presenting things that represents Srila Prabhupada in his Bhaktivedanta purports. I want to approach his writing with full faith and acceptance. I may use whatever intelligence I have to increase my acceptance, and not to twist out a variety of meanings. If I am to make progress in spiritual life, I have to (want to) accept Srila Prabhupada on his own terms. He is within the realm of Gaudiya Vaisnava *acaryas*, but I want to learn Gaudiya Vaisnavism from him. I also want to learn of his connection with the *acaryas* from him. He is my spiritual master and can teach me everything about Krishna and everything about himself. He didn't tell us to go to others to learn a new emphasis. He did tell us to advance to the highest stage of *Krishna-prema* by reading his books. Will I doubt that that's possible?

For example, when I see Srila Prabhupada talking of Krishna's greatness, which he often does, then I don't want to catalog it according to some other standard. That would leave me standing in judgment on my spiritual master: "Here Srila Prabhupada is teaching the neophytes. It is more important for those of us who are more advanced to seek out the passages where he speaks of service to Radharani." Prabhupada rarely speaks of service to Radharani, although he often refers to "transcendental loving service of the Lord." What he teaches will lead me to the highest, and how he directs me will offer me the best way to approach it.

Prabhupada is awakening our desire to practice *bhakti*, and teaching us what pure *bhakti* is about. He *is* awakening my dormant love for Krishna. That's why I don't think it is best to argue what one guru teaches as opposed to what Prabhupada teaches. There is a place for that kind of analysis, and it can help us understand why Srila Prabhupada is unique and that gurus are not interchangeable. Still, I prefer to say that Srila Prabhupada teaches many things. I may not know *what* he is teaching at every moment and why, but my duty as a disciple is to accept everything that he teaches as directed at *me*. I'm satisfied by that.

* * *

By serving Krishna, even if we have material desires, we "gradually forget[s] the hallucinations."

Today I went through inner changes "about what to write, about our travel plans, and in watching more "Images of Srila Prabhupada." The film ended with Prabhupada walking through Calcutta Park past the Victoria Memorial. Rupanuga Goswami was by his side. Later, he was alone with Devananda Swami, then Gargamuni Swami. Wonderful footage of Mayapur in 1973. The film showed the Western *brahmacaris* cleaning out a big wok, then playing in the Ganges, riding on the back of a water buffalo, and working in the field with oxen. Here comes Srila Prabhupada. What is he saying? I don't know. He's talking to his men about Krishna.

I asked M. if someone could help me get through that essay I haven't read yet. I don't really want to read it all. He had no real suggestions who else would like to read it. He thought whomever he asked might not be able to read it with an understanding of what I want out of it. It's hard for people to know . . . what you are thinking and to accept you.

For example, if you dream and you're a guru, then why aren't your dreams all *sphurti* visions of Krishna and Radha? I mean, you're a pure devotee, right? If you're not, and if you have these crazy tormented dreams to help you work things out . . . Some people want to dehumanize me by imposing a stereotyped perfection on me, and if I admit I'm not that, then they want to tear me down. Is that my imagination? I don't think so.

"You roman Catholics," he said, "you are so pious!" He was referring to my past life. "We agnostic Jews wouldn't dream of saying prayers. We are too mental for that." I wrote him back and told him that I too have a Jewish karma.

What else? Prabhupada. I already told you they captured the goat and took him away. He didn't come back. I listened to the bouzouki demonstration tape, read letters, and approved the cover illustration for *Cc. ASraya*. The main thing is that I think I will continue to read the *Bhagavatam* and to write through these days. I will not bother to attempt a novel or an essay or any kind of paper.

* * *

A young mother was bathing her infant in the Ganges. Another, a pretty Western girl in a *sari*, was petting a cow (until she became self-conscious that she was being filmed). Then what happened? The Gaudiya Math devotees were leaping into the air on *parikrama* by the Yoga-pitha. I saw young Acyutananda singing into the mike and

Sridhara Maharaja sitting on the *vyasasanawith* Prabhupada. Then again rupanuga Goswami and Devananda Swami. Was there a shot of the beautiful S.S. Steverino? Did we get a glimpse even of his ponytail? Who was *that sannyasi*? Who was that girl? Who was that ox? Is that the famous Bhavananda cutting jute as if he was a field worker? Is that . . . All those upraised *dandas*. Please tell me what's going on.

I was not there at that time and I don't understand it.

Anyway, you're probably too young and tender to hear all the stories. Just chant Hare Krishna and be happy.

Yes, there are things we leave out of the history books.

"A look at ISKCON pathologies" was the subtitle of his course. "The Curing of Souls in Vaisnava Communities."

Don't be afraid to tell people what's really going on with you. We will apply a dynamic morality and not a static one. We will accept you as good, provided you are willing to rectify.

Oh, I see.

Please just tell us something instructive about time and how it cuts everyone down except the pure devotee. Here is Krishna. My guru is giving Him to me. O Krishna, please help me open myself to You. Please enter my mind and heart as Prabhupada desired for me. Hare Krishna.

* * *

I decided I don't need to read that paper. All I have to do is find what Prabhupada says on the topic in his books. I don't need anyone to tell me that. I already know it. I simply have to trust Prabhupada to deliver me. I am not after salvation anyway, but *guru-nistha* and eternal service. I pray to be fixed in that conviction, and that Krishna will reveal Himself through my spiritual master's presentation. I am only a *cela*.

But do you have bliss?

Yes, I have bliss.

Someone said we should be impartial, fixed only on the flow of nectar and not so concerned where it comes from. "*Bhakti* flows in many ways, and I want to catch it *all*."

I want to catch it only from what I consider the purest source. Of course, they suspect that Prabhupada is not being purely presented, that he is being filtered through ISKCON.

No, he is pure. He speaks on behalf of Krishna. ISKCON cannot filter him if we read his books.

On and on the debate goes. Which camp do *you* belong to? Who's the best guru in *your* eyes? O Krishna. I need a little peace to improve myself in these quiet hours.

Quiet hours are for reading and chanting. It's in the quiet hours you make your gains.

But not quiet without Krishna. Hare Krishna.

May 25, 1997

3:15 a.m.

Slept in from midnight to one to assure I'd be headache-free for the 8:30 meeting. Many devotees plan to attend "all those aspiring for first or second initiation, and their

spouses. I skipped the early reading slot to rest. I missed my fraction or a fraction of absorption.

I changed my mind about reading that article. I think I will read it. It will be good for me to actually face the challenge rather than just thinking about it. I already went over my arguments and reaffirmed my exclusive surrender to Prabhupada's lotus feet. I doubt I will find what the author says valid for my own life, but perhaps I will be able to make some comments here that will be useful.

M. Kaulini's son is a state trooper. He has a Nrsimhadeva tattoo over his heart. May the Lord protect us even if we get shot. Protect us? Do you mean He should deflect the bullet? No, but may He protect my heartfelt remembrance of Him. And may He drive out all demons.

* * *

2:45 p.m.

Vacasamrtena "the Supreme Lord's words are from the transcendental world and are eternal. We don't become tired of the sound of the holy name.

I am turned inside out, if I even have an inside. The morning meeting went all right. Garlanded, with a microphone, I said, "No illicit sex." Later, two men said to me, "There's a letter by Prabhupada that says if you must be lusty, go to your wife."

Now, wait a minute here.

Vacasamrtena. Are my words as tired as I am right now? *Aca vacas*.

Do you believe in the Supreme Lord?

Leave the question hanging.

The independent candidate is the youngest member (25 years old) of the Dail (Irish National Government). She wants your vote. She's on a woman's Gaelic football team and will conduct her government behavior on Christian principles. What about Krishna principles?

Krishna? You people don't have a constituency. And you can't even vote because you're a Yankee.

Yes, but I can pray. I can hear the *vacasamrtena*, if I just tune out the other sounds for awhile.

* * *

Get tired of their faces,
don't love
tired of solitude,
and walk into reading
Room where I have
no taste,
none
for rhymes or doggerel
propaganda for
Krishna.
Just put me in range

of *vacasamrtena*
by discipline-force.

* * *

5:24 p.m.

"Man proposes, God disposes." Srila Prabhupada writes. I've read this before. Now can it enter my life? Pause and consider it. Svayambhuva Manu will come and offer his daughter to Kardama. We'll be reading about husband and wife dealings. My talk today was confined to "no illicit sex." It could have gone deeper instead of remaining so rules conscious. But I wanted to spell it out.

Day coming to an end. I answered most of the mail. Our plans are to stay for most of the summer in Ireland. I have to fight against the idea that I'm not doing enough, that I will become bored, that I'm making a mistake. There's no way around those feelings except further into the *Bhagavatam*. I'm already committed to it.

Hare Krishna.

May 26, 1997

12:05 a.m.

It's a major obstacle to lose interest when you note you've read something before. Just now I come upon a description of third-class, second-class, and first-class devotees. They say it's because the subject matter is so basic and we're supposed to be taking up our interest in Krishna's conjugal pastimes. If the material was less basic, we would be more interested.

There's a limit to that argument. Actually, you run into the same obstacle. Once you've heard something, you've heard it. The teachings in the advanced sphere are repeated too. You have to read them again and again.

So what of these three kinds of devotees? *Listen*. But why? Is it so I can preach this information? Yes, that, and because you need to face what he is saying here. Just because I have heard it before is no reason to turn off from hearing it now. If we are patient, Prabhupada says, we will be rewarded with fresh insights, or "new lights."

The second-class devotee is better than the devotee who worships in the temple "but who does not show sympathy to people in general and respect to other devotees." The *madhyama-adhikari* maintains "friendship with devotees, acts compassionately towards the general public in teaching them devotional service and refuses to cooperate or associate with the nondevotees." (*Bhag.3.21.31*, purport)

These are hints about how we are to behave. Whatever our service, it should be performed as an act of compassion toward the nondevotees (preaching), and it should be done respectfully and in friendship with the devotees.

"The first-class devotee gives assurance to every living being that there is no fear of this material existence: 'Let us live in Krishna consciousness and conquer the nescience of material existence.'"

I cannot imitate this stage, but I should try to situate myself in the *uttama-adhikari's* sense of total dependence on Krishna, and I should give that dependence to others.

* * *

Krishna is one and He expands. His expansions, therefore, are absolute. For example, He is nondifferent from His name. Krishna and the Deity are the same.

Reading this, I find myself thinking of how I'm no longer a GBC man. It's a reduction of status in this movement, especially in the eyes of the GBC men themselves. Then I find my mind straying over a position paper I read. But don't finish these thoughts. There's no point to it. I can't say I shouldn't think of such things, stop it right now. They're part of my life. Instead I'll tell the reader, "Watch out, I'm descending to a think-out-my-plans diary." That happens. I can't always write exalted literature and avoid the stuff of daily life. The "Dear Diary, this is happening" mode is the actual field upon which I carry out my attempts at Krishna consciousness.

Hare Krishna. A man danced and performed *yajna*. He lived patiently with pain. Still, his conscience and awareness of peer expectation demanded that he ask himself, "Are you doing enough?" In answer, he walked from room to room and repeated over and over to himself, "It is pleasing to my spiritual master that I read his books. My writing is how I communicate (preach)." This big *mrdanga* will preach better than I ever could be going from temple to temple eternally. This *mrdanga* is heard all over the world.

* * *

Last night's thought, "Take It While You Can" sounded like a good title for this volume. Now I've changed my mind. The words "take it" are too aggressive, and do not reveal my Krishna conscious import. Take *what*? Sounds like a motto for a hedonist ""Grab all the gusto you can get!" Steal it, seize it.

What I meant is that a devotee should take devotional service. Time is short. We should actively participate in our own spiritual development and we shouldn't waste time.

For me, it means recognizing the freedom I have to live alone, at least for now, and how I should take that opportunity, the permission of time and Providence, to "take" Krishna. But perhaps that's not clear simply in the words as a title.

* * *

Headlines: "Krishna Chant Startles London." "Swami chants in park with flock and creates ecstasy." "New Indian religion gets you higher than LSD." "Save Earth now."

Swami ministers to own self. Satsvarupa leads a life of goodness in Wicklow hills. Ex-GBC member retires to small community in South Ireland.

Tabloid: Hermit hides in hills. Ex-debauch tries to recover. Justification of self.

Critics of SDG say he's a bonk "writes only of mental life. Where is the risk in his life? They interview that Godbrother who says I'm a bonk and I find myself questioning his behavior. Alas.

Don't be afraid to tell. I lost the wallet, ate the egg, forgot the dream. Oh, now I remember it, but it should be censored.

The poet salesman jives down his lines in sonnet form. Behold the word (*logos*). *Ecce homo* "Behold the man (said by Pilate when Jesus appeared before him "after scourging). Jesus was an active preacher.

* * *

When Garuda flaps his wings, he vibrates the sound of the *Vedas*. The Lord's tears formed the lake, Bindu-sarovara. Lord Visnu is an expansion of the original Krishna. These are not mere symbols. Studying these words is not mere academics. This is reality. For now I open my mind to hear it, then bow my head to pause and receive it. Like in those early days when I first received it from Srila Prabhupada. He gave me everything.

I am still blessed to read his book, even after his disappearance. I don't need more advanced books. I need Prabhupada to guide me personally, in his own voice, just as he did when he was here among us.

Yes, that's my response to the challenge of that booklet I read. I will refute it (but not callously).

* * *

4:10 a.m.

Last night, just before Madhu went off to practice his music, I asked to speak with him. He sat on the floor and I sat on the chair and looked out the window toward the meadows and forest. After going over a few scheduling formalities, I told him I intended to spend my extra time staying here and reading the *Bhagavatam*. This was not news to him, but it marked a point of conviction for me. I felt like I was sharing a confidence because I hadn't spoken with that confidence before. Perhaps I wanted to express my desire to enter a reading *samadhi*.

As I spoke, I raised my usual doubt about whether reading and living here constitutes preaching. I had just read Prabhupada's statement that a devotee should take risks to please guru and Krishna. I told Madhu that if I want to respond to Prabhupada's call to preach, it's not that I can do something much different from what I am already doing. I have *already* been traveling around to the European and American temples and preaching. Is that so effective? I tend to think my writing has more preaching scope.

I then began to encourage Madhu in his own preaching through music. If a nondevotee sees a Hare Krishna person doing *anything* well, and his mind is favorably impressed, then that's a kind of preaching. In fact, nondevotees aren't so impressed by expert Sanskrit pronunciation or many of the things devotees do. If a devotee can play a musical instrument, however, or even just be a nice person, they can be won over.

I then went on to praise Hare Krishna dasi's gardening. The other day I thought of Elizabeth of the Trinity, who, from the little I understand of her life, was a mystic who spent most of her time alone in prayer. She is praised now for her intimacy with God. She experienced spiritual taste "the same taste we all want to experience. Some of us can reach *samadhi* (I use the word loosely) by staying alone and praying. Others can attain it by distributing books on the street. Others can perform or lecture on stage before

audiences. I write. Hare Krishna dasi gardens. Our movement can't continue to hold the stereotyped idea that Krishna is pleased only by certain forms of preaching and not by others.

These expressions came spontaneously, not with any desire to lecture Madhu. They relieved me of my own fears in deciding to dedicate a few months to reading and writing.

Madhu added that when I do travel, I can write accounts of our adventures. That's good too. But when I'm in one place, "You have to face the blank page."

Yes, the blank page. And also the *Bhagavatam* page.

* * *

5 a.m.

I pray to enter the *aSraya* of *gopi-bhava* three times a day. I pray also to Krishna, who is within the sun planet. I pray to the guru, Srila Prabhupada, in two different prayers, and similarly to Lord Caitanya. Then to *Krishnaya-govindaya*, the beloved of the *gopis*. Krishna is a beautiful cowherd boy who chases the *gopis* with His flower arrows of attraction. The *gopis* become attracted to His bodily features, simply by seeing which their senses become stunned. I say I "pray" to take shelter, but I mumble and grope and that's about all.

That's about all because this dandruff-headed halitosis kid with his offensive mentality and propensity to cheat, has got no cash. This kid was raised on sugar cones with ice cream served up at Fiorelli's soda fountain, and he's still reminiscing about it as if those were great times, as valid as pilgrimage to Vrndavana. Let's see how this kid does, having put aside his childhood boxing gloves and even his father, who has already passed on to another life. *That* meeting is over. Imagine, the illusion of that one is *entirely* over, yet when it was going on, how firm it was. I still have trauma from it. Yet how many fathers and mothers have I had? How many times have I myself been a father or mother or husband or wife? This time around the story goes a certain way, but I can't claim it was all designed for my self-realization. Or it was, but not until I realized myself as spiritual spark, eternal servant of Krishna.

Let's see how he's doing, this kid blowing bubble gum into big, pink bubbles that covers his face. Let's see how that Levis kid is doing. He insists on shrinking his denims by wearing them in a bathtub full of water. He likes them form-fitting. This kid of American culture. How is he doing? Has he left all that behind? (Behind? You mean back where that little red tag can be seen that says "Levis"?)

No, I mean behind, the way you throw garbage off the stern of the U.S.S. Saratoga. Oh, how I stood on that stern and hoped to be free of the Navy so I could become a Lower East Side poet.

I didn't know then that there was anything more.

Well, how *is* he doing? Didn't he break his heels once?

Oh, he's doing all right. Did you know he met a swami on the Lower East Side?

Now he's sitting here reading, and forcing himself to pay attention sometimes. Yeah, that's because he plans to stay in one place for a few months and give up his antics. He promises not to pay attention to other things, although the garden is blooming and there

are sheep on the hill. Don't worry, he doesn't want to get diverted. Oh, and he prays not to fall down. Yeah, he *is* already fallen, and yeah, he knows the purpose of life is not to avoid falling and dying in an unclean state just so he can get a decent ISKCON eulogy, but to attain love for Krishna. Can he do it? How is that boy doing?

* * *

9 a.m.

When Svayambhuva Manu arrived at the shore of lake Bindu Sarovara, he found it a charming, natural spot. He saw the sage sitting there looking like an unpolished gem. Kardama's body shone with the power of celibacy and especially from hearing the transcendental vibrations of the holy name. Srila Prabhupada says his *brahmacari* and *grhastha* disciples "in ISKCON . . . have improved in health and the luster has come to their faces."

Me too?

Oh well . . .

I may look like death
fried over, with a lean and
hungry look. Such men
are dangerous, they say. Behold he
hath a gleam and clamps
down on the right side. He's
wearing baggy orange sweat pants
up to 9 a.m., and hiking boots.
Goes into the woods daydreaming
of anxiety. I beheld him
gazing out a skylight window.
He didn't know we saw him
slink back and play his
piano. As for his "art" work
in poems, the less said
the better.

