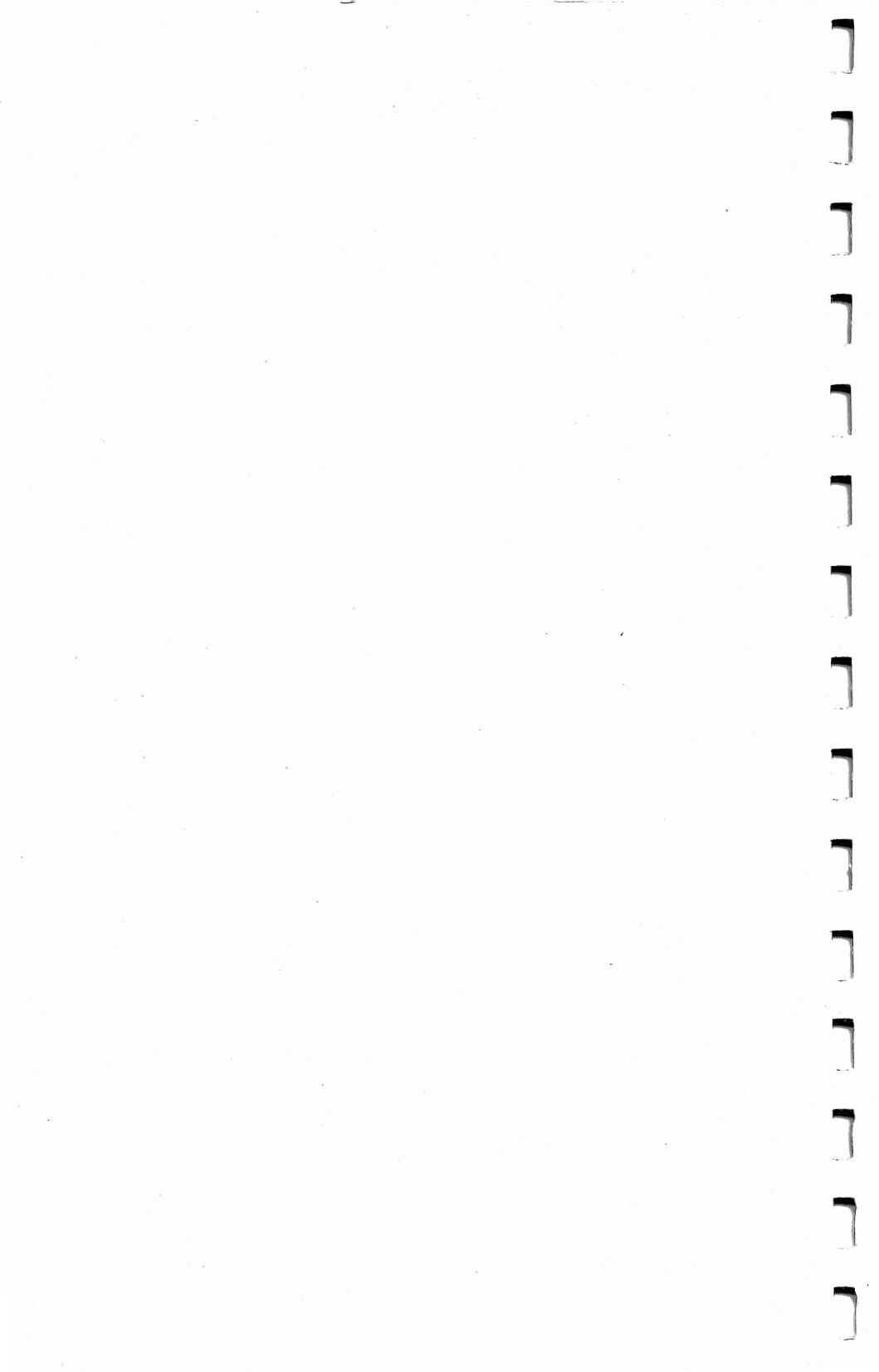


The Best I
Could Do



Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami



The Best I Could Do

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

Every living being is anxious for full freedom because that is his transcendental nature. And this freedom is obtained only through the transcendental service of the Lord. Illusioned by the external energy, everyone thinks that he is free, but actually he is bound up by the laws of nature. A conditioned soul cannot freely move from one place to another even on this earth, and what to speak of one planet to another. But a full-fledged free soul like Nārada, always engaged in chanting the Lord's glory, is free to move not only on earth but also in any part of the universe, as well as in any part of the spiritual sky. We can just imagine the extent and unlimitedness of his freedom, which is as good as that of the Supreme Lord. There is no reason or obligation for his traveling, and no one can stop him from his free movement. Similarly, the transcendental system of devotional service is also free. It may or may not develop in a particular person even after he undergoes all the detailed formulas. Similarly, the association of the devotee is also free. One may be fortunate to have it, or one may not have it even after thousands of endeavors. Therefore, in all spheres of devotional service, freedom is the main pivot. Without freedom there is no execution of devotional service. The freedom surrendered to the Lord does not mean that the devotee becomes dependent in every respect. To surrender unto the Lord through the transparent medium of the spiritual master is to attain complete freedom of life.

—Bhāg. 1.6.37, purport

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Introduction

(Notes while waiting to get to
the next writing retreat)

February 20, 1995, Puerto Rico

I want to study this evolution of my art, my writing. I want to see what changed from the book *In Search of the Grand Metaphor* to the next book, *The Last Days of the Year*.

The repertoire I developed in "Metaphor" seems to be one I will have to return to. Was *The Story of a Retreat* similar? *Progresso*? *Ballyferriter Stories*? I think they were each worked at from a slightly different angle. In *Progresso*, the metaphor was "progress." It's never exactly the same. You needn't be afraid that you're in a rut writing the same book over again.

In "Metaphor," the repertoire for each chapter was a Kṛṣṇa book section, improvised poem, dream, retreat news, and a few other ingredients. But the next book broke out of that formula and was more free-write, less structure—and it had its own metaphor, "the last days of the year."

I want to find that container which is most natural and which doesn't confine me, yet it's something deep enough that I want to return to it.

Here is a possible container for the next book: We are all under the control of Time. This is the one inescapable factor or theme into which all things fit. You can't control time.

You mean write a book with Time as the theme? But why not, in the mood of Nārada's instructions to Vyāsa choose a springboard or container that is direct glorifi-

cation of Lord Kṛṣṇa? Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura said that if a disciple's essay had the words Kṛṣṇa or Caitanya in it many times, then it could be printed. Are you willing to accept that?

After Puerto Rico, when we arrived in Trinidad, my thinking about what to write suddenly changed. I had a dream about being lost. I mentioned it to Madhu. As we spoke about it, different ideas appeared. Maybe I could write a series of dreams on the theme of being lost, with reflections in between them. But even as we spoke, I realized it would be confining. My life is not mostly or essentially made up of the feeling of being lost, although that's a recurrent dream I have.

Madhu steered me toward fiction. He said, "Why not tell the story of a *brahmacārī* who wonders whether he should change his clothes to white, or tell the story of an ISKCON guru who wonders if he's actually a *paramahansa*, as his disciples call him?" At first I objected to fiction, but Madhu argued that fiction actually conveys the truth. Then I started thinking, "Why not?" I mentioned that I would like to look at Franz Kafka's novels, and Madhu tried to get them, but they were not on sale in Trinidad.

But while in Trinidad, while driving to Baladeva's house near the airport, my mind turned again. I decided, "Naw, not fiction. Let me do my own timed books." The free-write can include fictive elements if I like. I have arrived at my present stage in writing after long thought and development. I'm not likely to pop back into fiction. What's wrong with what I'm doing? I like it—the mixtures, prose, poems, and so on. The timed books mirror my consciousness, or they actually are my consciousness. They're not more or less Kṛṣṇa

conscious than I actually am. And I think this form lends itself to a Kṛṣṇa conscious way of life. I'm not an Artist of fiction. I'm a devotee who writes—goes straight to the bone. If it's a dream you had, or a song you want to sing, then tell us, tell us.

II

March 4, Guyana

So that's the Introduction so far. Now visualize yourself writing the book you most want to write. If all goes well, you'll be free to do that in about eight or nine days. Visualize yourself writing the book you most want to write. What is it like? Does it have pictures? Is it a daily venture for twenty-two days in a row? You don't know what you will write each day, but each day—each session—is a chapter? It is a session itself. But they may follow in a flow, in a series . . . under a general title. Try to get some direction while here in Guyana.

Groundbreaking Ceremony (12:15 A.M. March 6, Seawell Village, Berbice, Guyana)

As Kṛṣṇa conscious as I can get by March 1995, is the theme of the upcoming book by Satsvarūpa dāsa. We are now planting the Ananta-śeṣa as the foundation of this book. Here is the little brass *mūrti* of Ananta with jeweled hood. Let us pray no *guṇḍa* is able to dig Him up, in this age of thievery. We will dig a pit about 15 feet deep and several feet wide and long, and into the pit we will go (a familiar theme).

But we will not stay in this pit long. Only for the time it takes to place Ananta in reverence at the bottom along with holy articles. We saw the photo of our Swami, Śrīla Prabhupāda, doing this in Māyāpur. Ours

is an inconsequential building by comparison to Māyāpur; this is just another of our timed books. But for me, it must be important and holy; I must take it that way. My spiritual life depends on the sincere execution of the act.

I'm dedicated to free-writing as a process. Although mosquitoes bite my feet and I didn't want to get up so early . . . Through the plethora of facts before me, all-seeming mundane, I need to penetrate into the presence of the Lord by the transcendental chanting. May Śrī Nārada be my guide. That foremost devotee taught Śrīla Vyāsadeva: book-writing which does not directly glorify Śrī Kṛṣṇa is verily condemned. So write something that will give people relief from the distresses of desire and lust (*kama* and *lobha*). Only pure devotional service can do this. "All glories and success to Śrī Nārada Muni because he glorifies the activities of the Personality of Godhead, and so doing he himself takes pleasure and also enlivens all the distressed souls of the universe" (*Bhāg.* 1.6.38).

Yes, that will be good for me and others—to read later.

The invocation states the purpose and asks permission and gives blessings. We hereby bow in full *daṇḍavats* (in words only? But words are lacking "the inspiration" and convey the life of the body and the will, when words are earnest—bow before the lotus feet of our spiritual master.). A man asked me last night (as I gave him his *gāyatrī* thread), "What does it mean to take the dust of the lotus feet of a Vaiṣṇava on your head? Is it figurative?" I said, "Mostly it is figurative, although it can also be done literally." I said, "Normally, we reject foot dust of another person as dirty and objectionable. But we so much revere the Vaiṣṇava guru, that his foot

dust is desirable. He is so sanctified, even dirt on his feet is holy to us. So since that is the case, service rendered to him is the actual dust of the Vaiṣṇava. Our worship of him, our submission to him. Hearing his words is our act of full faith and nourishment, and we so much need and desire his mercy (from his glance or words or his prayer for us) that we would consider it an equal mercy to get even the dust from the soles of his feet. He walks anywhere on the mission of the Lord. His footsteps, footprints, the ground where he walks, all are sanctified.”

I pray this writing of the best Kṛṣṇa consciousness I could attain by March 1995 will be executed and acceptable in his mission. It is through His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, our personal *bhaktivedanta*, who came and rescued us from our low born fallen state—it is through him only that we receive the full mercy of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava-sampradāya. And thus if we render him sincere service (as he taught us), it will go back through the *paramparā* and be received finally (and quickly) by the Supreme Lord Himself, by His best devotee, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

I make the gesture of evoking his blessings upon these writings. I pray that my desire will be protected, that I will be able to reach Wicklow, Ireland and begin writing on or about March 11, 1995, and continue for at least 22 days without interruption, and that it will be Vaiṣṇava writing and interesting and worthy for his followers.

Whether I know it or not, I write for my own purification. State that purpose. Be grateful for it. As for the method of “free-writing,” whereby you churn out your words even before they are chosen and perfect—that is a method for me to attain honesty. Readers may see the

purpose and accept it as an honest attempt to glorify the Lord by one who has many faults but who desires to praise and serve Kṛṣṇa's purpose. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in 1960, "I must admit my frailties in presenting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, but still I am hopeful of its good reception by thinkers and leaders of society on the strength of the following statement of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.5.11): . . . "Such transcendental literature, even though irregularly composed, is heard, sung and accepted by purified men who are thoroughly honest.' "

I hereby remind myself to somehow or other insert fully the descriptions of the transcendental glories of the name, fame, forms, and pastimes of the unlimited Supreme Lord. An invocation is also meant to bless readers, but I always feel inadequate to do so. When you speak representing Vyāsa, as in the ISKCON temple, on a temple's *vyāsāsana*, you assume that role and you do it. You bless by reading and commenting in *param-parā*. You just go ahead and do it, not thinking, "Oh, they have already heard too many lectures." I have not written enough good Kṛṣṇa conscious books. The world does not have enough good Kṛṣṇa conscious books by contemporary devotees. The libraries are loaded with mundane. So, " . . . let there be systematic propaganda for popularizing reading of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which will act like sugar candy for the jaundicelike condition of sense gratification. When men have a taste for this literature, the other literatures, which are catering poison to society, will then automatically cease.

"We are sure, therefore, that everyone in human society will welcome *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, even though it is now presented with so many faults, for it is recom-

mended by Śrī Nārada, who has very kindly appeared in this chapter” (*Bhāg.* 1.5.12, purport).

Now come out of the pit. We lowered you down, dear author. Come up and do the work.

The invocation is made, as Kṛṣṇa conscious as you could naturally be this morning of March 6. If you get a chance, write more preliminary material to keep you in shape, to pray until you reach your starting date of March 12, if Kṛṣṇa desires it. Time marches on and no mortal can stop it. Let us fill the days and hours with honest attempts to see Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Vaiṣṇavas as the centers of our lives—and not as self-serving egoistic selves.

I hereby crawl. Do joke sometimes. But will control the mind and senses in his service. As part of this groundbreaking, I do also declare that an epithet and victory flag shall be Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport on freedom as the main pivot in devotional service. Without freedom, we cannot serve and love. We take this statement to the max in our free-writing process. We pray it is not an abuse of the privilege, but the act expression for one like me who needs to constantly fight off pretense and who craves this freedom within a religious life. Prove to the world—I am surrendered and still I am free. I am free in submission, within the boundaries of safe Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I am blowing my horn in honor of the sweet Lord. I am purifying myself. And I hope it is art (or whatever).

Enough for now.

As I stood before the Deities, Rādhā-Gokula-candra, I noticed that I do not have devotion for Them. And then I thought maybe They would bless me anyway and I

would become a devotee of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in some way completely compatible to being a follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda. What? Get my own Deities of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa? No, that never seems to work out. Instead of ecstasy, you have to contend with practicalities of wigs and dresses and dressing Them and carrying Them. Prabhupāda didn't expect *sannyāsi* preachers to carry Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa or any Deities. He said, "Carry your beads and *daṇḍa*." I saw him tell Madhviṣa Swami, "They are not playthings." He said, "You will be traveling and preaching and not able to take care of Them." But he allowed me to carry Gaura-Nitāi for private worship in our bus.

What's the point? The point is desire to praise Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa as Nārada told Vyāsa. Desire to write a book which won't be just my ramblings. Rādhā-ramaṇa dāsa wrote me, "Thanks for putting Duke Snider on the bench." If you don't know what that means, dear reader, I won't explain it. But I wondered did he mean he is glad that I am not bringing up *his* old attachment to the Brooklyn Dodgers, or he's glad that I, as his so-called mentor, have finally given up thinking and writing about Duke?

On the way back from New Pānihāṭi this morning, Paramātmā dāsa said that I once stated in a lecture that if the disciple gives his life to this movement, then at the end of life, Lord Caitanya will come and rescue him, even if he is not perfect. I was surprised to hear it. I said, "Yes, but we shouldn't take advantage of it."

How to naturally insert *kṛṣṇa-kathā* and *upadeśa* as much as possible in this upcoming book? Not by taking Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa with you. Not by giving yourself an academic assignment, "In each chapter, write two qualities of the Lord." But no harm if I make a schedule to re-read *The Nectar of Devotion* from mid-

night to 1 A.M. and then later when I write my book, some nectar of the reading comes out. Also talk of the “problem” itself—how to write and be Kṛṣṇa conscious when so many other things pass through the mind—and we feel the need to be honest about it. This may be the main challenge and subject of the book.

Advice: Don’t try to escape your actual life or consider it unfit for writing about. Even the “distraction” of reading and answering your mail can be used in the writing. Don’t fear that your themes repeat themselves. This next book is shaping up as “more of the same,” and that’s okay.

I am here in Guyana with a typing machine that rings a bell when I make a typo. Garble-de-gook.

Madhu was saying that some devotees here don’t want to take the responsibility for their own actions. One is trying to decide whether to remain in the hot seat of being temple president (he is receiving lots of criticism) or to move out and buy a little house with his family. He seems to want me or someone to decide for him. “Then,” Madhu said, “he can blame someone if it goes wrong.”

Am I acting the same way when I ask for a friend to suggest to me how my retreat life can be more directly immersed in *kṛṣṇa-kathā* so that the writing comes out better? Decide it yourself. If you had an intense angle, you would use it. For example, when you arrived in Wicklow in mid-November 1993, you were quite intense about wanting to return to Śrīla Prabhupāda. It poured out of you, and it filled your writing and talks, and it filled your reading hours. But now that issue is settled. I don’t feel agitated also about whether retreat time is right for me, and I’m not guilty that I’m not preaching

in a certain way. I *am* feeling eagerness to spend time in a retreat. I have been steadily traveling and lecturing in temples in recent weeks. I want to relax. Do my own morning schedule with no demand to see people and give lectures. And I want to get into another timed book.

The heat here and limited time . . . I can't start it yet. When I get there. Thousands of miles before then. You will let free, let words come. Right now I don't have a very Kṛṣṇa conscious thought in my head. I'm thinking—what if I could get a citizenship in Ireland? Would that make me more inclined to stay there? Could I live forever in this body if I had Irish citizenship?

Plan the year, where will you be at the end? And you know . . . the whole thing could be up before you know it, not planned in your "month at a glance" itinerary when you will meet death. I definitely have not scheduled it for 1995, and certainly not between here and the car ride to Georgetown or the waiting terminal at Guyana Airlines, or the flight up the Caribbean (blue-green water below as we sail through white clouds and clear sky) and I don't want it to happen in the hotel near JFK airport (while hearing jets and in the excitement of rendezvous with friends from New York City who give us vittles for the next flight). The same goes for the Atlantic overnight flight. And for the 22 days in Wicklow, I intend to live and write peacefully and take morning walks and various creative duties. I am joking a little here, a touch of gallows's humor, whistling in the cemetery. We have no choice it seems.

But this brings you back to the theme that what you write should be as Kṛṣṇa conscious as possible. "Yeah, he was honest about it. This is his testimony, turned out to be one of the last things he wrote. Yet still he rambled along. I know what he was trying to get at,

that sweet and desperately dependent *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa through his spiritual master's books. Maybe if he lived longer, he would have attained it. But you know, this isn't something produced by the mechanical act of writing. It comes by the causeless mercy of the Lord."

When He sees the sincere effort of His devotee.

Joking along (and serious too), last day in this house at Seawell Village.

March 7, 12:10 A.M.

Just get up from bed and start writing. It might be dreams (something about a victorious basketball team) or intentions of Kṛṣṇa consciousness (I wish). Did you have any further inclination of what to do in the timed book? If not, then think now on the page. It will come.

Get on the plane, in the car, chase the mosquito lest he bite you. Last night, Madhu got carried away scheduling what we will do during Easter week in Europe. Shall it be Ireland or England? Then at bedtime, he said, "I'll have to come back from Europe now. We still have to go through two big plane trips before we get there." It is our tendency to live in the future like that.

And so I write of a book I will write. But what about now? Am I writing it now? Is this the best I can do in the Introduction? Yes, you see, I cannot see it yet. I can only visualize a future and give myself a good wish and a blessing. Lord Kṛṣṇa sees all. Through destiny or providence, He will decide whether I'll write well (or at all) in Wicklow. If it is best for you, He'll let it happen. He is managing the lives of His aspiring devotees.

And Time is one of the themes I hope to pursue. I'll have a bunch of quotes on Time from His books. "Time I am, and I have come to engage everyone." Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke to Arjuna when His friend fearfully asked Viśva-

rūpa, "Who are You, and what is Your intention?" *Kālo 'smi*—I have come to kill everyone as Time.

I want to control, in a book. Manage materials. Lead a reader along (like a trick, into a trap, only to wind it up at the end. That's All, Folks.). But a timed book may be a different venture where I flow with time and events.

A dog is barking out there in Guyana. It is exciting. Ink is flowing on this page. The long, white curtains are bellowing. A tropic breeze enters the room. That's luxurious, do you notice? You won't have that in chilly Ireland, the tight, wet island of sheep. But I want to go there. You'll feel more safe to conduct your experiment. But if I can tune into the time factor, I'll realize better that I don't control and shouldn't try to.

Try to enact Kṛṣṇa's plan for you. He who is Time for everyone. "The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Time I am, the great destroyer of the worlds, and I have come here to destroy all people. With the exception of you [the Pāṇḍavas], all the soldiers here on both sides will be slain" (Bg. 11.32). Don't attempt to defy time. Are you exempt, like the Pāṇḍavas? Can you write a book that will defy time and outlast it? Don't defy the Almighty.

Don't fight the devastating force. In the little time you are given (22 days or whatever), use it well.

"Eventually all the *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas* and everyone else are devoured like a meal by the Supreme." At the battle of Kurukṣetra, it was Lord Kṛṣṇa's plan that Arjuna should fight. "Arjuna was not in favor of the fight, and he thought it was better not to fight; then there would be no frustration. In reply, the Lord is saying that even if he did not fight, every one of them would be destroyed; for that was His plan . . ." So we

need to find out Kṛṣṇa's plan and then act. Because time is all-powerful, that does not mean we don't have a will, and action to take. We don't just float along on time in the river. We do something. Find out His will and do it *or else*. You'll be destroyed and all your acts as well. "Time is destruction, and all manifestations are to be vanquished by the desire of the Supreme Lord. That is the law of nature" (Bg. 11.32, purport).

This can be another theme for your book. You want to pleat strands like colored threads and make a story-rope-book, a work of art. (Remember the headband you made of beads when you were a Cub Scout? It came out a bit asymmetrical, like your own skull. Folk art, boys art) So art is allowed, but do it for the Supreme, under His direction. Make a "Kṛṣṇa" headband, a Kṛṣṇa wristband, a Kṛṣṇa belt, a Kṛṣṇa book.

But don't presume, "Here is my version of the Kṛṣṇa book." It's just a gathering of what has been said by sages, and my own attempt to live and follow, recorded.

You will want to dare
to improvise
the songs recalling how
you did it last December.
You picked up
horns, metaphors and
said, "Here is the mosquito,
I will wave him away but
if I have to, I will kill."
You talked like that of your
vulnerable, inculpable
existence, life breathing.

And this morning as dogs
yap in this backward country

(which has no computers,
 this country which is not friendly
 to consumers, not even rich ones,
 which has no business class
 on the airlines, which tells
 passengers to assemble at 4 A.M.
 for a 7 A.M. departure . . .
 just as well, let's get there early and get out
 of here, green and gold Guyana . . .)
 This last morning to write
 perhaps
 do the best you can to
 avoid direct killing of the
 biting insect, but if
 you have to . . .
 Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa,
 the devotees pray

Let me worship You and serve You. Let me fight all else

and enter *samādhi*—"while working, while typing, while preaching, you can be in *samādhi*, do it for Kṛṣṇa." It's not merely the mechanical act, but the consciousness, "I'm cooking this for Kṛṣṇa, writing for Him." And preaching, Prabhupāda said, "Unless I think, absorbed in Kṛṣṇa, how can I preach His message?" Write that way, constant. The message is Kṛṣṇa, and I am writing it, and it will come out all right. Even if it is asymmetrical, and not so controlled, if it is a sincere act, it will be accepted by Janārdana. Prabhupāda will not be offended even if you pronounce guru as *goruḥ*. He knows you mean no offense, but it is not your language, Sanskrit, *bhakti*.

This is enough warm-up for now. I'll go on to reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I'll come back here if I am able to, a few more words before time and providence act over the next few days. If we safely arrive in that cottage in Ireland, I'll write *The Best I Could Do*.

Best thing is to realize at each stop that you cannot do anything without Kṛṣṇa's permission. Ask His permission to write a nice to me within His mission. He is pleased if you sincerely call His name and praise His pastimes. It's for your good, and for others' too. Why not attempt it without duplicity? " . . . those who are always full of cares and anxieties due to desiring contact of the senses with their objects can cross the ocean of nescience on a most suitable boat—the constant chanting of the transcendental activities of the Personality of Godhead" (*Bhāg.* 1.6.34).

Note from my editor:

" . . . You are trying in the timed books to go beyond formula writing of any kind. It's an interesting paradox to first establish the walls (the time limit that forms a book) and then to try to find freedom within those walls. It reminded me of the monk entering his cell in order to pray . . . The writing sessions are your bread and butter, as you say, because they are authentic writing practice, but the timed book is the practice applied They include the integrity of your practice, but are still something other than the practice itself. . . . The timed book, then, lends a certain rhythm without too much structure. Yes, I think that's what it gives—rhythm and the semblance of structure, because the only rule is that you start on this date and stop on that date. There are no rules for what happens in between."

March 8, New York City stopover

Write what you want, what you are compelled to write when you actually sit down to do it. As a writing session—or timed book—let words come—so you can improvise asking yourself where to go and then going there. *Only as we write* do we discover the whole thing.

Chapter One

The Nandi Family

They started their capital with one dead rat. You know the story. Śrīla Prabhupāda says a *brāhmaṇa* has the most faith that God will provide for him. The *kṣatriya* has a little less faith, and the *vaiśya*, still less faith. But the real *vaiśya* has faith and also expertise for earning his living. Even a fourth-class *vaiśya* finds some item to sell like kerosene. He goes around to homes in the evening knowing that someone will buy. Or he buys some peanuts or something and sells them in the market. He knows these methods are not the actual means of his livelihood, but that Lord Kṛṣṇa is providing. The *śūdra* has no faith. He gets very upset when he has no money. He hires himself out to someone. He thinks, "This man is providing for me." But the *brāhmaṇa* works without a salary, confident that God will provide.

Similarly, I want to be confident that I can write and that God will provide the story. I need not hire myself out or panic. Have faith. And don't think you are doing it on your own power or that the power might run out. It is all in God's hands. He gives and takes away. Glorify Him in your writings because that is the purpose of all works.

You want to be confident also that whatever comes can be shaped into service for the Lord. So you begin again. Don't be deluded by false ego or claim results. Don't invent a new *paramparā* with yourself as founder-*ācārya* or God or Artist. But yes, you can play and you can take it for granted that whatever comes is also from

God. You have been trained by your spiritual master so you know what to do. Just apply yourself in his service. Be confident.