Lemons for warm drink in a.m.

Good appetite at lunch. Likes to sit before his master and massage him. Clean hands for that. Still seeking a fit title "how about "Choosing Freedom"? "Choosing to Be Alone"? "Choosing My Freedom"?

"Choosing to Be Alone" may again be too stark and not give the right impression. Besides, I'm not alone. "Choosing Freedom" sounds more positive.

Oh, I'm choosing to walk among the gorse bushes. I'm choosing to spend my time reading the *Bhagavatam*. After all, the Supreme Lord appeared before Kardama and shed tears of pleasure.

I choose and then have to face the implications of that choice. Life is not always easy. Bhakta Leo assured me that book distribution is "not all fun and games," but he wants to stick it out because it leaves his mind no time to think.

Of course, my freedom is not infinite. I'm not God. But I can choose this much
aloneness with this many books. I can choose not to smoke a pipe
or listen to music.
I can choose to become free of
samsara-dava.
O spiritual master,
please deliver me.
O down-pouring mercy-
giving Guru-
deva.

* * *

3:10 p.m.

Feeling weak. Just read something. I'm up to a purport I edited. I remember being
proud of that work. It's a purport describing Kardama praising the king for protecting the
world from miscreants. Srila Prabhupada explains the *varnas*. My knee-jerk response
here is to be disinterested, but I'm trying to get beyond that superficial reaction.

Before coming into this room, I sankirtana movement.

* * *

Now we go to Chapter 22, which describes the marriage of Kardama and Devahuti.
The sage asked the king, "Tell me what I can do for you?" The king praised him. They
truly appreciated one another, this emperor and this *brahmana*-sage.

The Supreme Lord is the real protector, but He's aloof from the affairs of this world.
He protects the living entities through His energies (including the *brahmanas*, *ksatriyas*,
etc.) when they cooperate and obey Him. He is Supersoul and oversees each soul
individually and collectively, according to His infinite capacity.

Down on your knees.

Whatever I write makes
sense in some heaven or
other. Not in hell, please.

Don't put me there, says
the salvationist in me.

And I strive to serve Him
today.

"Simply by meeting you," says the king, "the duty of my life has been made clear."
Srila Prabhupada states (*Bhag.* 3.22.5, purport) that this is what it was like for him
during his opening moments of his first meeting with Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati
Thakura. "On first sight he requested this humble self to preach His message in the
Western countries." Thus Srila Prabhupada was given a "transcendental occupation." I
was told to chant Hare Krishna and become a sincere devotee. I was told to do many
things in Prabhupada's service and to help his ISKCON. I will never retire
from *that* occupation.

By satisfying the *mahatma*, spiritual master, one achieves success in spiritual life. It cannot be done by one's own efforts, such as by making yourself a *sannyasi*, a scholar, a charity worker, etc. Success is achieved only by pleasing the Lord's devotee and working under that devotee's direction.

Sometimes I want to say, "I'm a worker, but I'm also a person." A person with needs, memories, feelings, pain, conditioned nature, and so on. Just because I've taken shelter of a pure devotee doesn't mean I am able to serve him purely. Like the bum who entered the storefront to present the Swami with toilet paper, I am "not in order," but I'm sincere. I seem to zigzag as much as that bum.

"I have fortunately been instructed by you, and thus a great favor has been bestowed upon me. I thank God that I have listened with open ears to your words." (*Bhag.* 3.22.7) He invokes our original Krishna consciousness. I think I'll pause here, saving for later the purport about how the spiritual master engages a disciple in work "such as telling a literary man to write poems.

* * *

5:35 p.m.

This day is ending. I got through the internal questionings "thinking at one point that maybe I shouldn't stay here this summer. Now I'm again firm on my course, choosing this freedom until providence decides otherwise. Trust yourself.

"You are fit for such and such work in Krishna consciousness. You can act in this way." (*Bhag.* 3.22.7, purport) The spiritual master instructs the disciple knowing his particular ability. He assigns him to a department of the *sankirtana* movement. "He trains him in such a way that by his tendency to act he becomes perfect." *Bhagavad-gita* teaches that you become perfect by acting according to your ability, as Arjuna did by acting as a warrior for Krishna. "If one is a literary man he can write articles and poetry for the service of the Lord under the direction of the spiritual master . . . The spiritual master is expert in giving such instructions." I have a number of instructions from Srila Prabhupada that I should write. I'm writing a bit differently, but that's okay. Judge by the results. Carry it out as duty.

Some disciples say they don't have that link or maybe they're doing something different than what the guru orders. Some of his orders may be temporary, others permanent. Some we cling to and use to the maximum. Yes, he said be a writer and I am doing it. He said (to all of us) read my books, and I am doing that too. Have I cut out other things he said? No, I'm doing them in essence, trying to cooperate and belong to ISKCON and help its members.

The point is, the guru will instruct each of us. He told me to go to Boston, then to come to India, then to take *sannyasa*, then to encourage the devotees in my American zone. He told me to give the *Bhagavatam* class as he introduced it, to travel around American in a bus as way Visnujana Swami was doing (as if I could do it in that style). He told me to distribute books, manage the finances, be his servant, start a library party, edit *Back to Godhead*. And yes, "you can lecture in the colleges." Some of these things were my own ideas, but the main premise was always to do something to please him and to catch his eye. We were like that up until the end. I was careful how I behaved because

I never wanted to become an object of his displeasure. During the zonal guru years, I may have failed in that "many of us did "but eventually I gave up that position and began again to travel and preach. And always I have been writing. Some devotees say my books help them. It's my preaching. Later, I will die for him.

Really? Do you have to die even if you're a quiet guy? Does it *have* to come? Yes, but not sooner than is destined. Better a moment of full consciousness, though, than a long life without it. Therefore, this poor man reads . . .

* * *

You ought to actually improvise and not so much
anticipate, anticipate
what's gonna happen to me
on the eve of the financial settlement?
How will I be traded and to what team?
When I get too old how will I be dealt with?
What if the liver breaks down?
What if my friend can't make it or the
Spanish road opens and gobbles us up,
Will I be able to think of Krishna at
that time? Why, why can't I
get the thing I most ought to get
in this lifetime, which is love of Krishna?
What did I do long and wrong and how?
Krishna, Krishna.

May 27

12:10 a.m.

Even in a dream I was explaining myself. Now reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* this fair midnight hour as the clock's hands move. The spiritual master is expert in giving his disciple his assignment. Take it that your service is tailored to the needs of your situation and your own tendencies. Be obedient.

"A saturnine place is Gita-nagari," said the astrologer.
That can mean ignorant but a *dhama* is not so. It's also detached and can mean quiet, even sleepy "a place with no grand tourist attraction plans. Just plow and plant and milk whatever cows are left and worship the Deity in Relative peace while the Tuscarora rolls by and in summer

trickles and slows down.
Honeysuckle and phlox and the
Baltimore orioles (flown in from
the city three hours away) all live there.

* * *

But I'm in Eire
at a desk while Svayambhuva Manu
talks to the sage: "Please listen
to the prayer of my humble self
for my mind is troubled
by affection for my daughter."

* * *

Svayambhuva Manu is compared to a disciple asking a favor of his spiritual master. First you must satisfy the guru. Kardama will accept Devahuti. This is a first-class method of marriage. Kidnapping women is no longer sanctioned. Vedic social methods lose their influence in Kali-yuga (*sati* rite forbidden, and other things). Makes you think that Srila Prabhupada gave us the best thing, chanting, elevation to brahminical life, and the charge to develop *daivi-varnaSrama*. But even if we don't, we can still go back to Godhead.

* * *

Once upon a time the rains fell and then stopped and started and stopped throughout the day in the Wicklow County amid the hills and valleys. There is one house and in it I'm reading of the ancient days. It's not an ordinary chronology, but selected histories of God and His pure devotees. This bride will become the mother of Lord Kapiladeva, the incarnation of Krishna who will teach *bhakti* and *Sankhya*. Be patient and hear it.

Kardama agrees to accept the beautiful and highly qualified Devahuti, but after giving her a child, he says, he will enter the *paramahamsa* stage of life. He doesn't want to remain a householder forever. How fortunate we are that Srila Prabhupada has moved us quickly through some semblance of the Vedic orders, especially to *sannyasa*. *Atam samastayah paratmanistam*. Let us take shelter of the lotus feet of Lord Krishna in devotional service, as was done formerly by liberated souls. Thus we can attain eternal service to Mukunda. "The highest authority for me is the unlimited Supreme Personality of Godhead." (*Bhag.* 3.22.20)

If one serves Mukunda he liquidates his other debts. "Kardama Muni preferred to devote his life as a servant of the Lord in *paramahamsa* knowledge."

So that's the thing.
Your face, lined page "
go ahead and fill them up
with words, not children but
fill the vacancies in the

universe. Words and children
are both calculated risks.

* * *

"I'm here again," said the poor driver of Viking one-day delivery office supplies. He had to drive all the way out here at 7 p.m. to deliver three pens to Madhu as a reward for previous purchases. Tried not to think of that driver as I took rest last night.

They say it's a myth "their life is a myth. The universe is temporary. Krishna, Krishna, I'll go with Kardama. I have passed through householder life. I encourage householders, but tell them no illicit sex. I'm trying to think of what to speak on next Sunday.

Brahminicallife? Some service theme? Chant Hare Krishna? Do something together. Even tomorrow my precious alone routine will be interrupted, and the next day even more so. Amen.

* * *

4:30 a.m.

Choosing a summer of freedom to live awhile with the prayers Lord Brahma composed millennia ago. This is my reality, *the* reality, and I accept it. Please now let me accept it not just as a theologian, but as a lover, a poet, an ordinary guy. Let the words come through me too.

Swim in the light on the page.

Women or men it doesn't matter,
ask and ye shall receive
the future

in which to digress or not, swan or fall down. O Adrienne rich, I read your last poems, composed when you were sixty-five, and wondered why you were so fixated on worldly injustice and carnal love. I'm sorry your publisher dropped your book and didn't even tell you. I'm sorry to hear Rwanda has incredibly bad karma and keeps getting killed off. There's a scarcity of food in Uganda, so the people are turning to steal from each other. Listen, there is a scarcity of kindness and clear spiritual knowledge in America, although there is no shortage of clever, educated people, beauty queens, muscular athletes, people on drugs, people taking seminars on health and dying and being dead in the morgue. In a big nation like this, how many die each minute? I tell you, there's a shortage of education.

Here in the *Bhagavatam*, the king is asking the sage to accept his beautiful daughter's hand in marriage, "so you don't have to beg later for a wife and be mistreated."

When a good thing comes your way, don't refuse it, in other words. Yes, I agree with that principle. This freedom has come my way and I'll accept it.

Krishna, Krishna science, Krishna art, Krishna fund-raising, Krishna dinner, Krishna rock band . . . I admit I am tired and I'm writing to keep myself awake. I can confess to a partial annihilation and pride and confusion and bluffing and seeking a new and better way to improve. I don't want to become entangled in illusion. Prabhupada is gradually freeing me.

Matter doesn't act by itself; it needs the touch of a living person. Similarly, the Supreme Person touches and instigates the material worlds and only then do they start to come out. He then maintains, then destroys them by His will.

* * *

Blip runs the machine. It wants me to participate. I learned to type by taking weekly lessons at McBurnie's YMCA in uptown Manhattan. The teacher was an effeminate man. The other students were almost all ladies. We pounded away on manual typewriters, circa 1959 (or was it 1961) "before I went into the Navy. Just before the last class, the teacher invited us to a party. I didn't attend it, but went on with my practice and gradually learned to type almost sixty words a minute. I wanted to know how to type because I was writing a novel. "Thank you for writing *The Avocado Theme*," Steve Kowit's girlfriend, Roz, wrote me. Yes, well thank *you* for reading it. It was a book about Duke Snider and his avocado farm.

No, I mean, I made it up.

But I won't tell more because those memories will give me a bad rep. You'll all think I'm not worthy to be a guru. Better I keep up the image.

* * *

Swami, swim you and I
in the forest pool
with other disciples, in the
Yamuna. You say, "Let us stop here
at this place where Krishna had His pastimes. Let us
hear from *Krishna* book," Swami, you
telling us.

They laughed and left. The room was empty and sunlight and a breeze entered. No goats. No more goatish ways. He protested when they dragged him away. He didn't like how he was being treated, but he was powerless to stop them. They put him in the trunk of the car and dumped him out (alive) on some backwoods road where he was welcome to take his chances.

* * *

8:35 a.m., Morning Walk

Just before I left the house, I had a disagreement with Madhu. I asked him if he had finished copying the tapes, but he hadn't. I added, "But you said you were going to do them yesterday."

"I'm doing all I can."

That took me by surprise. It seemed too defensive, so I remained quiet rather than saying something reassuring.

Apparently Madhu felt my silence and that stirred him further. He went to the kitchen and came back and said, "It's not that I wasn't copying tapes yesterday, but I didn't finish them."

It seemed that Madhu was more hurt by the exchange than I felt, although I wasn't trying to hurt him. But I was actually taken aback by his statement that he was doing all he could. Why should I deny him that? In the hardest sense, none of us are doing all we can. I feel that myself, that pressure that I am not serving Prabhupada with full surrender. I'm too timid to preach with his fire. I don't need to impose that on others. He *is* doing all he can, and I guess in some ways, I am too.

I mulled all this over as I walked. The weather is warmer today, and I thought of a report I got in the mail about the weather at Gita-nagari, and how there are Baltimore Orioles singing in trees woods and wild phlox and honeysuckle blooming. Doing all I can . . .

I also thought about Elizabeth of the Trinity, although I know almost nothing about her. But she is an idealized image in my mind of someone praying and contacting God in solitude, just for herself. She's the opposite of a preacher. There's a place for that kind of meditation, and it can fuel the preaching spirit if the focus is right. What am I saying? I'm wondering what I'm going to do for these next few months with the *Bhagavatam*. Can I reach a higher state or will I always be falling short, falling short?

I guess even my falling short still accumulates hours spent with the *Bhagavatam*. That's *something*. Svayambhuva Manu will present his daughter to the sage and on and on the verses will go. If I admit I'm not doing all I can, can I at least say I'm doing all I want? Is my life reflective of my heart's desire? It better be, otherwise I'm just dawdling, unsure, and wasting time. O Krishna, O Prabhupada, please help me.

* * *

10 a.m.

A memorable verse and purport where Kardama stops speaking, thinks of his worshipable Lord Visnu, and silently smiles (3.22.21). Srila Prabhupada says even when a pure devotee is apparently thinking or acting otherwise, he's actually always thinking of Krishna. "The smile of such a Krishna conscious person is so attractive that simply by smiling he wins so many admirers, disciples and followers."

Of course, phonies can turn on the charm too, and they receive their allotment of followers. Did you see him smile? I hardly smile now. I have no teeth. Thus providence restrains me. "Can Goswami smile?" A man in prison asked me that. He said he'd seen only my stern (scared?) face in the BTG photo.

Oh man, you smile
in such a way we
want to follow you "
you must know somethin'
joyful that we mortals is missin'.

The cream dream guy opens his cavernous hole and teeth twitters bright white (Tom's toothpaste lets you come up close) "

you awright boss
you win us with
your cheesy grin.

* * *

So cynical. There's no end to it.

I'm sorry, I got it from my Dad and Mom as we watched TV. I'm infected with it.

Kardama is different, and so is Prabhupada. They smile beautiful smiles of devotion, of inner awareness of Krishna. Some don't appreciate. Even when Krishna smiles some miss the point. They prefer their own cheating smiles. We could kill them for that, but no, they are allowed to live and smile until

their teeth are pulled out by Lord Siva's demons.

Look

let's get back to the sublime

bhakti-vaibhava

notes.

When he smiled, Devahuti was won over and began to meditate upon him.

Hearing of Kardama's acceptance of a dowry from the emperor, how he became rich, I almost felt sorry he was no longer a *brahmacari*. Gold and silks are usually for sense enjoyers. Devotees offer them to God.

Emperor Svayambhuva returned to his capital at Barhismati, so-called because at where Lord Varaha dropped hairs from His body. Those hairs later turned into green *kuSa* grass and were used to make *asanas* upon which devotees would worship the Lord. Manu was greeted by his citizens. He was always grateful to the Lord, knowing that whatever he ruled actually belonged to Krishna.

Now I believe

despite the noise in the kitchen

where he works

and the twitters of the birds outside. Is that a yellow tanager?

* * *

4:15 p.m.

Again, almost any purport is worth staying with and considering seriously. Sometimes you want to share it quickly, either through notes written here or in a lecture. First, however, I should personally absorb it. The more I can appreciate his purports, the more faith I will have in my spiritual master. I should never be afraid to admit that my faith can always increase.

In this purport before me, Prabhupada writes of the threefold miseries. It's not that those who take up Krishna consciousness become suddenly immune from those miseries, "but for one who is Krishna conscious the miseries of material existence have no effect." (*Bhag.* 3.22.32, purport)

This is important. Think it over. We can become free from the miseries while simultaneously knowing that we are in this miserable and temporary material world. How is it, then, that the miseries don't affect a devotee? Does that apply only to great devotees? Does it apply even partially to devotees on my level?

Imagine an old sheep

hobbling, doing a leaping old

dance. I laugh to watch him so
crippled "can't go uphill "
yet he dances at summer's
onset in the daisies bloomed
and the yellow buttercups.
He can't do it nicely
but . . .
Krishna consciousness
is antiseptic to miseries.

* * *

Svayambhuva lived in an atmosphere that eradicated miseries. The emperor's life was peaceful, prosperous, and religious. He and his subjects heard *Krishna-katha* in music and song both on rising in the morning and upon taking rest at night. They would then dream of glorifying the Lord. A nice life. I like to think my life is like that too. I have no subjects, and there's no *shenai* band around, but I hear Krishna's birds and sense the quiet when I come to sit at my desk for *hari-katha*.

"Consequently, although his duration of life gradually came to an end . . . [it] was not spent in vain, since he ever engaged in hearing (*srvatah*), contemplating (*dhyayatah*), writing down and chanting the pastimes of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 3.22.35)

Writing down "did you hear that? Writing *down*. In black ink on white paper? And although his life was dwindling, he didn't stop his Krishna-centered practices. He remained regulated around hearing and his life remained fresh.

Did he have moments that were too quiet? I doubt he went out seeking passionate activities to liven himself up. That would have been foolish. He accepted the quiet mercy as it came and increased his taste for spiritual life. Therefore, the sun's rising and setting does not diminish a devotee's life because he acts always according to his eternal service to the Lord.