“Śukadeva Gosvāmī, the son of Vyāsadeva, in his turn delivered the *Bhāgavatam* to the great Emperor Parikṣit, who sat surrounded by sages on the bank of the Ganges, awaiting death without taking food or drink” (*Bhāg.* 1.3.42). This is the original heroic situation, this is the context in which the entire *Bhāgavatam* is taking place. Time and death are themes I want to explore. Who the hell am I? I am tiny and this typewriter is manual and the tape isn’t even feeding properly. I ought to write with pen, but I am too stubborn to do so. In the course of this bluffing narrative, I will confess everything (not true) but not all at once. It is not all coherent and smooth, so don’t demand that. Be a *brāhmaṇa* and not a crazy man.

In the purport, Prabhupāda says, “At the critical hour of death, one must recite the name of Govinda. This is the recommendation of all great transcendentalists.”

Be calm and try to mine from Prabhupāda’s books some of the statements of time and death and you can add your comments. Time is the great container into which everything in the universe fits. Nothing is outside of it, neither William Burroughs’ latest book of dreams or his so-called “pushing on into new territory, once again committing the unspeakable crime of questioning the reality structure.” And also in one tinny, tinny corner of time is the old recording from the 1960s of Eric Dolphy, new jazz, “out there,” with bassist Ron Carter playing a cello with bow, “It was quite daring for its time.” And Christianity is within time, and Bud-

dhism, but *sanātana-dharma* is eternal—everyone has to serve, everyone is under *kālā*. Everyone is part and parcel of God. And God is the supreme person. His confidential nature cannot be revealed to faithless persons.

I thought I could put this book also into the container of time, but somehow, in a loving way, making a little sense out of the chaos of my mind and making it interesting without confining myself to a theme that is too much an assignment or like a straight-jacket for me. Time is just a big container, like the sky, all spaces within it. And yet I can be personal, just like angels are flying in the clouds.

So when your own time runs out, the test is how Kṛṣṇa conscious you are. Until death comes we want to render works and services to humankind by presenting Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Thus Ron Carter's bowed cello and the bebop out there of Dolphy who died young.

Regarding the Nandi family, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that on the birth of each boy or girl, 5,000 rupees was put into the bank and the child could receive it at the time of his or her marriage, but aside from that, they could not claim any share of the family fortune. They would also get food and lodging but were expected to work on their own and earn, on the same principle as Mr. Nandi who started with the dead rat. We are all living in Kṛṣṇa's family, but He wants us to earn our own. Don't be a free-loader. Your basic requirements will be met. If that doesn't seem to happen, it's because of mismanagement somewhere. God is providing the means to write this book nicely, I just have to work and discover it.

The original Mr. Nandi had no money and he went to someone to borrow it. That man said, "You are a *vaiśya*

and asking for money? Don't you see money is in the street? You have to have the eyes to find it." A non-*vaiṣya* cannot find money anywhere and he panics. Or he sells himself out to an employer. I propose not to panic or to submit to a too confining structure. But don't falsely stimulate yourself.

In his book of dreams, Burroughs says dreams are usually boring when related because of their lack of context. He also says the dreams are too obviously connected to one's life. He seems to seek some unfamiliar dream more real than waking life. I don't want to bore with my dreams. But do you think Kṛṣṇa consciousness when presented straight and simple is boring? No, I don't say that. But I do admit it is hard for me and others to always and only read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. We dip into our own lives and find the mixtures, the impure, the confused, chaotic . . . and desire for a new art, a personal expression, an addition to the literature of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "All right, go ahead, try your luck." But if we are smart, we will stick to His lotus feet even while attempting what we claim as something new that we just had to say.

"As a very rich man has no hankerings for small petty things, so also a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is guaranteed to pass on to the kingdom of God, where life is eternal, fully cognizant and blissful, naturally has no hankerings for petty material things, which are like dolls or shadows of the reality and are without permanent value" (*Bhāg.* 1.6.27, purport). And when in the course of time a pure devotee is completely prepared, Prabhupāda says, then all of a sudden a change of body takes place which is called commonly, death. He gets

his spiritual body then by the grace of the Supreme. I am not all pure, not all spiritual in body, not above attraction to petty things. But I seek within the grace and drive of even “material” music and crazy stories, the source of beauty, which is Kṛṣṇa. I do also go directly to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and find it there. Is this bad? I am sometimes going outside of *sāstra* to find Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We conditioned souls live in *sāstra* and temple life and preaching—but sometimes we stray outside. Or the material world penetrates into our ISKCON life. We can’t keep it out. Or we take a peek, we tune into what they are doing, the nondevotees. For various reasons we mix, either by our errant desires, or missionary work or the material world forcing itself on us. At these times, I want to be able to see Kṛṣṇa and report in a positive way. That doesn’t seem bad.

In God we trust. In God we trust, that should be the title of the first chapter. How far can you go with it? The time container. Death of Mahārāja Parikṣit as we read it, and the death of each of us. Mahārāja Parikṣit was successful long ago and we are living now in spot-life.

This is begun in Wicklow community, March 11, 1995. Don’t blow it. Live as long as you can. Everything is permissible in my father’s house provided it is right, right? Kick you out, otherwise. I mean you yourself choose to leave the shelter of devotees and the spiritual master and the Lord—if you do what is actually wrong.

I am pushing the boundaries and trying to include my way as within the right. But He will decide. Don’t gamble. Don’t gamble on the prowess and agility of your own horn-playing. You don’t even have teeth, but God is kind—this is a horn you can play anyway. Now get yourself ready for a first work outdoors in this solitary

neighborhood. I am happy and I hope that means He is happy with me and that readers also will be happy to read along in this.

Chapter Two

Interim

“He did not want to interfere with the current of time, but he prepared himself to meet death very cheerfully and very properly.” Mahārāja Parikṣit was very fortunate to get seven days notice and he used his time well in the association of Śukadeva Gosvāmī.

That is all right, but I was looking for quotes that show Time as imponderable. You can’t figure it out or measure it, so there’s no use inquiring why things happen. Everything happens within time. Also the shape of what happens is caused by time. Time is destiny or God who comes. Time is not a neutral thing. It is Kṛṣṇa acting when He wants and how He wants. Sometimes Vedic philosophers call this time. It is what happens. What happens is destiny. You are going along in your life and suddenly you get a heart attack or start vomiting blood. It was time that caused this to happen.

No one is to blame. It is all happening by time’s arrangement. Learn to accept it as inevitable. And sing your song. I don’t mean fiddle while Rome burns. I mean get something done. Be happy against the holocaust of time because your song is Kṛṣṇa conscious. But if your song is not, then watch out! The roof will come down on you.

Time I am and I have come to say that you have wasted your life. In Shakespeare’s play, King Richard says, “I have wasted time and now time is wasting me.”

You find yourself wasting time. Listen. A car is coming up the road. Sunlight blazing on the grass. Who is

it? What were you doing? How do you justify it? While I was listening to two bass players, one was laying down a slow jazz beat and the other was exploring the upper registers unusual for the double bass while the drummer was marking time slowly, with brushes only. It was interesting enough to hold my attention for a few minutes. I thought, "Where are they going with this? This is avant-garde, I wonder what critics would think of it and what a friend of mine would think of it—and what do I think of it? Can I honestly give my response to this and to a page in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*? Usually I want to correct my inferior response to Kṛṣṇa's holy names or the reading, or to service that I do for the Lord. I may not like Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but then I say it is my fault."

There is no birth or death in the spiritual world, King Yudiṣṭhira fully knew this. Everyone in the spiritual world is young. By understanding this and knowing something of Kṛṣṇa's appearance and truth . . . Mahārāja Yudiṣṭhira (along with Kṛṣṇa Himself and His close associates) began to consider going back to Godhead.

He is far more serious than I. I have to work out some karma. Well, you better "work it out" soon, or *daiva* will come and work it out on you.

A white man with creased cheeks asked me after a *Bhāgavatam* class in Guyana, "What if you think of doing something bad but you don't do it?" I said there is a dispensation in this age so you don't get karma. But if you think long enough, you will have to do it. In 1968, I was thinking whether to get married. Then I went out from the storefront to go shopping alone. It was snowing, snow on the ground as I crossed the trolley tracks.

Again I wondered if I should get married, and at that very moment I realized I had already acted with my will. It had been as good as done. Now all I had to do was wait. Sure enough, soon after that, Prabhupāda asked me to marry her, as if it were his idea. So when you think enough, you will do it. *Māyā* will give you the opportunity, or Kṛṣṇa will give you the chance to do the good or bad act you contemplated and felt—and then you will have to live with it, make the best of the bad deal.

The material mind can't wind up the cycle of birth and death. "The material color of the mind is changed when one washes it from contamination of life-breathing and thereby frees it from the continuation of repeated births and deaths and situates it in pure spiritual life . . . no more chance of the mind's producing another material body . . . The pure soul will be able to return home, back to Godhead" (*Bhāg.* 1.15.41, purport).

It's the same old thing, chewing the chewed, flute, bass clarinet, any music or anything. You work within human limits. But the sad and sweet song of the human being is his search for God. That's all right, but what about God's search for us, and His pastimes and what He offers us? It is better that a man take up *this* song and sing it. Is that what is meant by Milton's justifying the ways of man to God? Partly, but also it's not just preaching to the folks. God's song of play in the spiritual world and serious words coming from Him and the *ācāryas*. You really ought to give up your record collection and come to the Swami with clean slate and say, "Okay, I want to hear the tunes you have to give us in *kirtana*. I just wanted to go back for a little while to the old club to hear what they were doing as avant-garde

thirty years ago. I find it is the same. Please act as if I hadn't gone and done that, it was just a little excursion, you see, and I didn't forget You. Please accept me back to wash the pots. You'll see I'll do them so shiny, all the black smudges will be removed and I'll stack them shiny and wet up to the ceiling as a testimony of my good behavior, please take me back . . . I wanted to see if I could incorporate a little *māyā* in Your service and even say that it wasn't *māyā* anymore."

But *māyā* is very strong. If you indicate to her that you are a little slack, she takes you again. That means you forget Kṛṣṇa in favor of sense gratification.

You wanted to extend the boundaries and claim more *māyā*-held territory as being Kṛṣṇa's. I see. Well, that's your claim, rationalize.

This is an interim chapter. After this one, I'm going to hit the stride.

Chapter Three

The Renewed Youth

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the way. I started to read *The Nectar of Devotion* this morning. It begins with an invocation to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and to Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Prabhupāda personalizes what was written by Rūpa Gosvāmī in his vocation. Prabhupāda makes it an invocation from his own summary study of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. Now let me make my invocation. I implore the Lord of the *gopis*, the king of all *rasas*, which are five main ones and seven subsidiary ones that come and go—I ask for the Lord's pure devotee to bless this effort. He says let there be no hindrance to the execution of this *Nectar of Devotion*. Let it be protected from the crocodiles and the speculators who make their arguments. Their arguments will be like volcanoes on the floor of the ocean, hardly noticed. Mine is only a tiny work. It also needs protection, for sure.

I will not pretend to be a baby and look cute. Don't make like I'm an orphan. I'm a disciple of His Divine Grace.

It is cold in this room but not so bad. It will warm up. Madhu is building a coal fire in the fireplace below and it will come up in the radiator. I keep banging away up here. Be cheerful. Our van arrives today from Italy. Nanda is driving it and M. will pick him up at the ferry terminal. That means we have our van with all *Bhāgavatams* and can travel to places and live that life of reading and writing in various countries and hide-outs. Tell the world of ISKCON when they ask you,

“What are you doing for the Centennial?”—say, “I am reading *The Nectar of Devotion* and then *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and next year some other books of his.” I don’t have a specific Centennial pledge like, “Distribute 10,000 sweets by 1996,” but anyway . . .

Tolerate the pain. Tolerate the smallness. Be happy in Kṛṣṇa consciousness if you can.

The fire is out
but the blaze is starting within.
I don’t mean the *agni* in belly which is
also very important (Ekādaśī is today)
but I mean fire of immortal longing
for Kṛṣṇa conscious nectar-reading.

It all starts with hearing
our Swami told the boys in his room.
Even today 26 Second Avenue’s
a preaching center. Glad.

Fire of longing
flame of love,
little blue spark on pilot light to
blaze if I tender it carefully reading
Nectar of Devotion.

Our van is coming
loaded with the best books.
I don’t mean William Burroughs or the dictionary
or Shakespeare,
I mean *Bhāgavatam* and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja,
words of Kṛṣṇa directly in *Bhagavad-gītā*,
and translated with commentary by His Divine
Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

I am tired of being away from him
 and getting it wrong.
 Even the official praises of him choke you
 sometimes from the best and the real thing.
 Celebrate now,
 van arriving, white Renault
 loaded with books,
 cold morning salute
 this day and this book.
 We will come through.
 No one can stop us because *māyā*
 is not as powerful as *mam ekam*, the only one
 Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, cause of all
 and king of *rasas*.

So my friend, you can keep going with this. I told you
 there is a way to go, to follow the previous *ācāryas*. We
 are not great preachers, but the instruments of previous
ācāryas. You don't have to be residing in Vṛndāvana to
 be in touch with the immortal Vraja. You touch by
 faithful hearing. Also, that same Kṛṣṇa when He was
 in Kurukṣetra, don't try to separate Him from His
 paraphernalia or pastimes. He is still Kṛṣṇa on the bat-
 tlefield of Kurukṣetra. You say, "But that is a Vāsu-
 deva expansion," and I reply, "The expansion of whom?
 He is an expansion of original Kṛṣṇa. Don't separate
 Kṛṣṇa from the teachings of your spiritual master.
 Hear from him, that is good enough."

"Prepare to meet your Maker," they say. I have to
 pause and think again. What did I recently read or
 hear? Be confident that over the years you have been
 hearing and experiencing, and today too. In the bath-
 room half an hour ago, you heard him say even if one
 comes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness out of sentiment, which

mostly they do, not understanding the philosophy nicely, but just thinking, "Let me join," what happens to them? He said even if they fall down there is no loss. That means no loss in the attempt at Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In another sense, I think it is a loss. If you go somewhere where you are expected to make money but you come back empty-handed, then you failed. One who practices any Kṛṣṇa consciousness does not fail. I understand. But what about failing to make it all the way back to Godhead in this life? That is also a falling short. You still don't chant with love, writing these imperfect . . .

Don't complain, I don't. I say I will reach the Everest mountain peak sooner or later. We are but instruments to serve the previous ācāryas. Preaching is the essence. They glorify Kṛṣṇa in preaching. That is in the introduction to *The Nectar of Devotion* too. Preaching is the goal. *Bhakti* is cultivation, meaning activity of body, mind, and words, and when they are all used in preaching the glorifies of the Lord, there you have the perfection of cultivation. As for mental cultivation, you think of Kṛṣṇa. But you must activate your consciousness and not just have it. Use it. This is all described in many places and I'm glad to say so.

Śrīla Prabhupāda mūrti. Every day I will draw several sketches of him in the note pad that holds a hundred pages. He never looks exactly the same. Each portrait unique. In my crude hand, you might think it doesn't flatter him, it is an injustice. But you're wrong. They are works of love and that's what counts. If my sketches are primitive and depend on a child's vision, then who is to say that my writing is something more sophisticated and polished just because I've been using words

Sula Prabhu-pada murti



sketches by
Sdg



steadily for years and trained in it? I would be glad if I could return to the way of the child or a new person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the sense that one has a first-time enthusiasm for learning.

Now when you have read all the books many times and seen hype and institutionalism, but you don't want to hurt, you don't side with those who want to bash this institution. And yet you want to go alone and when you read a pure, old poem written thousands of years ago by Chinese Zen monks, you think it's nice indeed. But I say it would be nicer still to have the pure, fresh burst of Kṛṣṇa consciousness that you had in the beginning.

You have something even better. The renewed youth. The return to the master who never left you. And you will give service to others. Therefore, read on your own. I do recommend it and I will endorse you, send a letter to the chief editor, although I may not have as much influence as you think I do. After all, he has his own mind, but I will recommend, "Take care of this boy. He wants to make a renewed effort to read and I think this is a good idea. Give him what he needs."

Recovering still from jet lag. Long flights from South America to New York City in one day and the next day off to Ireland. The body still hasn't caught up to the mind. The body got carried here but it is still back in the old time zone. Primitive body can't figure out why we are going to sleep at the wrong time. He wakes up but I say, "You'll get the hang of it in a few days." And the writing of this will also catch on, you will see. Yes, suffering from a little jet lag and having to use an old typewriter. In a few days . . . if we keep up our reading habits, it will improve.

I go down after lunch to the kitchen and thank whoever is there. Their wives cook for me. I tell him, "Please thank her for me." Me and my fastidious tongue. Don't take advantage of them now that you are perched up here to write alone. Writing doesn't have to mean you play at making the last word, the quip at their expense, the gentle put-down. Then? Writing means . . .

I went on my walks. I told them and showed them the pictures of Wicklow in the book, *Japa Walks, Japa Talks*. Then I said, "Don't worry, I'm not trying to get people to come here." We both like it the way it is, as a closed community. What would you have to do to join here? Prove yourself a friend to cooperate with their vision. I was thinking to mention Han Shan's *Cold Mountain* as a place where he invites people to come and live, but it seems very hard to get there, cold and austere. Who would be ready to actually join him? Almost no one. But thousands of years later, we read it and do admire that cold mountain.

Please ask the way to Cold Mountain
Cold Mountain the road doesn't go through
by summer the ice still hasn't melted
sunrise is a blur beyond the fog
imitating me how can you get here
if your heart was like mine
you'd return to the very center

I didn't tell them that.

Got crayons and colored pencils. New world opening to me. First picture I did here shows March 10, the Hare Kṛṣṇa monk being welcomed by a man offering a garland at the airport, and the immigration man says, "What is your purpose? Business or pleasure?" You

reply, "Pleasure," with pleasure, and add, "To visit friends." Five or six weeks at most. He stamps the passport, the withered, fading passport. You have entered the shamrock land, flooding with torrents of rain, overnight while you flew to get here. Your friend drives you to Wicklow, you and he talking all the while. Now a day later I am still recovering from the flight and from too much talk and pressure to lecture as guru. Recovering also from long disuse of the reading faculty. Return to the spiritual master as a disciple capable of reading the right way.

Han Shan writes, "I live beneath a green cliff/the weeds I don't mow flourish in the yard . . . /with one or two of the immortals' books/beneath the trees I mumble reading aloud."

And here is a poem that suits my mood called, "Just Done," by Yuan Mei, composed long ago:

A month alone behind closed doors
 forgotten books, remembered, clear again.
 Poems come, like water to the pool,
 welling,
 up and out,
 from perfect silence.

All the nice projects, work at them a little at a time. Last night, cooled off any feverishness to complete things and drew a little. Got rid of outside influences of nondevotees. Dig in here and learn the art of living in your master's books. It used to be I had such simple faith. Whatever he wrote, I believed wholeheartedly and took to it and loved not only he and his order but loved even the U.S. mailman for delivering tapes of his dictations of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* for me to type. Why can't I be like that now? Because it's over twenty-eight years

later. But you can return to the original spirit of your discipleship and the original, eternal, spirit-soul nature by which you can read in the pure way.

When the spiritual master writes his summary study of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, you are in for a treat. He prepared it in a certain way for the members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and now I will benefit again. Whoever comes near me will also benefit if I take to it deeply.

Kṛṣṇa's Nectar of Devotion

just starting again, all aboard.

You mean a seminar?

Call it that if you like, a re-reading,

a return to the way it was,

the law book for ISKCON but who

cares for it now? When he says love reposes

only in Kṛṣṇa and if you find it you can

love all beings, do we believe that still?

Or do we think we don't need to water

the root so much?

"We tried direct Kṛṣṇa consciousness and

chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa

for twenty years and it didn't work,

so now we are into

prāṇa therapy and Erikson hypnosis

and pile-driving

man and pyramid business and money-collecting,

bogus hydrangea cursing the material world

we are . . .

so many contesting views without and within.

I just want to say I'm glad I'm back to read

and pray to keep it simple and

in the spirit of *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*,

favorable and pure and not for liberation even
but for the pleasure of service to Govinda
and Prabhupāda,
my Prabhupāda who write *The Nectar of Devotion*
and the other books he wrote.
Don't praise him cheaply but worship and serve,
starting with hearing from.

Chapter Four

I was putting this off. I tidied the room. Madhu is out picking up Nanda and our van arriving from Italy. The house is empty, so I went downstairs and cleaned the bathroom sink with a soapy cleanser. What else? Told myself, "You don't have to write according to a schedule. You can take it easy." So back up to the room. I made a clear place on the floor to put the *Bhāgavatams* when they arrive with the van. Put mats there. Sort it out some booklets we ordered a year ago, finally arrived, from Fair Acres Press, Eastern Christian—a nice idea. What else? Put some fresh, black coals on the fireplace embers. Wash your hands. Back upstairs. You don't have to write this chapter tonight. Straighten out some more books and files. But I came here anyway.

You can tell us what is going on. It is not like the more solitary retreats alone in a house. We are in the Wicklow community although they mostly leave us to ourselves. The chapter themes are buzzing by me or something. Can't think of the right words. Gradually I told him (when he asked me how I was doing so far), gradually I am building up a routine, but still can't sleep at night because of jet lag. The morning walk bodes well talking frankly about and to Śrīla Prabhupāda. And the reading (so important) is building up to two hours. So if I don't drop dead or get worse headaches and the world keeps spinning . . . this too will move along its destined way.

Excuse me if I insert another poem by an old Chinese monk. They speak for my way too.

To Be Shown to the Monks at a Certain Temple,
by Chiao Jan (730 A.D.)

Not yet to the shore of non-doing,
it's silly to be sad you're not moored yet . . .
Eastmount's white clouds say
to keep on moving, even
if it's evening, even if it's Fall.

Now everything is in order. What do you mean? I mean for one moment I think I've done enough house-keeping, desk cleaning, clerical ordering and my life is peaceful and I can write. The cover is off. The cover is closed. Some evil smelling mixture like dead roaches . . . Muslims use it on their food but they despised the odor of fresh ghee. That's a story. I can feel free to tell any one here. It would be nice if people lived together in peace. This is a song or talk while the house is completely empty. But they're out there and Thursday I will give a talk here on Lord Caitanya. Describe Him as our friend. Simplify doesn't mean "dumb down" the philosophy for idiots. It is simple, it is all right to be a religious writer and talker.

The year already took a jump, landed in mid-March, Equinox, day-light savings, St. Patrick, Gaura-Pūrṇimā moving along. I'm on schedule but it seems like a late start this year. We are in Europe early enough and determined to give me retreat time, reading time. I want to sense the value of it and proceed. I don't know exactly why once again I have fallen so far out of reading habit. It keeps happening and I come back. The *japa* is more steady in a low way. But for that too I have a plan—a one-week *vrata* of sixty-four rounds per day.

Stay tuned to this channel and all will be dispersed and discussed.

“Insurmountable time even brings about the death of Brahmā, so what to speak of other demigods like Indra, Candra, Sūrya, Vāyu and Varuṇa?” (*Bhāg.* 2.2.17, purport).

The point about short life duration is that one should as soon as possible give up petty material engagements. They can’t satisfy you in the long run, and they all die out and detain you from the ultimate goal. So why do you still dally with them, oh man of short duration? What solace and tickle you get out of it is an illusion when considered in time’s demand and your . . .

Āyur harati vai pumsām . . .

Both by rising and by setting, the sun decreases the duration of life of everyone, except one who utilizes the time by discussing topics of the all-good Personality of Godhead.

—*Bhāg.* 2.3.17

purport:

This verse indirectly confirms the greater importance of utilizing the human form of life to realize our lost relationship with the Supreme Lord by acceleration of devotional service. Time and tide wait for no man. So the time indicated by the sunrise and the sunset will be uselessly wasted if such time is not properly utilized for realizing identification of spiritual values.

That’s the warning from time, by wise persons. Here is the good news for one who engages in spiritual activities, and why we should do it:

And thus the sun fails to rob the pure devotee of his duration of life, inasmuch as he is constantly

busy in the devotional service of the Lord, purifying his existence. Death is a symptom of the material infection of the eternal living being; only due to material infection is the eternal living entity subjected to the law of birth, death, old age and disease. . . . In other words, a devotee of the Lord is guaranteed eternal life. A devotee's old age or disease in the present life is but an impetus to such guaranteed eternal life

As I write, a gray-haired man and older woman both with walking sticks come down from the hills along with a pre-adolescent boy also with a walking stick. They speak awhile outside this yellow-painted stone cottage. They look out across stone walled fields to other Wicklow hills. And then they move on. This is a good location, not busy, not Dublin, no cars. The only cars are those of the devotees when they come here, and they come in a pleasant mood. I'm very fortunate and wish to spend the time well. On this visit I bring a newly published *Japa Walks, Japa Talks*. It's like a proof that I can produce something tangible in a Wicklow stay. More reason to be left alone. But this time . . . I'm not doing like that. Settling in. With ISKCON Vaiṣṇava duties. Are you going to look at those Fair Acre booklets and start talking about prayer springboarding from them? It seems best that you . . .

From Lipo (701 A.D.):

I Make My Home in the Mountains
 You ask why I live
 along in a mountain forest,

and I smile and am silent
 until even my soul grows quiet:

it lives in the other world,
one that no one owns.

The peach trees blossom.
The water continues to flow.

Chapter Five

ISKCON Culture

Masked man invades the prairies. I wash the body including the bung hole with hot and cold water in this bathroom on earth. The man who gives up material concepts and gains the favor of the pure devotee of the Lord who is *niskīñcina*, can gain entry to the kingdom of God in his own spiritual body. But that is by the Lord's mercy—to send the pure devotee. Prahlāda Mahārāja told his father and all else who will listen, that you cannot attain to knowledge or devotion to Kṛṣṇa by any means, not by fruitive acts or austerities, studies, and so on, but only by following the instructions of the pure devotee (smearing your body in his foot dust).

And Nārada said to Yudiṣṭhira, "You are very lucky although you feel yourself insignificant as a devotee compared to Prahlāda Mahārāja. The Lord was so attracted to your devotional service that He lived with you constantly and sometimes chastised you as your guru, or was so friendly that you were astonished later when you saw His universal form. And sometimes He even acted as your messenger!" This shows that the Lord is rarely attained but He is attracted by devotional service, as if it is a force even stronger than Himself (in the form of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī).

Good and bad. All good feelings pass through you and some are silly like nice, wool socks and goodies and some are profound, the happiness of devotional service. You can't always distinguish. You can't get all the different things done that are on your schedule. This is the way I

like it, quiet and on my own, yet I will attend their simple Gaura-Pūrṇimā function after three days. I will speak something about Lord Caitanya while sitting in a small room. Lord, Lord, You are kind to us.

Listen, I have my flight too. I know you do also. But listen to me for awhile. So says the writer, and if he's lucky he gets some reader or readers. In a thumbnail sketch. In a long book. Some lonely-like-himself-soul can read.

An interesting little essay here by Mother Mary Claire saying there is a difference between loneliness and being alone. We do it, we who choose so for religious purposes, not to cut ourselves off from humanity and preaching. I hope that my aloneness will be acceptable to Prabhupāda. I take it in the pragmatic way that when I am alone I get more literary work done and can share it as preaching. And alone, I take time to read his books and then I can preach. But also, I go alone . . .

Like the solitary sailor, we deliberately choose our aloneness as part of a personal quest. We are people engaged on a search. It is always a search for God, but it is also a quest that brings us to a place of exposure to a deep heart-searching, listening awareness of the fundamental, crying need of the world. This is precisely the monk or nun's chief service to humanity. In aloneness, we learn to share in a basic way in the emptiness and lossness that people today often know, but also often try to block out and ignore.

—from "Aloneness Not Loneliness"

by Mother Mary Claire SLG

She also says she prays for all people when she is alone. That's a hard one for me to relate to although I

like it. Pray for people. I suppose I don't have much faith in it because I didn't hear Prabhupāda talk of it much. Yet he did. Advaita Ācārya prayed for Lord Caitanya to come. Prahlaḍa prayed that everyone, demons too, may become peaceful in *bhakti-yoga*. You don't want to petition the Lord. I have much to learn of pray.

Mother Mary Claire also says that, "In our love for God is contained our love for all." Prabhupāda definitely says that and therefore one person's practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness alone helps all people. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī said that a *pūjāri*'s ringing a bell in the temple is doing more for the welfare of society than many who open hospitals and feed the poor. If you satisfy God, everyone will be satisfied. I don't have to know exactly how it works. This sort of alone is not a replacement for going out to meet people and talk with them. Yet it is a way that calls some of us. "Through their constant aloneness they have acquired a deeper capacity for communication with their fellow human beings and more urgent desire to penetrate to depths where human need is at its greatest."

I tend to say that my way is best, as do the book distributors, the cow protectors, and everyone else in ISKCON or out of ISKCON. We enthuse ourselves that way. But I prefer to be accepted as one kind of worker in ISKCON. We may not have separate orders like the Catholic Church, Jesuits, and Carthusians, etc. We are all in one preaching wing of Lord Caitanya's movement known as ISKCON. But still there is variety in the unity. I am alone trying to fuel the movement with a message of my own. It is not a message that says, "Everyone should go alone and free-write." I don't say I'm the best for doing this. But I claim this territory.

We claim for Kṛṣṇa. I am in a *tulasi* house or attic room alone writing this for you, for us.

Not enough time to do all the nice things I'd like to do. In mid-March, the year is still not too old. The morning is delicious and light enough by 6 A.M. for me to go out. So far I have not been noticing nature's details much; I am more absorbed in thinking out loud on a vital subject, my relationship with His Divine Grace.

Once someone did a Bṛghumuni reading for me (astrology) and it said that I should not say the name of my spiritual master. I thought this was a crazy thing and didn't follow it. But I see the point in it lately. Don't take his name cheaply or in vain. Everyone is shouting Prabhupāda for 1996. Sometimes I prefer to say, "Yours in his service," rather than, "Yours in the service of Prabhupāda." I say His Divine Grace, and I like to say "the Swami." He who called my name. He is in his picture, but he is more than that. We don't know all of him. He gave us, and what he gave us we should take and live with it. But know that there is more to him. You will satisfy him by carrying out his order intelligently and diligently.

Don't come into my room while I am writing.

I heard you coming up the stairs so

started typing quickly so you'd keep away.

My parents used to think I was working at writing only when I typed up what

I'd already written.

The sound of the machine convinced them

maybe I wasn't so worthless and wrong to write.

Maybe I could sell something

the manual typewriter

pounded away under my fingers but got stuck keys.
 I sent a novel, *Sagittarius*, to an agent who said
 thanks for it but we can't sell this kind of thing.

It was marijuana prose.

Dreams and things not really happening

to me that's

the same kind of delicate imagery you like to do last
 year in *Gite Stories*. Some day it may

come back again,

a madness of outpouring stories and fiction
 in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. How nice!

The force that drives the green flower
 dries my green age—is Kṛṣṇa.

I get up at midnight

with no Miles Davis tunes,

"Roundabout Midnight" necessary for me,

but even with that burden I would get up

or while worrying about Bill Clinton's sure demise.

He'll never get elected, and it don't matter a damn.

Kṛṣṇa is in control. All the idiots . . .

I saw headlines, nine Republican candidates
 converged to

New Hampshire where they have early
 presidential elections

for nomination by their party. See those
 nine guys so

blatantly maneuvering for power.

I am a loyal member-follower of the GBC.

Just keep a distance is all.

In the yew tree, the poet wrote, are birds
 and my yew tree bears the wind.

Poets are nice guys often but maybe not.

I got to pay attention to KC but you say
 it's all-encompassing so not *māyā*
 to be looking around at everything and remarking
 this too, this too can be seen through *sāstra*,
 and then it is not *māyā*. And I
 should not be a person encaptured by her.

Last night I saw an Ekādaśī moon so bright I thought it was maybe full, but they are not full on the eleventh day. We ate a little bit of fruit. It was Sunday, so at lunch they served Gaurāṅga potatoes and some veg, and I don't remember, some potato patties, and then a desert too rich. Madhu showed me what gets left over when you make clarified butter, a milky scum so thick it couldn't even be cleaned from the pot. His point was how can you expect to digest desserts of creamy milk like they served yesterday? Yes, I thought, I prefer a hot fruit pie with a crisp, flaky crust. But maybe he has something against that too. Better not eat at all, like Raghunātha Gosvāmī, so enamored by Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and names that he doesn't need to assuage the tongue. Or eat some trifila, doesn't taste good. I wish I had love of God but don't wish enough or act. Write.

Brahmā is also afraid of his death, and thus he performs devotional service to the Lord, just to release himself from the clutches of illusory energy. . . . Similarly, a human being who does not develop a sense of responsibility before he dies is no better than the madman who tries to enjoy material life very happily without concern for the future"

—*Bhāg.* 3.11.33, purport

Ah yes, ISKCON's got its culture too.
 You don't have to run to the zoo rhyming.

We got amulets and you can't always be sure when a man hands you a block of wood and says, "This is a piece of the floor from the original 26 Second Avenue." He said a worker saved it when they were ripping up the floor (which they shouldn't have done).

I don't know if it's the same floor I sat on watching and hearing the Swami. But I shall have faith—take this chip of wood as the real one. Even the real one is real only when imbued with your faith and memories and the fact that Swamiji actually did come to that place and save us with *kirtana*. The chip of wood can remind you.

Even if one concentrates his mind on the boar form of the Lord, that is also yoga. As confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā*, one who concentrates his mind constantly in meditation upon the Personality of Godhead in one of His many varieties of forms is the first-class *yogī*, and he can very easily attain trance simply by meditating upon the form of the Lord. If one is able to continue such meditation on the Lord's form at the time of one's death, one is liberated from this mortal body and is transferred to the kingdom of God.

—*Bhāg.* 3.19.28, purport

Well, better finish this one. You are getting tired? Maybe. Also feeling tempted and irritated. Need to go down to some quieter sources. I admit to influences and just letting them come into me in my writing. Be open about it and then you may have a better chance to see the difference between an influence, an imitation, and what you yourself have to offer as unique. Picasso said

it was okay to imitate and then when you botch it, you know that was actually the real you, the artist.

The botch is you
not the regular and careful copy you made
or even your following regulation although
that you must do. It is not heart.

You are not a Zen monk or Catholic Claire
or éclair tart to eat.
You are not a mole or pile or
you knew Halloween in the Great Kills village:

Kids were allowed to paint a Halloween scene
an art competition
I guess the Chamber of Congress saw it as
a way to control the spirit and get
no broken windows.
Neither were we inclined to break windows.

I drew a painting full of cliches, tombstones,
witches, the hangman's knot hanging
from the tree,
it was fun cleaning your paints inside the store,
working on one of the painting on glass
while a friend worked on another part
proud to show your parents and not envious
of the first prize winners in the dress shop.
You got to do your thing, *yajña*.

It's still like that in the village of ISKCON.
I am painting the window in a small store,
the owners are friendly and let me wash my brushes
and I am not breaking anything,

an excited kid using the traditional images
but thinking it's original. Or he doesn't even
think, just gets lost in the painting art.
Paints Hare Kṛṣṇa on the window, Hare Kṛṣṇa
in the mind and heart and type it in words,
Hare Kṛṣṇa to make it clear who I am
and who is the Lord. When they say, "There is only
one God and Allah is His name,"
We incorporate that too. Let's not fight.
Each prophet has a place. Kṛṣṇa is all-attractive.
Thank God there are specific Kṛṣṇa followers
and someone may read my poem.

Chapter Six

Prayer and Tortoise Shells

This book has its own course to go, just let it speak. I did yearn for this retreat, therefore there is a work awaiting, to come out.

Little Orphan Annie. I have to let the door open. But the good innkeeper does *not* have to let the door open. As in the rabbi's tale, he lets the outsider wail and knock on the door, but he does not let him enter. Tells him, "Go away!" This is a tale about prayer and how to control the mind. Don't let them in.

Little Orphan Annie and her dog Sandy (arf) can stay outside in the cold. I won't melt butter-like to hear them or sultry girl sirens and hens and horses and men with spittle. And guns. I have got my own guns to knock 'em back.

Soon it will be 3 P.M. You should pause and wake Prabhupāda and change his *cādar*, the post-lunch sleep operation. Staring out the window. Can't claim someone interrupts me, if I don't have something I'm on to. Or it would be nice, I says to myself, if I could read *Govindam* prayers and see in mind's eye the Lord who is described therein with the eye of unalloyed devotion. Do your *vaidhi-bhakti*, even without love or spontaneity. And look at the blank awhile. The Lord may reveal Himself and you have no alternative but to go on chanting and hearing with improved endeavor.

However, persons who have given up stereotyped worldly affairs and the beastly followers of these affairs, and who have taken shelter of the umbrella of Your lotus feet by drinking the in-

toxicating nectar of Your qualities and activities in discussions with one another, can be freed from the primary necessities of the material body.

—*Bhāg.* 3.21.17

The time factor cannot affect the span of life of the devotees. . . . The greatest danger is transmigration of the soul from one body to another, and only devotional service to the Lord can stop this process. . . . The time factor, however, cannot touch the lifespan of the devotees.

—*Bhāg.* 3.21.18, purport

You think maybe you can move into some new territory in writing? That's fine, but not if requires contorted . . . I wouldn't want it if it hurt my arm like when bullies pulled back your arm until it hurt fierce. It still does, I woke up with that pain from lying the wrong way. Then what do you want, effortless? Still jet lagged?

He said (in the kitchen, the man who is loaning me this house) that Gaura-Pūrṇimā is actually not on Thursday as it states on one calendar. The full moon is actually on Friday. Is that all right with me? I said, yes. Later is better. It gives me more time. I almost thought he was going to say they decided not to observe it at all and I could go on reading and writing without having to meet with them. I like those kinds of observances when only M. and I and maybe one other are in a house somewhere and we go on with our routine as usual. Maybe a short reading and *kirtana* or an extra cooking prep. And I mention it here.

I did it. I changed his *cādar*. Sang the *praṇāma* song. I said I'd confess almost everything before I got done. This

is confessing the littleness. The littleness of your fingers and fingernails. The guy has finally come to this retreat and is too tired to say much. Let me just lay back, he says, don't push so much with your schedule. Why substitute the travel and lecture schedule with yet another demand, the demand of your inner and writing life? Can't you do what you want for an afternoon? Go ahead, read in those Fair Acre pamphlets about prayer and desert fathers—if you want. You will discover. You quickly found out you weren't interested in William Burroughs' dream book and the jazz tape, surprisingly.

But I don't want this stuff to filter into my book. If I don't write but putter around, that doesn't seem right. If I try to do both, then the puttering filters into the book. So what? Is the book supposed to be an ivory tower? I don't mind if you tell me what you were doing when you got released from the demands of your travel and lecture. I don't mind. Just don't get lost in some other world.

Don't read the Sunday funnies or sports page or—anyway, you've got a bad ankle so I know you can't walk off somewhere in the afternoon hills. And you're a *sannyāsi*, that limits it. No women. You don't like to use the telephone. This room is small and not so much natural light. You don't eat extra when you don't know what to do. You don't sleep extra. And if you draw too much, it won't be right or fun or you could get a headache. But go ahead . . .

Just passed about fifteen minutes to read on prayer. I liked what it said about accepting yourself as you are when you pray, not as an ideal person of prayer. I also accepted the point that prayer isn't easygoing, but its

purpose is to surrender to God, to offer yourself to be made in His will. But then stuff about pacivity, I wasn't sure about that. She said you could start prayers using imaginative gifts like writing a poet or painting a picture, but these are just the early stage and you have to go beyond it. When we first begin, our prayers are superficial and we want to get something from it, "instead of grasping that the essential heart of prayer is throwing away of ourselves in simple self-oblation to God . . . Any form of prayer which does not stimulate love to give all soon becomes dry and sterile, a formal duty or even a mantra as in some forms of non-Christian prayer."

Her negative attitude toward the mantra is understandable. She probably takes it as some mechanical act, as if we think the mantra is magic and you just say it over and over. Prabhupāda also condemns such mantra uttering. He says it must be done with *priti*, love. He says that Kṛṣṇa never said you can make Me offerings with Vedic mantra, but with love. Then what is the place of God's holy name, Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra? It has to be uttered with love. However, it is so powerful that even when uttered with offenses, it cleans sin.

What are you getting at by discussing these subjects in your book? Are you threatening to give the book-writing up and go beyond, to be a saint in silence or just sit in quiet through the afternoon "doing nothing"? No, no, I just mean to say . . . *govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi*.

Could you just do tortoise shells?

Huh?

Could you just paint fancies and not care for Art?

Could you chant an extra round

in the empty house?
 I could chant but I'd count it as "one extra round
 to make up for negligent mantras."
 I could walk around the empty house
 and that would be nice. But don't expect me
 to quit this book.
 I never asked you to.
 Could you do the tortoise shell,
 could you—you mean like Alice in Wonderland?
 No, your own. Your own.
 Could you do the . . . Yeah, yeah, I could, kid,
 but don't bother me just now. I'm trying
 to figure out
 how to use this retreat and write
 a book (best-seller) and to pray.
 Like "non-Christian prayer"?

One should not remain continually implicated in
 household affairs up to the time of death. He
 must leave.

—*Bhāg.* 3.25.5, purport

The Lord continued: My dear mother, devotees
 who receive such transcendental opulences are
 never bereft of them; neither weapons nor the
 change of time can destroy such opulences. Be-
 cause the devotees accept Me as their friend,
 their relative, their son, preceptor, benefactor
 and Supreme Deity, they cannot be deprived of
 their possessions at any time.

—*Bhāg.* 3.25.38

I've heard some far away noises like engines, but they
 didn't produce. Yet any moment one could turn louder,
 persist and come up the hill and it would be Madhu. He
 will have gotten the better typewriter and other stash

we left in Collnacopague last year, and I'd be diverted asking him what he did in Dublin and maybe not get back to finish this magnificent (laugh) chapter. So better plug away at it manually. I do notice your head is a little achey and the room gets too warm from the coal fire below. You are rambling. I'm a rambling man . . .

Chapter Seven

No More Titles

Wait a minute. The razor blade was clogged. I am still using things we got on the plane. Still thinking of Guyana. The face and slim body of Haridāsa down there, and Rūpa, them accompanying me at 4 in the morning to the airport even though I sat in a separate van and don't speak with them. Tropics, car park, small-time country and always that covered hostility I assume between blacks and Hindus and me, the odd, white Haribol. "Can a white man become a Haribol?" Then we started for the terminal and two of them ran ahead a few steps to take photos. It is nice, but it is also something not so deep. I cannot be expected to come down here every year, and they know that. And they know I can't be with them so much even when I am there physically. Besides, they don't change much even if I were to sweat out every last ounce of blood I had. They are the way they are, everyone is like that . . . it seems. Good-bye Guyana, I am still wearing the thick *brāhmaṇa* thread I got down there and trailing the anecdotes.

When we arrived in NYC it was for a twenty-four hour lay-over at the Hilton Hotel. In a lobby, several ladies were waiting for us. Jaya Gaurasundara's wife and Prema-bhakti and her husband who wore a long chain befitting I guess a rock star that he is. Bhāgavata dāśī was also there. They had been waiting almost two hours and as I sat in the lobby, while M. checked us in at the desk, we were in a world of our own, smiling and interested in each other. Then I noticed the bellhop guy

was watching us from a distance. It occurred to me that I was a bit of a celebrity waited for in the hotel by my friends. It occurs to me now how nice this Kṛṣṇa consciousness is even from that level. I could never have expected such a loving reception if I had not become a devotee. In other words, I am famous in the world of ISKCON. Or at least for a few friends.

Oh, you might say, even if you were a *karmi* you might by now have three or four loving friends to meet you in a New York hotel. Even your own mother and father or wife and a few children and maybe some literary friends, who knows? Yeah, maybe, but they wouldn't be friends in Kṛṣṇa. They wouldn't wear *sāris* and say, "Hare Kṛṣṇa," and I wouldn't have FedEx boxes of letters from people inquiring about Kṛṣṇa consciousness and a manuscript of a book I'd written, so lovingly edited, for sharing Prabhupāda's teachings in my own voice. Besides, it's more likely I'd have died and gone down into the lost species of life by now. But fond remembrance of the hotel reception, from the viewpoint of that bellhop guy who looked as if he were thinking, "Who is this guy that they're waiting for all smiles and with a flower garland and food for him? Is he some kind of guru? Let me take a look."

Keep going, man, gratitude not to have a headache when I got up at midnight. And new volume of *The Nectar of Devotion* to continue my reading. The verses praise the hearing of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Rūpa Gosvāmī has selected these. So each one that he mentions I look up in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* volumes which are on my desk. I read the purports. In one, Śrīla Prabhupāda says that anyone who is trying to remain aloof from this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement

and at the same time practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness is living in a hallucination. Gulp. I thought, "Is that me, trying to stay aloof?" I decided no, I am, after all, giving a five-days' disciples' meeting and then another five-day seminar at Villa Vṛndāvana and visiting temples. I am always thinking of devotees. Even the great devotees in the books, but also in the movement. Maybe I am a little aloof. But I am aloof only from certain aspects of ISKCON. It could be said that every devotee is aloof from certain aspects. The managers might be aloof from the inner life. The chief may be aloof from *japa*. They are aloof from my books. So everyone is aloof from certain aspects. Don't throw that stuff at me. I will share this purport with devotees here in Wicklow and assure them that their aloofness is—like mine—only for certain aspects of association. We need devotees and we need to hear about Kṛṣṇa to serve Him one way or another.

In her poem, "At the Lake," Mary Oliver asserts her theology about the spiritual in the natural world. I would like to be as assertive and confident as she is. Even if you don't agree with her, you don't object to her saying it so well. You are thankful and you believe that the poem can do that, can capture the experience and keep it alive and moving . . . I am in ISKCON in my own way and would like to assert as well as she does. Also, she works the same themes of the natural world again and again. She is confident. It is her vision. She is not ashamed of it, but considers the natural world infinitely rich, if she can only keep entering it, if it would allow her. She keeps writing.

After telling us in language which was a little too tedious for me, how the fish looked when it leaped out of

the water at night, she then says, "This is, I think,
what holiness,/the natural world,/where every moment
is full . . . " And then this:

I've knelt there,
and so have you,
hanging on
to what you love,
to what is lovely. The lakes'

shining sheets
don't make a ripple now,
and the stars
are going off to their blue sleep,

but the words are in place—
and the fish leaps, and leaps again
from the black plush of the poem,
that breathless place.

Well, Stevie, you can do it too. *The Nectar of Devotion* world where the verses quoted send you to the open volumes of Prabhupāda's *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I did enter and got an inkling. It's not my made-up world but the Absolute Truth. Let me live to serve him and not for my own self. Give yourself to this. Make your craft for his purpose to praise Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa consciousness. What did he say? Prabhupāda said that hearing about Kṛṣṇa is so ecstatic, the devotees don't want liberation. He also said that a devotee only wants to convince people there is God and God is Kṛṣṇa, and to do this he doesn't mind if he is in heaven or hell and doesn't aspire for liberation. That is the preacher's *samādhi*. I would like to be like that in my own way naturally. Praising Kṛṣṇa and preaching even if you don't notice

it. Preaching not just keeping it for yourself. You owe it to he who gave you the knowledge, tell others just as he told you. I'm not doing him a favor but duty, paying back, attempting to.

He said hear about Kṛṣṇa. The Māyāvādis say it is just stories made up, everything is void. No, no, these are facts. Kṛṣṇa comes in many forms and He is the Supreme. Work at this. Accept the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa as absolute. Oh, but what about the fact that billions of people (in China alone) don't even know Kṛṣṇa, or even if they've heard of Him, they don't accept Him as God. The Christians don't and the Buddhists and the Islamites and Mormons. Oh well, I can't satisfy all these concerns. I have to fix myself at His lotus feet. The newspaper cartoonists would lampoon us if we became a little famous, pictures of Hare Kṛṣṇas with *sikhas* looking ridiculous in the worldly context, they'd try to prove. At present, they don't even bother to mock us. We are too small. I say, "Bah, humbug, and screw you."

All right, back to yourself. The books of poets are all right, they are doing what they do. The night is doing it. And I am here. You are waiting to read this, to write this.

Be concrete. Madhu came back from Dublin. He went through the first procedures to get his new passport because the old one was filled up. He had to wait on line and then go to the police office where they "witness" that he says he is a citizen of Ireland. Maybe some day I will be too. I said that if that happens, I'd give several reasons, like sentiment for the Irish land, wanting to be alone, my health is not good (then why live in Ireland?). You don't understand. It's because I can find cottages

and go there and I'm a writer. See, I heard you gave writers free residence free of taxes in this country.



Your old spiritual master, your young spiritual master, your eternal spiritual master. Will you always remain a disciple? Yes, I am always a part and parcel. I sing *saṁsāra* and I am able to meditate on each verse as I wave the incense before him. He is the one who gives us *prasādam*, who worships Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. When you say *śrī-rādhikā-mādhavayor apāra-*, you don't have to think of Them but he, he who teaches of Śrī Rādhikā and Mādhava and who assists Them in the *kuñjas* (that you don't have to analyze, you just feel with faith that what Viśvanātha Cakravartī says is true and true of your master), and then he is the direct servant of the Lord Hari. Yes, it is not a slight of Lord Hari, but rather Lord Hari says we should honor His servants that way. We don't say the servant himself is Hari, but how else are we going to receive God? So we worship him as good as God, it is right and to do so, Hari likes it that way. Unless you please him, you are nowhere, and so all the verses, each one I think of and that is one of the best prayers, best songs in the whole creation, *saṁsāra-dāvā*.

Now I am telling you and then I will go outside for more walk talks. If I hold up and expunge (?) the junk and say the world is better for Kṛṣṇa consciousness since Prabhupāda taught it we are still carrying on . . .

Thus the devotee who worships Me, the all-per-vading Lord of the universe, in unflinching devo-tional service, gives up all aspirations to be pro-moted to heavenly planets or to become happy in this world with wealth, children, cattle, home or anything in relationship with the body. I take him to the other side of birth and death.

—Bhāg. 3.25.39

The influence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is felt in the time factor, which causes

fear of death due to the false ego of the deluded soul who has contacted material nature

—*Bhāg.* 3.26.16

purport:

The living entity's fear of death is due to his false ego of identifying with the body. Everyone is afraid of death . . . The fear of death is the action of *akālā*, or the time factor, which represents the influence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In other words, time is destructive. . . . Time is a representation of the Lord and it reminds us also that we must surrender unto the Lord. The Lord speaks to every conditioned soul as time. He says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that if someone surrenders unto Him, then there is no longer any problem of birth and death. We should therefore accept the time factor as the Supreme Personality of Godhead standing before us. This is further explained in the following verse.

See time as Kṛṣṇa. You try to fill up your time with worthy work. What is it I wanted to do? Oh, next there is the *gāyatrī* duty and then you put on your coat and boots and go out to walk and this time you are talking about Prabhupāda on the walk. At the bridge, look down at the rushing water. Chant on beads, keep walking and talk. Something comes becomes intelligence is allowed to you. In this way you fill up the time pockets. Return to the house, more to look forward to, the little bowl of cereal, just enough and not too much. Then you can rest after your morning's labors. Did you work hard enough? But you can't press it too far. I left notes for Madhu, "Give me new batteries, copy the tapes, read this, let us discuss how to avoid headaches, let us plan what to do in late summer and in 1996 to avoid the crowd."

Fill in the time . . . before it's too late. Then anyway, you run out of time, no more, no more, you have to give up even taste for the sweet, hot cereal and hot milk. So if you have to give it up later, why not now? Because we are still living. We cling to it. We say this too is a form of devotional service. But at the time of death, devotional service takes the shape of giving it all up. I can't give it up now but I will then. Now I do dovetail my living energy in his purpose. But I need to hear what this is, this surrendering to Kṛṣṇa which they say is the essence of prayer. And Prabhupāda says it is the purpose of human life to work just for His pleasure. I don't grasp this yet. Because I want to do things for myself. That must mean I don't understand, I am in false ego.

In a book of poems, in between the sections, I found this, which seems to describe me all right and the reflections I am seeking in this book so far:

*In headaches and in worry
Vaguely life leaks away.
And Time will have its fancy
Tomorrow or today.*

We are not so alone here. But I have plenty of space. Work it. I went outside and saw the lovely gardening and landscaping in the small yard. He has black paper down to guard the plants. Something against the house to make the ivy grow up that. Forgive me, I can't think of the right words or names of birds. Why are all the cars alike? Why do they . . . what, shit, grab the ulcer, tit grab the mice feet the words are angry and my body is getting too warm. I am a false ego thing, a scurrilous rabbit of bad words from influences I've received. Not my fault, you see. I exonerate myself in this court. Go free,

go scot-free to fly on a ferry boat. You won't sink. God will protect you and allow you to go gracefully to Vṛndāvana at the end. Or you might have to die in the parking lot at the airport in Georgetown, Guyana with the immature devotees around you treating you like an exalted guru instead of a friend, a dear friend dying, holds his hand and help him remember God and to be forgiving and accept, accept wherever God is sending you.

Let me make a few last drawings before I go. And what about you? Surely I'll be at the bedside of some friends who will die before me. I will tell them, "Don't worry. It's not so bad." They will say, "What do you know? It's my death." I'll say, "Yeah, but I have to die too." They will say, "Yeah, but right now, I'm dying." I'll say, "True enough, so I came to help you through the final stages."

The front part of the ribcage curls up like a hook. I saw it happening on Prabhupāda. They say this is a sign of the end. He said, "No one comes to be with me, they think I'm contaminated" (by oncoming death). Heavy stuff. He withdrew. The little Satsvarūpa dāsa wanted sweet and easy-going, delicate exchanges always to be nice like 26 Second Avenue days, but death is hard. Prabhupāda died gloriously. I say that word. Anyway, he sure did it well, champion, right up to the end. We were left behind.

Why this writing about death? I don't know. I just wanted to write and it came.

I can't think of a title for this chapter and I am getting tired of making titles anyway. It's false stuff. Too cute. But what are you going to do? Leave them just numbered? Yeah, why not?

Okay.

Okay, sugar coat, pineapple top, and coconut shred.
To you I'll sing a little song because I almost forgot and
I got to.

Heaven's the place poets don't believe
make fun say what is my father going to do there
dance like a celestial Fred Astaire?
I say you are ignorant and cannot be
told any more than Prahlāda's father because you
are too attached to sense grat.