May 28
12:05 a.m.

Devahuti is compared to Bhavani, Lord Siva's wife, because she selflessly served her husband even though he did not provide her with a house or riches. Both wives were born into families of great kings, and both were satisfied to serve *sadhu* husbands, although it meant living as beggars.

I was a householder when I first heard these verses. I took them as significant passages, and thought that the wife should satisfy the husband and assist him in his Krishna consciousness. It was different in my marriage. My wife and I served our spiritual master as two individual disciples. Srila Prabhupada points out that *visrambhena* and *gaurabhena* mean that the wife is the husband's intimate friend, yet she always remains respectful. That's a difficult combination. Our familiarity bred

contempt. Neither did I deserve so much respect. But I thank Prabhupada and Krishna that I am still able to serve him, even if my marriage wasn't so ideal.

Sometimes disciples think I have little to offer them in terms of advice about their *grhastha* lives. It's true. I lived with my wife for only three and a half years. Then Srila Prabhupada allowed me to take *sannyasa*. I escaped. My wife went on in her own service as a book distributor and artist for Prabhupada's books. We continued to serve our spiritual master as individuals.

At least I can tell my disciples that they shouldn't make the usual mistakes. They should base their marriages on respect, and that starts with the self-respect earned by strictly following the rules and regulations. I don't know how to help them find emotional intimacy without allowing it to fall into illicit sex, but I assume it can be done since there are householders who have achieved this.

And they can study the example of Devahuti and her husband. When a man goes out to work, he may become agitated by his contact with the outside world. "Therefore, in his home life he must be treated by his wife with sweet words." When she too gives him a hard time, his life becomes miserable. I know that means she has to be a saint. Vedic women are trained for sainthood by following this path.

Times are different now, and ISKCON is certainly not a model of Vedic society. So many husbands have exploited and abused their wives by misusing the Vedic standards. It's natural that wives will rebel. They want marriage to be a partnership, not simply a relationship based on one person making demands and the other doing nothing but fulfilling them.

Srila Prabhupada mentions that we should similarly serve the Supreme Lord with intimacy and yet with reverence. Our sweet Lord.

I want to ask forgiveness for my mistakes. Every stage of my life has been patchy. I can only keep going now, reading, chanting, serving, and forgiving others as they forgive me. There is nothing else we can do.

* * *

Wives today may not be confident that their husbands are such great devotees and that they are receiving spiritual benefit by serving them. They want to become servants of God and guru directly. This sometimes leads them to neglect family life in favor of preaching. Devahuti set a different example, and she became the shareholder of her husband's devotional credits. Kardama said, "I shall offer them all to you because you are engaged in my service. Now just look at them. I am giving you the transcendental vision to see how nice they are." (*Bhag.* 3.23.7)

We apply this to husband and wife, but we can apply it to the relationship between guru and disciple also. By sincerely serving the bona fide spiritual master, a disciple automatically attains all good results. *Prema pum-artho mahan* "to achieve the Lord's grace, love of God, is the greatest perfection of human life. By serving guru, we will achieve it. Kardama and Devahuti are both great souls. We should follow their behavior.

* * *

5:50 a.m.

"Hey queer bait!"

Who can believe I have survived the cruel world for 57+ years? Still, this world has left its mark. These phrases sometimes run through my brain. The *Bhagavatam* calls them "rude slogans chanted by ruffians" who march along. "Kill him! Eat him! Chop him up and pierce him!" Those slogans are like time bombs that go off suddenly, or bubble up from the unconscious. They're all still in there, imprinted on the brain. And that includes all the injustice anyone has perpetrated on another. None of us can really escape the era of barbed wire, concentration camps, torture, and abortion. In the end, we see ribs laid bare to the wind, as I saw on the road today in that sheep's body.

Isn't it natural to ask, "Which door leads out?" Sanatana phrased the question like this: "Why are the threefold miseries giving me trouble? Who am I am?"

* * *

8:11 a.m.

Kardama said, "I give you the love of God I have attained." Devahuti was grateful, but she also wanted his child. Even without knowing the outcome, we can just imagine what the union of two such qualified persons would produce.

Let it sink in. They were qualified to "conceive" the Supreme Lord. I can read about it.

The "nameless" birds at the end of May are twittering just beyond this skylight room. I'm not going on a walk this morning. I'm in a bit of a holding pattern, waiting to go over for my luncheon meeting with a Godbrother. At least I'm able to read and be calm.

The next section seems a little strange to me. I mean, he was such a serious *yogi* and she such a serious servant, but he created an aerial mansion and restored her beauty to her, and they travelled around the universe expressing their passion. I liked Kardama sitting in his cottage at Bindu-sarovara. Okay, then read and be astonished. Go with the story so that you too come to the conclusion that such life is a waste of time. Kardama will leave and return to his simple, austere hermitage activities. And I should appreciate his power. He was able to travel all over the universe in that way, but he remained a devotee of Lord Visnu.

After her nine daughters were born, Kardama was ready to renounce his household life. Devahuti asked him to first award her fearlessness in the form of a son who could grant her spiritual instruction, and ultimately, liberation. After fulfilling her desire, Kardama retired to the forest as a *sannyasi*.

* * *

11:50 a.m.

I think *Choosing To Be Alone* might be the best title. Madhu suggested "Facing Myself," but if I face myself, then it seems I come up with wanting to be alone. I rejected the title earlier because I thought readers would misunderstand it; it looks negative. Prabhupada says that often renunciates go alone out of frustration and sentiment. We think of devotees as being together in *sat-sanga*. Only *yogis* go alone to meditate. And they don't preach. But here I am choosing it? I like to think of it more as choosing my freedom to read the *Bhagavatam* on my own.

At the risk of being misunderstood, I think I'll keep the title. I just noticed I said "at the risk of being misunderstood," and not "at the risk of being mistaken." Because I'm not actually alone, I'm with Krishna. And there are devotees nearby. Still, I'm alone with my Krishna consciousness and with myself trying to practice it.

I quoted Thoreau on solitude in the first volume of *Every Day, Just Write*:

I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. To be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating. I love to be alone. I never found a companion that was so companionable as solitude. We are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men than when we stay in our chambers.

It's a hard statement to say that even the best company becomes wearisome. With Krishna and the pure devotees in the spiritual world, of course, that's not true. You won't want to be in Goloka if you're too much of a loner. You'll prefer somewhere to practice *Santa-rasa* meditation. A cave?

Anyway, there's no point in analyzing it to death. I don't think it's wrong to step apart from anything that dissipates you. I feel as if I'm in an intermediate stage of my life, learning to live with pain, finding the more permanent truth among the impermanent conditions.

* * *

12:15 noon

Looks like I'll be having lunch with a visiting Godbrother. I'll ask about his writing and computer topics. I'll avoid certain topics, unless he wants to discuss them. My teeth are glued in. I have an Esgic in my pocket just in case.

Srila Prabhupada is smiling. He's taking Madhu's meal since I won't be eating here. Sunny day. Front yard full of white daisies. A daisy in Ireland is tiny compared to the big faces in America. Buttercups I already told you about, didn't I? I've told you almost everything at least once.

Srila Prabhupada is smiling.

* * *

2:50 p.m.

My Godbrother said that a few years ago he underwent a mid-life crisis in which he asked himself what he was really doing to serve Srila Prabhupada. He also wondered if he was doing the best thing he could do to go back to Godhead. That brought him to the point where he decided to travel and preach more. He said he now tries to never pass up an opportunity to preach when it's offered to him, even if it is personally inconvenient.

I said that with my health restriction I could not follow that principle, although it was praiseworthy. I said there are many people who have to work within some confined situation, such as a teenager whose parents may not let him go to the temple, or a man in prison. They have to learn to surrender to Krishna despite the confinement.

We talked a little bit about a Godbrother who left recently. He said that he always considered this Godbrother his friend, but in the last few years, this Godbrother seemed more lonely, as if he was now only going through the motions.

When I saw my Godbrother (he was standing outside the Wicklow schoolhouse), I got out of the car and bowed down. Back in the car I said, "One doesn't meet many *sannyasis* in these parts."

"It's a good place for *sannyasis*."

Yes, it is.

Later he had wanted to know where I was hiding. At last he had discovered it. He asked how long I stayed here.

Several months a year.

Is that okay?

Summer wind rattling the latch on the door. I heard it washing through the trees, through the hundreds of leaves attached to their branches.

God, God . . .

He said he wants to become recognized by Krishna. Did I know how to achieve that? I said I couldn't answer from experience, but from what I've heard you become recognized by preaching. Even if one isn't advanced in other ways, if he preaches, he's like the farm boy who goes to war "a hero.

Although I didn't say it then, I wanted to add that there are many ways to preach.

Then Madhu came to door and reminded me that it was 3 p.m.

* * *

6:08 p.m.

Some books arrived. One was about Herman Melville and his circle in his last years. He became a recluse, but he kept relationships with books and with a select circle of author-friends. He was preoccupied with the literary art, and he didn't have any religious faith, although he read books on Buddhism. I'm not interested in studying his mind, poor guy.

Also arrived, a book on headaches that looks interesting. (I've gone seven days without one. Hare Krishna.)

Madhu and I are ending the day discussing my letters from Srila Prabhupada. Madhu asked about my attitude then and now regarding dependence on Krishna. I said something which has just become coherent to me. I spoke in favor of admitting that we don't know what will happen, what is even happening now, or why life changes the way it does. All we can do is simply cling to the basics of chanting and hearing.

I'd like to rest soon. I'm tired.

May 29

12:05 a.m.

The sage told his wife to perform devotional service and the Lord would come as her son. Don't refuse this. This is what Srila Prabhupada is saying too. Sometimes we think we need to look elsewhere to understand *bhakti*, but Prabhupada already gave it to us. The Christians can't give it to us because they don't have radha-Krishna. Other Vaisnava sources can't give us exactly what Prabhupada gave. If we are missing it, it's because we have neither taste nor the ability to concentrate the mind on what we are hearing.

Unfortunately, those two go together. It's hard to concentrate if you don't already have love, and it's hard to love if you don't pay attention. Spontaneity comes from attentive love.

I don't need a new religion. "*Srimad-Bhagavatam* is the best book," Lord Caitanya said.

But is it for the common people like me?

If so, where is Vraja Krishna?

Lord Caitanya didn't complain that the *Bhagavatam* was insufficient for realizing Krishna in His most intimate feature. read all the cantos and especially the purports.

Vishvanath Cakravarti Thakura stresses the importance of accepting the spiritual master's instruction as our life and soul. The Lord is already present in our hearts. He will "come out" (like flames come out of wood or butter from churned milk) when we concentrate on the worship our spiritual master has prescribed. This is serious.

A devotee here said that he wishes Krishna would zap him with love of God. He feels if he has to continue at his present pace, which seems to be him exerting effort and Krishna not responding, then he will never make it to attraction. O Krishna.

When they say we will automatically attain attraction, it means it will come automatically to one who seriously, without motivation and without interruption, pursues it by hearing and chanting. We have to actually cultivate it.

* * *

The Supreme Lord agreed to appear in Kardama's semen as He had appeared from the Brahma's nostril and the pillar in HiranyakaSipu's house. May He agree to appear in my writing and in my life. I know my mind is not a clean, steady, secure, place for Him to sit. I invite Him, but I haven't prepared yet for His arrival. Sometimes I think I'm afraid: if He comes, He might take over the place and take everything I have, body, mind, and words. Then where will my love of solitude be (and my mild sense gratification)? I'll be haunted by Krishna, and transformed into my true self.

Well, don't you want that?

Of course, but it's frightening when I put it in those terms. I know it's silly.

In the end, everyone has to find the *sadhana* that works for them within Prabhupada's regular teachings. A disciple in prison writes a prayer every day in his own words. It's important to him to express himself. Someone else remembers a bit of Sastric pastime of radha and Krishna. Someone else does something else. Someone just works hard to achieve their spiritual master's purposes. All of this is tested in the crucible of chanting on our beads.

* * *

Can I pray like that disciple in prison? Would I write them down? I hesitate to address Krishna as "Lord."

My Lord.

In the Hare Krishna mantra I address radha, "O Hara," "Hare," O energy of the Lord. First the energy, then the Lord. Hare Krishna.

O Krishna, You are the energy behind all. Even more importantly, You are the person behind all. Can I give myself to You? Please take over my life. I really do want You to.

* * *

7:45 a.m., Car trip to Dublin

I start a conversation about the local election. A twenty-five-year-old girl is a candidate; her main qualification is that she plays on a woman's Gaelic football team. We jokes and make skeptical remarks about the system. I drop out of the talk and sit back. No pillow "I'll use my arm. Dead rabbits on the road. Can you think of some Hare Krishna theme? The renunciation of Kardama? Krishna playing the flute? Satsvarupa clinging to the mantra, like a suckling with a bottle?

"Vote number one Mildred Fox."

I would rather be home and following on my schedule. Aware that my time is short. How many springs and summers can one man expect to live through?

Hare Krishna. Double-decker green bus. Greenery on both sides of macadam road. Bright sunshine. I have to go to the Justice Department to register for another year's stay in Ireland. ISKCON pledged to pay my expenses. We count on this easy-going country to let me stay.

"Brittas Lodge" riding stables. Fences to keep in the cows and sheep. Gorse, milkweed, deciduous trees everywhere. Sunshine dapples across the page. M. is going to Birmingham to sing in a festival. Praghosa will drive me back to Wicklow in time for Srila Prabhupada's massage and bath. I hope I'm able to do it, but if the pain strikes, I will . . . bear it.

* * *

11:20 a.m.

Return car journey. Stamped for another year in Ireland. What does it mean? refugees flooding into Ireland, a thousand a month, causing a problem, but U.S. citizens are still welcome. The doctor and Justice Department visits were both easier today than three weeks ago. Hot as a summer day. Talking with Praghosa as we drive along about what I might speak on Sunday.

* * *

3:50 p.m.

Back after a long day. Events replay in head. Pakistani in Justice Department trying to bully woman agent. She refused to give him an extension. He said he would stand there until she gave it. Then a man agent came and was firmer. He told the immigrant to stop abusing her. Finally the guy backed off. The whole office was agitated, people looking at each other. They treated me easily, like a friendly fellow. Because I'm from America? No prejudice toward a Hare Krishna.

Now back here, brain sorting it out in replay after replay. Looking for direction from Lord Kapila. read slowly and savor it.

* * *

5:30 p.m.

"You have a right to be safe in your home and on the street," said the lady McManus, who wants to be re-elected. She says she and her government have worked hard for a crime-free, drug-free Ireland. You have a right to more jobs and more money, to a good water scheme. They're begging for votes. Everyone knows they're lying, Praghosa said. He said he might like a barrister career, but it's probably too late for him now. Then he said that there is so much pressure that one preach in one of the most recognized forms. He feels it too. Of course, if that pressure comes from guru and Krishna, then it's right. We would be wrong to go against it.

A rabbit is a living entity, a citizen of the state. No one consults how rabbits would like to be represented by the government. They live in brambles and come out foolishly to nibble grass. I saw three together and they were much bigger than I had guessed. Good eating for a fox, or easily hit by passing cars. They were so big I could see the grass blades in their teeth. Just thought of the goat, too, who no longer lives here.

Madhu is in the process of cancelling our ferry tickets to Spain. That's that. I'll stay here, a leprechaun.

I have been reading the first book in this series, *Welcome Home . . .*, which was written at Geaglum beginning on a cold, rainy day. I was crying through the words "I felt it even now. I was pushing myself deeper, looking for something in the written words and the sense perceptions of rain and sky and lake and island. I'm still looking, and I still want to dive below the surface officialdom that my life had become. I thought of my Godbrother who recently visited and how we don't really know each other's hearts.

Anyway, before it's too late I had better go downstairs and pour Prabhupada a glass of apple juice. It will break the tension I'm feeling. Then perhaps I'll be able to crank out another page.

* * *

Night Notes

"Dreams are a gift of God," says a book written from the Christian perspective. You can take it that way. They take the attitude that God's will is being revealed to us through dreams. We all want to do what Krishna wants us to do, but we can't always listen to our peers, who are often quite willing to define Krishna's will for us. We hear something, but we don't have full trust. But does that mean we can discern God's will for us through dreams? Dreams seem so bizarre, and at best, symbolic. They rarely have explicit Krishna conscious content. Maybe Krishna wants us to work out our *maya* through dreams. Maybe when we show interest in the dream messages, they will start becoming more clear and more obviously in tune with our Krishna conscious aspirations. You know, start with a dead rat and grow a fortune. The Supersoul can teach love of God in strange ways . . .

Okay, so what about that dream I had last night? I was in the Navy again, trying to get to the base. It was the same Norfolk, still filled with ego trips and people doing their own thing, even in the Navy setting. I was afraid in the dream, and I was thrust out on my

own in a bad environment, living a secret life, smoking marijuana, reading of intellectual life and literature. I was corrupt. I tell you, neither being in the Navy nor my reaction to it were conducive to my positive development.

But in the telling I have mixed in my real-life experiences. I don't know why I was dreaming about it all again. I'm now trying to go back to Godhead. I am living alone with that desire. What has my past got to do with my present, especially as it is presented to me in dreams?

O Krishna, I can't approach You on my own; I don't know how to call upon You and to feel my dependence. I'm trying to force that cry out of myself through writing, and of course, by reading the *Bhagavatam* several times a day. No voice can pull me forward like Prabhupada's voice in *parampara*. Now I can only wait for You to reveal Yourself to me. I wait, and in the meantime, seek my integrity. For me, trying to live a life of prayer seems to grant me the opportunity to be myself.

Krishna, I can't express this to others. If I speak about it to certain people, they will think I have exiled myself for political reasons "obviously the same reasons they have for creating their own exile or schism. But that's not my way. If I speak about it to certain other people, they will think I am not toeing the ISKCON line, that I should be more institutionalized, even social. I can't take that either. Therefore, I am left trying to speak my heart only to You and to Prabhupada.

This "alone growing" is painful, but I see no choice but to continue it. Please show me little by little the ways in which I must surrender. Please make me fit to share what I learn with others, to be of help to them in their own moments of doubt and aloneness.

Praghosa asked if on Sunday I could talk on devotional service as more than the outer form of service, but as the act of devotion itself "actually feeling the love. He added that it seemed important for devotees to find out what it is they want to do for Krishna and then to do it as an offering. I told him that *japa* is the most important offering for all of us. Other services are secondary.

I said it, but I know it's just dawning on me too. Facing ourselves. We need others to support us in this.

May 30

12:15 a.m.

Kardama is praying. I am too. I close my eyes and think how Kardama is grateful to the Lord for appearing in such a poor *grhastha's* home, even though He appears in the heart of a *yogi* only after many, many lives of practice in a secluded place. The Lord is *bhakta-vatsala* "He favors His devotees. O Krishna, please also be inclined toward me even though my voice is mixed.

The immigration officer asked, "How long do you want to stay in Ireland?" It took me by surprise. If I had said, "For my whole life," would she have stamped me a permanent resident? I doubt it. I said, "One year," and that's what I got. Better I take one year at a time. There is no permanent home in this world.

* * *

When I try to think of God as I have over the years, I realize He's a puzzle. How can there be a person with no cause? Everyone has a cause except Him. Hearing it again, it suddenly hit me and filled my heart. Krishna has no cause. That's the power of hearing from a pure devotee.

The Lord is *param-satyam*; He has no origin. When Desmond O'Grady asked who gives God knowledge, Srila Prabhupada replied that by definition God is *svarat*. No one gives Him knowledge.

We have to make that leap of faith to go to Him. That means accepting Him as He is described in the Vedic literature.

I am as hungry for *bhakti* as when I joined Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada prescribed preaching. But sometimes I wonder *how* I can preach without *bhava*. I *can* go through the motions, but that's not what I want now. I want to be real.

* * *

From, *Melville and His Circle: The Last Years*.

People who know Melville generally think that at the end of his life his literary powers waned, but this book shows that he was concentrating and intensifying his thoughts on art and creativity to a degree greater than ever before. He became reclusive, and that's why most people thought he had died out. The title of this book is deceptive because actually, Melville had no friends. He belonged to no author's clubs, claiming that he was too much of a hermit, that his nerves couldn't take large gatherings.

Then what was Melville's "circle"? It was the group of authors and thinkers with whom he associated through their books and ideas. The soul selecting its own society.

I'm attracted to this picture of Melville in his later years, but unfortunately his friends were not transcendental. He did study Buddhism a little, but not with any sense of theism. I'm not interested in reading of his studies in Schopenhauer or others. What I am attracted to is how much more able he was to sustain himself throughout his old age without superficial relationships or "contacts," and by taking shelter of books. He actually felt he had become best friends with some of the authors whom he was reading. I can do that too with Srila Prabhupada, and through him, the Six Gosvamis, Vyasadeva, and ultimately, Lord Krishna and His *parisads* in the spiritual world.

* * *

More from the book on Melville:

Melville's penciled notations and underlinings of the books he read have been made available to readers. Whenever he found something about solitude, he underlined it:

* * *

Melville's markings in his volumes of Schopenhauer revealed the extent to which very late in his life he had become occupied with the subject of reclusiveness. In his copy of *Studies in Pessimism*, he penciled a vertical line by Schopenhauer's remark that if a person "has a soul above the common, or if he is a man of genius, he will occasionally

feel like some noble prisoner of state, condemned to work in the galleys with common criminals; and he will follow his example and try to isolate himself."

For Schopenhauer, the choice was fairly simple: "Solitude on one side and vulgarity on the other." Of particular interest to Melville was Schopenhauer's remarks on the growing tendency in the aging genius towards reclusiveness.

Melville also read the collected letters of the French novelist Honore de Balzac:

As he went through these two volumes, he was forcefully reminded of what it means to be a busy writer, not just writing and publishing a poem here and there or having volumes privately printed, but dealing with all the knotty problems and experiencing all the excitement of an author writing for a hungry public and for demanding publishers. In his letters, Balzac covered the spectrum of all the frustrations and satisfactions inherent in the life of a creative writer turning out one work after another. A partial list of the subjects Melville found Balzac addressing includes the following: Pain and resentment from bad and unfair reviews; speculation on how to make his works more accessible; his reluctance to consider a work finished; new ideas for novels and stories in hopes for the future; discouragement; sense of failure; a desire to be read and admired; concerns about royalty income and about debt; the "torments of an author's life"; hard, constant, frenzied creative activity; inspiration; the slow development of one's craft as artist; isolation from the world at large; art as a kind of religion; total devotion to art, lost manuscripts and parts of them; the pain as well as the exhilaration of writing; the necessity of letting other matters go as one writes; opinions of other authors; literary law suits; the pain of proofreading; the headaches from dealing with publishers; the frantic attempts to meet deadlines; the more than occasional inability to create and invent; the public's power to inflict pain; the strange workings of the creative imagination; the agony of having works rejected; good and bad critics; and fear of being a has-been.

When I look at this list, I realize I'm really not a writer in the professional or fully artistic sense. *I don't want that life*. I don't have the joys and the excitement of it, but neither do I have the harassment. Maybe I used to think more that I could be such a writer in Krishna consciousness. I could serve Prabhupada and his movement by turning out books, maybe even fiction, and that these books would attract the nondevotees. At any rate, I would be a fully involved writer turning out one book after another. Until recently, I was still thinking of this in a spiritual context. I thought I could write different books for Krishna conscious readers.

I feel that within the last half year I have gone beyond those desires to a stage I consider better. Art is no longer my "religion," and I am no longer anxious to win over my public. rather, I have exempted myself from that by writing whatever comes within my attempts to live a Krishna conscious life.

That doesn't mean I write less. It does mean I write with detachment toward the usual concerns of a "creative writer". I would like to keep this focus in mind when people tell me that my service is to be a writer, or when I say that to myself. I am not a writer, but a devotee who writes.

* * *

7:45 a.m.

Last night I dreamt I had lost my red beads, the ones that Prabhupada chanted on. I had been going from place to place, and somewhere along the way, I had misplaced my beads. I began to feel distraught, and I knew I had to make the effort to recover them. Suddenly, in the midst of the dream, it occurred to me that I was dreaming. I heard myself say, "When you wake up, you'll be able to look around the room and find your beads."

If dreams are a gift from God as that book I looked through says, then they should be used to develop our relationship with Him. This dream taught me, through my feelings of loss, that I already have a connection with Krishna through my beads. Even if I don't feel loving attachment for the holy name when I'm actually chanting, I have developed a strong attachment for the beads themselves. Of course, the beads represent my original connection with Prabhupada, who not only instructed me to string them, but who chanted on them and ran them through his hands before my initiation. I am always wanting to affirm that Prabhupada and Krishna love me and that I have a tangible taste (*ruci*). So here it is. I saw it when I lost my beads.

* * *

9:10 a.m.

Kardama wanted to leave home to think of Visnu in his heart while living as a wandering mendicant. But Lord Kapiladeva was already in his home as his son. How could he want to leave? Because at fifty years old, one is supposed to go to the forest. A Godbrother preached this and was criticized.

* * *

Winnie the Pooh in the other room with other children's books. One poem asks, "Who made God?" No answer.

No answer.

I roam from room to room.

"Leisure is more important than work," say the Pessimists.

Because you can think in leisure.

But leisure can quickly become laziness. An introspective person has to learn to stop short of that. He learns to lighten up to pray, to allow the water of his soul to seek its own level with Krishna. Or to sift down in gentleness to the important questions: "What do you want? What can you do?"

Christopher robin. Never read it. Don't need to now. I have already grown up.

Someone asked me a question about the absolute truth. I admitted I'm also puzzled by it.

That's a different way for a guru to answer. Did you really say, "I really don't know for sure, Prabhu, but this much I can say." Was that honesty to give them a dose of your experience? A dose of yourself?

Well, I don't know all the answers. "The main purpose of *sannyasa* life is to be in constant companionship with the Supreme Lord, either by thinking of Him within the heart or hearing of Him through aural reception. In this age, hearing is more important than thinking because one's thinking may be disturbed by mental agitation." (*Bhag.* 3.24.35, purport)

* * *

11:50

Browsing through Jung's *Memories, Dreams, reflections*. When he was about eleven years old, he was hit on the head and soon began to have fainting spells. Later he discovered they were a self-inflicted neurosis, which he enacted regularly to get out of going to school. reflecting back on it he writes, "What had led me astray during the crisis was my passion for being alone, my delight in solitude. Nature seemed to me full of wonders, and I wanted to steep myself in them."

That's an interesting concept, that being alone can be a passion. We usually think of passion as something expressed in the company of others because it is so much based on pride and the desire to be appreciated by other people. We think of a quiet life as in the mode of goodness. But I suppose there can be a passion for goodness, or in Jung's case, a passion to enter Nature and escape from the human world. I have to be on guard not to get carried away or deviated from my spiritual aspirations. Too much being alone can become sense gratification, even if you justify it by always being engaged in one of the limbs of *bhakti*.

In fact, early this morning I felt good inklings. Something can happen when you're alone that usually doesn't come when you're in a crowd. It's the seeping down of realization. Nowadays they call it actualization "a beginning of a yearning to know Krishna and to learn how to pray. That's a kind of passion too.

* * *

6:45 p.m.

Rested two hours just now in bed waiting for a headache to go down.

* * *

Prabhupada is distant from me: a dream

Prabhupada is living in a house, but I'm never there. I'm serving in separation. There's no idea or chance that I could come to know his life inside that house. I can't see how he moves, what he does. Then it strikes me that this is going on, that I have no access to him and no thought of a relationship carried out in closer physical proximity.

That's the end of the dream. I thought it indicated how nowadays I feel that distance or separation from Prabhupada. Prabhupada has left this world. But it reminds me that I simply have to open myself to Prabhupada and I can be with him even now.

May 31

8:25 a.m.

People want eternal happiness but don't know how to attain it. Srila Prabhupada said Lord Krishna defeats all Western speculation in two lines of the *Bhagavad-gita: dehino 'smin yatha dehe . . .* Accept it and then act according to the truth: you've taken shelter of a temporary body that is full of misery, although the soul is eternal.

* * *

"Now, being sanctioned by Me, go as you desire, surrendering all your activities to Me. Conquering insurmountable death, worship Me for eternal life." (*Bhag.* 3.2.38) Kardama wanted to go alone to worship God in his heart. His son Kapiladeva sanctioned his desire. It's another form of *bhakti* leading to eternal life.

* * *

10:03 a.m.

Kardama adopted a *mauna-vrata*, accepted no residence, and lit no fire. Srila Prabhupada honors Kardama's *mauna*; "One becomes silent so that people will not disturb him . . . He became silent for relief from nonsensical talk." (*Bhag.* 3.24.42, purport)

With no house, he would have to depend on the Supreme Lord for food and shelter. He was free to travel. Kardama saw the Lord within, and himself as well. Detached from the outer world, "such a great devotee is never in trouble with others because he sees everyone from the platform of spiritual understanding; he sees himself and others in the right perspective." (*Bhag.* 3.24.44, purport)

* * *

10:45 a.m.

I breezed through that paper I mentioned for about twenty minutes. The author quoted Prabhupada extensively. I didn't read all the quotes. I was just looking for his basic argument. Now trying to write down some of my initial feelings, not to create a position paper, but for my own use.

I was avoiding this paper because I didn't want to deal with polemics, but this morning I felt more prepared to face the challenge. Here are some of the challenges this paper presents:

The author describes his evolution in taking to *raganuga-bhakti* under the direction and protection of a Gaudiya Vaisnava (whom he doesn't name). If you read sympathetically, then the author implies that his evolution can be your evolution. He also explains why he feels what he is doing is both necessary and authorized by Srila Prabhupada.

Then he mentioned that Prabhupada's books contain thousands of pages describing *vaidhi-bhakti*, but only a few hundred describing *raganuga*. Prabhupada, he says, summarizes *raganuga*, although he presents it as the highest goal, and he provides us with no clear and detailed instruction on how to practice it. What is being implied

here is that if we read *only* Prabhupada's books, we won't be capable of attaining *prema-bhakti* or remain exclusively focused on Vrndavana Krishna.

The author goes on to say that merely reading Prabhupada's books and preaching are not enough. To understand the essence of *raganuga* practice, we have to take shelter of a devotee who is directly practicing *prema-bhakti*. He adds that it's not really practical "or possible" for Prabhupada to give us instruction on this particular path now that he has disappeared, because he would have to instruct us through dreams or revelation, or through the collective devotees sharing common realization. Therefore, we may have to go outside ISKCON to someone we can trust for such instruction.

My simplest response to all this is that I've been through all this before and I have already made my own decision about wanting to follow Prabhupada exclusively. I also realized as I read that I've become out of touch with the debate. But I don't want to debate. My position feels so simple and clear to me.

But that aside, perhaps I have to be prepared to defend how Prabhupada *will* be able to bring me to *prema-bhakti*. That seems to be the challenge that requires my heartfelt response. Again, my position is simple. My first point is that Srila Prabhupada didn't tell me (or anyone) to go to someone else to discuss *raganuga-bhakti*. Neither did Prabhupada say that when we became more advanced, we would have to go beyond his books. There is no solid evidence that Prabhupada instructed us in this way.

Whether I am qualified to go back to Godhead at the end of this lifetime is a different discussion and actually comes down to my own personal level of surrender, not Srila Prabhupada's qualifications as a spiritual master. What Srila Prabhupada did teach us was to be faithful to guru. I already know from reading his books that the highest goal of life is to serve Krishna in Goloka Vrndavana as a servant of Srimati radharani. Srila Prabhupada himself gave me this prayer when he awarded me the *sannyasa-mantra*. It is not right for me to step over him now and to reach for something more, as if what he has given is not enough. Rather, it is right that I stay in my place and await his mercy. I have plenty of work to do just trying to pay attention to the holy name. My failure to chant purely is not Srila Prabhupada's fault. It is not a sign that I need another guru. As I remember, when I did seek instruction from another guru, I was still struggling with the basics of attentive chanting. The work we have to do to attain Goloka Vrndavana is our own.

* * *

11:50 a.m.

It's hot today "too warm for my usual layers of clothing. Today, if I can avoid a headache, I want to be present with my complete self. Yes, I did that once "integrated body, mind, and soul. I was vibrating the perfect note like a tuning fork. I hope for another such day.

O Krishna, this is the way, I know.

* * *

I saw a weakness in that paper. The author writes that he does not intend to minimize the importance of preaching, but he couldn't accept concentrating on preaching while neglecting the development of pure devotional service.

Of course, it's true that we can push preaching so much that we neglect *sadhana*, but upon reading his words, I thought that perhaps he saw preaching as somehow consuming energy that would better be used in the cultivation of *prema-bhakti*. That does seem to minimize the importance of preaching. Prabhupada taught us that preaching would purify us. When we are purified, we can proceed to the higher stages.

Rather than deal only with the challenge being presented in this paper, I felt prompted to broaden and deepen my conception of what preaching is. Preaching is our way to attain Lord Caitanya's mercy. Only with Lord Caitanya's mercy can we hope to understand Radha-Krishna's pastimes. And the author is correct: we should not preach by sacrificing our *sadhana*. ISKCON needs to deepen its understanding and appreciation for the importance of *sadhana*. At the same time, ISKCON is representing and following Srila Prabhupada's emphasis on preaching. In the deepest sense, ISKCON is following Srila Prabhupada's heart. If we shift our focus away from this to something else, how can we say we are his followers? Neither should we think we are neglecting our devotional creeper by preaching "too much". We need to deepen our understanding of what preaching is about.

* * *

3:15 p.m.

More on that paper: the author writes that Srila Prabhupada wrote thousands of pages on *vaidhi-bhakti* and only a few on *raganuga*. Actually, everything Srila Prabhupada wrote was about pure *bhakti*. Even if he didn't specifically spell out Radha-Krishna's amorous pastimes on every page, he was not teaching anything conditioned or anything leading us to worship Laksmi-Narayana in Vaikuntha. His standard was to describe only pure devotional service with the highest stages implied. The method Srila Prabhupada taught for attaining the goal is hearing. Hearing only confidential pastimes does not in itself give us the *adhikari* to realize them. Do we say we can have no knowledge of the soul until we know our particular relationship with Krishna? No, we don't say that. We act on whatever realization has been given to us at any time. We remain determined and chaste at the spiritual master's feet, we live through the dryness and the lack of taste due to our own offenses to the holy name, and we pray and aspire for pure *bhakti*. We pray for deliverance out of those sentiments.

* * *

" . . . to hear about Him always is the actual pleasure of the senses." (*Bhag.* 3.25.2)

* * *

Where's the lit?

Where's the perfection?

Where are the poems? The *prema-bhakti*?

Where are Radha and Krishna and Their intimate *manjari* servants?

O radha and Krishna, I have heard of You from Srila Prabhupada and I want to hear more.

* * *

8:07 p.m.

Can't sleep. Decided to meditate on *Bhagavad-gita Slokas*, but can't seem to concentrate on that right now.

Thinking of the Godbrothers with whom I studied *raganuga*-inspired literature in the early '90s. Haven't seen too many of them since those days. No deep friendships developed, I guess. Alone to pray to Krishna for the nectar of entering the holy name. I *admit* I'm outside it.

Just read a purport where Prabhupada says we should always pray for protection so that we don't fall down. "A little inattentiveness may at once create havoc and bloodshed." One who always seeks the Lord's protection has no fear of falling. That's also Lord Caitanya's promise to His missionary workers. Brothers, please accept me. I'm a fallen soul, but proud, unfortunately.

June 1

Here is a rehearsal for the talk I intend to give at 8:30 a.m. at the schoolhouse. I want to begin with an explanation of how I answer questions. I am referring specifically to my writing. In writing I am more intimate than I am when I speak, but I think I would like to speak with at least some of the intimacy of writing. One thing that I do in writing is not simply to recite philosophy as I remember it, but to tell of my own experience in attempting to follow it. I may even express my experience of doubting something in the philosophy and how I deal with that. This is a somewhat unusual presentation for a Vaisnava guru. But it's not without precedent. We see something similar in the songs of Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Narottama dasa Thakura.

In reading some of my poems in *Gentle Power*, Manu dasa appreciated this method of expression, and he wrote me a letter regarding my Vrndavana poems. He said, "The poems are revelatory and radical."

. . . cold hand,
*yoga-asan*as, bizarre dreams under
the Indian quilt, then happy to awaken
and discover I'm in Vrndavana
a little longer.

Manu commented, "We have the beauty of Vrndavana and then the honest expressions of the experiencer. I love existential expression. . . . you are the redresser of

the imbalance in our society which brushes over the experienter in favor of emphasizing the absolute standard on all of us."