But those who get his books have a chance.
I saw him and met the pure devotee and wanted
something like this. But if you are too soused and
proud of your learning, *māyā* has stolen your
intelligence and you are lowest of mankind
and a *surabava*—then you can't take to it.
Anyone who can take it is lucky
even if his life was apparently
cursed in other ways.

In my mind I laughed at the picture
of the gaunt, old woman in *sārī*
in former Yugoslavia.
But don't make fun. She may not look
like an Indian lady with her hair pulled back
serving Food For Life meal out
of superficial sentiment. But still it is
Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
And do I look more authentic in false teeth and
fading smile, glasses falling off my ears?

Let me tell you, brother, you better not judge
others, the desert fathers say.
Lest God judge you.
I have run out of things to say.
Tip O'Neil, basketball players
go to China . . .

And I am in Ireland, I think.
I want to write a book of passionate praise
of the Supreme Lord seen with my
inner eye of devotion
from reading *Brahma-saṁhitā*.
I get swayed and induced and enchanted
to think of Govinda and serve Him
instead of serving myself.
I am not aloof from the
Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.
That would be hallucination.
No title, no title

Chapter Eight

An editorial in the *ISKCON World Review*, "ISKCON's responsibility to social change." They start out, "ISKCON devotees have tended to relegate themselves to the realm of irrelevance." I took a personal affront at that. Then I thought, "We are not actually irrelevant, but what do we have to do to become relevant? I mean, the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness may appear irrelevant, but our duty is not to change it while presenting it to society. We don't want to pander to what society thinks are the main issues. Oh yes, we can preach expertly, but that's a different thing." I remember lecturing in a college class and speaking of transmigration, the soul, and God. The teacher said, "We are not so much interested in these beliefs. Could you tell us how your practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness has helped you as a person?" So I answered his request and I was enlivened to do it, and in a preaching mood, I tried to describe how it would work for his students, they would get peace of mind and so on. But after all, my main point was to present the *Bhagavad-gītā* As It Is.

The IWR editorial goes on to say that Prabhupāda was socially aware as evidence by his earlier writing in *Back to Godhead*, where he mentioned Churchill and George Bernard Shaw, etc. But I think Śrīla Prabhupāda was not so much interested in them or in social change. His point was that Kṛṣṇa consciousness would solve all the problems. People think this is not practical, but it is, if they will only take to it.

The editorial goes on to say that we shouldn't be afraid to contact the nondevotees and their world and answer the many issues such as abortion, animal

rights, nationalism, war, etc. I don't disagree with this, but maybe I am just in a different mood. If they want to preach with more social awareness, by researching the problems and presenting them in a non-dogmatic way, fine. It's that old issue—if you have a particular angle on how to serve and preach, then go ahead and do it, but don't make a trip on me and say that we all have to do it your way or that that's the only thing, the best thing. And in your enthusiasm for your project, which may be the need for social awareness in our preaching, don't put down preaching which may not be so socially aware. The writer says, "Devotees are not meant to live in ivory chambers, shrinking back from the world, and devoting themselves solely to attainment of other worldly salvation. We have to show the public that we can benefit their lives . . . if someone asks, 'What's in it for me?' we'd better plausible answers."

But actually, our philosophy is other worldly. We are preaching of salvation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We are primarily concerned that people chant the holy names. We have to convince them to take this up. I felt a little hurt by that description of the devotees shrinking away. Maybe some members of ISKCON ought to shrink away from the world . Let them get deeply involved in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world. Let them send us messages from that world. We have enough of this world. "The world is too much with us/getting and spending waste our powers . . . " The IWR writer says that now in the Centennial year (again), "We might ask ourselves exactly what does the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement have to offer?" It has the chanting of the holy names. It has the science of *bhakti*, the all-attractive form and pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, it has the hope of leav-

ing the cycle of birth and death and taking back with us all souls, going to Kṛṣṇaloka. Yes, and it has answers to social ills, you are right. IWR writer, you are right. And so am I.

No one can tell me what to do. That's my attitude.

Here we are again at the pass, at the river, singing the song, looking for the topic, eschewing the stuff, not worried to write about. Here we are at the piano machine knocking out the words.

Keep going, trust the unconscious. We read some Eriksonian stories. In one, he tells how when he was very young it snowed in November in Wisconsin and he thought, "I wonder how long I'll remember this?" I have a similar memory of walking towards P.S.8 on an October 31 while a heavy snow fall was in progress. I thought it was just great that snow had occurred on such an early date. I was only about ten years old. I remember it still. The mind can come up with these things from the past, the unconscious. But what do you do with it? Mr. Unconscious, please chew something that happened to me and please use it to manage my pain and make me more Kṛṣṇa conscious. But one of my memories is not going to suddenly bring down Kṛṣṇa's causeless mercy, is it? That's up to Him, He is independent. Maybe He will see me doing or thinking something that will move Him. My attitude should be that whatever He does is fine. But in the meantime, what do I do? I can't just sit here blank. Neither can I always be thinking of Him. It just doesn't work for me, not yet. So I tell stories, write these improvised chapters.

Lord, Lord, when You do come to me, and if You wipe away all these memories and take away all desire to

write like this—whatever You do I will accept it and it will carry me. But I think I will always have free will, that's the way it is, right? My free will may tell me to surrender to You, then I will really care for You. I want to serve You and tell others about You. That will be my liberation, the liberation of a preacher, following the footsteps of my spiritual master. "Oh when, forgetting my own happiness, will I humbly take up the divine command and go preaching door to door?" Bhaktivinoda Thākura asks.

"Polish devils" is written on the outside of the silver-colored coal sacks, and a cartoon figure, "Coal Cat." The miners in south Poland had to enter hell to get the coal out and now the bags are delivered by an Irishman in sports jacket and gray wool golf cap, Irish face, here in this remote cottage, six bags for us because we use them up faster than the usual occupant of this house. We are living here to read and write.

In *The Nectar of Devotion*, there was a string of quotes from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other sources to prove that devotional service surpasses liberation. Impersonal liberation is rejected by the devotee. If there is some liberation but it is devoid of the hearing and chanting of the pastimes of the Lord who is known as *adhokṣaja*, and whose pure devotees give out nectar like mad bees, then I don't want that so-called liberation, say the pure devotees. I want to remember Your lotus feet and serve You. I want that. I read and looked up some of the references. I am sorry there is not more than this right now. But I ought to relax and go ahead.

This is serious. You are content or what? You were in Guyana, what's it like? Well, they had soft screens on

the window, but still some mosquitoes got in. I stayed to myself for most hours but regularly came out morning and evening and lectures. I drew some pictures. Madhu was in touch with Guyana Airlines to reconfirm our flight. We got out of there. Now we are on our way to somewhere else. We are in the retreat and you are writing the timed book. And you knew you'd get stuck in it.

Alone, alone oh
and all the rushes did file past,
niggeredly past you come to say
something so bad you can't say it
so go as close as you can to it and
say at least something.

The bites of evergreen do foment on the shore
of the Everglades. I don't know what to say.

He got a relaxation tape and said he's going to a healing fair to get information. But I think, what's the use? Go to a fair for writers and you'll get sick of it in five minutes. You need to avoid fairs and stay home and write. Here is some sunlight dancing on my fingers. Hello, hello. I saw hail earlier while we were talking in the living room. I didn't mention it but saw it slanting and driving down onto the ground. Now here I am and we talked about long-term memories but I didn't get the point how they can be harnessed or they can serve you.

Please forgive me
I can't write a divided line poem today,
the habber-dasher cut the pants pegged
at fourteen inches.

The apple tortoise, I mean, pastry
fell out of guts, like you were
disgusted and didn't want to eat.
Those feelings of frustration and frustration

they come when you can't do what you want.
 You are on the wrong track, man.
 Old tape recorder of 1950 with big reels
 green light flashing and you
 used it to record from the radio.
 Now it's all lost and whatever you wrote and stack
 of nudey magazines,
 and baseballs rotted and candy and
 parents even gone I think
 and certainly Elvis 45 RPM records on Sun label.

Green meadows in Ireland now.
 Disciples, disciples, what a concept,
 to be a guru. "I am a disciple of
 Satsvarūpa Gosvāmi." That sacred turf,
 don't mock it.
 Cut the grass, cut your hair
 if you can find the razor blade
 and this is all for now.

Well, this is maybe the worst day on record. I don't know what I did wrong. Kṛṣṇa is writing the book, *The Nectar of Devotion*, through Rūpa Gosvāmi, telling of divisions and stages of *bhakti*, and *bhakti* is the supreme way. Get rid of the witches of *bhukti* and *mukti*. But this book is so inferior you can't even compare it. Go ahead, beat yourself with rods. And sing a song as it gets nearer to 5 P.M.

Please also describe eternal time, which is a representative of Your form and by whose influence people in general engage in the performance of pious activities.

—*Bhāg.* 3.29.4

purport:

From the date of the birth of the body, the influence of death is also acting; the advancement of age entails the influence of time on the body. If a man is thirty or fifty years old, then the influence of time has already devoured thirty or fifty years of the duration of their life.

Everyone is conscious of the last stage of life, when he will meet the cruel hands of death, but some consider their age and circumstances, concern themselves with the influence of time, and thus engage in pious activities so that in the future they will not be put into a low family or an animal species.

This is a description of time. Note the mention of a man thirty or fifty years old. A man here got sick. An ambulance took him to the hospital. He wrote to his friends, "It's amazing we think we won't die." The emergency passed and he is still alive. But we will each die. We think we won't die by Gaura-Pūrṇimā of this year. There are thousand devotees at ISKCON Māyāpur and probably they will all live through the holiday. If one dies, they will say it was fortunate. People will try to guess as to his destination. Some will say he went back to Godhead because he died in the *dhāma*. Some will equivocate. I would say I don't know for sure, it is very individual.

I am fifty-five years old all year long. I will go and chant and chant, and the sunlight will fall and innumerable books may be written, but it can't stave off time and death. Most people, me included, prefer not to think about it. We say, "Okay, I've got my food today and I will rest tonight." It seems fairly safe here. I'm okay. I don't mind that I don't have a wife and children. I prefer it that way because it's just extra baggage that you

eventually have to give up. It's a distraction. But even without it, with me free from it, perched alone in an attic room, I'm still not free. I got rid of one encumbrance, but even while standing on my tiptoes I can't reach the spiritual abode of my heart's desires. I'm stuck writing. The branches are wavering.

The gusts were so heavy this morning I closed the umbrella and let the rain sweep over me. I was so absorbed in speaking into the dictaphone about Prabhupāda I hardly noticed anything else, and kept walking getting soaked. It was okay.

The day, the day, February, no March 14, and tomorrow is the Ides of March when Julius Caesar was killed. I don't care. "I don't care, I don't care, what they may think of me," the lady sang in the musical, "The Gay '90s." I heard it when I was nine years old in Queens, and I thought how odd, how melodic, the lady doesn't care, doesn't care what people may think of her. It seemed acceptable to my parents and so it was acceptable to me. But mainly I lusted after a miniature billiard board table because the boy next door had one, and I wanted chocolate bunnies. I scraped my front teeth against the chocolate to enjoy it more and ran into the street wearing knickers to play with marbles, afraid of dogs, surviving on the block, 76th Street, and Ozone Park.

Now the day has ended this chapter.

I flew a little and hopped to the
land of Wicklow hills. Tomorrow
tomorrow I will chant the holy names.

I noted what she said about non-Christian prayer,
about mantra, which has no meaning.

But I want to tell them I chant

God's holy names (as you people chant
Jesus' names) with devotion.

I want to tell them,
but the truth is that I am all dryness and one
Dom, priest, said to his follower,
you should just accept once and for all that
your prayers are always and all dryness and you
should become frightened if they
are anything else.
Dryness and distraction and
surface stuck.

I would go down if I knew where.
The millennium is ending, the Padayātra
is continuing, the IWR will come out
in the year of my death,
think of it, a silly obituary for me.
I will eschew the articles, the sewn
bag. Don't take me to the hospital, our
spiritual master said. But he let them do it
in emergency in England.
But not at the end, not at the end.
Just let me chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, he said.
And . . .

I will tell you he is more personally
my friend. I can draw his picture again and
again a hundred studies. You don't mind
to see them each one a little different.
Now I have to go, I feel a little better
because I tried. Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra
is still available
to me and Lord Caitanya is the only hope for

fallen people, His biographer said, because
He gives us Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa,
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.

Chapter Nine

This morning 3 A.M. downstairs I saw light from outside, glanced out there and saw rays and then the source of it, the fulling moon. The white orb with pocks on it. Too cold to stand there straining to see it through the window. Go to the bathroom and get your job done in there. O holy night, O austere cold. The life here is nice if you can discover something in it. What is there to do? We are waiting for Kṛṣṇa to reveal Himself as He desires. We go on with our duties. So many.

Thank You, dear Lord, for allowing us this time. Please let us awaken more to the need to surrender to You and be guided by You. I know Your greatest devotees are in Vṛndāvana. That is, in Kṛṣṇaloka, and in Vṛndāvana in this world, there is a special opportunity to do this. But when I go there . . . so many things happen to distract me. Yet the sandy lanes, even when filled with *guṇḍas*, and even when the ISKCON guest house is buzzing with latest controversies—still it is Vṛndāvana, land of mystery. Here in Ireland I sense this and yet look for my way in the keys of the typewriter.

There is more to life than writing. Writing is just a way to express spirit. The tape recorder was perched on top of the toilet and I heard him say from 1966 October, there is material and spirit here in our own bodies. When the spirit is gone, the body is “as good as stone.” Similarly, there is matter and spirit on the universal scale. There is the material universe and the spiritual world. Both.

But you cannot know the supreme spirit, the supreme person by the speculative method. Even in this world if you want to know a big man, you can't do it by experimental knowledge. But when you serve him and by friendship and love, then you can know about him. We can't know everything about Kṛṣṇa.

This fellow, reading at midnight, *The Nectar of Devotion*, the sixty-four items, rules of worship. The banyan tree, the *tulasī* tree, the spiritual master, worship Gaṇāpati, don't wear red and blue, don't go on the altar until you have digested your food, no marijuana or opium. No nonsense. No carping and hemming and hawing. One item is to take risks and endeavor to serve Kṛṣṇa. And when the Lord comes out on the palanquin, you should follow behind Him in procession. Worship the Deity. Why do you neglect these things? Don't put your dirty hand into the water. Bow down at the right time in the right way. Don't collect disciples, don't be enthusiastic to build many temples. Don't read many books, is enough to read just four that's all, *TLC*, *NOD*, *Bg*, and *Bhāg*. That's some of what he said.

I read along in it aware always that I am forgetting what I read almost as soon as I stop reading the sentence. Nothing I can do about that but keep spending precious time in reading at least. And yes, some of it will stick. Trust the unconscious. Trust that the mind will be able to draw on this stock of reading when you go to give a lecture. Or whatever, you will be a good student of your spiritual master's books because you are spending this time. Rest assured. This is not going in vain.

Worship the banyan tree. Respect the demigods (but don't worship them as God) and don't bring in opposing

scripture. Honor scriptures that praise God. Don't waste time, don't associate with the nondevotees. They may be gross fools or they may be some kind of scholar or good worker, but if they don't know Kṛṣṇa they are non-devotees and you shouldn't associate with them. It is worse than being in a cage of fire. This is the way. Out of thousands of persons . . . hardly one knows Kṛṣṇa in truth.

The eternal time factor has no beginning and no end. It is the representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the maker of the criminal world. It brings about the end of the phenomenal world, it carries on the work of creation by bringing one individual into existence from another, and likewise it dissolves the universe by destroying even the lord of death, Yamarāja.

—*Bhāg.* 3.29.45

purport:

By the influence of eternal time, which is a representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the father begets a son, and the father dies by the influence of cruel death. But by time's influence, even the lord of cruel death is killed. . . . The phenomenal world is created, maintained and destroyed by the finger signal of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore a devotee does not desire anything in this material world. A devotee desires only to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This servitude exists eternally; the Lord exists eternally, His servitor exists eternally, and the service exists eternally.

You think maybe something different will come and that I will stop this book. You mean a fiction book like Madhu suggested when you were talking in Trinidad?

He said why not write a story of a fellow who has a dream of his being lost and then he wonders what it means? He relates it to some doubt whether he should get married. Or in another story, the fellow is a guru and wonders if maybe he's not qualified.

"Yeah," I said, "but then where do you go with stories like that?"

He said, "Oh, you just do it. It doesn't have to be far-fetched, but neither is it your actuality. When you are in Wicklow," he said, "don't look out the window at the moment you are writing and describe the clouds in the sky." "But why not?" I thought.

At the time I thought let me go with what he's saying. I could be a fiction writer and create some big truth through a story. But then it petered out. I thought, "No, I can't do that." But we were thinking of it and said, "Let's look at some fiction." I wrote on a piece of paper, "*The Castle and the Trial*, by Kafka," and a story by Fidal Dostoyevsky about a man who is going to kill himself but then fell asleep and dreamt of a perfect world and when he woke he decided to dedicate himself to that vision of a world of love.

But Agni dāsa couldn't find any of those books in the bookstores of Port of Spain because Trinidad is not a cultured place except for Rastafarians and carnival stuff.

"Listen," I said to myself, "you can go to your retreat and write more of the same. Keep going from where you left off in your last timed book. That's all, just keep mixing those ingredients." And so the idea of a dream book or fiction book was put aside. We did send one message up from Trinidad to get a book where a writer writes his dreams and then reflects on them. When we got to New York, there was a book waiting by William

Burroughs, *My Education*, a recollection of scraps he wrote over the years. Nandi-mukhī dāsi said on my request she went into the bookstore and almost by mystical direction, she immediately found that book and it seemed to be what I asked for. But when I read it, I was disgusted by his homosexual, lusty dreams and stupid stuff, hallowing nightmare he lives in . . . old man going to the grave completely unredeemed, no God conscious inquiry, danger all around for him.

So that left me with a distaste for dreams, and I want to write interesting stuff. So I will not describe for you, at least right now, the dreams I had in which I was lost. I have not been recording dreams very scrupulously. They fade away and I just wake up contented there was some dream. I hold on to it a moment to see if I understand something, and then I just get up and go about my day.

Those guys (Mary Oliver and Zen collection of monks, mountain living, etc.) are all right, but I have my own row to hoe.

Can't avoid that
derivative jig,

Buddha nature my hoe in back yard.

Made in Ireland, a relaxation tape M. bought
called "Trigger Relaxation." I haven't heard it yet,
but it's on hand, another distracting goody.

Idea is when headache comes you turn this
on and some guy named Kevin talks to you,
says release your tight clothes and lie back
and do this only if you want to.

Just relax your bones and nerves but don't do it
when driving your car.

I'm a helpless joker.
 Got to make my thing.
 Looking around Buddha nature is everywhere
 in the heart. Oh I've got their number, the
 Christians talk of silence and listening to God,
 too much emphasis on that without hearing from
 guru and the actual pastimes of the Lord,
 they make
 it a mystery as if by that method He will
 deign to reveal Himself. Of course it is possible
 but our method is to chant. The challenge is,
 "Can you
 pray when you chant?" Dry Buddha nature in
 an incense stick. I draw another sketch of
 His Divine Grace and I like it.
 We'll keep them with me to admire,
 my own drawings of our spiritual master.

Again, you are on your own, looking around, walking
 somewhere in Ireland which is not your country. You
 think they would let you live here? What if they did?
 Where would you eat and live? You can't just be a perpe-
 tual guest of the householders. You have to pay back
 with lectures and more than that. Do you have a travel
 fund? But that is for your travel. You could collect
 money just to live in one place. Nanda said he and his
 wife come from simple families and they don't demand
 much, therefore they can live without having to slave
 over it. That's an important point. So I could do the
 same, just live in a cottage. But you are proving to
 yourself, what would you do there? Even a few weeks and
 you grow puzzled whether your reading is deep enough
 and needs to be enhanced by outer work. As for writing,

here you go again, talking about fiction and the need for more direction and structure as if this rambling is not enough. So how would you do it full-time if you didn't travel around? You don't have a writing career.

Gaura-Pūrṇimā coming up and I am not in Māyāpur, thank God. Not in the atmosphere of the meetings. What did they say, what did they resolve? What about going to see Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja? Who is GBC for Caledonia? What about Henry Miller? What about the trust fund and this one and that one?

Oh gosh, I am no comic book hero or reader.
I'm sitting on the rope of hot furs
words are spewing around the place with no order.

The military commander with ten red stripes
saluted the tallest general tree and said
Gesundheit. You too, I said, and ran through the
forest of bears dreams trailing big trees.

He said for the Centennial year I'll start off
by sitting at the health retreat for a month and
writing some ironically phrased book about it.
And then I'll go to Śaraṇāgati and all
year I'll be laughing and crying in my snuff,
wetting the sleeves and bloodying the pillow.
No one will understand what you write.

Don't worry about that. You are simple and transparent. Be grateful for that. Write any old thing and it will still be comprehensible and it will be KC.

KC means Knights of Columbus. My father was a member. It's for Catholic men. I don't know what they

do except they have a picnic. That was pretty good. At some place on Staten Island where they had races for the kids and lots of hot dogs and beer for the men. We kids ran around unsupervised after the official races. They raced us as if we were pet rabbits and we ran our hearts out trying to please our fathers, the Knights of Columbus.

It didn't matter if you won or not. The Knights of Columbus, the Knights. What a lot of bunk it is, I now think.

Typical religious family stuff without any God consciousness. They could have sat us down and talked something nice about Jesus and holy life but they didn't. Just hot dogs steaming from a booth and handing them out free as much as you could eat and drink, eat and drink and then later in the day I separated myself from the official picnic and we were fooling around with a scrimmage game of baseball and my father came over to see what we were doing.

Then eventually we went home.
I loved my dad.

And he, I suppose, in his own way, loved me. Me.

Cry a tear for that
if you can.

He took you to the restaurant and said that he is himself a meatball, easily molded by anyone who loves him. This is the open secret of himself, he told me. Love me and you can get from me whatever you want. But what

did he have to give? I didn't take him up on it.
 I wanted something myself and
 he couldn't understand.
 Kids in the 1950s went their own way.

Why don't you give us another quote about time and death? And how come you just drop the quote here without any further comment? You act like a delivery man from United Parcel. If I ask you what is the purpose of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* quote on time and death, you shrug and smile and say, "I don't know, boss, I just deliver them." But you should make a comment. But they seem to speak for themselves. They are a *leit motiff* for this book.



You see, dear reader, we are followed by the tiger of time. He comes in our dreams. Time is stealing life away. In the time between sun up and sundown he takes away your life duration except for those who chant the glories of Gadāgraja. It is like that. Time I am.

You can just read the quotes quickly as they intertwine with what I am doing. Whatever I do, it's within time, the biggest container into which I put all my stuff. And this book is about all the stuff I can put into it that is happening or that I am thinking about. It's all insignificant compared to time itself. Time is not impersonal, but it does chew up all the particulars of my life. Is my writing and living a vain attempt to be a person? The particulars, like the house we are living in and the food we eat, does it all just go into oblivion?

What did you eat yesterday? It was *kicchari* and a spinach with some little green vegetables in it and hard *capātis* I could not chew. Then is it all gone, the disappointing sweet ball and the day before the elegant apple pie with cream? Yes, they are all going, going, gone. That's time. Time is God reminding you that you better surrender. In the meantime, forty-five minutes you read *The Nectar of Devotion* in the early morning and again that much time later. Later, see you later, said the time as crow flies and the time is ripe.

When time comes in his own good time,
I'm bidding my time
because that's the kind of guy I am
while some folks are frettin'
I'm just sitting
biding my time.

In this way he comes under the clutches of death
and lies down, surrounded by lamenting friends

and relatives, and although he wants to speak with them, he no longer can because he is under the control of time.

—*Bhāg.* 3.30.17

purport:

For formality's sake when a man is lying on his deathbed, his relatives come to him and sometimes they cry very loudly, addressing the dying man: 'Oh, my father!' 'Oh, my friend!' Or, 'Oh, my husband!' In that pitiable condition, the dying man wants to speak with them and instruct them of his desires, but because he is fully under the control of the time factor, death, he cannot express himself and that causes him inconceivable pain. He is already in a painful condition because of disease, and his glands and throat are choked up with mucus. He is already in a very difficult position, and when he is addressed by his relatives in that way, his grief increases.

O treetop sitter,
give us direct Kṛṣṇa consciousness,
please. I'd like to
hear a *bhajana* from your lips. Dear Bhāgavata
Purāṇa dāsa is singing on the graveyard shift
of twenty-four hour *kīrtana* crew in KB Mandir
even though the *tamāla* tree is dead
and folks talk bad about who
is going to see Mahārāja, Bhāgavata Purāṇa goes on
singing, bundled in coat for cold and
got his own tent brought from the West,
my initiated disciple, wrote me, "Is it all right
to worship
the *śalagrama śilā* Aindra gives me?" I said
I personally am not so keen on it but Kṛṣṇa is
in your heart so you decide. I hope he doesn't become
too much an esoteric *bābāji*. He is a simple fellow

with good heart, cries out in cold night.
 Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa. I too in my own
 way am up for the graveyard shift
 singing in the courtyard, the tree dead,
 the temple president
 was shot in the back, stay away from controversies
 I said.

Give us Kṛṣṇa conscious *bhajana*, trouble me not
 walk in countryside Buddha nature is
 no zazen by sixty-four rounds *vrata* for
 one week coming up

I'll tell you about it. I'll tell all I can before this book
 is up. It will be strung out in limited time no more than
 twenty-six days and probably I will close it before then
 but maybe go the full route if my faith and conviction
 holds up and I don't think of something better, this is
 the best I can do.

Chapter Ten

Should I be a Fiction Writer?

I am coming straight from a reading with Madhu of Chekov's, "The Schoolmaster." We almost finished it, but then someone came to the house. I came up here and this is my time to write my chapter. I read the fiction because I want to see if I still ought to write that. I saw what a master Chekov is and you can't just toss a story like that off without lots of care and thought beforehand. You have to know your character thoroughly and think it all out beforehand. You do it and you re-write, for sure. I seem to have developed a way of writing life that is totally opposed to that. I write what comes, that's my motto. I've been doing it for years. It would seem to me no fun to write the other way.

Before we started our out loud reading, I told Madhu some of my resistance to fiction. I said, "I may not be cut out for it. I know it's very hard work, and I don't want to fumble as an amateur at it. Life is short and art is long."

M. encouraged me, "Why not try it as a hobby?" But I don't know. The Chekov story, what effect does it have? I read it with gusto, taking up the characters, and I was certainly interested in it. Literature is powerful. It tells us about life in a wonderful way.

Yeah, yeah, you could go on writing these prose-poems, these plea-dilapidated free forms, these free breath hail storming sunny afternoon, March, all kinds of weather, writing of aerograms and sky messages. And *capātis* I can't chew through because I am 70% reduced

in chewing power. Have pity on me. I am a fiction-less author who desires to look out the window and tell what this sky is like, this one, shiny, white-blue with drops of water on the undersides of branches like pearls in the noses of Deities or Kṛṣṇa Himself . . . This day where there was snow on the ground and then it melted, but not before Madhu took a photo of the rare event.