This is my inclination: to hold the person experiencing to be as important, or even more important, than what he's teaching. I expressed this in my book, *Memory In The Service Of Krishna*:

"Whenever I was subjected to an extended discourse, especially when a learned professor would speak on theoretical science, I would think, '*But what does the scientist do when he goes home; who is he?*'"

A friend once analyzed my intellectual position and said I was an existential humanist. In the essay in *Memory*, I go on to say how in the days before I met Srila Prabhupada, this led me to worship and follow poets more than religionists, because poets went for the truthful expression of their own knowledge whereas I thought religionists were mainly repeating a dogma they may not have realized.

This conflict has been satisfied for me in Krishna consciousness; I no longer see a duality between public and private life. Of course, the difficulty with the poet is that he doesn't really have knowledge; he has only subjective experience. We want knowledge about God, not just someone's attempt to be truthful to his experience (or his lack of it). There should be no question of subjective experience weighing more than objective truth when knowledge is descending from an absolute source.

Still, I want to say that we in ISKCON are in an experimental stage. That is, we haven't actually realized everything that we have come to know intellectually. We should admit to this, and if we do, we can draw strength from our collective honesty. Otherwise, we are forced to isolate ourselves. If we're not real people, we won't be able to touch other people.

After stating all this, I would like to answer a couple of questions devotees have placed before me. I plan to answer from what I have heard from Srila Prabhupada, and from what I have personally experienced in my own practice of Krishna consciousness. Also, I plan to "identify" with the question, which means I may sometimes find giving the answer difficult.

The first question I will answer is to elaborate on the point that devotional service is essentially the love with which we offer something, and this is even more important than the objective value of the thing we offer.

The other question is about finding our particular service. This question was accompanied by another similar question, which came as more of a human cry: "Why doesn't Krishna zap me with more mercy, because unless I get more mercy, I'm not going to be able to continue."

By way of an answer, I'll quote *The Nectar of Devotion's* statement about *laulyam*. We have to learn to cry in eagerness to become engaged in a particular type of service. In other words, the burden to approach Krishna is on us. We shouldn't think that Krishna has failed us. Krishna has given us everything we need to return to Him. Now we have to accept it and work through our *anarthas* "those things that keep us from taking His mercy" even when it's dry, even when it's hard, even when we don't think we're making any advancement. That's what humility is about. *We are* lower than the straw in the street. All we can offer Krishna, actually, is our faithfulness to His love.

If I feel inspired, I'll speak more on that at the meeting, sharing my own feelings on these points. I might also mention that if we become too impatient, we may look for ways to get beyond straight Krishna consciousness "promises of a quick route to heaven.

To answer the question, "Isn't it really the love with which we make an offering that counts?" I'll read the *patram puspam phalam toyam* verse in the ninth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita* and elaborate on that.

To find our vocation, I found NOD, p. 127 especially helpful. That's where Prabhupada says that taste determines what kind of service we will take among the nine items of devotional service.

I have nothing so extraordinarily personal to say, I guess, in answer to these questions. Answering questions is a grave responsibility, and we don't want to pull out all our own inadequacies when giving answers, as if they provide a solution. But I want to share honestly, as who I am, and to be in tune with who they are.

* * *

5:30 a.m.

I decided spontaneously to take my walk earlier than usual. I want to take advantage of the early light. It's nice being alone in the house. It lends to more spontaneous turns in my schedule. I don't have to worry that I have to explain myself to anyone, even to an intimate friend. I can come and go as I like or walk through the house with a dictaphone in my pocket.

It was a wonderful walk. The air was cool and I felt it moving against my body. My clothes fit comfortably, and somehow that felt good too. The sky was an egg-shell blue brushed over with almost formless clouds.

* * *

10:17 a.m.

The lecture went well, in my opinion. In addition to the Wicklow devotees, a three-man book distribution party was present. Their presence made me a little hesitant to speak too intimately, but they were friendly, so I went ahead and said what I wanted to say. When I began, I anticipated the beginnings of a headache, but I was able to complete the talk still strong and clear.

Wondering, of course, when it was over, "Did I do right?" Praghosa drove me back to the house and I let myself in. I suddenly saw the loneliness of the house. It felt tangible and the silence shocked me a little. But I'm entering it again, and . . . I can't quite explain it more than that.

* * *

She asked, "How do we know that the service we love is leading to love for Krishna?" There are symptoms, and we can check ourselves against them. For example, we should be loving to hear about Krishna and to chant His holy name. We should feel ourselves becoming attracted to His transcendental form. We should be learning to see Krishna in

everything we do. Is the service you are offering helping you to develop the qualities of a devotee?

I told them I preach by also admitting that I'm not pure. As I said it, it occurred to me that at some point, I will have to drop my precious attempt to be an artist, an honest writer, a solitary, etc. I will have to simply serve Krishna without enjoying anything for myself. That's what it means to empty yourself.

I remember reading a diary written by Robert Francis some years ago. He said that he doesn't stay alone because it's more enjoyable, but because he gets more work done. That's an ethical justification. So I ask myself the same questions I told that devotee to ask herself: is this service helping me to increase my attraction to Krishna? There is no other test.

I didn't tell them how tough it is to read only Prabhupada's books. I might have said that if I were alone with a close friend. It's hard to read his books because they do seem basic, and they constantly repeat the same themes. Still, I believe they do have a variety and depth I haven't yet discovered. I'm willing to keep looking for it, and that's the point. It takes work to stick at it exclusively.

O Lord, O energy of the Lord . . .

* * *

12:20 p.m.

I told P. I thought it was good for M. to get a break from me for a few days. He said, "And what about you, do you also enjoy a break?" Yes, it's nice having your own space for a few days.

* * *

Swami, stately, solid,
sober, I ask forgiveness
when I find fault it's

something I don't want to do

deep inside. It's over-familiarity; my mind rebels against "the same thing" again and again through all these years. I think that's understandable, and it underlines the fact that I need to find deep receptivity. I can't wait, however, to attain that perfect receptive state before I begin to hear. Therefore, I hear at odd times and assume it's right, despite the pain of the *anarthas* in my heart.

Prabhupada, you often asked, "What is the difficulty?" You asked in Los Angeles in April, 1973. You were speaking on the prayers of Queen Kunti. You wondered why they devotees were coughing so much. Then you digressed into speaking about how we should care for our health, which meant neither eating too much nor too little. You quoted from *The Nectar of Devotion* verse about how we should not waste time. You continued on that train, listing the other items in the verse: *nama sadaruci*, meditative *japa*, life in a holy place (you didn't mention India, but the temple), worship of the Deity. Did I think you had really digressed? No, you looped back to Queen Kunti's feelings of devotion and her sense of impending separation from Krishna as He was leaving Hastinapura.

* * *

2:40 p.m.

M., back from London, says he had a "great weekend." Sounds like it was full of excitement. He told me how hundreds of devotees went out on *harinama* on Saturday night, and that several ISKCON gurus were also present. By contrast, my weekend was so quiet I can't even think of what to tell you happened here.

But plenty happened. It was good to be here.

When Madhu met one of the ISKCON gurus, the guru asked about me. Madhu told him I was in Ireland. He replied, "He should be here for *this*."

Yeah, it's probably true. If I were there, I could say, "See? I'm preaching." But really, at this point in my life and health, to have appeared in England on *harinama* would really have been a *performance*. I don't see how that *harinama* would have been more preaching for me than writing this book. Yes, I feel that conviction.

June 2

12:10 a.m.

Here I am. Face it. *This* is what I have chosen. My pen writes and I can't say that Krishna is dictating it. I don't have time to read so many books. There is only one book, the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and in it I am reading Lord Kapila's teachings to His mother "the famous Chapter Twenty-five: "The Glories of Devotional Service." I would like to read Queen Kunti's prayers along with this section.

Jerome of Christianity dreamt of Judgment Day. He was asked, "Are you a Christian?"

"Yes," he replied, but the judge disagreed. "No, you are a follower of Cicero." Jerome was an avid reader of Latin classics, and after this nightmare, in which he was punished by hellfire, he vowed never to read worldly classics again but to concentrate all his studies on the Bible.

"Human life is regulated life, not animal life. In regulated life only can one understand transcendental knowledge" (*Bhag.* 1.25.1). I'll regulate my reading "that's what I want.

Spider on wall. Delicious wind, strong all night. I couldn't sleep at first. Be silent and know your God.

Tower black and white
the poem spews
and water boils
bubbles dancing.
Find the music
the theme

which is repeated. "To hear from Krishna is the real pleasure of the senses . . . His instructions are nondifferent from Him. *Bhagavad-gita* can be read or heard many times . . . it gives great pleasure, the more one reads *Bhagavad-gita* the more he gets the appetite . . . and each time he gets new enlightenment." These are the secrets being taught in this one book, and they become true for me when I read it. "Similarly, we find

that transcendental happiness in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. The more we hear and chant the glories of the Lord, the more we become happy." (*Bhag.* 3.25.2)

Books M. brought back from London: *Student Essays on Philosophy of religion*, which is Tamal Krishna Maharaja's book, Bhurijana Prabhu's *Surrender Unto Me*, which is his *Bhagavad-gita* overview, two by Simone Weil, two others.

The clock ticks
as I write bright

bright. The eye pain rules as these thoughts go through my brain. My foot feels the uneasiness of being in this body, and I lie awake in bed thinking, "I am not this conglomeration, but who am I?"

That block between myself and Krishna? I have created it myself.

* * *

When she asked how her gardening could lead her to love of God I could have said
plant *tulasi* in a pot
plant *tulasi* in a pot
and water the mantras in your heart
see God in every plant.

But is she a mystic? Maybe she just loves to put her hands into the rich earth and to see the flowers grow.

Well, how *does* your garden grow? With love and art and sun and rain and the life that Krishna gave.

Acknowledge *that*.

There's no harm. Krishna is there and you will find Him, if you look hard enough
with the inspiration to find Him
and to chant on your beads in devotion.

What can I say? It's a natural act for which we can be grateful and through which we can recall
Govinda, Adhoksaja "the names
one at a time.

* * *

Vidura made it clear he was interested to hear more from Maitreya. "Therefore, please precisely describe all the activities and pastimes of the Personality of Godhead, who is full of self-desire and who assumes all these activities by His internal potency." (*Bhag.* 3.25.3)

* * *

The wind sound is comforting from inside this stone house, but when it gets stronger and louder I wonder, "What if it blew us away?" It blows the leaves on the trees!

All activities done in forgetfulness of God are sinful. That includes pious sense gratification, which binds us just as surely to the material world. Gratifying the senses

makes you think you're your body and that your life's purpose is to satisfy it. "Thus your purpose is defeated. A spiritual master can help you as a guide. As Devahuti said, "You are the ax which can cut the tree of material life." She added, "You are my transcendental eye attained after many, many births."

* * *

My Godbrothers write books.
I'm writing this to my grandmother who
sat up in bed and said, "Goldilocks,
what big eyes you have."
Or was it I who said that to her?

* * *

Don't drop your pen or you will
lose your train of thought.
Oh, don't lose your soul for
such jokes or ruses
composed for the lonely.

* * *

He was all alone when the
fire broke out.
"No one should know," he said,
"the nature of my soul."
But they're all same,
those psyches, and bodies
are basically universal.

When three hundred devotees hit London town on *harinama*, he said I should have been there. But I wasn't. I was in Ireland, pacing this floor,
alone but happy.
We all want to be saved
given love
and work
each according to his own way.

* * *

9 a.m.

I could meditate on the phrase, "You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the origin and Supreme Lord of all living entities." (*Bhag.* 3.25.9) Just that one phrase.

While walking I thought, "My brothers have written careful, structured books, but I want to fly. One brother said that since he assumes Krishna spoke in a structured, thought out way, he wants to discover Krishna's progression of ideas. I'm sure Krishna's

ideas are structured and that my brother found the path. But I have a question: when Krishna spoke, did He carry an outline, or did He speak as He was inspired? Could He have digressed if He had wanted to, even if he didn't in the *Bhagavad-gita*?

Can I?

I can't find solace

in the words of other men . . .

(Except in the words of Krishna and

His pure devotees whom I have

accepted as my guide.)

Krishna takes me to the other side of darkness to the light, the forms and places of the spiritual world.

Lord Kapila says He will teach Devahuti *bhakti*. He's pleased that Devahuti has inquired sincerely with the desire for transcendental realization. Krishna genuinely wants to help us become free of suffering. Therefore, He will explain everything.

There is matter and there is spirit. In matter (and material consciousness), we do horrible things. We are all entangled in it. Therefore, we should use the human form of life to avoid future suffering and to help others avoid it too. Lord Kapila's yoga system requires no change or updating. It is eternally serviceable and practical.

* * *

10:40 a.m.

A disciple writes to tell me that she is not reading at all. Every day she promises herself she will start a reading program, but then doesn't. I forgive her. I forgive them all. I forgive myself too.

Devahuti . . .

a crow (hawk-like)

glides in the blue

buffets of wind.

* * *

2:50 p.m.

The soul is tiny and the Supreme unlimited. Non-Vedic sources can add to this information, although they tend to express more the human dilemma than to point human yearning toward God. At best, it's often mental speculation what they present.

Tractor in field across the street, mowing down wheat. It's already late and I feel I haven't done much today.

The Supreme soul is infinite and the individual infinitesimal. Some of the devotees here (all my disciples) had a quarrel. They relate their different sides of the story, each feeling they had been provoked by the other. It gives me pain. If I were at the Krishna-Balaram Mandir, I could remind them that the bell is ringing three times at this time of day, and the monkeys are climbing the dome again. Down in the sandy lane a man is crouching, begging from passersby. "Radha-kunda, Seva-kunja, Hari Hari . . ."

Here the tractor sounds like a giant bug or an airplane taxi-ing. It's peaceful here too despite the strain of that quarrel.

Here I can kick it off with a shrug
and turn back to my typewriter
typewriter, looking for the clear way
that's deep
but never seems enough.

I shouldn't ask for so much.

I'm reading and kicking myself for inattention.

Go forward like an old kicking mule who occasionally trots along, then stops short, blind, fatigued, and lays in a ditch. The distracted writer suddenly notices, "We're not going anywhere!" and spurs on his donkey.

* * *

3:50 p.m.

We fall short. For example, we are supposed to have absolute faith in and obedience to the spiritual master. Sometimes, however, we find ourselves asking, "Is my failure my shortcoming, or is there something wrong with his order?" Or maybe something milder: "What he said is right, but it may not take into consideration all my particulars. Maybe he doesn't really know who I am."

Did Srila Prabhupada say it was absolutely necessary for us to stay in ISKCON? Did he say that ISKCON was perfect? When he told Gopal Acarya in South India that Govinda's movement (meaning ISKCON) was as absolute as Govinda, and that thinking of ISKCON was as good as thinking of Govinda "did he mean we had to think of ISKCON by always working in a temple?

Whatever I write here seems clumsy and imprecise "not even what I mean. I can't state an argument precisely because to do so I'd have to become a lawyer or a professional philosopher. Others are better suited to those posts.

But I'm asking myself whether I accept our ISKCON "dogmas" superficially or because I believe them deeply. What is beneath my acceptance? How did I come to accept Krishna consciousness when I joined the Swami? Was it so simple a thing that I suddenly decided that whatever Prabhupada said was true? Was I "am I "that pious? That simple-minded?

Am I allowed to ask these questions?

Why did I join?

To get in out of the rain?

To escape my Suffolk Street apartment?

To be holy?

To become a disciple?

To chant Hare Krishna?

I never left. I came clean

because I didn't want to remain dirtied by my parents' conception of what a decent life was all about. I wanted to emulate my master. Do you remember the words that used to scream through your mind even in his presence?

Yes, I have found some relief.

Now this tractor roaring outside my window and the cawing crows sound against the scratch of my pen
on this cool day,
sunshiny but blowy. I seek words.

* * *

4:40 p.m.

I don't seem to have the charisma for loving God. Got too many hang ups and too much of an impious past. Can't escape it now. My culture produced my skepticism, and I'm such a product of my culture, of the American climate.

So? Are you saying you have wasted your time, even though you were saved? Well, you worked in his mission then, but what are you doing now? Can you turn away from self to look upon the Lord? Can you say "Prabhupada" with the love you want to feel? Does he accept you as you are? Will he order you to take a new phase of his mission?

I am one of thousands in ISKCON. I'm not special. My life swirls in a teacup of feeling.

O Krishna.

Who has the charisma to love God? Do we have to be mystics to feel ardor? What does it take?

Listen, the crows and peaceful wash of the wind "

I want to be here at
this vocation-well
lowering the bucket and
Raising it again.

As a farmer grows and
cuts down his field, so do I
grow and cut down my field "
not for cows I will slaughter "
but . . .

for what?
You say. To offer
in devotion
to my teacher.

* * *

5:25 p.m.

6:09 p.m.

Move on. Original genius pawns watch. Dreams but doesn't bother to record them for fear of disturbing his sleep. Wants to sleep, sleep.

Leaves flickering in the light. Hanuman on banner screams to scare the enemies. Krishna drives His friend's chariot. It's not a myth.

And where were you? I was in Dallas and I was impressed.

And pressed
into service.

We believe we will come back next life. Krishna, Krishna, Krishna "it's good to say His name over and over. Nothing additional and glorious? No. I ate my fill today. May I do your bidding, dear Gurudeva. I seek you in your *vani* and in my own response. Fear I don't *love* to do anything, either preach or read, but I face these shortcomings and call out here.

June 3

12:15 a.m.

That devotee's request to be zapped by Krishna is a kind of joke in a way, but something we each secretly desire. Instead, we could be content to practice our usually superficial chanting and reading, say, "This is all I can do," and wait for death, resigned. Write it out "the embarrassing record. Then pray for God's mercy to come in the form of appreciation for *nama* and *sastra*, and in the form of full faith that Srila Prabhupada is giving us everything we need. Clear your *anarthas*. Admit that your position "even the present one "is not necessarily the best you can do, yet it's the best you can do *right now*.

I read that one should hear about Krishna in the association of devotees. I must admit that right now, I'm not doing that so much. Perhaps that implies that I don't respect others or love them enough, or that I consider myself better than them. I don't think that's really true. I find my sense of respect from this distance.

"For love is kind and love is blind," Madhu sings in "One Evening Fair." No, I am not dissatisfied with him or with any others. Hare Krishna. *Satam prasangan mama virya-samvido*.

* * *

"The devotional service most suitable for different types of devotees is determined and fixed by the mercy of the spiritual master." (*Bhag.* 3.25.28, purport)

". . . *bhakti-yoga* or devotional service, which is executed in nine different ways, headed by hearing and chanting, aims at complete realization of the Supreme Lord." (*Bhag.* 3.25.29, purport)

* * *

4:25 a.m.

It's never easy to write, he said. The head and hand conspired. He grew drowsy after a bath while trying to read aloud. He was reading the "Prayers of Lord Brahma for Creative Energy" chapter. The Lord told Brahma, "I will always be with you. I am pleased that you glorify Me." He said that it was I who gave you the inspiration for your prayers. Then the Lord left and Brahma was ready begin the creation.

Trying to go beyond my tiredness. Oh, he's got an important personal mission on behalf of Krishna. I used to scoff when a disciple said, "I don't know what my mission is." Or when they form mission statements, as learned from Stephen Covey. Why? It's just the lingo. Our personal mission is to get straight, serious, and to dance in Krishna consciousness, and to give up all jazz and sonatas, to fall down dead and alive, to recall no more Monk or Basho or even a vague God, but to focus only on Krishna in

Vrndavana as Prabhupada taught. Our mission is to contact the actual Krishna as He appears in *Krishna* book.

It's got to be.

One's daughter is taking gymnastics lessons. Another is in the can for racketeering and worse. Two others sing to me and direct to God. One writes a prayer in his own words every day in that chilling, horrible atmosphere. Another is an old-timer, mellow, sees Krishna somehow and doesn't keep it to himself.

Relax, serious.

Swami, I am not a scholar
learning from the person in charge of
Religious studies, so I won't become your
academic preacher in the world.

I'm not at the computer on behalf of ISKCON's
Communications Department.

In my dreams I lay in bed beside a GBC man
who didn't like me. But I'm not like that either.

I'm your *cela*, he says.

I'm trying to prove it fresh and ready
like a newly flamed *capati*.

* * *

Serious things: the death of each and every one. The condition of the world, running out of energy. Crime. These things are not the most serious, however, because they are plans for improving on the material plane. It can't be done. The only thing is Krishna consciousness. That is most serious. If you are planning to print a book for Krishna consciousness, but if it's not full of *Krishna-katha*, then it's not serious or worthy.

How can I feel loved?

Go to His bosom.

Abraham's?

No, to Krishna's broad chest where the Kaustubha jewel rests. They smiled as the Kaustubha jewel and the gem Balarama got after killing Sankacuda became good friends. Because Radha wears the Sankacuda gem and Krishna wears His gem, and when the Divine Couple embrace, the jewels on Their necklaces also embrace.

* * *

Hickory dickory dock, the Swami ran down
the block in a dream

where he was divested of his vestments. The church said, "You are an anathema," and they cast the guy out to be devoured by jackals. Many cruel things done during the Inquisition.

Investigate and give me the results. We found the imprint of their boots in the mud. These are the guys who raided the icebox, who read the Catholic nuns' writings, who listed to a zither recording, who didn't do anything harmful as far as he knows. He wants to stay in Ireland in a monastery. He is an American in Paris.

Back to the room to read. It's my home "not this particular house, but a quiet place with no other obligations except those I impose upon myself under the obligations of my vows to Srila Prabhupada.

* * *

Beginning twinge in the eye so I cannot push over the ground like that farmer's tractor on the hill out there. Home for me also includes living with that twinge, and observing it go up or down.

* * *

9:55 a.m.

M. couldn't drive to Dublin for his 9 a.m. doctor's appointment. Battery dead. Patri came to jump-start him, and now he has driven off locally to get the battery examined. I went to bed to see if I could quell my twinge. It's still here in seedling stage. A devotee is supposed to be coming over to take the empty gas bottle away and to get a filled one. The morning creeps away.

* * *

2:47 p.m.

Reading to refute that paper I read. He said Prabhupada wrote mostly on *vaidhi-bhakti* and not much on *raganuga*. I see a statement like "pure love of God" as going all the way from *vaidhi toraganuga* and transcending the technical barriers. I want to really feel this. Little drops of water wear away the stone.

Pure love of God means we don't do things for our own amusement but to amuse Krishna. How to make that our whole life? For example, some things I do come under the category of therapy. I mean, I sleep and eat, and although I would like to say, "This is for Krishna," it seems I'm doing those things for myself.

* * *

4:55 p.m.

A devotee "enjoys all the facilities of the material and spiritual worlds, even during the present life span." (*Bhag.* 3.25.37, purport) You don't have to pin all hopes on a pass-fail situation: "I either go back to Godhead or I fail and have to be reborn." Lord Caitanya prayed for causeless devotional service to Lord Krishna life after life. Even while in the material world, a pure devotee is liberated. I may not understand it all, but at least I recognize the solace.

The devotees are protected from ravages of time because they accept the Supreme Lord as "their friend, their relative, their son, preceptor, benefactor and Supreme Deity." All these. Krishna, God, is a person and we can live with Him, serve, and love Him in this world and the next.

Please mind, wake up
and take this gift

freely offered. Why
do you dwell on lesser
concerns? Why are you afraid to
embrace the feet of
the Lord of your life?
Christians saints do it,
why not me, a flawed Krishnaite?

"My dear Lord, it does not matter where I am born, but let me born, even as an ant, in the house of a devotee." (*Bhag.* 3.25.40, purport)

"A devotee always prays, 'For my misdeeds, may I be born again and again, but my only prayer is that I may not forget Your service.'"

The devotee doesn't make much effort to improve himself materially. He simply serves the Lord in Krishna consciousness. "Without the knowledge of the devotee, the Lord arranges for His devotee to be immediately transferred to His transcendental abode just after leaving his body . . . That is the inconceivable power of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is favorably disposed to the pure devotees."

June 4

Midnight

Anyone who does not take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead falls into material activity and repeated birth and death. Lord Kapiladeva says this. I write it down. And I mean to tell you, please live by it. Your tiny intellect can't "figure it out."

Out of fear of the Supreme Lord, the demigods carry out their functions and thus the sun shines, Indra sends rains, fire burns, "And death goes about taking its toll out of fear of Me." (*Bhag.*3.25.42)

Haley ho, the day has
begun. You die some but
live some and celebrate your
God. O you of little
faith. You may walk
in the pine forest on the
logging road, surrounded by
signs of cruelty, yet
the soul can be joyful.

* * *

Good penmanship,
happy to write ink sounds, this
fellow passed up opportunities such as "zounds"
"sward"
and kept going for all the nectar he could find "
in a bee?
No a flower

that comes from Krishna
while evil comes from men
(with God's sanction).

I know how to explain it and I've gained the conviction to represent Krishna. That's a preacher, although I admit my shortcomings.

The class lecture is for
my own purification, so I can witness the truth as a Vedic standard bearer.

My notebook reflects what I read. It says we're entangled in the modes of nature. The soul doesn't suffer, yet he thinks he does. He can get out of this only through devotional service. Yes, that's in my notebook.

But what do I actually feel?

I feel I should write down what *sastra* says.

But who are you that writes it?

I don't know. A bundle of nerves. I feel pain and doubt and little perks of physical pleasure, mental agitation, and temporary satisfaction. I'm in there, though. The Vedic literature assures me of that, the soul in the heart.

The soul in the heart, but not a hardy soul. The buggies and beasties encroach on me in my mind. I sometimes dream of them with fear. O Krishna. Even such sufferings are for my purification.

* * *

Write write until you
give up pretension and it
becomes a prayer, a cry
Please let me serve You free
of that which holds me
back,
the fears and reservations and
the attempt to get the first-
class berth for the
easy ride for
yours truly.

"As long as one has even a slight desire to enjoy or lord it over material nature, there is no chance of his being freed from the influence of Nature's material modes." (*Bhag.* 3.26.1, purport)

I write letters to friends to tell them I love them, take care, here's some Sastric guidance and a poem and a cartoon

of worms, or sheep (one with an injured leg) nibbling grass.

Who can figure it out?

Better to pray to God for
permission to act as His
instrument "

a pen, a knife, a zither,
a guide,

a preacher.
Pray not to sin or deviate
and to use everything you do
in His service.

* * *

5 a.m.

From *Melville and His Circle*:

Therefore, when Melville used the expression "people of leisure" in a letter to his cousin, she responded with a disclaimer, reflecting the values of her time and place in glorifying work and fearing the corruption of leisure. Melville wrote back that by "people of leisure" he meant "those whose time is not subject to another." The lines that follow suggest that in her bantering, Kate had hit a nerve in Melville. She may have been light-heartedly voicing platitudes about the dangers of idleness ("the devil's workshop" as many people considered it), but Melville was too involved personally to let her remarks go unchallenged. There was no "merit" as he saw it "in *not* being a person of leisure. Whoever is not in the possession of leisure can hardly be said to possess independence. "They talk of the *dignity of work*. Bosh. True Work is the *necessity* of poor humanity's earthly condition. The dignity is in leisure. Besides, ninety-nine-hundredths of all the work done in the world is either foolish and unnecessary, or harmful and wicked." With that he caught himself, realized he was heatedly getting into a subject close to his heart . . . he had gone far enough, however, to reveal one of his great temptations during the coming years, the lure of leisure.

* * *

8:55 a.m.

In the past I have been curious about the mysticism experienced by Christian saints. They speak of falling into an abyss, which is the presence of and their union with God. But what *is* it? What is the equivalent Krishna conscious experience? "As Kapiladeva explains to His mother, this 'seeing' can be done by hearing from the proper authoritative source . . . if someone accepts whatever is explained *as it is*, without interpretation, then he can see himself." (*Bhag.* 3.26.2, purport)

* * *

10 a.m.

The let-go policy has been modified. Professor randy Goodman said in our creative writing class, "Don't just say whatever pops into your head." A student, Howard Kaminsky, said that a Jew in his short story could be called Friedman because that would be symbolic of the fact that the Jews were burnt in the concentration camps. It was a Jewish college. Yeah, don't just say any old thing that occurs, trash or nonsense, and claim, "I must write it down because it came along the pike." Yet once you start screening it never ends. You become a crippled perfectionist. The editor and writer

wrestle. Friedman, here we go down into the abyss to meet Krishna, who is never void. He is mystical and known only through devotion, the Supreme Person.

Hey, that's what we sell at our booth at the religious festivals. We have the big Vedic Krishna conscious *pandal*, and if you come inside you'll see beautiful Deities of radha and Krishna, and on stage men and women in Indian costumes (although they are white-bodied or of African descent), and you will hear Hare Krishna mantras chanted with drums and *karatalas*. Then you will hear a lecture based on the *Srimad-Bhagavatam's* teachings, as explicated by Lord Caitanya and presented more recently by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. That's what you'll get if you come here.

I'm in the tent too with my free-writing booth. I am not a pure free-writer "you know, those kind who let all the gibberish out. I steer to Krishna. Still, I allow a little lack of control so the words can Pop! It's a sign of excess of good will and energy.

I thought you were complaining of a lack of energy.

It comes in spurts.

The soul does come under *maya's* cloud, but God never does. *Maya* stands to one side of Him and lives always under His control. All the effulgence of the spiritual and material worlds emanate from His body, yet if you make it to the spiritual world, you will be able to see Him as the dearest person (i.e. not just as a ball of fire). A Vaisnava's best mysticism is his ability to hear submissively. The *sastra* gives us more than we could ever hope to learn by other processes, such as yoga or meditation, but we have to accept it as it is. We do so with a simple faith, or even with a rigorous *parampara* understanding.

But, you ask, isn't "know" still theoretical? How does one "know" by experience?

Everything is given to those who perform *bhakti*. Krishna promises to reveal Himself in the heart of anyone who possesses deep faith. Faith and experience therefore go together.

* * *

12:25 p.m.

Sheep bleating. Almost lunch time for me. I'm up in the little study room. Hear the sliding door, back entrance opens. It must be devotees bringing the *prasadam* in pots. I'll wait until I hear them exit and get in the car. Then I'll go down and heat it up. Try to be aware it's an offering for Srila Prabhupada.

The poor sheep. We don't really care for them. It would be too much to feel for all the cows and sheep. Yet Srila Prabhupada teaches that the farmers' killing them is murder. Sometimes we actually feel the wrongness of it, but usually, we're so alienated from the farmers and their lives that we barely think about it.

* * *

2:44 p.m.

I want Krishna to become more a reality for me. I'm not doing enough for that to happen more, but at least it occurs to me. I'm grateful to be able to even say it in my mind: I want Krishna to become more real to me. It becomes a prayer. *Maya* dictates

what a conditioned soul has to do: "He is forced to act in that way due to his offense in his eternal relationship with Krishna." (*Bhag.3.26.7*, purport)

If I chant, maybe something will happen. Or even if not, I will chant anyway because it's such a good thing to do.

I want Krishna to be more of a reality. Monks have to work hard to pray and adore Krishna and contemplate on His pastimes. *Babajis* chant the holy names of Radha and Krishna day and night at radha-kunda or Govardhana. I have feeble excuses.

* * *

5:08 p.m.

"When one is fully convinced that he is not his body, there is no question of fearing death, since the spirit soul does not die." (*Bhag. 3.26.16*, purport)

Time destroys. ". . . and it reminds us also that we must surrender unto the Lord." The pure devotee gets free once and for all when he attains his spiritual body in the spiritual world. I see the destructive power of time now, although I'm still looking at it as though it were a vague philosophical concept. We tend to be so blind "almost as bad as the merrily-merrily-life-is-but-a-dream *karmi* who doesn't know death will steal everything. It's happening bit by bit each day. I sense it in a literary way, or an intellectual way. I sense the danger of the material passage and think I should take shelter in the almighty Krishna, but it's vague.

Krishna wants us to come back to Him in pure consciousness. The tragedy is our misuse of free-will. He lets us turn away from Him, yet He stays with us as Supersoul. He doesn't force us, but He stays with us. "He remains with the *jivas* simply as sanction-giver and witness so that the living entity can receive the results of his activities, good or bad." (*Bhag. 3.26.18*, purport)

June 5

12:10 a.m.

In the beginning, the soul has pure consciousness, but it becomes polluted by the misuse of free will. Even in this life, after coming to Krishna consciousness, we can misuse our free will. That's due to false ego. It's like shaving with a razor: a little mishandling and you could cut yourself. Even in my so-called senior status, boasting of thirty years of service and saying I'm "too old" to fall down into sex life, I could deviate. Don't relax your focus. Concentrate your waning mental powers on the goal of life. It's not that spiritually I am waning, but I feel weaker otherwise, and *maya* is always testing us.

If I can't attain *ruci*, then let me at least develop patience and a humility that accepts my lower status. I want to be grateful. Don't make life worse than it is. Use your intelligence and mind's desire in Krishna consciousness.

I wrote a tale of a man who became a devotee. The unconsciousness fed me words and they took shape. I didn't have much to say, so the job was finished in 40 to 400 words and I returned to reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I also recorded two strange dreams. Then again went back to reading about Sankhya a bit at a time. I realize I can be

thrown by fate into situations that are not my desire. I console myself that I could be in prison, or even back in the Navy, but I'm not, I'm here, and I'm writing for purification.

Where is Your house? Where is Your dress? Radha and Krishna making puns with words. "My residence is in Your eyes," He said, taking the second meaning.

Pure consciousness, twenty-five categories "how to pass a VIHE exam on these topics? Instead, you wander out from the *gurukula* buildings to watch the monkeys on the roof, then walk along toward the *prasadam* hall. Someone stops and asks almost anything, and you immediately forget what you absorbed by your academic study.

Reading a purport about learning by sound. I recall sitting and looking at a tree and its bark, somewhere around Cambridge maybe. This was during the time I was typing and editing this section of the *Bhagavatam*, before it was published. Just now I remember "something about how when you hear about milk you learn all about its properties of taste, what you can touch, etc. Sound causes bondage and can also release you from bondage, depending on whether the sound is material or transcendental. He who controls the sound waves. Sound is so powerful it can make us forget Krishna. We become captivated by material sound. Therefore, don't talk *prajalpa*.

Better to always be simple and obedient and to use the mind and intelligence to study Prabhupada's books. To please Prabhupada is the success of our spiritual lives. An old dog, I feel like I'm not able to do all the tricks I used to do. My tail doesn't wag so much anymore, and I'm tired of jumping through hoops. Some think that that means the old dog has become less submissive for all that. He wants only service that makes sense to him, something suitable to his station in life.

Station? What's that?

Oh, you know, he can't hack those hoops anymore.

Then what *can* he do?

Well, he can read. And he's willing to write as much as possible. He's got that much resolve left in him.

It's June 5 and the roses are blooming. The gorse is also in large supply. I will walk the hill, meet with M., and return to this desk again and again.

Write a few letters.

O grace, O grace.

Play the tune.

O Krishna, You are my best friend, if only I could know You. I was going to add, "And be worthy of Your companionship," but You are so kind that You remain with me even though I'm so covered by the modes. You want me to return to my original purity so that I can see You. May I know this in my heart, self, truly.

* * *

4:35 a.m.

I just heard Srila Prabhupada in a lecture first saying that rather than speaking in our own words, we should pray with prayers such as *Brahma-samhita*. He said it would be "advantageous" and that Krishna would be pleased with us.

Then later in the same lecture, Srila Prabhupada said it didn't matter if our words were broken in prayer. Krishna wants our *bhakti*. He gave the example of five-year-old

Prahlada, who pleased the Lord with his sincere words. Krishna sees the essence: *bhavagrahi janardana*. Therefore, our own broken words are good if they are imbued with love. Without love, even the best compositions will not please Krishna.

I love to hear the rain. The sky is still dark, but now the blue is coming out of the black. It may not be a sunny dawn, but that's okay with me. I will go out and walk in the rain if possible, and chant Hare Krishna.

What shall I speak of on Sunday to this little family here? I'll tell them to please be happy and worship Krishna. Do the needful for Him. Keep your families happy and warm, bring in enough money to feed them and teach them Krishna's glories and sweetness. And have a little place for your Guru Maharaja to live here with you, where he will compose his songs to the Personality of Godhead. The broken words and broken attempt.

* * *

Rain tinkles on the skylight glass. Nice. I want comfort, but sometimes I can't get it. Even in affliction I may find comfort. I don't seem to find much comfort in the Hare Krishna mantra, but I hold onto it. Still, I chant my mere sixteen and after that my undisciplined mind flits here and there carried by currents. Do those currents include spiritual desires? I am tossed, I flit. Hare Krishna, the mantra may never stop coming.

* * *

Swami is the one who controls his senses.
When it's time for night sense grat he's sleeping
and when they finally crash out he is awake
making prayers to the Lord.
I therefore call him Swami.

* * *

My master said a Swami is one
who loves and serves Krishna not
merely a man with a beard
and saffron robe but a person
who works and serves the Lord.