If you wanted to be a story-writer, you couldn't expect to dash it off. I have a note pad downstairs and the whole thing is notes I made in describing the character who would be Harideva. That was before I began to the actual story-writing. Madhu said, "For example, you could tell the interesting story of the conflict in relationship between Pragoṣa and Dārūka here in Wicklow. Of course, you couldn't do it, their feelings would be hurt. But you could draw some essence from this and make up a new character and tell a fiction."

"But yeah," I told M., "I'm not willing to take the trouble. I am willing to take a double dose of triffla at night, but not to spend my precious writing time taking notes to arrive at a character, thinking up some plot of a story." What will happen? The story comes out, I think, that although the schoolmaster was a bastard, always irritable and arguing, it's because he has a fatal illness. And at the annual party, they all know it and they praise him to disguise because they know he's going to die. That only comes out at the end. I think that's what this story will tell. So what is your story?

"A hobby," he said. I could tinker with the story. Would you mind, dear reader, if in the pages of this narrative I told some little fiction? Oh, but how I dislike the work, how I dislike groping and struggling in the beginning stages. How can I dare stumble and fum-

ble along? No, if I did it at all, it would be in a separate notebook because after all, these eight pages per morning and eight pages per afternoon are the best I can do in the latest state of art timed book by SDG, and I wouldn't want to turn it into an author's notes toward writing a story.

You could try something. Trust your unconsciousness. What do you really want to do? What would give you the most pleasure and have hopes of bring something devotees would read with profit and pleasure? Could you become a Chekov of ISKCON? Are you willing to struggle with the other writers who are trying to do this, like Mathureśa? Tell me just how much you are willing to work at that kind of writing. I don't know.

The brilliant sunshine in the fields sparkling, all green, all traces of snow gone, all traces of bouncing moth-ball hailstones gone. Just sparkling green meadows two days before St. Patrick's and one day before Gaura-Pūrṇimā.

Yes, tomorrow is Lord Caitanya's birthday. We will not have festivities with the community here because they are going to do that on Friday. But we will completely fast tomorrow until 4 P.M. and then break the fast. Other than that, I won't be doing anything in the way of observing the holiday. I think the Lord will forgive me provided I keep myself busily engaged.

Fiction write? Doesn't seem I want to do it. Don't want to hack it out. There was once a guy who wanted to get married, and bit by bit, he admitted it to his superior. No, I just can't get into that crap. At least not right now. But I'm willing to have fun and keep reading the stories of this master, Chekov, and maybe a few others. All lost and by the wind grieved . . . I'm a poet

betimes, and *that* I like to do enough to try my hand at it every day.

Maybe in the same way, a little bit each day, just say fifteen minutes in a separate notebook, you could make a few notes toward a story. What's the harm? It won't mar this one. And you can see where it may lead you.

M. said, "Why not talk out this resistance to story-writing?" What is there to say? I want to keep gabbing. But I have a little voice of doubt—you see it often in these pages—that maybe I could do something better. But then this is me, the whole me, and what could be better? This is a wild garden and I am asserting and learning how to shape it and present it. My own rough hewn kind of art. You may call it a non-art, an excuse by one who cannot knuckle down to write. Maybe. But I imagine two writers in a room and one had deep convictions to write his own kind of nonfiction. He might say, "I'd never write fiction. It's a lie. Why make up stories? As Thoreau said, why create a hero? Why not write of the actual hero you are each day?" And the other writer in the room is a dedicated fiction writer. And he says, "Why stay limited to your own little life? How self-centered! By fiction, I'm able to explore many lives and express much more, and whatever I say is just as true as you with your own one life and ego-centered prose." So they would argue, and it's not that one is right and the other is wrong, but they have different dedications.

Trust the unconscious. Keep writing while you can. This is your story.

Once there was a black fist and he drank too much. He capsized over onto his wife and she said, "Get the hell out of here." He didn't know that he was about to die.

No, you can't write stories that way. You first start and then stop and you have to do it all in a separate notebook. I told you it could begin with, "How about a story of two devotees on *saṅkīrtana*?" Or, "What would you like to write?" Then I might answer, "I don't want to write any fiction. It would have to be very close to fact." I might consider it again as in my story, "A Trip to Spain," where I wrote of a visiting *sannyāsi*. It would have to be something like that. You see? Huh?

It would have to be tongue-in-cheek because I am, and loping and about the struggle to become Kṛṣṇa conscious because nothing else is important to me. The man who didn't attend meetings because he gets headaches. The man who talked with his secretary all day in the office of the Centennial headquarters. No, not that one, censor it. The story of the masturbator who couldn't get initiated. Tell of other people's problems. No, no, a thousand times, no. But this facing yourself and saying, "I don't want to be a story-writer," does it diminish you for this timed book of whatever comes?

Maybe, but I told you I wanted to say what actually comes to mind. Let me look at cues I wrote this morning to prepare myself for this chapter. One says, "No secrets. Tell us what you are doing and thinking, who you are and where you've been and where you are going. Tell us what has influenced you and then you can separate that from who you are aside from the influences. Your Kṛṣṇa consciousness and your spiritual master . . . please go on with this nice book."

When the eyes lose their power to see color or form due to morbid affliction of the optic nerve, the sense of sight becomes deadened. The living entity, who is the seer of both the eyes and the sight, loses his power of vision. In the same way,

when the physical body, the place where perception of objects occurs, is rendered incapable of perceiving, that is known as death. When one begins to view the physical body as one's very self, that is called birth.

Therefore, one should not view death with horror nor have recourse to defining the body as soul, nor give way to exaggeration in enjoying the bodily necessities of life. Realizing the true nature of a living entity, one should move about in the world free from attachment and steadfast in purpose.

—*Bhāg.* 3.31.46, 47

purport:

A sane person who has understood the philosophy of life and death is very upset upon hearing of the horrible, hellish condition of life in the womb of the mother or outside of the mother. But one has to make a solution to the problems of life. . . . Without being unnecessarily upset, he should try to find out if there is a remedy

Endowed with right vision and strengthened by devotional service and a pessimistic attitude toward material identity, one should relegate his body to this illusory world through his reason. Thus one can be unconcerned with this material world

—*Bhāg.* 3.31.48

Dear oyster lovers, you should give up eating other living entities. Dear hail stores and people who live in glass houses. The guy who brought the coal here, the Irish army practicing with their feeble guns. The newspaper writers in Dublin trying to cash in on the international world events coming from England. Ireland makes its own news, yes. And the news, the broken and amputated leg. You should be grateful for the *karmis* for

keeping banks of livers in case you need one and bottles of blood in your type. They are the ones who would keep you living if you had a breakdown. You make fun of altruists and police and people like that, but they will keep you living. Oh, is that true? I thought it all happened under the power of God.

My Smith and Wessen rifle. My Nike shoe. I wanted to tell you more of Guyana, just the wonder to have been there. I drew a picture of me "hanging in in Guyana," smiling and holding up a bottle of Tropical Mist mineral water. You live comfortably enough using up money and life support systems they've provided you. Because you have heard and been trained by Śrīla Prabhupāda, they gather to hear you but they didn't change their ways.

That one lady, Bhaktin Sandra, was with her husband, but then she left for another person. Could you tell that in a short story? I could, but what's the use? I don't care, it's too slow, it's too hard. Okay, don't keep moaning about it then.

You seem to have harmed your own flow in this chapter by this. I'd like you to get focused as you were freer flowing this morning. Maybe you should just retire from it for the day and go on to other tasks. I do believe in you and I know you'll have plenty to say in the morn.



Chapter Eleven

Holy Gaura-Pūrṇimā

Holy Gaura-Pūrṇimā. In cold bathroom hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda's wonderful lecture from October 1966. He was convincing us there is a spiritual world. He said it is unmanifest (*akṣura*), but we have a feeling for it, at least. Just as when you become quiet and think to yourself, "Am I this leg? Am I this foot?" You will say, "No, I am something else." He brought it so close. He said it such a nice thing. Convinced us there is a spiritual world. He said, "What if you heard there was a country, and if you went there, there would be no birth or death, you'd be always happy? You'd think, 'Yes, this is my heart's desire, I will go there.' "

He said you must have faith or you can't move an inch even in ordinary affairs. If you hear that by Air India or Pan American Airlines you can go to India, you have faith in it because they are reputable companies and their planes are regularly flying. Actually if you get on board the plane the next day, you will get down (in India). So we must have faith, but not blind. Have faith in something respectable. As far as India is concerned, *Bhagavad-gītā* is accepted as authority by 100% of the people, whether atheists or theists. And outside of India . . . he kept pouring it on, one nice proof after another. Yes, we do have a feeling for the spiritual, we do have faith and we ought to have faith in the authority. I took it up and repeated it to my Lower East Side friends, on whose ears it fell like sound on deaf men. Nevermind . . .

Happy Gaura-Pūrṇimā, keep writing your nonfictional odes. I was reading *The Nectar of Devotion*, all the miraculous effects of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. (In a lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda said you can't know God's name or form by speculation but by books of knowledge. We cry to him, "Please accept me," and he reveals himself. Even a little of Kṛṣṇa consciousness lifts us up from the ocean of birth and death.) By Kṛṣṇa consciousness, He can be known, by accepting the books of knowledge and by no other way.

The miraculous effects—if you enter the temple of Viṣṇu, you won't have to enter the womb of a mother for another birth. If you take three drop of *carnāmṛta*, you will feel transcendental bliss. If you take the flower garland that was worn by the Lord, you will enter the kingdom of God. Just bow down, smell the *tulasī*, smell the incense offered to the Lord, these things will each bring you to the perfect state. They are not wild claims. These are the effects.

Lord Caitanya was praised by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī. He was full of faith and devotion. He heard daily from Raghunātha Gosvāmī who spoke with tears in his eyes. O Lord Caitanya is the only hope for those who are fallen. Lord Caitanya gave what Lord Kṛṣṇa hesitated to give in *Bhagavad-gītā*. He is the most munificent of all the incarnations.

Hundreds of thousands of people will gather in Bengal, in Navadvipa, in Māyāpur, at the ISKCON Chaitanya Chandradaya Mandir. They will see the large forms of Rādhā and Mādhava and the *aṣṭa-sakhis*. The GBC will be there and ordinary devotees from Russia and Estonia and Brooklyn, some. And the GBC resolutions will be read and the fasting will go on until the

moonrise. I am here in Wicklow hills and don't feel isolated from the spirit of Lord Caitanya or His mercy. I peered through the wet, cold glass on the porch and saw to the source of light rays in the sky—to the full moon. It looked like a face with an "O" for a mouth and a little sad, the face in the moon. The moon signifies the Lord appeared on this day. We will fast and have *kirtana*, not much of specific ritual, but I will be content to walk and talk of Prabhupāda and to write here—all glories to Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda.

Graffiti for the Lord under this bridge.

O exclusive shelter for all who are situated in troubled life, in this formidable fort of conditional existence the time element, like a snake, is always looking for an opportunity to strike.

—*Bhāg.* 4.7.28

My Lord, since *brahmānanda* is also defeated by the transcendental bliss derived from devotional service, then what to speak of the temporary blissfulness of elevating oneself to the heavenly planets, which is ended by the separating sword of time?

—*Bhāg.* 4.9.10

My dear Dhruva, the Supreme Personality of Godhead is ever existing, but in the form of time, He is the killer of everything. He has no beginning, although He is the beginning of everything, nor is He ever exhaustible, although everything is exhausted in due course of time.

—*Bhāg.* 4.11.19

Actually, you have not killed the Yakṣas, nor have they killed your brother, for the ultimate

cause of generation and annihilation is the eternal time factor of the Supreme Lord.

—*Bhāg.* 4.12.3

That's it, Lord Kṛṣṇa is time and is killing everyone but He can save you and you can go to eternal time. He is the respectable authority on whom we must have faith. Please Lord, just as in my dream last night where I felt I was at the edge of a cliff and about to fall over and die, yet I trusted if it were to happen I'd consign myself to the protection of the Lord—so without fear I call out to you from the soul. Please protect the *bhakti* instilled in me by your pure devotee. I cling to that time when he came to us and the fact that he picked me up. O Lord, Your pure devotee is Prabhupāda.

May he always be remembered by his good servitors.

May Lord Caitanya dance in the hearts and homes of people all over the world, as taught in *Caitanya-carit-āmṛta* presented by our spiritual master. No one can do it as charmingly and convincingly as he. He is the one who is empowered to place Lord Caitanya's lotus feet in the hearts of people everywhere. Just as he convinced us in America in 1966.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare.

It's cold and you are prompted to type fast and stay awake. I could not sleep last night. I was thinking of these nice activities today and here I am, a nonfictive fool, a non-expect, not a master like Chekov or Henry James. I am the fool, Adam's apple and *goruḥ-guru*, the one who wants nonviolence and yet doesn't work as hard as he could, who is afraid that if he fasts he'll get a headache, who would like to weigh more than 120 pounds—in short, he who thinks he is the body, the greatest fool. But Lord Caitanya is like the moon who

shines even in the courtyard of the *caṇḍala*. He has come to us by the grace of His pure devotee.

I've got my own truth to sing, poet-say, my own Pulitzer Prize Mary Oliver in *Black Water Woods*. She says, "But this too:/the little words/leaping up like hairs!"

Yes, I know what that is. Now don't get carried away, drunken sailor. Forget your nights. You go to bed by 7 P.M. so you can get up early. You are not proud that so many words come. It is all due to Kṛṣṇa. Don't be immodest. Chekov said Dostoyevsky was immodest and pretentious to write such long books. But if you are in a line of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then you have a lot more to say.

It is not immodest. Kṛṣṇa is endless and on Gaura-Pūrṇimā who will stay silent? Rise up, cold spirit, feel your pulse, hear your spiritual master speaking to you from a 1966 lecture and think, "Yes, this is it, he did it, he convinced me. This is a very sweet lecture, I should note this one and save it." But are they not all like this, if only I can hear? Oh, banish that stupid doubt and that dislike of the one who teaches you. There is nothing to dislike except your own dislike."

Use it up, burn up the coal and the air and the oxygen. But the love of God cannot be exhausted. Be kind to your flock and pupils and your master will be kind to you.

He said the prayer is, "Please accept me." The Lord is delighted if you think of Him in connection with one of His devotees as in the prayer, "*Ayi nanda-tanuja kīṅkaram*." He likes that. So you call out, "Please accept me," by chanting His holy names. The names and forms

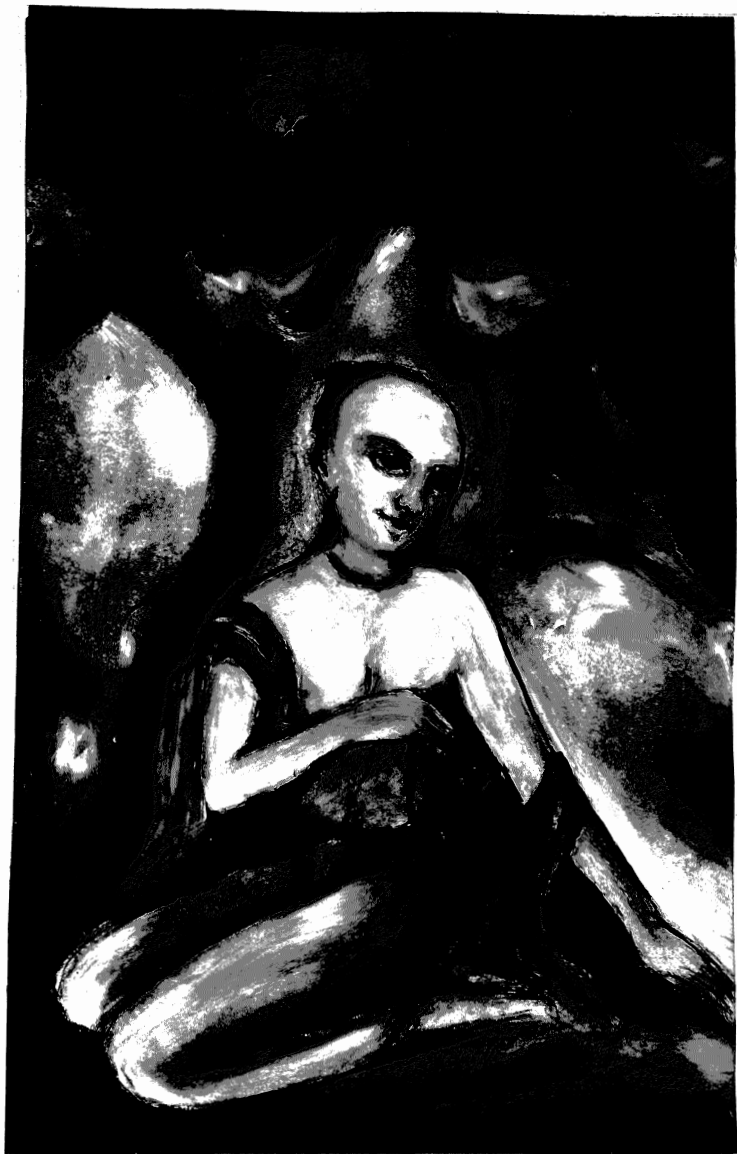
cannot be known by any other method. But He reveals them to one in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. What is Kṛṣṇa consciousness? It means to accept the Swami and believe what is stated in the books. The books of knowledge, that's Kṛṣṇa consciousness. No other way. It's true but not known by material experiment. What more proof do you want? Become a devotee and gradually you will see and know of the pure devotees in your midst.

Gaura-Pūrṇimā means spring is coming and you will be allowed to do wonderful things. I told a friend back in New York, "I love my life." But it's not me that's notable as life-loving. (I mean Kṛṣṇa-loving. He gives us the anticipation for going to Vṛndāvana, going to Italy, to write another story of white blossoms, in some mountain retreat like Cozille where you wrote another free-write book last year, *What Shall I Write?* and you agonized among the cherry trees and Śrīdāma dāsa couldn't speak English but wanted to make the *capātis* right, so the toothless guru could chew them.)

It is not me that has a big heart to say I am life-loving, and I don't mean the material world's opportunities—that would be illusion. But Kṛṣṇa is kind to give us a life in ISKCON with things to do in His service. This is delight, to have more to do . . .

This is Gaura-Pūrṇimā. I am excited by the possibilities of living a little longer and going to Scotland to chant sixty-four rounds a day. Very few will know of it. Listen, it doesn't seem possible to improve your *japa*. Well, anything is possible by the Lord's grace. Maybe the increase of quota will help. You've got to get to that point where you call out, "Just accept me." Don't fall into the mindless state. This isn't Zen or "non-Christian prayer." This is listening to God breathe His love

into you in His holy name. A life of brace as Caitanya wrought, fresh and mild, the Lord whose voice is like a lion to scare the elephantine vices, the Lord whose remembrance makes life easy, the kind Lord *sannyāsi* who sat alone chanting at Imlitala and then met hundreds of people in the afternoon, who loved to roam in Vṛndāvana re-meeting His old friends from when He was Kṛṣṇa the cowherd boy.



May you be happy feasting on air this day until the afternoon, if you can last that long. I wish you well, poet of no-story, may you cry to the moon a little dog, a *bhakti* fellow, your master won't forget you, all souls are graced by him. I praise his servants in ISKCON who preach so boldly and well organized, gathered now in Māyāpur and me aiming at the same moon.

Aiming at the same moon with a little "O"
a mouth of the moon is saying like that but not
like that painting, "The Scream."

It's just what I saw when I looked
this morning. They say there is a rabbit
in the moon. But it is increasing, by grace,
upon the people in the form of the *saṅkīrtana*
movement. It's up to His devotees to
spread as they do, making plans
by the Ganges. I bless by prayer
may all preachers become holy
and love the Lord
and learn to like each other.

Why do we have to quarrel?

Why not accept that all these folks
want to do something and me too?

We are here by his grace.

It is Gaura-Pūrṇimā and I am honored to speak
on the three aspects of Lord Caitanya as
I see it: 1) He is the inaugurator
of the *saṅkīrtana* movement by which He
danced in the streets in teenage
and defied the Kazi.

He is the ideal preacher of the *Bhāgavatam*.

A most learned scholar and we should follow Him.

And He is Kṛṣṇa coming in the form
of Rādhā to taste separation from Kṛṣṇa.

In Chapter 34 of Kṛṣṇa book
Prabhupāda says the spiritual master
should enrich
the disciples with separation from Kṛṣṇa.
Follow in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya.
But how to do that?

Oh, look at the moon
hear His *Bhāgavatam* don't try to belong
to this world.

Culture separation, the desire to meet
with the Lord. Chant your "empty" mantras and
realize that they are filling you up somehow.
Utter the cry, I want to be with Kṛṣṇa
if only He will teach me
how to be a better devotee.

You figured you could go a long way just on *japa*. Of course, *japa* is for yourself and *kirtana* is for others. But Prabhupāda said the most important rule is to chant sixteen rounds of *japa* everyday. That means we become strong in private practice and only then can we do outer things. I am advocating private practice. I love it. Give us a house on a farm road where no one knows. I will preach there, Listen my friends, we have come to hear and chant extra holy names. God is in His names. Let us pray, "Please accept me." Let's not fall asleep but chant and chant with desire for this prayer, "Please accept me."

I don't have any story. Once there was a boy who wore a Pittsburgh Pirates baseball cap because that team always lost in the 1950s. They were terrible but Ralph Kiner hit plenty of home runs for them. You can't remember more. Just as well.

Now go to your *gāyatri* and your morning walk is not far away. You have exhausted your present possibilities. I say enough and I appreciate it.

I am your friend. You are the friend for others. You have exhausted yourself. Now fall at the feet of Lord Caitanya. Be a park department worker in orange pants and green T-shirt and read the *Bhagavad-gītā* by the bath house. If you have to come back next life, I pray to be with devotees as soon as possible and remember to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Only then will it be bearable. That will be too much separation if we totally forget Prabhu-pāda. Please Lord, don't let that happen. How can we be thrown back into such darkness of forgetfulness? Please keep our remembrance constant. I see the point now—it doesn't matter where we live as long as we can remember You. And that requires the association of devotees who chant Your glories. I would rather be an ant than a Brahmā, if I can gain the association of pure devotees chanting Your glories. My Śrīla Prabhupāda, may I remember him and at the time of death stay steady, chant, "Please accept me, please engage me in your service."

Chapter Twelve

It is Gaura-Pūrṇimā. I heard a relaxation tape. He said, "Every day in every way I am gaining more control." I thought, "Wait a minute, do I want this more control?" Yes, in the sphere where I can control. But they should make a tape for devotees where you program yourself, "Every day in every way I am letting Kṛṣṇa gain control over my life." I visualize myself chanting with more access. I see myself sitting and chanting and entering the hearing of the holy name. I am reading *The Nectar of Devotion* and not just mentally noticing things in a bored or feeble, nondevotional way, but I am experiencing it as nectar. I am building my desire to serve the Lord and Śrīla Prabhupāda by participating in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement's crusade to inject Kṛṣṇa consciousness into everyone. Yes, yes, that would be nice.

At 12:30 noon we went into the little temple room of this cottage and sang together. After a half hour, I said, "If I chant anymore, I will start to feel strain." Then I looked up in a letters book for what Prabhupāda says about observance of Gaura-Pūrṇimā. He said that when the moon comes out you can break fast as we do on Ekādaśī. So M. said, "But they have been cooking for us non-Ekādaśī." I said . . . He said, "But they will have only one preparation then."

"Oh well, maybe you can cook a second," I said. He said, "I already cooked a sweet for today." I said, "We can take it tomorrow." He smiled and said, "Yes, it is St. Patrick's Day."

Every day in every way you on a tropical beach (what do you mean, like Guyana and any minute the jumbos are gonna come and check the white men on their beach and say, "Hey mon, what are you doing here?"). No, a tropical island of the mind-imagination, and it is deserted and you are at peace with your environment. Again I say let us Kṛṣṇa-ize that scene. You are preaching. Or you are at your desk writing a successful chapter of this book. How does it look? It looks very readable for the future. Like *Letters From a Sannyāsi* and poignant expression of devotion to Prabhupāda and you are in his presence and he tells you what to do. It is something that you can actually do, a way you can participate and help other people in their efforts to become Kṛṣṇa conscious.

Ah yes, I visualize I am breaking the fast (this is not being told to me by a man with a gruffy-gentle voice and British accent), but I am saying it nonetheless, that when we eat we think of Kṛṣṇa, we actually offer the food first to our Guru Mahārāja and think that it is for him. He will eat and that is as good as offering it to Kṛṣṇa. When you eat something after offering it to him, it is *mahā-mahā-prasādam*. I don't know how it works, but you give it to guru and it works.

Bhagavad-gītā, The Nectar of Devotion. I see myself being a better student of these books. Please, master, let it happen that I allow you to take charge of my life as fully as possible. The free will of the living entity, dovetailed in the service of the Lord.

Yes, and time enters, time is Kṛṣṇa and takes away your life. You feel feeble physically when you raise to a standing position because you are growing older. Your body is feeling a little lighter now because you have not eaten? Yes, I guess so.

This is the ever-ready present. This is the feeble capacity. It depends on how you look at things. You don't want to be one-sided and sentimental such as thinking that material nature is all benevolent. One living entity crams another down its maw for daily sustenance. It is a cruel, clawing place. You are able to live a little longer . . . but you kill inadvertently. The Hare Kṛṣṇa mantras can save you from sins.

I told you we would go for a week in Scotland to increase our *japa*, four of us. While chanting, singing at noon in this temple room, I thought maybe we could do *kirtana* there too. I need *kirtana* reform. But after a half hour, my back began to ache and I knew I couldn't go much further without feeling something which would creep to the region of the eye. Your dream of long, long *kirtanas* with the light in the room changing and time seems to stand still—and the issues of the day fade and all purposes for which things were made—like the hand puppets on the wall in this room—seem of little consequence as you take time out to only chant and pray, which you should do. You chant as a Vaiṣṇava should on this Gaura-Pūrṇimā, the way to worship Gaurahari.

The weather is changing. It is cold and the heat from the coal stove is filling this room. I open the window. The sunlight comes out at this moment and shines upon the wet limbs of the trees and the wind shakes the limbs . . . I see the inverted bowl of one hill, green layers, land divided by stone walls, some green and some brown, it is March the month of many weathers. See the low stone walls.

Why hasn't Bhaktin B. written to me that she would like initiation from me? Is something happening with

her? Of course, it's happening to everyone. They are filing in and out of the temple room at Bhaktivedanta Manor. And the GBC meetings are over in Māyāpur and the members are getting their rides back to Calcutta. So many plane flights to far-flung places of the world. One goes back to Japan by the quickest route, one back to where, to U.S., Śeṣa Prabhu returning to Baltimore, he has new added duties. He said he was in the temple one day (he told me) while the *ārati* was going on, in Māyāpur, and a voice sort of spoke to him and said, "Prabhupāda wants competent persons to push forward this movement. It is a very valuable movement and competent persons should help. So you are competent, why don't you come forward and assist?" He is acting on that.

What has a special voice told me?