* * *

Hare Krishna, the rain, the empty days, the person who wants to do something and has divested himself of all ISKCON assignments so that he can do the most important thing. A brother wrote me that he advocates this position for some, but admits Prabhupada didn't "over-emphasize" chanting and hearing. Some persons may use it as an excuse, claiming they are chanting or reading but actually sleeping and eating. Besides, the great work of preaching has to be carried out. My brother reasons, however,

that at least *some* of ISKCON's leaders, especially those who accept disciples, should be *sadhus* and learned in scripture. Hare Krishna.

* * *

8:55 a.m.

Went for the long uphill walk. It seemed okay, although more of a workout. I was aching within over my shortcomings. What else can I do?

What am I *doing* out here? Thought of my Godbrother's mid-life crisis. He asked himself, "What are you doing for Prabhupada? What will you do for the rest of your life?" He resolved not to pass up any preaching opportunities.

For myself, I had to ask something further: "What does it mean to preach?" For one devotee it may mean one thing, and for another something else. That's why it seems that no one else can provide you with absolute answers for your own life. You have to feel you are doing the right thing within your own heart. I don't want to feel self-righteous about my path. I felt that way once, and it turned out that many people were offended by my behavior and thought I was going in the wrong direction. Now it's a struggle to live through the bare engagement I have given myself to only read and write. If I can't make it out here, then what?

* * *

Why don't you lie down
princess on a pea?
You'll feel better unless
you feel worse.
Why don't you
pray, "Hare Krishna?"

* * *

10:25 a.m.

I can't read on and on and on. My interest fails. Theology, explanation, Vedic knowledge, example, analogy . . . I say I can't.

But there's nothing else in the world I care about. I need to be more detached from material enjoyment in order to concentrate on the Absolute Truth. That's what the book says.

But I'm tired of reading that. reading is like reading a menu; eventually you want your meal. But I can't demand it. It's not in my power to take it. *Bhakti* has to descend from Krishna.

So I'm exhausted right now. I think I've gone so far, made so much surrender, but I haven't gone anywhere. And my ankle hurts. I want to cry with pain.

O Krishna, You are ever-fresh. Where *are* You?

* * *

10:50 a.m.

That's a beautiful book, I mean physically, *All Of Us: Collected Poems of ray Carver*. But he's dead. It's got an excellent binding, red cover, dusk jacket with antiquing. But he's gone. It's a posthumous publication. His soul has gone elsewhere. Karma is intricate and ironic, it seems. I wish him well. He wrote as honestly as he could.

* * *

11:56 a.m.

Wake people up to the awareness that Krishna is their best friend and the supreme proprietor. "Then this illusory dream of lording it over material nature will vanish." (*Bhag. 3.27.4*, purport)

Feeling sorry for yourself? Don't mind. You are quiet. It's quiet except for the sound of the wind in the June-leafy trees across the street. Bath. Lunch.

If you feel sorry that you don't appreciate the *Bhagavatam* and Krishna, such sadness is appropriate. I haven't given up. "Unless one's mind and consciousness are fully engaged in devotional service, there is always the opportunity for the mind to become occupied with desire for sense gratification." (*Bhag. 3.27.5*, purport)

"One has to become faithful by practicing the controlling process of the yoga system and must elevate himself to the platform of unalloyed devotional service by chanting and hearing about Me." (*Bhag. 3.27.6*)

My life is geared to this goal. There is nothing to lament. Sometimes it just all seems so hard.

* * *

2:40 p.m.

Qualities of a devotee, sees all entities equally, is celibate. Srila Prabhupada spells out that we see all entities equally but associate intimately only with devotees. Not with rock haulers on our walking paths or politicians or nondevotee poets. I've read lists of descriptions of these qualities before, but it doesn't hurt to read them again.

A nondevotee is anxious to make more money and eat more, but a devotee accepts whatever comes without great endeavor. His only anxiety is, "*How to render better service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.*"

It is recommended that he live in a place where there is no large number of ordinary men. "It is important to live in a secluded place (*vivikta-sarna*) . . . live in a secluded place and always remain peaceful. Peace of mind is necessary for prosecuting Krishna consciousness." (*Bhag. 3.27.8*, purport)

* * *

From *Melville and His Circle*:

Although Melville developed something of a "hermit's reputation" during these years, he was, of course, no hermit. He received visitors; he attended church; he frequented libraries and bookstores; he took walks; he wrote letters . . . What we are dealing with

here is not a thoroughgoing recluse, but a man with growing reclusive tendencies, a person who was thinking more and more about the solitary life, reading about it, and in his own mind justifying it without ever intending to cut himself off completely from loved ones and society.

While it is a mistake to think of Melville as some kind of self-exiled misanthrope, at the same time it is clear that he was divorcing himself from any activities and gradually narrowing his circle of intimacy. He sought out no one, initiated no correspondence, usually answered the letters he received with gravity and politeness, cultivated or even tolerated no close friendships, and so on. It was almost as if he had thought through the problem of how far he could withdraw without damaging his psychological makeup beyond repair and without cruelly injuring his family. He tried not to go beyond that point, but reclusiveness was without doubt one of the subjects most on his mind in the period 1877 - 91.

This quote occurred to me again today when I admitted to myself that I'm not a real recluse either. I'm eager to see the mail. For the last two days, the mailman hasn't even stopped at this house, but I hope he'll be by today. Maybe someone will send me something. Friends in the mail. I do initiate some correspondence, and if I don't hear from certain devotees for awhile, I ask them to write to me. Sometimes things seem to get too slow alone. On the other hand, I know there is something precious in solitude, something I'm attached to.

I recall when I first resigned from the GBC, or when I was seriously thinking of resigning in December of 1986, before the actual GBC meetings. It occurred to me that to resign meant paying a price. Whatever the price, I felt prepared to pay it. Privacy had already become precious to me.

* * *

4:25 p.m.

Apples and doves, peaches and Aunt Jo and Uncle somebody (I forget his name). He was dark and she was blondish, and they had a big jar of fake golden fern plumes in their living room. They had plaques and a clock on their kitchen walls that attracted my attention. One showed a bas relief scene in Italy, a country house, mountains, a bay. Another showed a Dutch boy and girl. The kitchens of aunts and uncles "I would look at objects and feel my eyes glaze over as the hours went by, wishing my parents would decide to leave and take me home along the busy highway through Queens and under the cement underpasses in that '53 Dodge. It would usually be so late that I would be falling asleep in the back seat with my sister. We'd arrive home to Great Kills, and Mickey the dog, who was frantic from loneliness, would greet us with an explosion of yapping affection. All so long ago.

Krishna preserves us. Even then. I had no religion. Now I am looking for it. How easily I threw off the little faith I had when I met those first college professors.

* * *

6:20 p.m., Night Notes

Fought off the harsh cutting of myself by an overactive gremlin today. Sometimes it gets overwhelming, that sense of dissatisfaction. Maybe the rain and darkness lend themselves to my mood.

I can say I have no duties, but that's what I wanted. I can say I'm not attracted enough to Krishna, and I'm facing that shortcoming. regardless of how I word it, a monk has to pray, and he has a duty, if he is Prabhupada's disciple, to preach. To preach more and more effectively we need deep realization and attachment to Krishna. That's what I'm trying to find for myself. Last September I proposed to read *Caitanya-caritamrta* as deeply as possible, but after awhile, I saw I couldn't really sustain only reading. Now I'm trying again with the *Bhagavatam*. Last year, when I gave up, I went traveling. M. encouraged me to travel then, saying, "You have to do something for Prabhupada." Now I'm staying alone for him.

These are tests I have to pass. rather than think my lack of taste comes from lack of engagement, I have to accept the challenge and not relieve myself by doing busy work. When I'm too busy, I hanker to read, and when I'm reading, I hanker to be busy, and there's no real end to it except to stay with one and break through the static.

The living entity can realize his liberated condition even in this world with these senses and mind. He is free of matter by understanding that he is Krishna's eternal servant. I read that, and I want to live it.

Cars splash by on wet road and I hear the sheep calling out. Are they suffering in the rain because their coats have been shorn? Or are they calling out just as they would on any mild, sunny evening?

June 6, 1997

12 midnight

Sometimes a purport seems like too much philosophy or intellectual analysis and although I try to follow it and derive its comfort and enlightenment, I feel I want something else. I want to be touched by Krishna, by Krishna consciousness. Of course, this may not be a good attitude on my part, but I admit it here. Carried to an extreme I would read only what I considered nectar. So far I'm reading all the purports, or skipping one here or there.

The living entity considers himself lost when he identifies with the material field. When he knows he's eternal, then he's enlightened. He was never lost. The Mayavadis' quest for oneness is another exhibition of false ego, which creates the state of being lost.

I don't want to be lost.

"Well then, you should preach, Prabhu." You should take part in an ISKCON project, or so I'm told.

Too much penance for me at this point in my life. Brings on too much pain. I can only do so much. Is there another way I could be more outward and not feel the disappointment and pain I have always felt in the past?

Yes, certainly. I can give more lectures. I could attend more festivals. I could ignore the pain.

These past couple of days have been rough "riding the waves of doubt and indecision.

* * *

Devahuti is asking how the soul can actually become free from matter. We may talk of the two as separate, but our talk is often theoretical. Matter and self *seem* inseparable, and it seems that the self cannot stand without a body.

There are so many things in our discussions that fall into the category of theory. Like talks of love of God. When we watched the Prabhupada video, I found myself critical, even sad, to see the devotees crowding around him who have since left his service. Or, in some cases, they are still serving, but the disasters we have been through collectively make me cynical. I can't always find the resolution between past and present. Prabhupada is with those devotees in almost every shot, and the list is long. What do I do with those feelings while I talk about love of God? Do you see what I mean about theory?

Srila Prabhupada answers Devahuti's question by citing Bg. 7.14: only one who surrenders unto Krishna's lotus feet can become free of *maya*. But how?

Prabhupada says we should cry. He means it. We should cry, and do substantial work for the guru's mission. I cry that I cannot enter the nitty-gritty ISKCON. Is that because I feel too disappointed by the past? I cry about that too. Some think it's why I appear to feel left out. They think I have basically left ISKCON and that I have put myself in a dangerous position. I don't want *maya* or a non-Krishna conscious life, and I have to live *somewhere*. This is a narrow isthmus.

Oh, it's not as bad as all that, is it? Others are in similar positions. But it's true that I feel the pain of being neither here nor there. I don't (or can't) move toward integration into ISKCON dealings, and I'm not completely self-satisfied on my own.

The answer to Devahuti's question: surrender to Krishna.

How? Is my present plan okay? Or am I living for myself and not for Krishna? Krishna and Srila Prabhupada want me to figure this out and to surrender myself in active service. It seems any change I contemplate will strain my health. It always comes down to that "health is the deciding factor.

Sridhara Svami states that we do not become contaminated just by associating with matter. A citizen can live in a state without becoming a criminal. Lord Kapila says, "One can get liberation by seriously discharging devotional service unto Me and thereby hearing for a long time about Me or from Me." (*Bhag.* 3.27.21)

Sheets of rain audible. Wind. This house will stand up to it. Lights and electricity still working so far. Must not be a major storm.

* * *

4:20 a.m.

It doesn't matter where you stay as long as you remain Krishna conscious. We can preach anywhere and be satisfied. When you feel remorse for your shortcomings and turn to Krishna for ultimate shelter even from them, then you will be able to see Radha-

Govinda. *Vedesu durlabham adurlabham atma-bhaktoh*. Seeing Krishna becomes easy when you have devotion. Otherwise, it is impossible. *Bhakti* is everything, and it's in Krishna's power only. He is independent. No one can order Him, but He submits to His pure devotees. When Yudhisthira approached Krishna with his *prema* and asked, "Please stay a few more days in Hastinapura," the Lord immediately agreed. He also agreed when Arjuna asked Him, "Please drive my chariot between the two armies." This so much pleased the *brahmana* in South India that his own ecstatic love was awakened whenever he thought of it.

I heard Prabhupada say that formerly there was one world empire, and he gave evidence of it. The evidence seemed flimsy to me at the time, something about the Caspian Sea once being to place where KaSyapa Muni lived.

But wait, the main point is to believe what Prabhupada says. It can't be proven wrong even if the nondevotees say the Caspian Sea got its name some other way. Faith doesn't mean to reserve judgment, but to accept wholeheartedly that what the spiritual master says is true. Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Prabhupada said that. "O Acyuta," Arjuna said, "please drive my chariot between the two armies so that I may see who is assembled here in this great trial of arms." Krishna did. Later He said, "I am the sun and the moon. Everything comes from Me. There is no truth higher than Me. Please surrender to Me. Think of Me always and become My devotee. I am telling you this because you are My very dear friend." Confidential knowledge and nothing to doubt. Not everyone is even entitled to hear it, nor do they want to.

On my way up the stairs, I wanted to tell Madhu that although we study the *Bhagavad-gita* in overview, the essence is contained in the loving meditation that although Krishna is the Supreme Lord, He is willing to drive Arjuna's chariot because they are friends. Madhu appreciated hearing that. He said, "What good is the analysis unless we have that appreciation?"

I have to take the time to speak even small realizations and appreciations to the devotees. I shouldn't keep Krishna consciousness to myself while making orders and wheedling requests: "Copy these tapes and mail them. Make lunch on time." That's what hearing and chanting is for "to share what I realize. Krishna will reveal Himself to those who speak Krishna consciousness.

* * *

O Krishna, Hare, please fix my mind on You. I have no reason to be morose. You have given me a few months to explore Your service. Please don't let me waste even a moment of my time. A devotee always wants to use his time well. These next few months will be a positive experience, although I see my weaknesses clearly. I have to fight for the right to be a devotee and not take it for granted.

Religion was born from the chest or heart of Brahma, where the Lord is situated. religion is the Lord; it's not something other. Irreligion is born from the backside of Brahma. I am the goal of the *Vedas*, Krishna says. The Caspian Sea was formerly KaSyapa's place. Yes, I can accept that, even if I can't convince scholars of it. I can accept it because I am a servant.

* * *

Words and sound. "Beauty but beauty put." What does *that* mean? It means that the Caspian Sea had better watch out or we'll pour it back into the tea cup from which it came. Don't upset the Almighty or you will see His power. Freud later wrote to Jung, "I have become more humble about the existence of psychic phenomena. I see it can happen." That's a far cry from understanding devotion to God, which even Jung didn't get. He thought Hindus believed in endless *samsara* and that Buddha was the first to teach release from it. Even a college freshman in a World religions 101 knows better than that now. *krsnas to bhagavan svayam* they don't know, however. O Lord, You can teach me and I will teach the world. I will not be embarrassed if the nondevotees say we are wrong on certain points. I will assert that we are right. Even if we *are* wrong on some details, it won't bother me. I don't really know one way or the other anyway.

I am simply stumbling. Don't want to be judgmental, like Simone Weil declaring the rights and wrongs of the world's religions. Better to be a student who hears from the teacher and accepts what he hears. Yes, you can ask questions, but ultimately, surrender is required. Some of the answers may have to be held for awhile before I can understand them. I accept that too.

Now wind this up. Time to splash some paints next door. Ask permission from Krishna first. At every step, please let me ask Your permission to serve You in that way. Hare Krishna. And throughout the day return to Vyasadeva's book and see what is being said about the soul, material nature, and the Supreme Being. Sankhya, *bhakti* "I am on the right track to where the daisies grow and remember Krishna.

* * *

8:45 a.m.

Normal-for-Ireland weather. Cool enough to wear a coat (with hood) and both a hooded sweatshirt and sweater. Blowing mists. It's election day. Madhu says the Fianna Fail party is likely to win. In my own world, I would like Satsvarupa's pro-reading-and-writing party to win. Progress has been slow, but it seems they're in power now, so I hope they keep their seat.

My Wicklow activities will be justified as long as I continue to take in a regular infusion of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I say it can't be a forced feeding, but neither can I wait for a stage when I'll be spontaneously attracted at every moment of the day. I can only go back to the *Bhagavatam* time and time again. I know the gems are there, those phrases that touch off my meditation on Krishna, and to find them, determination is essential.

* * *

Playing out a fantasy that I'm giving class at Villa Vrndavana. This came to me because Madhu told me he saw two Italian devotees at the Soho Street temple when he was in London recently. I imagine I'm given a verse from the twenty-fifth chapter of the Third Canto, something about the soul being covered by the material modes. I think of how the devotees there (everywhere?) are hankering for someone to address their real

problems "the inter-devotee quarrelling, their loss of faith, the need for a better ISKCON, etc. but I say, "When I think of one of the biggest challenges I personally face, I might put it in these words: 'I have accepted a dogma which tells us everything about the Absolute Truth, the nature of God, how to live, and so on. By accepting this dogma, I have stopped thinking about these vital subjects. They have not awakened devotion in my heart, so although I repeat the same messages to others, we perpetuate an illusion that we are all fixed in the Absolute Truth when in fact we are not. We don't know God at all practically. It makes us feel uneasy without ourselves, or unsettled, and it causes us to quarrel with ourselves or others."

In the style of Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana, I thus state the opposition, then refute it. rather than give my imaginative speech, however, I want to answer the challenge by getting more in touch with why I have accepted Krishna consciousness. That means examining my doubts and searching out the pockets of dryness. If possible, it also means overcoming the sense that this is dogma so that I can speak earnestly, with heart.

* * *

9:30 a.m.

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: One can get liberation by seriously discharging devotional service unto Me and thereby hearing for a long time about Me or from Me." (*Bhag.3.27.21*)

I'm tired, but little pieces of texts float through. "Krishna is Supreme, the soul is covered but gets uncovered by devotional service" "bits and pieces. Know yourself as Krishna's eternal servant. Give up your *iSvara-bhava*.

Am I *servicing* the Lord when I read?

Oh yes, hearing is a prime method of service. It leads to all other services, and even if you *only* hear (as Maharaja Pariksit did), it is still a total, purifying act of devotion. Nothing is missing.

Mixed devotees want a reward for their service "even bliss, or knowledge of their relationship with the Supreme. Pure devotees such as the *gopis* want only to satisfy Krishna. Even while in this world, the devotee develops a desire to go to a particular abode of the Lord in the spiritual world. The Lord fulfills this desire and thus the devotee never returns to the material world.

* * *

Noon

The Teresian method of *lectio divina* is to take a small amount of scripture and read along until something catches your attention in a special way. Then you are supposed to stay with that. The Teresians prefer to read aloud, slowly. They savor and repeat that one phrase and allow themselves to fall into a kind of trance of devotion through it. They take it personally. Then they pray by addressing themselves to God as He is speaking to them in the selection they are reading. That's how they locate Him "in the scripture.