Yesterday we discussed about fiction. But now it has ebbed away. I am back at this reality plugging away. One wants to be a devotee. The morning walks are bliss, don't forget it. You started out of the house this morning at 6 A.M. with sufficient light, the red light on your dictaphone shone brightly and you saw—ah, this is precious, I am again starting a walk and will be talking freely on Śrīla Prabhupāda. It is one of those delicious sessions of the morning walk where I add to and am enabled to—in this case, talk freely of him—and it will come out. It is good to do this, go down the rocky road alone and I will not meet anyone, talk to heart's content getting at good stuff, this too is reality.

So I don't go out and meet people in the streets, and I don't sit in at meetings anymore with heavier God-brothers and hear them analyze the latest predicaments to get people to agree on something and guide our soci-

ety right against its enemies. So I prefer to worship alone. That doesn't mean I cannot add to this movement. Yes, but be aware you are just in one little corner.

What does she want, Mary Oliver, desiring the impossible? She says it was not impossible. You listen to her poem and think this is far out. She is able to say things people normally are not able to say. She is able to see into her own life and through nature, she sees secrets. She says:

Whoever I am, it is for mere appearance's sake,
It is for coin and foolishness,
and I am thinking of something better.
. . . Truly this is the poem worth keeping.

A mossy house anyone with any sense would enter
as soon as the soul begins
to desire the impossible.

I know she would never accept a religion that gives you all the answers. She wants to be mistress who goes out on a little excursion and sees and hears the mockingbird singing imitation of many birds and then she draws a conclusion from it:

May I also bring to each blue and cloudy morning
a suitable exuberance, a few exact words
bowing and snapping.

She dreams of something impossible for her soul. What is that? To become a bird? To live forever? Maybe she dares to think in a wild moment that there is God, and Jesus is His eternal son and we can live forever. Something "impossible" like that. Maybe she daydreams she can become a nun of a religion. But she would abandon that. She mostly wants to be a poet, a poet, to enter the natural world fully like the birds and animals and ponds and trees and live in them and speak

as a poet of those secrets and joys which they feel who are wild. She says:

Still, listen, I swear I have not set one word down
on top of another without
breathing into it!

I'm not going to make fun of her. I'd love to be able to write like that, but in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Yes, in Kṛṣṇa consciousness proclaim the full religion of *Bhāgavatam*. I will tell you how I came to accept it. I'd like to be able to convince people but more than that, let me be allowed to enter the *Bhāgavatam*'s spiritual world and become lost in love of guru and then whether I speak nicely or not it will be true and I'll act true, not just pile one word on top of another, I'll breathe life into it, I'll be a lover of *harināma* and preaching and have lots to tell you.

He forgets that before him is time, which is taking away his life span with the passing of day and night. He does not see the gradual diminishing of his life, nor does he care about the superintendent of death, who is trying to kill him from behind. Just try to understand this. You are in a precarious position and are threatened from all sides.

—*Bhāg.* 4.29.54

Nārada is telling the king. He tells a story in which time is the tiger coming to attack you, the deer. The longer story tells of Kālyakanyā and Jarā and the days and nights are personified examples to impress us how time is coming to steal and wrest away our enjoyable, illusory life.

My dear Lord, Your absolute authority cannot be directly experienced, but one can guess by seeing

the activities of the world that everything is being destroyed in due course of time. The force of time is very strong, and everything is being destroyed by something else—just as one animal is being eaten by another animal. Time scatters everything, exactly as the wind scatters clouds in the sky.

—*Bhāg.* 4.24.65

I am writing this for your benefit, dear reader and self. I don't expect you to flip out and run around scared, but be sober and don't waste time or remain in illusion about it while you fully absorb yourself in temporary things. We had better serve Kṛṣṇa with the things we are attached to and better than that, is to directly serve Him in *bhakti*.

Time creates illusions:

Everything happening within time, which consists of past, present, and future, is merely a dream. That is the secret understanding in all Vedic literature.

—*Bhāg.* 4.29.25

The actual reality is Kṛṣṇa only, devotional service. Thus the devotees are beyond time:

Simply by expansion of His eyebrows, invincible time personified can immediately vanquish the entire universe. However, formidable time does not approach the devotee who has taken complete shelter at Your lotus feet.

—*Bhāg.* 4.24.56

Spiritual assets are never lost. Yamarāja's men don't approach devotees. They take shelter in the Lord and whatever they do is protected by Him in devotional ser-

vice. Consider it, believe it. Study it more in these books and even before you fully realize it, write it down and tell us.

Will you give us your poem-song soon for this chapter? Yes, I had better. But do you want to? Well, some kind of walking alone.

From the top of the stairs I look down to him and say, "They are cooking for 4 P.M. but only now we have rediscovered that it can be only Ekādaśi preps. But you have said that means we get only soup today. So I'm asking you can you please go into the kitchen

and cook something else?" He looks up at me and I don't know for sure what he may do as I try to impress upon him that I want this.

It is my tongue speaking, sure, but I reason that I ought to be peaceful. After all, it was me who insisted on looking up in the letters book whether we are

supposed to eat only Ekādaśi foods after fasting on Gaura-Pūrṇimā. They were going ahead with plenty of grains and a special grains sweet. So I ought

to be commended as austere and faithful to guru *paramparā*.

Therefore what's the harm if from the top of the stairs I speak down one flight and ask for at least more than one prep? Just a soup after not eating all day, would leave me disappointed. Oh you poor thing.

Ramble and tell us another stanza's worth.

There is a grove where you can go
and chant in Vraja.

There is a girl or three or more who considers you
her guru, but some have gnawing doubts
why I always go through changes.

There is a grove in the mind where no girls stay
or if they do I see them as spirit souls
but better if I'm alone with a few monks and
we chant there in this grove where
there is a special

quality, where we are able to gain attention
to the holy names. That Dom said,

Don't ask for anything but
dryness and more dryness as this is your true home.
Be afraid of any ecstasy suddenly
visions or tears.

Well we don't say that is all but I
accept your point, stern teacher. It is good.
But not this deliberate
thinking of other things while you chant.

We are like tourists here, not the regular home owners of this cottage. I don't think they use up the bags of coal as quickly as we do. They say, "Oh, go ahead and do it." One reason is we are used to central heating. Also I get up at midnight when they are usually asleep and don't need the heat at that time. We demand hot, hot water, and in short, we demand a cozy situation and thus use up the coal that waited millions of years to form and the coal miners dug it out in Poland. No wonder they mocked the young Hare Kṛṣṇas' *harināma* party which paraded through their countryside. But when the cheerful ISKCON swami faced them and spoke hon-

est and was not afraid, they didn't mind him and they heard the chanting and didn't mock or threatened so much, so I have heard.

Coal mines

The tape said every day in every way you are calm, and to remind yourself of this message just touch your thumb to your forefinger and that will be your own special signal to call up from the unconscious the realization of relaxation that you have experienced by hearing this tape—or reading this book. Thus you will know.

On these October 1966 tapes, he is talking from the Eighth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*. You know, *paras tasmāt tu bhāva 'nyo . . .* there is a spiritual world. It is thrilling to hear it. I wrote on the cassette, "Great," so I could hear it again. The spiritual world is unmanifest, we say. That means there is a covering on top of the material sky and you can't see beyond it. Just as a local cloud prevents you from seeing the sun above in the sky. So we can get to see it. We are actually in the spiritual sky but the *mahā-tattva* is covering it. You can enter the activities of the spiritual world by hearing about them. On those planets, there is a liberation whereby one has the same form as the Lord, either two- or four-handed. One cannot tell the difference between Him and His eternal servitors. There are airplanes there. Goloka is the best. The scientists cannot know it. What can they know with their tiny sputniks? They cannot go to the nearest planet and what to speak of the spiritual world? But by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, the sound comes straight from Kṛṣṇaloka and you can receive it as we are doing.

I am glad to have discovered that series. I really like him to just go straight into the existence of the spiri-

tual world and defy the materialists who don't believe such things. I would not have believed, but when I met him and heard from him and saw the books, I decided to believe, or it was mercy on me that I began to.

Now I am feeling a little weak and hungry. I'll eat any damn thing they give me and find it palatable. But first hold your horses and offer it nicely to Prabhupāda. Don't ruin your life in any way.

I've been very conscious that I am writing my way through a chapter and looking for things to say. It may have to be this way. At least I turn to whatever's at hand, being honest about that relaxation tape, a kind of foolishness I mentioned. But it helps a giddy, weak fellow like me who cannot stand much exposure to the material world. Wants to live in his quiet way and yet be accepted as a preacher. You too.

When I speak of preaching to these householders, they too may get nervous and think, "What does he want us to do? Go on the street and sell books? How can we see our present lives as preaching?" That's the point, and I would like to help them with that.

We can both be more creative to find ways to preach even within our imposed or actual limits. Start by acknowledging it and desiring it and then by writing articles or baking cakes or just living a good example, but with that in mind, that I would like the people of the world to see the Hare Kṛṣṇas are not useless cultists who are trying to make conversions to their religion, but it is something noble and nice and normal and they can take to is. See our flower garden, our nice children, our schoolhouse, and inquire why we don't kill cows. See our well organized and sane community, the way we live is practical. I do believe that that would encourage

them and I will say it again tomorrow for my Gaura-Pūrṇimā talk. Say yes, this is preaching too. Lord Caitanya wanted *goṣṭhyānandīs* and this you are doing, living this way pragmatically, approaching economics, work, and family. I say that you should add to this the chanting and the reading. I am free from pressure to do this *bhajana*. I need to earn my own keep not just by eating but by speaking on behalf of Lord Hari. I thank Him for the writing arm and wish to make it acceptable in His service, confession, or whatever, all glories to Lord Caitanya who is Kṛṣṇa Himself, whom we worship by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare mantra, the *mahā-mantra*. I part from you with that. May you chant too, happy.

Chapter Thirteen

Happy St. Patrick's Day

Happy St. Patrick's day. I may have time today for only one chapter. I usually do two per day. We have to go at 3 P.M. over to Dāruka's house for the Gaura-Pūrṇimā festival. The children will put on a short play, Satsvarūpa will give a long lecture, and then a puppet show for about twenty minutes. On the way back, I may visit our van which is parked outside the schoolhouse. (The road leading to this cottage is too bad for the van to drive upon). So with all those activities this afternoon, I may not have energy to write the second chapter in the evening. Anyway, one is enough or whatever I can get.

The feast yesterday, yes, it turned out to be that—although it was all Ekādaśī preps. They came up with three different milk sweets and an apple chutney done by Madhu was excellent in combination with the potato pattie cakes that Patri's wife made and there was also a hot tomato soup and two different *sabjis*. I have no complaints and I offered it all to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Without him in his *mūrti* form, I'd feel lost, lost indeed.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma.

Literary ideas are exciting. You talk about Śrīla Prabhupāda on your walk and separately you do drawings of his *mūrti*, and then suddenly it flashes on you that you could bring these two together into a privately printed book (three copies as usual) and it would go together well.

But sometimes your flashes are not lasting, solid ideas.

How do you feel? I feel happy with life. I was so filled with it in the bathroom, anything I thought of felt good and a part of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I like what I am doing now but also feel, "Okay, when Kṛṣṇa takes all this away, I'll accept what He does next." The main thing is to think always of Kṛṣṇa. In one commentary by Śrīdhara Svāmī, he wrote, "O Lord, loving remembrance of Your lotus feet is rarely achieved. Please, O Nṛhari, arrange for me to have that remembrance day and night." To get the remembrance, maybe He would have to take away things you are doing now. You may have fun and be excited by your activities, but they may not be the best for promoting remembrance of Kṛṣṇa constantly. So then he prays, "You just arrange it so that I can always think of You." The phrase, "You just arrange it," implies that Kṛṣṇa has a free hand—the devotee wants the Lord to fully use that power in his life—to take away whatever is an impediment to constant thinking of Kṛṣṇa. It is a daring prayer. What if one thinks too much of his wife and children or his literary plans? The Lord may take them away and say, "Don't blame Me, *babu*, you asked for it." We will cry but then realize we have what we really want, the remembrance of the Lord. You are distracted during *japa*. You don't know the name is the Lord, you don't know what is the glory of the Lord who is so easily present as Nāma Prabhu. You don't know. But you can pray to Him to please arrange it.

So feeling good, yes. I want to come here and express some of it. This dirigible chapter contains the latest,

creative expression allowed by the Lord. We read in *The Nectar of Devotion* that you don't need renunciation or knowledge. You just need devotion. Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna, "I will you because you are My devotee and friend." That's all that is needed.

Devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Someone attained perfection by hearing about Him, and someone else had more of a taste for chanting His glories. Both attained perfection. Be absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness in some way and give, give.

Since there is no sunshine in those subterranean planets, time is not divided into days and nights, and consequently fear produced by time does not exist.

—Bhāg. 5.24.11

That is the illusion in the subterranean planets, that everything is all right. You don't get wrinkles or smell bad, you can have sex and maybe even be religious and live a long, long time without noticing the days and nights are passing. You are not afraid of that. But better to be afraid. Look, Frank Sinatra got so old, no hair, no teeth, no nothing, it will happen to you? Did you see the photo of William Burroughs in 1995 on the back of his book? Who is going to save those guys from hell? It is the devotees of Kṛṣṇa who have that responsibility. They're working against time. They are sincere workers going to the battle fronts, borders of war-torn countries, risking life saying, "We have to get over to deliver Food For Life," and they deliver the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and Prabhupāda's books in the same way. These are *sankirtana* stories. Did you see that one about the Druze people in north Israel? Yeah, I looked through it. Not so much of a book, but first-class service to the Lord

they did. One devotee went right up to a butcher who stood in the worst neighborhood on the street holding his bloody chopper in hand. The devotee started speaking to him, aware that one wrong word or one wrong move and he could be killed.

The sleeping condition means loss of knowledge. . . . "What is night for all beings is the time of awakening for the self-controlled." Even in the higher planets, everyone is under the spell of the illusory energy. . . . The sleeping condition, called *kāla-sarpa* (the time factor), keeps the conditioned soul in a state of ignorance, and therefore pure consciousness is lost.

—*Bhāg.* 5.13.9, purport

I once asked Madhu what this typewriter sounds like in the next room. "Like a machine gun," he said. Sorry about that that I have to shoot holes in the false theories of atheists. Shoot down many. I don't mean the Lord's servant, *Māyā-devī*, and neither could I shoot her if I tried. But her representatives in this world, the false theorists, I shoot them down with bullets of logic and love, kill them with the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and *prasādam*. I don't know.

The time factor is covering me too. Shoot thy own self, thy false self, and die and live again. The sleeping condition. You get glimpses of being awake and what it could mean, pure love, and you could help others.

Play them the tape of Prabhupāda giving a *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* class in the morning at 26 Second Avenue. It gives you a look into the life of those days. He said God provides. We have hundred pound bags of rice and wheat in our stock. No one else has such a stock in their kitchen. So Kṛṣṇa has provided, it is not just a story.

The Swami had those sacks donated to him and he cooked *prasādam* for many.

Then he asked if we knew the twenty-six qualities of a devotee which he had given to us on a piece of paper. "Do any of you know?" he asked. We were silent. Someone said that he could get it on the piece of paper and look at it. Prabhupāda said, "That is not good. You should not say that you have knowledge somewhere in a book or on a paper, but it should be in your mind and heart. You are all missing," he said, "so how could you become saintly persons?" He taught us, took charge, and reprimanded us. Then he went over the qualities and said, "You can test yourself whether you are becoming a devotee by whether you are attaining these . . . silent, expert, poet, doesn't eat more than is required . . . Don't talk too much unless you talk about Kṛṣṇa."

Sovereignty over the three worlds is very insignificant because whatever material opulence one may possess lasts only for an age of Manu which is but a tiny fraction of endless time.

—*Bhāg.* 5.24.24

purport:

Time is unsurmountable. The time one is allotted, even if it be millions of years, is quickly gone.

I think I'm doing all right when I write quickly and a lot. Just see, I didn't waste my time. I made a hundred books that people can read. But then I'll have to leave the scene and not be able to taste the good (or bad) results of that hasty composition. You used your time well or not? Not well enough. Did you concentrate on the holy names and preaching? Or did you just run

around like a chicken with its head cut off (as we say in horrific, ordinary speech)?

Oh, I just ran around, I did wrong things. Bali Mahārāja pitied Indra for wasting his time in engaging Vamanadeva in getting back Indra's kingdom for him. He should have asked to render him loving service. A waster of time. Dear Lord, give me back my heavenly kingdom. But what will you do with the heavenly kingdom? You will reign there and then have to die. Do something that won't be a cause of lamentation when you die soon enough and all the material things are taken from you. Before your allotted time runs out, achieve *bhakti*. *Bhaja Govinda, bhaja Govinda*, you scholarly fools.

The personal weapon used by Lord Kṛṣṇa, the disc, is called *hari-cakra*, the disc of Hari. This *cakra* is the wheel of time. It expands from the beginning of the atoms up to the time of Brahmā's death, and it controls all activities. It is always revolving and spending the lives of the living entities, from Lord Brahmā down to an insignificant blade of grass. Thus one changes from infancy, to childhood, to youth and maturity, and thus one approaches the end of life. It is impossible to check this wheel of time. This wheel is very exacting because it is the personal weapon of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Sometimes the conditioned soul, fearing the approach of death, wants to worship someone who can save him from imminent danger. Yet he does not care for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose weapon is the indefatigable time factor. The conditioned soul instead takes shelter of a man-made god described in unauthorized scriptures. Such gods are like buzzards, vultures, herons and crows. Vedic scriptures do not refer to them. Imminent death

is like the attack of a lion, and neither vultures, buzzards, crows nor herons can save one from such an attack. One who takes shelter of unauthorized man-made gods cannot be saved from the clutches of death.

—*Bhāg.* 5.14.29

Slow down, Moses, adjust your sights. Is the lamp light in the right place? Is your seat comfortable? Your back not straining? Don't do something thoughtless that may bring a headache because you are scheduled to lecture this afternoon. Don't lust after prunes and almonds. Just stay calm. Don't be in a hurry to spend money for transatlantic phone calls just because you've got some bright ideas to convey to your publishers. Hold on, Moses, hold on. Calm down to the rear end of utterance and . . .

Wait a minute, I've got to sing. What are you telling me, to bank my fires?

I'm just saying be careful.

Okay, okay.

Mary Oliver can play magic, feeling in words. She writes a poem of the hottest day. She thought of a knoll where she could go and sit under the pines and maybe a breeze would come out of the bog. But when she got there, she saw a beautiful woman was already lying there casually, just where she wanted to sit. Then:

"Don't move I said
but she rose up
on her pretty hooves
at the sound of my voice
and heavily
and with sorrow and with panic
she vanished

into the trees.”

That's the end of one poem which she has numbered as #10. And then immediately you get this three-liner as poem #11:

Each moment has been so slow and so full
and so drenched with sweetness and my life
has gone by so fast.

There you have it again, the time factor. It steals the life of Indra in heaven, and a little human poet feels it too. She looks and feels keenly and so naturally, she notices this. While observing her beloved nature, the birds and deer and the perceptions she has as a sophisticated human, and while setting down the wonderful moment in words so well chosen that she wins all the national book awards, she nevertheless loses her life in the process. Was it worth it? Would it have been better to become something else, a Kṛṣṇa conscious person? But she doesn't know what that is. No one could reach her in Provincetown or Breyer, Virginia. No one. We are the cultists and don't have access.

I promised that in every chapter
I'd write some divided lines.
Poets serve in time, the biggest carton.
We seek big cartons for books or
sturdy ones with tops to store things in
but the biggest container is time.
It is sturdy but also fluid and invisible
and tricks everyone. They didn't notice, they said.
How could we fail to notice? Did you lose count?
Were the numbers so high in your annual
rate of mortality? Fifty-five years old, I keep saying
as if that will keep me alive.
Looking in the mirror a glance, say, “Hey,

you still look pretty good, well-
preserved, no slack skin on face."

An old man in an earnest moment
looks good in a photo, more handsome than ever,
that's if you don't pay attention to
his dimming eyes and false teeth.

Yeah, an old man can look keen and fierce
and wise, look in his eyes
there's that beauty.

All this nonsense.

Time time

and sometimes you get tired of talking about it.

Always deaf and you don't even mean it.

Speaking nervously. So better talk of life
and make poems of *Nectar of Devotion*
summaries.

The Lord teaches the importance
of reading. It's guru, *śāstra*, and *sādhu*,
these three, keep always
and your life will be sublime

"Here is our card, please come

to our Sunday feast. Just from milk alone
we can make hundreds of tasty preparations
from grains and vegetables and fruits.

Please come and hear *Bhagavad-gītā* philosophy
and see the imperfect youngsters and oldsters
of your country and race

who have taken to Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Yes, it is very nice. Nicer
than anything you've got."

I went over my Lord Caitanya lecture outline with
M. He said I don't have to apologize when I speak of
Lord Caitanya as the inaugurator of *saṅkīrtana*. Don't

think the devotees here will be intimidated. They want to hear what Prabhupāda preaches straight. They can apply it in their own way. Also when you speak of Lord Caitanya in the mood of Rādhārāṇī in separation from Kṛṣṇa, get ready for a question. He will ask, "How can we apply this?" Say yes, we cannot do *rāgānugā-bhakti*, but it is good to hear of this ultimate state of Lord Caitanya's demonstration. I will not back away from it because it is part of His life.

I wrote myself this cue for this chapter: "Write on, write free-write, the chapters don't have to be conservative. Don't always think I am writing to get through this one and it's a struggle to reach eight pages, but let hell break loose, write whatever comes and steer to Kṛṣṇa."

Wow, you mean that, bubby, let hell break loose? You don't mean the Satanic realm, do you? That is forgetfulness of God. It's against God consciousness. I don't want to release that kind of poison into my book.

I didn't mean that. I mean from your own pious life let "hell" break loose. I still am not sure I want to do that.

Besides, as I indicated above, I am an old man, and when I start jogging even in writing (while sitting motionless), it threatens to give me a headache and I don't want to cancel my social-spiritual duties later in the day. Therefore you've got to slow down and relax in writing sometimes.

You see, you can't do so many push-ups or exercises and talk for many hours and write like crazy, hell break loose, or listen to jazz drums and bass. You need rest.

Read that story, "The Schoolmaster." He was going to die in a week yet he went to the annual school party. The poor guy was such an arrogant and unpleasant bastard even at the end of his life. Chekov leaves it for you to judge. But why tell the story anyway? Human folly is what it is. We want to hear of someone's receiving God consciousness, otherwise the same thing, dying and people becoming enemies and the story grabbing you and even the dramatic artist telling of this expertly, it's not going to help you. Therefore I as a writer have the responsibility to give Kṛṣṇa consciousness at every step. The purpose of all works culminates in glorifying Kṛṣṇa. That's what you have to learn. Kṛṣṇa is the cowherd boy who rules the universe. He allowed Dhruva to take control of the time factor while he was in charge of the pole star just to glorify His devotee, but actually Kṛṣṇa is always in charge of it.

Now what more are you going to say? What more in this time?

So my friend, this is Albert Smith ad libbing on the stage of the Burlesque theater. In his last speech, he says, "Beware the Ides of March." This is St. Pat in New York City on the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral. As the parade draws near, a big helium balloon of Pepsi Catwaller is in the sky over 5th Avenue and Hare Kṛṣṇa is not there today but huddling in the halls of Sophie Tucker Memorial Hall which is now their temple room in Brooklyn. The devotees are chanting, however, and therefore upholding the city.

Allen Ginsburg is there no more. But the Swami is here in *vāṇī*. He didn't leave, he didn't leave. Remember those ambitious devotees who would like to stage something in 1996 as big as the St. Patrick's Day parade?

But they won't be able to do it. That's what I said. I am always skeptical and the small-timer. I was on the side of those who did not want the Swami to attend the Cosmic Love-In or to go to San Francisco. I wanted him safe and sound just giving lectures especially in the morning on *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, just for us. I am that kind of closed-door devotee, I want intimate settings. When he told me that someone promised to give ISKCON land in Alaska, I smiled in disbelief and he shared that point of view with me, showing that he also scarcely believed it. But on other occasions, he praised devotees like Śyāmasundara who tried to do utopian things for Kṛṣṇa. Why not? Kṛṣṇa can do anything.

So on this day, I will walk and talk and I too have ambitions as big as the house. I too want to glorify Kṛṣṇa and call this to your attention. I hope the devotees don't split a gut. I hope that everyone will realize their potential.

End this with Śrīdhara Svāmi's prayer, remembrance of the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord is rare, so please, Lord, arrange that I may have it. What does it mean in my case and in your case? This book is full of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, not just in the book, but in your heart. Swami says it has to be remembered by you not kept in a separate file. But when that is not possible, then keep reading. We are at least in touch with the mantra and the teachings of the guru and *sāstra* and Kṛṣṇa, the words at least are purifying us.

A horse I see alone every day in the field. And nicely built horses rode by poor people in Guyana. They have their wealth of the tropic weather. You could live there and write sincerely finding Kṛṣṇa in your life if they will leave you alone. You'll make a book, take you in a boat up the river to the forest, and from there you'll

send back what you write. Time I am, said Kṛṣṇa, here to end this chapter.

Part II

Chapter Fourteen

Starting the second week of this project. I could have written so many things, I was thinking of it in the bathroom before coming here. Now my options are closing out. You can say I am alone but not lonely. You can say I sat and drew another wood-like portrait of the Prabhupāda *mūrti*. And it is the 18th of March and I am an artist. I am a devotee. It is serious business to worship. We are keeping Prabhupāda as our best friend. But we do not know him. We don't know who we are. Now I am sliding down into the current of writing what comes and that seems the best.

Earliest memories hiding inside the foyer or front hall of one of the buildings on 76th Street looking out at a big dog but terrified to go out there. Why so afraid? The dog won't bite you, but maybe he will. Dogs were not friendly to little kids. Little kids are small, they can't defend themselves and a dog might look big indeed to a little fellow. Imagine a big Doberman or Great Dane!

But I overcame that fear pretty much, one of the big psychological victories of my life. Others were not so easy to overcome.

You casted away the effluvia of past life. What is the use of recalling it? I want to be who I am. You mean a whole human being now. But that fellow, well adjusted as he may be, will have to die. Better you discover the spiritual self.

Is he someone, something described in Vedic literature? Another living entity? A Vaiṣṇava aspirant? Is he the fellow who surrendered to his guru, that story we

tell? Oh, what is the truth? And what does it matter? We have to get ourselves together, as we say in 1990s jargon. Get it together. Pull together your disparate parts and pull on your pants and don't pull your pecker. Pull rank. Shit on the house. The house is burning. Chagall has left a ladder to the roof and we don't know how to get down because . . .

That rational approach to the liquidation of the promise to forebear bluffing prose. Write another sentence like that. How much bluff is going on? And we sat on the sofa and watched the children's play yesterday. I am being a good reporter to tell you, dear reader. I've told this story before.

We are in Ireland. Sometimes you do something because you are not patient enough. You could just watch the smoke coming up from the chimney of a neighboring house and watch the sky. Why do you feel you always have to get into action and draw another picture? Or when you go to draw one, why does it have to be the one you see before you instead of the one inside you?

What matters is *paramparā* and honesty and the cutting edge of a good art (like a good tobacco smoke), a good savoring art to impart to the folks as music from the flutist's pit.