I don't attempt anything like this, really. It doesn't seem to be my inclination. It's appealing in a theoretical sense, but when I actually try it, it's not. It seems to amount to

silent meditation where the phrase becomes a mantra and where you concentrate on the associated feelings and prayer. It's all intense. I can't pay attention on such a deep level.

So I read along and cover pages, but I do try to retain the spirit of prayer, personal application, and concentration. I'm looking for my experience to deepen as I read. Sometimes these notes help.

* * *

12:30 noon

A lamb somehow got out of the pasture. Now he's bleating on the road to get back in. He can't remember how he got out, so he doesn't seem capable of returning by the same route. He keeps going to the main fence and crying. Two other lambs, who are inside the pasture, have come to look at this outsider. He has his freedom, but he wants only the "safety" of the grassy field and his fellow sheep. There's nothing I can do to help him. If I help him get back inside, it would be like returning him to the slaughter's knife. There are so many things that require that we remain aloof in this world, but each incident serves as a reminder not to come back.

June 7

12:15 a.m.

Answered mail yesterday afternoon. One disciple wrote to say I write too many books. She didn't say it in a kind way, like, "I love them, but I have no time to read them all." No, she wanted to know what purpose they serve. She said they distract devotees from Prabhupada's books. I won't pursue it here, but I didn't appreciate her opinion. She said she likes only the books I write on *japa* and *sastra*, as if there's nothing else to say. Maybe she's right. Others see it differently, though.

I like Kapiladeva's instructions. One set of verses describes the many virtues that one should practice in yoga: live in a secluded place, don't be a thief, eat frugally, be clean, study the *Vedas*, worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Each one is nice, so contrary to the life of the nondevotee. But to practice these virtues, we have to be guided by the expert spiritual master. Some crazy cultists follow a few of these virtues and then commit suicide. It is so easy to crash off the road.

* * *

I came here splayed out this morning because I've been answering so many letters. I have about ten left. Maybe I should do them now.

Neither have I chosen what to speak about tomorrow to the devotees. When I saw the world crashing through my peaceful late afternoon reading and writing yesterday, I again felt the positive attraction to a simple life based on hearing, chanting, and writing. I want to come back to it as soon as possible. I shouldn't doubt it the way I do. But I also realized how grateful I am to be able to answer all this mail. It's a strain physically and mentally, but last night I was finally able to break through, find my voice, and respond to each letter.

* * *

8:50 a.m.

Kapila teaches *hatha-yoga* with the goal of fixing the mind on *Vaikuntha-lila*. The same thing can be achieved more simply by chanting Hare Krishna.

My mind is trying to read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and at the same time choose a topic for tomorrow's class. Madhu suggested I read and comment on *Caitanya-caritamrta*. I haven't done that in awhile. I'm more into the *Bhagavatam* right now. Have I read anything recently that would lend itself? I want something tailored to this group of devotees.

How and why to raise llamas on a tourist farm?

Or I could talk about

the new flood of stars found in the Milky Way,

the cloning of Dolly,

the 50th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's breaking into the major leagues,

but the purpose is to revive our Krishna consciousness. A pledge of allegiance speech for Srila Prabhupada and ISKCON?

sankirtana stories from Moscow?

My answers to certain letters . . . I could discuss the topics anonymously, or would that still be considered a breach of confidentiality?

The unconscious in the *Vedas*.

Why Proust and Dostoevsky didn't write too much, according to their fans.

The dreams I have of being lost in the Navy.

Analysis of Srila Prabhupada's teachings on women in the *Vedas*. Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*.

O Lord, check out your answered mail and see if you can pull out some favorites.

Back to *Bhagavatam* . . .

* * *

10:15 a.m.

The mind should be fixed on the personal form of the Lord, whose attitude is cheerful . . . " (*Bhag.* 3.28.13) This is *samadhi*. I seem to flit on and off the page like a titmouse. The more I come back to it . . . good. Little "*samadhis*." Little attempts.

When you confess your shortcomings, your stock goes down with those who seek a perfect guru absorbed in *Vraja-lila* and goes up with those seeking an honest voice. Be detached. Krishna has a spiritual body. He has *everything*, and He even contains the impersonal. But His personal form is best because He likes it.

* * *

2:52 p.m.

The Supreme Lord's lotus feet are not a myth or a fantasy, not an image from the collective unconscious. They are reality. Carl Jung could never accept that. I don't meditate on his archetypes or of things that come to me in my dreams or trances.

You mean you accept this description in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*?

Yes, I do, although I can't meditate on Krishna either. I'd like to . . . (said lamely).

What's this? He doesn't say his prayers with *bhakti*? He accepts the *arca-murti* to be God but doesn't worship Him? Why is that?

He doesn't have time. It requires four *brahmanas*. He's busy worshipping the book *bhagavata* and writing this in the few spare moments he has before and after something else.

June 8

5:10 a.m.

Headache all night and still going. It brought me this comforting insight: living alone is my speed. I'm not just choosing to be alone; it has been forced upon me. No point making other plans.

The life I'm living is very busy reading *Bhagavatam* and writing my endless book, and therefore I say, "This is my speed." I sometimes feel like I'm rushing through the day. There's plenty to do, so I shouldn't complain about the lack of engagement. Tend to the work of the soul.

* * *

4:03 p.m.

Long day in slow motion. The pain doesn't seem as bad as it has been lately. Some days I get it sharp, but not that "suicidal" hot poker pain. Anyway, whatever it is I have to sit it out and build my anticipation for tomorrow's activities pain-free.

Hard to feel that the Kapiladeva's teachings are personally delivered to me somehow. If only I could listen as spirit soul. Can I put myself into that position? What can I do but proceed with faith?

June 9

12:15 a.m.

Woke from a dream in which I imagined finding a booklet of poems by Allen Ginsberg called "One Hundred Happy Ideas." I thought to write my own list of happy ideas, but maybe that's too gimmicky.

Or maybe not. In my dream, Ginsberg's book started with a mention of Prabhupada: "When he wakes, his eyes are still heavy with sleep, but he's already plenty dancing." It implied that Srila Prabhupada was having spiritual visions in his sleep, and that he wakes chanting and dancing in the *sankirtana* movement. One section in the booklet was "for the grandchildren" and contained games and puzzles. His one hundred happy Ideas were anything. Mine could be anything too, even drawing on utopian scenarios where the author (me) could feel free to state how things might be without being bogged down in how they really are (or how they could be brought about). Let's see.

* * *

Reading. The verse states that the devotee should meditate on Laksmi, who massages the Supreme Lord's legs and who is Brahma's mother. As I read, I suddenly identify with a so-called sophisticated reader's response and feel knocked away. "How could anyone

accept this as the Absolute Truth? It sounds like mythology." The characters, Laksmi, Visnu, and Brahma sound like personalities in other world mythologies. Such sophistication makes you an outsider when you read. Without simplicity and submission, you'd never be able to accept any of this.

Speaking of reality, what about me? Am *I* more real than those about whom I am reading? I wandered lost in a dream, wearing elastic bands wrapped around my feet. Does that sound real? What about this attic room in Wicklow? No, I can't claim that I am more real than the *Bhagavatam*. I am less substantial, even to myself.

A *yogi* meditates on the Lord's transcendental form starting with His ankles. In the temple, the Deity, and the Lord of Vaikuntha in the spiritual sky, wears a yellow silk *dhoti* that falls from His waist to His ankles. The devotee begins his meditation at the Lord's lotus feet and moves upwards. He has no shortage of beauty upon which to meditate, so "There is no reason for his meditating on something imaginary," as the impersonalists do. (*Bhag.* 3.28.24)

"It's incredible" that God is a person with a human-like form. I thought I accepted this fact thirty years ago, but every day when I hear it, I accept it again.

* * *

About my "One Hundred Happy Ideas" dream: I wanted to steal it because it had a reference to Prabhupada.

* * *

4:20 a.m.

I have expressed doubts about the validity of my choice to stay alone and to read the *Bhagavatam* and write. Thinking about it more, I realize that what I feel called to do right now is to sacrifice for the *Bhagavatam*. Sacrifice implies that I am giving something up, so what is it? I'm giving up my nonsense, my record collection, my pen points "or, I'm not giving them up, but using them in His service. I want to give up everything lesser for this one great thing. I am giving up my claim as an original artist and thinker to repeat (in my own words, of course) what Vyasadeva and Srila Prabhupada have written. Yes, that's what I'm sacrificing.

A devotee sent some catalogues. I chose a pair of pants and a Swiss army clock. M. wants a new flashlight. Anything else?

Do they have peanut butter sandwiches for *sadhus* on monk's bread?

Do they have non-leather saddles so we ride Pegasus toward Krishna conscious free-verse? What about slide trombones and jazzy music? (Do those even exist in the spiritual world?) Is there somewhere in Vraja for pants and hiking boots?

I don't think so.

I wrote to a devotee, who intends to reside at radha-kunda and Govardhana, that Vrndavana is a dangerous place. You can win a hundred times more than anywhere else, but you can also lose a hundred times for your offenses. Don't belittle that holiest of places. We have to be qualified to live there, and prepared to be careful and Vaisnava in our association. That devotee can take it as I meant it or not, depending on what he

wants. I didn't intend to belittle Vrndavana, just to give a healthy warning. I aspire to qualify myself to live there.

For now, I'm not obliged to print every damned word that comes to mind like tears in the eyes. Did you know that *yogis* are advised to meditate on each and every one of the thousand spokes of SudarSana-cakra? Keep fixed in devotional *smaranam*, somehow or other.

* * *

8:30 a.m.

Are you pleased you made that deer scream?

I didn't *want* to make her scream. I saw her from a long distance and thought she was a cow. We both froze when we saw each other. Then I took a few steps forward, she screamed, flashed her white tail, and she leaped off, still screaming, into the woods. Maybe my smile was hiding something macho. After all, I'm a tall, dark, dangerous fellow advancing on the path.

No, I'm probably more squeamish than she is. And I don't like to see the tractor's tracks any more than she does. They've chopped down trees along the path, leaving a "bloody" aftermath of trunks and branches and upturned earth. Someone could say I'm afraid of the real world and that's why I constantly turn to the *Bhagavatam*, but that's foolish.

* * *

We still have those catalogs from L. L. Bean and another outdoor clothing store. The devotee who sent them told us to choose what we liked and he would buy them for us. I went through and tentatively selected several styles of hiking pants, although I narrowed it down to one. Then Madhu and I sat down together and I thought, "I don't need pants. The only thing I need in addition to my *dhoti* is a pair of sweat pants for my walks or to keep me warm at midnight." I think I was allured by the photos. Hey, you can wear these handsome, unwrinkable pants when you go out bird-watching or hiking. They are stylish enough that when you descend from your mountain top, you can drop in at the local bistro and . . . Of course, they don't mention the agony you'll have to go through to pay for the wardrobe (a pair of pants costs sixty dollars), or what you have to go through to pay for the wardrobe of the beautiful young woman walking by the model's side. Who would have time to watch birds at that price?

And of course, none of the models were over thirty. None of them wore eyeglasses, and all of them were sturdy people, outdoors people who looked comfortable in shorts relaxing on the back porch. A prominent feature of the clothing is the many secret security pockets that "brigands" won't be able to get at. Of course, they don't mention that the "brigand" can still knock you over the head and go through your clothes at his leisure. They don't mention how fragile life is and that the clothes will probably outlive your body. Nice boots, nice jacket, dead man.

* * *

9 a.m.

O Krishna, I can't hold your image in my mind for long. I'm sorry. The daisies appear reddish when they close at night in the cold. When they open, the red disappears and I see only the simple yellow whorl surrounded by white petals. The red seems to come from the inside part of the petal, but why can't I see it when the flowers are open? Every creature has *acintya-Sakti*. The deer, the fox, even the helpless rabbits, and all of it comes from You. Unfortunately, we don't appear to have the potency to escape the miseries of birth, death, disease, and old age. Only You can save us.

A *yogi* should . . . not think of a denim shirt or fleece pullover that he could order from an L.L. Bean catalogue, and especially of the woman strolling beside the male model, both wearing light parkas, hiking boots, their dog on a leash. The *yogi* should meditate for a long time on the lotus feet of the Lord, which "act like thunderbolts hurled to shatter the mountain of sin stored in the mind of a meditating devotee." (*Bhag.* 3.28.22)

The Lord's compassionate glances upon the devotee "soothe the most fearful threefold agonies of His devotees." That's all they need when they're in the throes of anxiety "to think of the Lord's smiling face. But will He smile *my* way, cast His glance? O radha, when will You cast Your sidelong glance of mercy upon me? Out here in the hinterland of devotional service, not performing *bhakti* without interruption, my motives mixed, can I ever hope for Your glance? O Krishna, You are *bhakta-vatsala*. You love Your devotees. Even the struggling ones.

* * *

I remember this series of verses about meditating on the Lord's form. I used to memorize the points and repeat them to the devotees. The devotee meditates on Krishna's smile and offers His obeisances, and that "dries away the ocean of tears caused by grief." The Lord's arched eyebrows protect the devotee from being charmed by cupid.

Nirbija-yoga means fixing the mind on the Lord's form. It's "lifeless yoga." Srila Prabhupada says, "Those already engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord are above such meditation." (*Bhag.* 3.28.35, purport) *Sabija-yoga* means you spontaneously think of Krishna and serve Him with your senses.

Are we engaged in *sabija-yoga*? We should ask ourselves. Is it enough to run around on the orders of the temple commander, or should we be doing something more? If we hear about Krishna, we'll know what to think.

* * *

2:45 p.m.

This volume is ending with the plan to sacrifice more of my time to read the *Bhagavatam*. The *yogi* realizes his sweet relation with the Supreme Lord. "One's actual relationship is eternal, that of love." Good-bye to so-called happiness and distress. It's *all* distress anyway. A *yogi* always remembers that he is Krishna's eternal servant. He begins with obedience and discipline, and finds his own attraction. The relationship between devotee and Krishna is eternal. The Lord is *anandamaya 'byasat*. " . . . Oneness

with the Lord means that one has no realization other than happiness." (*Bhag.* 3.28.36, purport)

Sometimes devotees think it's wrong to want to be happy. It's not. What is wrong is our sense of lording it over. Our happiness has to be derived from what's natural, which means service to Krishna. Therefore, Prabhupada said if we are unhappy, we are in *maya*.

A verse and purport state that we shouldn't accept our dream body as real. A pure devotee doesn't accept his awake body as real either. He is living out his life, but he is no longer operating under the law of karma. He recognizes everything in his life "his body and its by-products "as part of the material dream. His own acts are the final movements of an unplugged fan.

* * *

4:40 p.m.

The Supreme Lord is different from the *jivas* and different from His material energies. They're all simultaneously one and different. This is inconceivable. I'm in the homestretch of the day now "clear, afternoon hours. And it's almost time to leave Wicklow.

Make the sacrifice and find the taste, even with your Swiss army clock with its no nonsense alarm. It's on military time "sixteen hundred and forty hours now. Soon it will be *caturmasya* and another summer is moving on. It means Karttika is approaching. I won't be going to India for it this year.

This is my life, I'm realizing more and more, or at least it's the thin, external side of it. I have nothing else to say. I'm not speaking of ISKCON issues or world events, or about the crashing waves or how two worlds can interact. Not even thinking ahead to the time when I'll die or where I'll go next. This is it. The apple blossoms, peach blossoms, spring blossoms are all gone. It's summer. The blackthorn blossoms are gone too. When I go north again, I'm sure the primroses will be dead. Srila Prabhupada said young people are most eligible for coming to Krishna consciousness because old people are too set in their ways. What about a person who has been practicing Krishna consciousness since he was young? They say that the senses grow blunt and so does the mind. They are good for nothing, those old guys.

An old guy devotee becomes more enlivened as he approaches death. Let him not diminish even as his body and senses dwindle. Krishnadasa Kaviraja wrote his best works in his old age. Old people are more detached from matter, and therefore they can be elders in society. They have wisdom to share if anyone wants to hear it.

"Listen, my children, and you shall hear/ of the midnight ride of Paul revere./ Scarcely a man is now alive who remembers that fateful night."

He looked to the tower and saw two red lights and knew that the redcoats were coming. He jumped on his horse and galloped from town to town, "The redcoats are coming! The redcoats are coming!" Everyone jumped up to be brave to defend their colonial right.

Listen, my children, and you shall hear of

ISKCON's follies and successes too. We honored hot milk at night in Styrofoam cups, then went to bed without sex. Just sugar in the milk and a silent prayer not to be attacked by thugs. Another prayer to ensure that we could rise without quarreling with others or with our own hearts. Those hearts, we knew, could fail at any moment. (You'd better write your last will and testament tonight and leave everything to the company store.)

Goodnight to this volume; I've run out of space. Thanks for coming with me over the humps in the road. There will be more ahead, I'm sure. Hare Krishna.

* * *

A vase of flowers from Hare Krishna dasi's garden:

Fern leaves.

Jacob's ladder: blue flowers with yellow pollen and leaves that look like ladders.

Ladies' mantle: lime green flowers with round scalloped leaves.

Dark red pink: "pink" refers to the deeply fringed petals, not the color. "Pinking is a fringed edge, a sewing term."

Astrantia: white and green papery flowers. At a distance they don't look like much, almost like a milkweed, but when you get close, they're quite extraordinary. White leaves instead of green. Petals or leaves "which are they? Wonderful.

Yellow rose.

Pink rose: this is moss rose. Moss-looking sepals add to the attractiveness of the flower. When I touch them, they're sticky and aromatic, almost like pine resin.

I have placed the vase where it belongs, on the altar with Prabhupada and the worshipable Deities. I hope the roses will open for them in the warmth of the room.

* * *

Be faithful. Life is intact. The casual one on the left with no teeth admits that the cold touch of a pen point to his left finger was a thrill, especially when he saw the ink run out in a blue river and make its way, not between the two armies at Kuruksetra, but to its own way. As Krishna has arranged for him.

O Krishna,

please bring us to You again.

* * *

6:15 p.m., Final, final word:

I have not forgotten

that rabbits eat small little buttercups and nibble grass.

I have not forgotten that foxes eat rabbits.

Neither have I forgotten that all life possesses a spirit spark inside its body, that each forgetful soul must be pounced upon by some creature or other and be eaten.

And, I have not forgotten that I should hurry up and preach the message that brings freedom. If we get freedom, better not misuse it again. I mean, we so rarely attain a human body, so we had better use it well.

Hare Krishna and

preach until you die.

This audience is smooth, yet one has to tolerate if the speaker goes on chanting Hare Krishna.