Tell us what you read, Henry, in your own *Nectar of Devotion* reading. Well, it was very good, thank you. I did not win the Nobel Prize this year. It was awarded to Toni Morrison, and now it is 1995 and you have to give another. I dreamt Brahmānanda dāsa said I was supposed to raise a great deal of money for Prabhupāda's movement. I said I didn't remember making such a promise. But I guess he was right. He was right.

The Nectar of Devotion told about ecstasy and the words are kept mostly in English so we don't know how it corresponds with the actual science Rūpa Gosvāmī taught. One of our Godbrothers may enlighten us on that score. But my intention is to read *NOD* as our spiritual master gave it.

I read you cannot imitate *rāgānugā-bhakti*. It means to be spontaneously attracted to the ways of serving Kṛṣṇa as is eternally followed by a resident of Vṛndāvana. The conjugal path is highest, but the least likely that you can approach until you are free from all sex desires. Otherwise, don't attempt it. Execute regulative duties and gradually you will come to the higher state. You don't have to falsely stimulate it.

I also thought I should be careful to show respect for Godbrothers even if I prefer not to be with them. Don't claim, "I don't want to be with them because they are not advanced souls." But it's just the way it is.

Now honky-dory always wants to tell some stories of his imagination or his whatever you call it. I said I will give him a half hour a day later today. So many projects, we can't fit them all in. The devotees here in Wicklow said I don't have to meet with them again until a week. That suits me. I want to get into the life of writing and reading, just plugging away at it without designating that it is this or that. Take the most advantage of this retreat in that way. Can you bear the crunch of living in the present?

I am not a aviator. I am not a student of Reserve Officer Candidate. They had this simulated thing where you were on the bridge of a ship and other ships were in the water and things started happening like ships headed toward you and you had to figure out what

to do and make decisions. I always tried to stay in the background and not be put on the spot. I didn't know what the hell was going on because it required mostly mathematics and that sort of thing, and when it got tense, I couldn't remain cool-headed and was even less able to figure out the math so that the other ships would not hit us. I didn't have that kind of intelligence. I am better at writing and reading poetry. I had a copy of Ferlingetty [?] poems in my locker and showed it to one guy. He liked it and said he liked that sort of thing. I was surprised I could share a moment like that. Mostly it was hell. Hell of being shut in yourself and not being able to tell others. They were all trying to become officers. We were victims of an oppressive system. Poor guys. You should be happy you are Kṛṣṇa conscious now and give relief to others. The book distributors are doing best work by pumping these books into colleges and so on. But they should not shortchange people or you'll get the opposite effect. I know the logic is that they may be imperfect, but the important thing is to get the perfect books of knowledge into their hands.

Go alone and find God. It is better than when you are with people. You have sharper perceptions when you see birds or smoke from a chimney. You can see it for yourself without having to react to someone else. It is a great pleasure to be with yourself in that way if you are not afraid of it. I regard it as a great luxury also. Yesterday after being with such darling children and good-looking women and the stalwart men of this community and myself playing the role of the congenial guru who can give a well organized talk on Lord Caitanya—to come back to this room, and even Madhu leaving me alone, and I just sat and looked out the window, that

was a luxury indeed. Then I started doing some reading and editing work.

But spiritual advancement comes when it is God-directed. You pray to Him to please reveal Himself to you. Why, so you can have a show like watching a puppet show? No, but so you can know what He wants of you. Your life is meant to serve God. You are not whole unless you do that. But we want to fulfill ourselves. The *Bhāgavatam* says this is a lesser state. You may have your own desire and still be a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. He will let you have those desires or He may take them away. Highest state is like the *gopīs* and other Vrajavāsīs who just wanted to please Him. Śrīla Prabhupāda says there is no instance of someone wanting to actually please the sense objects of other persons in this material world. We are always out for our own sense enjoyment. But the *gopīs* desire the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa, and Lord Caitanya says there is no higher standard of devotion than that shown by the *gopīs*.

Yes, I visited the van yesterday after being with the devotees. It was very cold and I did not stay long. Wanted to get out as soon as possible. Picked up a few items, then came back here. They served extra sweets, *halavā* and sweetrice, in honor of St. Patrick's Day.

It's all right. I can write fast this morning and I won't get a headache. It's only eight pages so I can do it, I'm not so feeble just yet. You like to write cute literary things even if the readers don't understand the background to the anecdote like, "Damn it, Thurber, stop writing."

Oh yes, time and death. I almost forgot.

“The unsleeping, invisible, most powerful time factor causes these luminaries [all stars and planets] to revolve around the polestar without cessation” (*Bhāg.* 5.23.2).

Don't waste time by sense gratification. Don't forget you are the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. Don't deny this. Don't remain indifferent. You write your little Post-its as if they will save you from death. Keep pumping out Post-its to your secretary and put them in the Out basket. Last night, he went over with me the various notes marked, “See me.” I thought, Good, this will be interesting. But after ten minutes, we had finished them. I wanted more, but there were no more. We discussed the phone calls he has to make and so on. *Bas*. And then I will have to write some more. But it is needless to make so many travel plans and lecture plans. It is a kind of idle thing to talk plans just in order to do something. Better to do nothing sometimes. Live each day as it comes and don't make so many plans. He says you have to make plans in advance to save money on travel tickets. Okay, that is responsible *sannyāsi* life. But some things don't have to take so many plans. We plan ahead anyway as a way just to do something as if we are now controlling the future. We live vicariously through projecting ourselves into the future.

I've been telling you about Mary Oliver. As she might say, don't ask me why. She tells in one poem about hundreds of swans suddenly coming down on a lake in Ohio. She remembers these things. The swans came and then the next day they flew away. She says:

Then they flew away
my life in Ohio
went on

everything was changed
 do you know what I am saying
 everything
 everything was changed

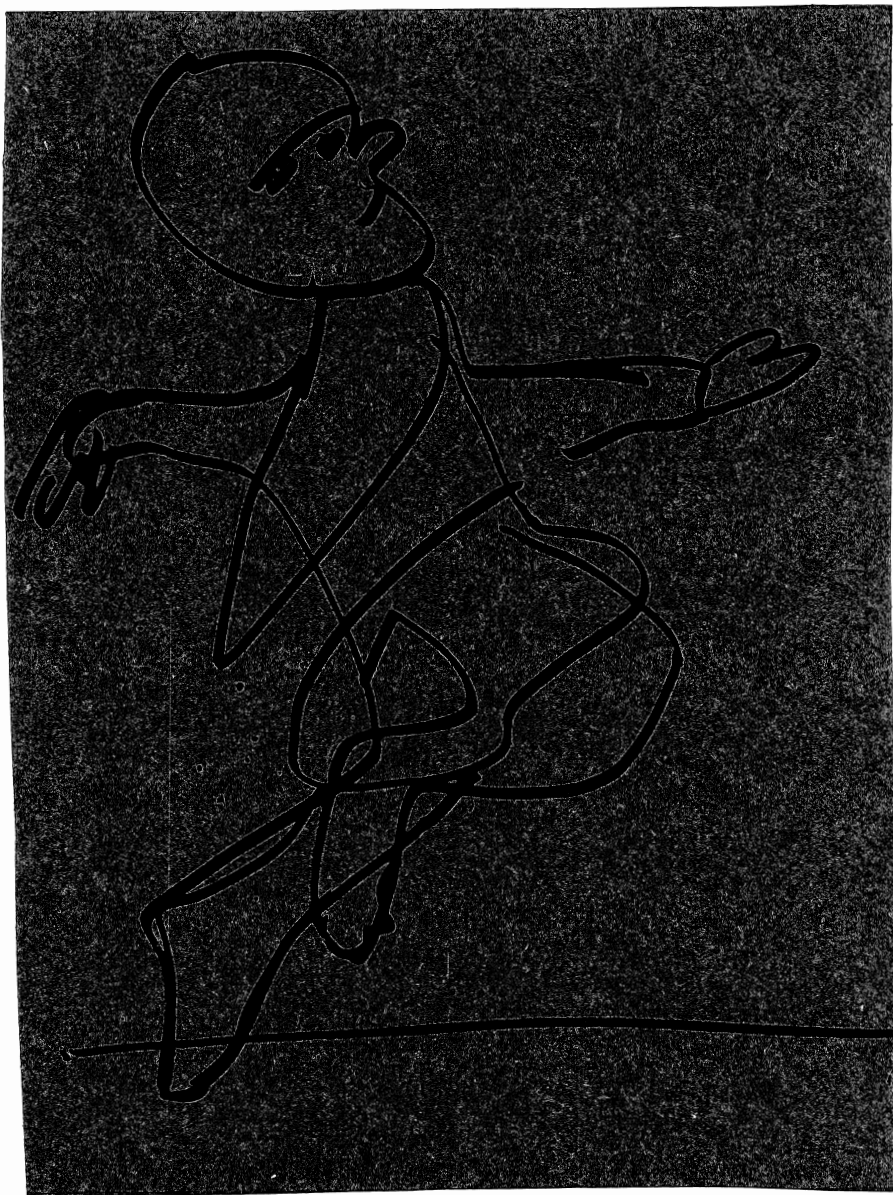
I guess I don't know what she is saying how everything was changed. She reads so much into the movements of nature and wild creatures. More than I see there. Credit her as some kind of mystic seeing and feeling what I cannot, and poet for trying to put it into words. It's an art, of course. Her poem about the swans lasts almost a whole page of quite short lines and is numbered as #12 in the series. Then after it, the next poem is #13 and is only two lines long:

Good-bye good-bye
 to the blue iris.

I like that sort of thing. Good-bye to the blue iris. I take it she is dying, saying as some death-parting words like a haiku death poem. She loves them, they are unspeakably beautiful. There is a nice watercolor of a blue iris on a note pad I have here. They are beautiful. They get silky and heavy for maybe a week and then they die. I recall one house we stayed at, was it in June?—in the Kenmare region. There were wild irises on the walk. I used to pick some. It was a treat to see them and pick some for your vase on the altar. Nice thing to do. You sang, I remember, and wanted to pray. But praying is a very hard, long road.

One Christian says that for the monk, everything is toil. He should always be toiling either in some daily menial labor or in his cell praying. It's not an easygoing life. I find reading is sometimes a toil and chanting also. Better toil than neglect. But Prabhupāda speaks on the verse *su suclam kartamavyayam* [?], and says Kṛṣṇa consciousness is fun. You dance, chant, and eat,

which everyone likes to do and finds happy. It is not a laborious gymnastic yoga or like that. So he doesn't agree that it just toil.



This book is a sequel to *Last Days of the Year*. I like to read that sometimes. You are writing so many books, someone might say, "What is the purpose of all those books? Do you expect us to read them all?"

No, no one says that. But they might say, "Why not write fewer?"

I might say, "Okay, I have done enough books and my vision of spiritual life is not so great that I am going to change the world by yet another book. So instead, let me do something more useful, give out buns at the Food For Life center in Philadelphia to poor people." But, "No," I say, "I have to write."

Then one might reply, "That's good, but first enrich your life with some practical experience that you can write about."

"No," I say, "I have lived enough to write about."

But then someone could say, "Why don't you select more important things from your past in ISKCON to write about so it will be more profitable?"

"No," I say, "I will write this." Good writing is good writing. And we can use it. Besides, I am hungry for it. Besides, I can very easily not feel like writing. That I can do. Instead of writing, I can read and putter around and get into something else. I can say to myself it's better to read in scripture than write your own nonsense. But that is not meant for me. I am going to write, I say.

Yes, I want an edifying book. But let it come of its own. I read some notes I took while reading and they were good, they nourished me. One was on a section in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* where they say you should ask permission to eat or for whatever you do, ask permission of God. It is a practice one can do. I liked that when I first read it. I thought actually I don't do that in a de-

liberate way. So much of prayer is not really possible for me now. But when I write, it is a kind of prayer. And what do you do after you write it?

It is like my drawing of the Prabhupāda *mūrti*. I numbered them and I will send them to someone who cares to keep them for me. Keep them on file. Make books.

Oh, you almost forgot, you are supposed to sing in each chapter. You gave us a few of Mary Oliver's poems, so what about you, poet?

Hey faggot a guy called from the stoop.
I had long blond hair the first time in
my life. Was hurt and shocked to
hear that. What am I supposed to do, turn
back to him and say take those words back
or we will fight. I don't fight.
I keep walking west toward the Village.
But I am no faggot and I know that.
He mistook me because I had long hair.
It was 1964 and long hair wasn't so common.
I'd have to pay that price if I wanted to keep
long hair. You look like a girl.

Another time also walking west
toward the Village,
a fellow said to me he wanted to live first
and when he has lived enough then he can write.
I said I operate in the reverse way:
I want to write first.
He said that is a Pyrrhic victory.
He read something I wrote and wanted
to advise me to enjoy sex and not
be like Rilke, whose idea of loving a girl

was (as this guy said) to not open your
 fly to have sex with her. I was hurt that
 he took the psycho-analytic approach
 to my story rather
 than see it as writing and me as a writer. My point
 of view was that we are all
 somewhat sick but writing
 is an art, and it is a religion you can live for.
 Although I am sick, fucked up, and so forth,
 just read my story and like it as art
 and life. But this guy saw it as only a
 Pyrrhic victory that robs you
 of life because life was to
 open your fly and take your prick out
 and put it in the girl and have orgasm.
 He said his father was a minister
 and taught him to see God in all things,
 so now he is trying hard, living near
 the Bowery with a girl in a loft
 removing the presence of God
 from each and every thing.
 He was dedicated to that removal.
 These are the kind of people I knew
 just before I met the Swami.
 I wandered around lonely
 and art-writing was my only solace,
 that and a good-humored ice cream man.

Sorry, friend, you have fucked up again. So many
 rude and crude people, I don't have to be another one by
 putting obscene words in my holy book. They said you
 are setting a new, low standard for Vaiṣṇava writing by
 putting those words in. I say look, once in awhile I have
 to tell the truth that raunchy life goes through me. I

have been exposed to it. I am a nice, kind, sensitive person and I want pure things, but I have been exposed to these things. I regard them as nasty, but they have affected me. Roger Monty told me, before I went into the Navy, that he was concerned for me in this way—he thought that the Navy would make me crude. He saw me as a sensitive person, but thought that in order to survive in the Navy I'd have to become somewhat like them. He compared it to a candy bar, something about eating the candy bar and not being able to resist it. How could I stay as a sensitive flower in the midst of all the fuck you, fuck this, fuck that sailors? Maybe Roger was right. I had to survive. I got tough. But that's also something I think I can use. To be tough isn't always bad. I am a little tough and so I can be a devotee of Hare Kṛṣṇa even when people shout at me, "Hey Harry, get a job," and so on. And tough when my own Godbrothers say, "Why the hell are you living alone so much and writing those crazy books?" (they don't say that) Be tough. But be soft to God and guru. Be open and strong and do what they ask.

This chapter went fast. I can end it, but I could continue it also. The main thing is to sing and dance in *kirtana*. The breakfast is an afterthought. Just take whatever they give. On your walk, I want you to praise Prabhupāda and consider your relationship with him. I don't see him exactly in his photo, but that's part of it. I want to love him and I told him yesterday that I will struggle to keep my admiration for him intact. It doesn't happen automatically. You don't just drop your intelligence. You fight to go on admiring him all your life and overcoming the difficulties. I could have told them much more because I have some experience. You

see, he sometimes seems too basic or whatever, but that is something we have to deliberately fight to overcome. You have to do it with full intelligence. This is the function of the analytical mind and intelligence, to be faithful to your guru in a creative and simple way.

To be his *śiṣya*. You keep it. You work at it, maybe the way a man works to keep a chaste relationship with his wife. Or it's similar to keeping that kind of relationship with ISKCON.

Now I'm at the bottom of the page. Farewell friend until later today. I do want to keep the writing life of this book as long as possible, all through March if possible. It will be a handsome, fat book. You know what I mean. Not the natural world, but the spiritual world and the speaking of it, the not-waster of time. Every word counts. Sing, sing, this is discharge. You are hereby discharged from the Navy and free to meet your guru in NYC and now forever after you will be his, I mean it, I propose a toast to forever Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Chapter Fifteen

Okay, dear reader, this is a brave but I hope not foolhardy, attempt to do the chapter even though there is some budding headache pain lodged in behind the eye. I may not make it for the full eight pages. You will understand. But these pages are welcome. Face it. You are the one who likes to read them. Is the *Churning* book good? Some say you write too many. Nevermind. You don't write enough.

I listened to the relaxation tape. It was waves on a beach or somewhere, not a very pleasant sound, actually. A seagull once in awhile. Quiet infrequently the narrator said something like, "I am content . . . I am kind . . ." and I wondered.

I substituted other things I'd heard for relaxation, like bringing heat to the hands and feet, and slowly I unwound some Hare Kṛṣṇa mantras. They should teach that.

Madhu has gone off to Dublin to a healing fair. They have many booths there and he will pick up various literature. It's his own idea, but I don't object. Let people do what they want to do. That's a recent motto of mine. It is a worldly wisdom because I see they do that anyway.

It takes rigor to read the books of Prabhupāda. Same for books of mine that are supposed to be published. I also looked at a little collection on *The Desert of the Heart*. Some nice sayings from the Stern Fathers who prayed in the desert. Can't remember any right now.

Be humble, be silent . . .

Always pray to God, whatever that means.

Prabhupāda is making it clear, there is God. He said there is no instance in the material world of something happening just by itself. There is the intelligence of the Supreme Lord behind it. Scientists exclaim nature is supreme, but that's not so. It doesn't act on its own. I can't repeat it here, the feeling I get when I hear him and I am convinced. He speaks that way about Kṛṣṇa too and *Bhagavad-gītā*. Strong theist. Strong *bhakta*. Hear it and profit. He gives the best tape but you can't listen well if you feel you have a headache.

Being very much afraid that the time factor will end our existence, we [demigods] offer presentations unto time by performing our work as time dictates. The time factor himself, however, is afraid of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore let us now worship that Supreme Lord, who alone can give us full protection..

—*Bhāg.* 6.9.21

I sat looking at the clock as it went from 3 to 4 P.M. Listen to the wind outside. Waited and thought, "When it comes to 4, I may go downstairs and put more coal on the fire." I'm alone in the house. Thought maybe if I just try to sit around some feeling or idea will come. Besides, I'm not fit to do anything else because the pain is threatening. Think of some strategy to make it go away. But maybe it should be here, it has a signal. I get in good mornings from midnight on, the reading of *NOD*, the *japa*, and early morning chanting, the morning walk . . . Maybe this is a signal that I can't expect to keep going all day at that rate. But still you have to live . . . You can't just retire after 10 A.M. and go to sleep for fifteen hours. So what to do? Am I so feeble? It doesn't seem right. Therefore I think of strategies to

make the head pain go away. And yet . . . I can't defy the physical limits of the body. Don't attempt something that will be hurtful to the body.

Mary Oliver writes a poem about a toad. She's kind of crazy in a nice, harmless way. She saw the toad sitting in the heat of the morning sun. She says she squatted down beside him (like Thoreau did) and began talking to him about life and everything that she could think of, feelingful things. She told him how it felt to be a human being five feet tall and wondered what it was like for him to live who is down there acquainted with the dust. She seems to have expected him to reply. Last lines:

"He might have been Buddha—did not move, blink,
or frown,
not a tear fell from those gold-rimmed eyes
as the refined
anguish of language passed over him."

She writes good stuff. I am also pouring out the "refined anguish of language," the lament to the empty room. But it's more than that. We get to say Hare Kṛṣṇa. We squat down to say Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, and that makes a world of difference. Don't forget that and don't forget to say it. But you have to be convinced. That's what I'm struggling for. *The New York Times* writes, "Oliver's poems are thoroughly convincing . . . as genuine, moving . . . as . . ." But can I say the same for me?

You lookin' for flattery?

Why don't you open the window? Why don't you go down and put some coals on the fire so it doesn't go out? I appreciate that you are risking to get this chapter out. So move around the house just a couple of minutes and

come back here. The typewriter will be waiting with its red light on. I'll think of something to say. Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare.

O shark-faced boy, the Italian man and his wife drove our van all the way and he had a beard from those several days and wife was adjusting her winter coat maybe feeling hot as they sat before the fire in this house the other day, remember? And I spoke with them about Italy. He asked me how's my health. I said something about travel in Guyana. Guyana, such a strange place.

I keep thinking of it, the palm trees and the black men. I don't think of them so much now as time fades it. We are away from there. That big airplane . . . you can't . . .

The shark-faced boy attempts another poem with all his influence in a big pouch full of old powder-medicine. Keep in your head a memory of something you want to do because you are an old man with waning powers. Yeah, if you want to remember something like, "Go down and get those digestive powders out of the porch before Madhu comes back," you'll have to forcefully keep it in the front part of your brain and it will only stay there a limited time, you better act on it or it slip away. You don't have such powers. But don't lament about it, the good thing about old age is you get to die, you get ready for it . . .

I had something cleverish on the
tip of my tongue to say about old
age but I heard a noise, thought
it might be the car of Madhu approaching,
so I turned my head to listen and when
I returned the clever thoughts were gone.
That's how it is.

The shark-faced boy poised a pose,
he has simulated humility and
said it will be better not to collect
disciples and money. He said I can't embrace
poverty like Desert Fathers, I like too much sweets.
I heard there is an allergy test where you bring
your own food in and the guy pushes your
arm and if the food isn't good for you
you feel weak. What a joke, I mean probably
it works but just see me holding up *halavā*
or a *laḍḍu* and saying, "Oh, I feel weak, so
I promise I won't eat this anymore."

They are leaving Mahāprabhu's *dhāma* and I am
smashing myself. You could say, but I say,
it's a brave effort to
even be heard.

Now the poem had better end and you talk some
other stuff. We will have to pay the bill
when this is over. Rover.

A cue for this chapter: "Keep the hand moving. This
is a happy book. Get on a train of thought of something
Prabhupāda said." Good advices. This is a happy book.
You ask people, "Did I write it all right?" But that is
not the way. I got excited yesterday thinking I'll start a

separate fiction project or call it a story project like my *Gite Stories*. So I got notebooks and pen ready and put them all on a spot on the floor, but today, no go. I'm here instead.

Prabhupāda? I told you he made strong, theistic arguments about how life comes from life. The other day he said scientists cannot float a cup of water in the sky, but God floats all the oceans on the planets in that way. But He is not like Atlas struggling.

He does it through His energies.

He is God as His activities show. He is God

He spoke *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Dear Lord, please let me read it with faith.

I don't care what the rest of the world says.

Please let me come back to His lotus feet.

The God of light of Śuka and Vyāsa,

the God Kṛṣṇa, Supreme Person told by

my spiritual master quoting *Brahma-saṃhitā*.

I got to go His way but He doesn't want me

just to praise Him like a sentimental fool

and pet dog

but be a good representative. I try to do this

by also this modern type writing. You know

I try to do.

I pat you on the back. You is good

for writing this chapter even with

your arm strapped in your chair.

He said I want to play a part in the movies

where I am

sincere and straightforward like Jimmy Stewart,

not my ironic self-deprecating New York voice.

I thought that describes me also.

I'll sing the glories of the Lord
 and readers like it when the author
 isn't even present
 and they get good copied works, translations
 from some
 heretofore unpublished Gauḍīya scripture.
 They say this is humble of you, you didn't
 even put your name on the cover,
 whereas Satsvarūpa . . .

Self-deprecating ironic New York

O King, as small particles of sand sometimes
 come together and are sometimes separated due
 to the force of the waves, the living entities who
 have accepted material bodies sometimes come
 together and are sometimes separated by the
 force of time.

—Bhāg. 6.15. 3

Yes, we get separated by time. I am living in a tiny time period now where Madhu and I travel around in our van. I saw the van yesterday for the first time this year. It looked dirty and there was a greasy mark near the gas cap. I was not impressed, but no dents were visible. I guess it will continue to last although it needs a heating system. It's got new tires, but they have to fix the ownership papers. So how long can we, me and Madhu and the Renault, go around these European countries on the lam? How long?

Your mistake is that you think I am the body. "We are not the body. We are spiritual beings trapped in the body. Our real interest lies in understanding this simple fact. Then we can make further spiritual progress . . . Therefore material life is a reservoir of miserable

conditions." I can read my spiritual master in a good state of mind. Banish the idea that he should have written something with different emphasis. It is a contamination. Be satisfied that he is giving you the best. I have to work to read him in best state. I don't know exactly how to do it, but you've got the right idea when you rise at 12 midnight and read for the first hour. Now I want a couple of more shots in the day like that. That will then infuse this writing also.

She says:

"I don't know if I will ever write another poem.

I don't know

if I am going to live for a long time yet,
or even for awhile."

But she says she is going to live wisely. She says she will be useful and frivolous and happy. Her plan is to gather the acorns from the Fletcher oak tree that she loves and when she goes back to her country she will plant them in the earth, "To rise like a slow and beautiful poem. To live a long time."

It's raining hail and water. Prabhupāda and I are here alone under the attic roof of this yellow painted cottage. Warm and cold.

Your toenails your head your
crown your scalp your well-being it is
temporary. Your secretary is in Dublin at the
healing fair and maybe a devotee

from the ISKCON

center is selling books with a line, "This is
the real healing."

I am not healing but this uh,
poem and book is healing. It is

the balm of Kṛṣṇa consciousness,
 the real herb is Kṛṣṇa.
 This is the healing art.

To write a poem-story while you
 can. You don't even know what is coming.
 But as the nature cannot act on its own
 so I write under the direction
 of Lord Hari. He causes the synapse
 in the brain, allows the fingers to pump out
 the word. No machine works just on its
 own, someone has to pump it.
 I am doing that but behind me
 is the Supreme. The Supreme is therefore
 writing this poem to Himself.

It is a kind of jest but serious,
 our combined efforts, God and I.
 He is the supreme individual and I
 am the mini one. He upholds all and
 I am foolish and in ignorance.
 Ignorance is the cause of sin.
 But the fire doesn't excuse the child.
 You get burnt.
 But this poem is the happy act
 where I collaborate with Kṛṣṇa
 and say Kṛṣṇa, my free will is to Thee.

This is the offering of a little boy.
 This is the fresh effort stumbling
 to say I love You and want to
 serve You all my days in
 this life and the next.
 When I am in most difficult

condition of pain and cannot write anymore,
please lift me up in Your arms.

I am helpless now but don't know it fully.

Please rescue not only me but
all of Your *bhaktas* and *bhaktins*.

The great soul sees all as perfect but
I can't see two feet left or right.

As the sun shines brilliant through some
clouds in Ireland, Wicklow, and the
water drops from shiny branches all
wholesome sight, I can't bear it
but note it,
my foolish act as poet-creator.

Okay, we are coming into the home stretch. It all got inspired when I took a look at *Last Days of the Year* and said, Yeah, lemme try for more of that. God is feeding you. You are like a baby bird with your mouth open. The devotees see God in every act. They think of Him. You can see Him in the Deity. He is not a stone. He appears in the stone or brass because we cannot at present see Him in His spiritual form with our material senses. (Can't claim my senses are all spiritual because I eat *halavā* offered to God and have served in ISKCON so many years.) Yes, He is the Deity and an example of that is the story of Śakṣi-Gopāla. "If a Deity can talk, He can walk," said the *brāhmaṇa* to Gopāla, and the Lord agreed. You know . . .

The son was an atheist and didn't believe the Deity could walk.

I want to end with paens. I like to be thinking and feeling how everything I write is coming from God. It is factually true. If you know it, you are Kṛṣṇa conscious.

If you don't know it, you are in *māyā*. But the fact is He is the supreme as upheld by the great *ācāryas*. It's up to you to believe it or not. Don't get left behind like some rascal guy challenging the Swamiji in the storefront, preserved on tape and who knows now where they went after that. You stayed with him. But it is possible one can stay in the monastery and still be a nonsense. The one who keeps God in his heart is best.

I am telling this on March 18, happy to have been able to pump it out and say that God moves my fingers. Amen, then. All glories to the Uttama-śloka, the Supreme. His name is known all over the world by the grace of Swamiji's movement. Because Prabhupāda spread it, so even now they say, "Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is bad," but they are still chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and that is good. I too am tricked to say Hare Kṛṣṇa. I say eight rounds in the morning by candlelight and hope to be there tomorrow, good health chanting, chanting and bringing the mind back by free will to hear, to hear, and then you can walk and tell Prabhupāda stories and be happy with your limited strength. I do encourage you for all you are worth.

Chapter Sixteen

Sign of the times: to lambkins first I've seen this year, accompanying two elder sheep, walking down a lane toward this cottage. Lambkins. They were not trying to drink milk while I watched, neither did they know how to eat grass, still too young for that.



Up during the night with headache behind right eye, I missed my 3:30 A.M. appointment with this book. So here I am, trying to get back into it. It's like standing in the waves of the ocean, on the beach, waiting for the waves to carry you. Here comes one.

You think something may come or should come or wants to come. What? Some different kind of writing where you just go right for it, again and again some intensity of personal desires expressed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It would be at one time more literary than these chapters so far and at the same time it would be more personal in self-help mood. That would be done by dropping all attempts to make chapters in a book? Waiting for the waves, talking about this to a companion. We ride whatever comes and talk about a big one.

Old man and the sea: over thirty days he caught nothing, then a fish so big he couldn't handle it with his meager equipment. He used all his strength and hauled it in. But then a shark came and ate the fish. He was lucky to escape with his own life and came back and, we presume, he died shortly after that because after all, he was an old man.

Why bring that up now?

I have to do all my duties here, important ones, like reading *The Nectar of Devotion* and reading the last section of the *Churning* book before it goes into production. Then I'll have to prepare for a series of classes for disciples that takes place at the end of April. Now is the time to do that. And daily I walk and talk. So I can't get carried away, consumed by one wave, and besides . . . it's just a rumor so far.

I propose that you keep going with this one, using the items, strategies you've picked up so far and new ones as they come, and see what happens in the next retreat or

in between. You are like Brooklyn Dodgers pitcher Carl Erskine, plucky fellow, got to get through this game and win with whatever combination of pitches you can muster, fast ball, curve, change up. Don't dream that you are pitching and no hitter. They have already scored a few runs against you but the Brooks are ahead and you can count on more runs, what with the big part of the batting order coming up next inning, Duke, Campy, etc.

Since the material body is sure to be vanquished and the duration of one's life is not fixed, neither death nor life is to be praised. Rather, one should observe the eternal time factor, in which the living entity manifests himself and disappears.

—*Bhāg.* 7.13.6

These are instructions for the behavior of a perfect person, given by Nārada. Neither death nor life should be stressed, says Śrīla Prabhupāda. "One should observe the activities of eternal time, which is the cause of birth and death." We die life after life and are reborn. Kṛṣṇa is giving us a chance each time to be born and live for awhile. The time duration is Kṛṣṇa in an impersonal form. He is a person and time is one of His energies. See that.

Hiraṇyakaśipu wanted to become the greatest. He knew it would not be easy. He was ready to perform whatever austerities were necessary. He said, "Since I am eternal and time is eternal, I shall endeavor for such austerities and mystic power and trance for many, many births, and thus I shall occupy the same post occupied by Brahṁā" (*Bhāg.* 7.3.10).

That is admirable determination.

I am inserting these texts so my chapter will not be relative. It will be worthy to read in classrooms of a *gurukula* or if my book is being examined by some board of devotees, they will see I was in *sāstra*. But do I feel these pages of time? I shove them out the way we shove out good *prasāda* for the hungry or the way we shovel coal out of the bag of "Polish Devils" and slide it out onto the red embers. You see, time is the biggest container into which to put everything.

Yes, I heard you say that.

Don't fall apart on me. Don't be morose or cynical or snide.

I'm not. But I'm being honest too. This is a sliding book. It is threatening to slide out from under you. It doesn't have a thunder or plot to hold suspense or progress like four waves in *The Nectar of Devotion* or similar constructions.

Yeah, but it has a string of days, and fills each chapter. Time is the container. Let they who are wise students take the lessons of time from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Next to that verse from Nārada there is another one: "Literature that is a useless waste of time—in other words, literature without spiritual benefit—should be rejected. One should not become a professional teacher . . . nor should one indulge in argument and counter-arguments. Nor should one take shelter of any cause or faction."

Is Mary Oliver useless, devoid of spiritual? Well, she seeks her spiritual in the natural world by her own vision. But she is in ignorance about transmigration. If she knew it, believed in it, it would change her vision. She would add it to what she feels when she squats down beside the toad and talks to it or thrills to see

swans and snakes and trees. She would have to consider, "If I tune in too much to these creatures, if I really think they possess secrets that we humans don't know, if I really believe my own poems, those in which I say I'd like to be a wild thing, then I should know the consequences—I may very well be born next time in the body of a toad. And that will not be fun or graceful and there will be no writing rewards." Besides, if she were God conscious, she would glorify the Lord who is behind nature. Now she only half dares in her wildest moment of love and mystic insight, to suggest that we can believe in things that we normally think are impossible. And occasionally, she mentions Jesus as some kind of ideal figure. So I am mostly mentioning her for other reasons.

But not right now. She sings of a sea mouse, so ugly and dying. She found it on the water's edge and stroked it with her finger, "Little darling, little dancer, little pilgrim, great pouch slowly filling with death."

And oak trees of fall dropping their shells. This is better than spring, she says. But I saw the lambkins too. And read in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that a devotee offers his obeisances to everything in creation because he sees it is all expansions of the Supreme Lord.

My own poem oh yes I almost forgot.
 All week long the guitar lay idle,
 electric unplugged beside the speaker
 my dad bought me in some bargain place
 near the Battery in Manhattan.
 Then to my surprise the music teacher
 arrived at the door and my mother called
 me and I had to run down and see him totally
 unprepared. He finally said if you don't want to

practice then give up the lessons,
 even though he was a mild guy with
 scholarly glasses
 and played classical guitar
 and I'm sure he needed the money.
 Your lack of interest in college studies
 or your procrastination in asking a girl for
 a date until finally it was too late,
 and with reluctant relief you let it go.

My poem is coming to life however
 on the haven of Brookhaven the sun
 shines and words like first violets
 and daffodils I saw a few on a
 clump, they suddenly appeared even while
 hailing days of winter are with us.

The walks, the walks, the people here
 leave me alone not even a Volvo truck
 that only came one day and was gone
 before I knew it. There is one house
 where people come
 on Friday night and are gone by
 Monday morning but even while they are here
 I pause in talking only two minutes while
 passing their view, then I go on talking
 to Prabhupāda and whatever comes to mind,
 nice day, cool day, the walk
 unfolding so quick it's half-done
 and you've said what you could satisfied
 because there's more ahead, breakfast in
 the house.

But also last night during the head pain for awhile
I didn't have a handle on it and was restless.

I woke up Madhu at 9 P.M. I hadn't
heard him enter the house back from the
healing fair in Dublin.

We spoke awhile just so I could orient myself.

He told me, a hall with eighty booths
and he didn't want to give them credit,
the people with claims for photoing auras
and this and that . . . but he picked out some
pamphlets and a pair of eyeglasses
with little holes in them
to exercise your eyes.

Too late for me to use that.

I went back to lying in the dark and
now I had a handle on it—you lay back and
endure it and don't worry that

you have any schedule
to follow. Your only duty is to lie back
and try to rest and maybe fall asleep which
I did and the alarm went off at midnight when I
was deep in some fantasy dream where
I was being delayed over something and
devotees were characters in the drama although
it was not Kṛṣṇa conscious in substance.

Glad it's over, glad I am here now
bright sunshine, tree drying off, stones on
the wall, Ireland and they leave me alone.
Now what can I make of it
as offerable to the Lord?

How do I feel? Oh, I am all right, thank you for asking.

Would you like to write a story?

No, I don't think so.

If you get your present duties cleared away, what might you do?

Can't say. If I knew, I'd do it right now.

When Merton became a priest, ordained, he said that he became God conscious in an ordinary way and that was the most important thing. He said that's more important than having a high, going up and coming down. But everything in your life is thereafter transformed to love of God. Your ordinary self and life and all things in it are now sanctified because you are a priest. He said it's beyond words but it brings a peace and great happiness. I suppose I have that too in my life and shouldn't be greedy for great ideas, consuming thoughts to write about like a feverish Kafka up all night in ecstasy while writing *Amerika*, as Brod reported. Mostly he was very unhappy. I want to be mostly content and confident that I'm serving my guru. I'm not trying to be the greatest American writer or amazing breakthrough author in ISKCON. Sure, I'd like that too, but not if it means going near or over the edge.

After I finished eating lunch, I looked around, almost like sniffing, like a dog, interested if there was a possibility of anything else I might eat. And when I heard a car pull up, I thought maybe they were bringing another preparation they had forgotten. But no, that was it. Settle for what you got which was good enough. Now on with your day.

When I read *The Nectar of Devotion* first thing on rising, it's not that constellations of devotion are blaz-

ing before me and I am reeling with it. I miss more than I gain. But I'm doing it and some good things do happen. So it's best to keep up with this dedication. I kept notes while reading back in December 1993, and I read them too this morning. I was proposing at the time that I do only this sort of reading. I would do almost nothing else in life except continually read and then do a free-writing to accompany it. The free-writing could be anything but would be anchored to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and keep coming back to that. It sounded promising, but I didn't keep it up. The timed book has been my dedication these recent months, this past year, one after another . . .

Yesterday afternoon while I risked to write my chapter (and it appears to have been wrong because the pain came on strong at night, but maybe it would have happened anyway in which case it's good that we rushed in here and wrote before it closed down)—I said, "Oh look, God is writing through me." I reasoned that He is the power behind all things so I am the instrument and He writes through me. Prabhupāda said that anyone who doesn't believe in God is either a damned fool, rascal, or madman. Even the power one has to say, "There is no God," comes from a power superior to you. You don't say it on your own. It cannot be attributed to nature only. Your power may also be taken away from you. Where from you get this power to say, "There is no God"? How is it you can speak? A human is "as good as stone," he's just a collection of bones and flesh, yet he's given power by some higher life authority (call it God or whatever).

Yes. Well, it's true, and that is the intellectual understanding to prove that there is God. I do feel it also. Or I did yesterday when I said it. Now I am just putting

along in this automobile of self-expression and I do serve God. I don't want to write for any other cause. I serve the almighty. I deserve to know Him, serve Him and love Him. Love of God is the only goal. There is no love otherwise. Bhiṣma said love is taking it from all others and reposing love in God. Then it spreads out to all.

Poor man, poor man, that's you brother.
 Old man that's you too.
 Toothless you don't want to say too many times
 lest they laugh at you when you are in their
 midst or repulsed by you and don't love you as
 they did when you and I were young, Maggie.
 The wit of the white pine
 is vanished for the lip
 let's hear again the song about Time.

Time is God I am.
 The biggest container and you are
 shoveling it in, you the white-haired
 scholar in the attic, dry air up here but at
 least it's warm. He keeps wanting me to open the
 window, it will smell. I will smell
 like Grandmother Doty used to, on front porch,
 horrible odor of her old age, what, she didn't bathe?

Or do you smell when you get senile and
 you don't give a damn, the tin clock goes tick-tock
 and a grandson wants to run away out
 the front door, explores the blond weed field of
 Great Kills on this his first visit
 to this country kind of place
 and he has a toy knife in his belt.

O my Lord, Your Lordship is eternally awake,
 seeing everything that happens. As eternal time,

You reduce the duration of life for all living entities through Your different parts, such as moments, seconds, minutes and hours. Nonetheless, You are unchanged. Resting in one place as the Supersoul, witness and Supreme Lord, the birthless, all-pervading controller who is the cause of life for all living entities.

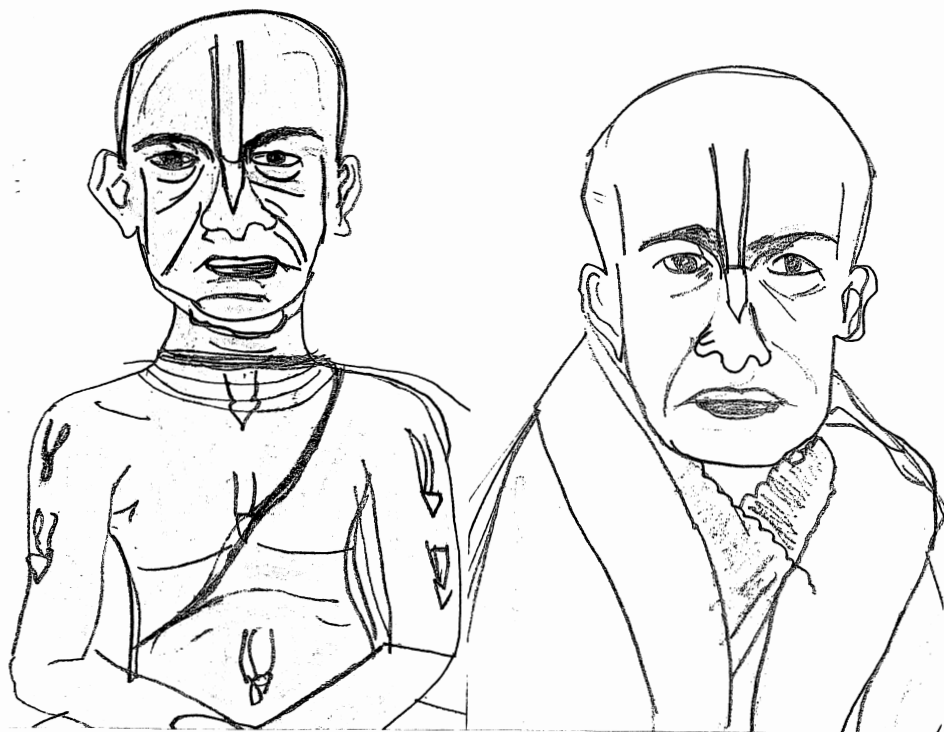
—*Bhāg.* 7.3.31

He is unchanging, the only one unaffected by time. Under His shelter, eternal associates are also free of time. That is why He is God, the one above time.

Don't try to picture it with your tiny brain which might conclude (while you sit on the toilet passing stool) that how could anyone be above time? Time must give birth to all creatures, so how could there be God before time? He would have to come from somewhere. Or if not, how could He be? How could there be God? It is insanely, frighteningly impossible to conceive. You go mad trying. Best not to try and accept the time direction and the *śāstra* direction coming down and the subservience to the Supreme Lord.

Wow, this is a grind down. I will finish and go downstairs. I will read aloud with Madhu from the book of Erickson teaching tales. He tells some story from his life and then the commentator tells you what it may mean to a therapist to insinuate something to give a client some courage to overcome his bed-wetting, or as in my case, for pain control and even averting pain. Sure could have used some extra cunning last night. But I have to say, Oh, this much be a signal. It had to come. I overworked or something. It served to remind me that at death it will be like this, with no hope of it suddenly evaporating overnight. Oh, that's a pity, a friend

may say. But what the hell, we all have to go. But for now, only 55 years old and still waiting for big waves of coherent meaning to carry a book or tell me what I should do to find the pearl of devotion hidden in me—we read these Erickson tales and hope to overcome the pain too frequently coming and taking away hours that could be used constructively in Kṛṣṇa conscious pudding work.



Start slowly, start fastly, offer your obeisances to your spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. You just drew his picture with your pencils. He appears carved out of wood, the picture of the *mūrti* of the picture of the *mūrti*, how many times removed from the actual Swami who came to us? Yet by doing it, you draw close to him. You have to smile at your drawing rendering. It doesn't look like him, it looks like a drawing, like a carved wood rendition of a seafarer, a fisherman kind of thing you could buy in a tourist shop, but in this case it is your Swami and he smiles back to you from the *mūrti* form as if amused at your devotion to draw him as yet another way to serve and come close, yet another way to be childishly proud of your own so-called prowess.

Oh, if He liked, He could give you enormous powers to draw likeness. You could sell them like Anantaśakti and Haripāda—Satsvarūpa's renditions of the Swami. But would that make you a better devotee, would it make you puffed up? Just see how I've become another type of artist, there is no limit to the nice things I can do, and as usual, I outdo everyone else in ISKCON in this art. It is like Picasso and the wood-carver in the tourist shop and . . . crap.

Time, time, drenching us down, we don't seem to understand. If the great time epochs sweep past fast and even the U.S. Presidents and the Olympics and the creatures and Archives can't even hold it all, then why don't you realize that you will be gone in a flash? Why do you act as if . . . as if it's important to be as comfortable as possible since you have to go anyway? And no one escapes the blows of nature. Your body grows old and dies and dies and dies. The death part eludes us. we

think that before we go we will live and that is more important and significant than death itself. But each one gets his chance to lie on the floor, on a bed, or however he is executed, like Merton was electrocuted when he touched an electric fan in Bangkok.

You never know. Then your papers will be here for someone to sort through. No one has been able to speak on both sides of the wall at once, the death and life sides. You either live, in which case you talk and walk and eat and defecate, and then have sex, or you are dead and you are silent, no more guff from that side of the grave. Your body goes on to the next life, the next life in reincarnation.

Pragoşa told the Irish T.V. audience in a way not to alarm them, to see reincarnation as nothing strange. It just means that we are eternal and wherever we go next, whether to heaven or hell, that is reincarnation. That's all it is. We are eternal and we have to go somewhere next, but the body is death. Any belief in afterlife is reincarnation. Very well said, although he left out the details—that we take birth in animal species or who knows where in this material world.

The Irish people must have been touched by the pretty faces of them and the walks in their old neighborhoods before they had been devotees. It was a good show indeed. In any other country, there would have been so many challenges and snide remarks. This country is okay in that respect.

Now let us see what is happening on the front of this story. You seemed a little depressed thinking oh me, oh my, this story isn't going anywhere. It's not like a thriller detective novel, has not plot. This series of chapters is not like some organized book on macrobiotics

or demigod worship as seen through the eyes of a Chicago *brahmacāri* . . . It is not a book on *rasa* or anything at all but the flow of this person's consciousness, these days and weeks in clover Wicklow. So he thought, "Better I call it quits, terminate it eventually and no more timed books like this."

But then I looked at *Last Days of the Year* and the chapter looked like a poem. They're each poems and I don't have to have plots of adventures at the North Pole or escape hatches and six characters in search of an author, don't have to as long as there is true outpouring of the heart, the heart, I say, and provided you've got some actual *sāstra* to keep us going.

People are simply wasting time and the valuable gift of the human form because a human being who does not cultivate spiritual life but dies like the cats and dogs is degraded in his next life.

—*Bhāg.* 7.6.4, purport

Even if you are pious, time exhausts the piety. You have to come back down again into the lower species. Time wears you out, wears out your young muscles, and those pretty faces slacken, the light dims out of her eyes. Rheumy we get. Kṛṣṇa alone is unchanged by time. He doesn't wither or die.

Oh, you believe that? You believe in your Kṛṣṇa? You don't think He's just an animated cartoon or at least some myth? I saw in a religious encyclopedia that He was a tribal chief who later became God by Vāsudeva worship.

Yeah, there is such crap in encyclopedias, as they call them. Better you find out about Kṛṣṇa from the source of true Kṛṣṇa science and not in rumors by scholars who poke their noses in where they don't belong. Go to India

(Indiana Jones) and not by PanAm but by the rocketship of knowledge. I got to clam down and tell it straight. If you were someone sitting in front of me, that's one thing, but for you, my dear friend, you ought to know better than to bring up these gremlin voices that say, "Why God? Why should God be Kṛṣṇa? Why not just . . ."

In case your gremlin doesn't believe, I say it's Śrī Kṛṣṇa. You say something else, but there's no arguing about it.

Kṛṣṇa has sixty-four qualities that Rūpa Gosvāmī goes over. He is a perfect linguist, can talk to animals and birds and humans in all languages. God is Kṛṣṇa, I'm not going to argue with you. But He is too sacred to be mentioned in this skittish, roundabout way in your prose. Your prose eats up everything as if it is eating up time and Kṛṣṇa in His original form. That's not a fact. Don't be like *Time* magazine writers who make everything subservient to their potshots and arrogant journalism. Don't make Kṛṣṇa just another item in the flotsam and jetsom of your stream of literary consciousness.

Okay, I'll heed that. But still I am writing this as long as I live. Is it a sin? I am telling you where I am at.

It might be a sin. It might be better to calm down and organize your thoughts and employ them writing some cold and calculated sentence to evoke a reader's step-by-step understanding of Kṛṣṇa. And why this dashed off habber-dashery dots?

Yes, God is God and not just another item, I understand. But I haven't come to that standard. Oh, let me say that whatever I write, it's part of Kṛṣṇa's energy.

But aim more for direct Kṛṣṇa consciousness in these pages, just as Nārada said to Vyāsa, "You mention Kṛṣṇa in all your books but only as a sidelight. Now you should write *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and make Kṛṣṇa the main subject and *bhakti* the clear goal of all works. Otherwise, you will remain morose."

It's true the capable poet in
me is God's gift and should
be used in His service. Kṛṣṇa sports in Vṛndāvana
and *The Nectar of Devotion* tells us this is
far better even than Vaikuṇṭha.
The Lord's body and activities are so appealing
that even the Lord in Vaikuṇṭha is amazed
and loves to see and hear Kṛṣṇa.
So what to speak of lesser beings?

If you did not love it then when
I began to read His sixty-four qualities
it may be that
you are envious of God
and such an offender, reading but
not worshipping with devotion.
When Kṛṣṇa is praised your inner self
(consciousness) says, "Why should Kṛṣṇa be
worshipped? I am as good as Kṛṣṇa." And my first
thoughts are best thoughts
and Buddhist thoughts
my Goldberg larks the truth and
jibberish is my *sāstra*. In this way you try to escape
but death finds you out easily
although you say so many things
he can spot you on the highway
wherever you are on earth

every secret is known to him.
 Your posed dance and scalpel and hinge
 of untruth mad capers—
 he sees it all and
 you a scatter-brain.

So my friend, as Śaṅkara said,
 why not give up playing with the suffixes
 and prefaces and just worship Govinda,
bhaja Govinda, bhaja Govinda.

O my Lord, as waves attract branches and leaves
 that have fallen into deep water, You, the su-
 preme eternal time factor, attract everything
 within this universe.

—*Bhāg.* 8.17.27

purport:

The time factor is sometimes described as
kāla-stotra, waves of time. Everything in this mate-
 rial world is within the time factor and is being
 carried away by waves of attraction, which rep-
 resent the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Get back to this point why you don't write exclu-
 sively about Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda. You kept a diary
 when you went into his rooms in Vṛndāvana and that
 was right on the point. Well, here I am on the leash,
 taking advantage of it. The long leash in the West. The
 pester-proof words. You sometimes talk like this in
 Vṛndāvana too. I don't know. It is my nature. I do
 declare that Hare Kṛṣṇa chanting is the best thing for
 everyone. I can talk straight. If I were on the camera on
 Irish T.V. or American T.V., I'd talk straight. I would
 say true philosophy and my brain would try the best
 way to put it across honestly and yet convincing and

crafty in presentation. But here I am relaxed at home in my slippers, there is no need for pretense. I guess I am claiming (as a lawyer's defense) that writing like this shows that even when I am most relaxed and doing what I want, even then I praise Kṛṣṇa. Although I write about picking my nose and prose and praise and poems of Mary Oliver—even then He is foremost in my mind and I know that anything else leads straight back to Him. Therefore it's providing me varieties of ways to preach His glories. It's another way to speak when you are on T.V.

She wrote another poem saying the deer had come out into the meadow in winter. She was indoors reading the *Iliad* where some *kṣatriyas* were behaving according to codes. She says it's just a brave story only, and then she goes back looking at the deer, surprised they are standing out in the cold and the rain coming down on them. What to make of it? It's real life true to her observation. We see that she is more drawn to the deer in nature and their dumb bravery than her cozy indoor's reading of the ancient book which seems less real. That's what I get from it. A good poem once again, but tied to limited values of one without a guru. They swallow so much stuff. Mailer too, although such a tough guy assuming and bragging, swallows the whole conception that sex and this body is the real life and so a brave person lives life as fully as possible. Mailer is so afraid of being a mere book worm and not being in the real life. But he mistakes what life is actually for, swallowing the stuff . . . he never had a bona fide guru. We were fortunate to get one and go beyond the limits of this world and the body. We dare (by guru's grace) to transcend

the consciousness, to go beyond the body, see the soul through the eyes of *śāstra*. It is much better.

But the true-to-observation writing of Oliver's poem on the deer in the meadow is enviable. We should write like that too. If you are reading a book indoors and the deer outside catch your attention, then it's all right to write about that and not pretend you are more interested in the book. In her case, she is consistent in her allegiance and affinity for the natural world. In my case, I wish to prove—but is it true?—that my attention is drawn away from material nature to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. Is it true? When it is not true, I want to admit it. But then I will say, "Wait, I wish to be Kṛṣṇa conscious. I don't wish to dwell in the relative worlds." And then I will go there and speak the truth. So this, my friend, is why at least in this timed book I am not only reciting *śāstra*, but telling the truth of the flow of my imperfect life, these precious days in retreat.

For awhile I waited to get here and now I am using my time as best I can. It is the best I can do, I say ironically but truthfully also. It is not pretending to be better than I actually am. But surely Kṛṣṇa consciousness in 100% spiritual varieties is the real goal and I read it when I take the time in his books. My master teaches us step by step.

Time is taking away this retreat but I am filling it with the book of these flows. I wish I were better. But for the present, this is who I am. This is one way to write and I know there are others.

On the tape, Prabhupāda was saying . . . but then the batteries ran down. He was saying what a *mahātmā* actually is. He is one who has become broadened by understanding that God is everything and that he is the

servant of God. From that vision your heart or soul becomes great. *Mahātmā* is not a label to put on a politician. He was saying it straight, and the batteries ran down to very slow voice so I had to turn it off and bathe and dry off in silence. But my mind was racing and making sentences to begin this chapter. I was thinking, "Yes, let me hurry upstairs and begin it." I felt conviction that it's okay and I still do, although you challenged me that this book is not more Kṛṣṇa conscious like the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is. It's a record of an imperfect guy trying to enter *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, trying to have that be his flow. Oh, I'd like it to be true. And one day it may be true, and in the meantime, I'm after all, a Kṛṣṇa conscious person aspiring, and do tell you the news from the *śāstra*.

One more page of solid gold. The Lord is above time. We are under time. You can worship God by seeing Him victorious, how He annihilates everything else. Then you take shelter of Him and be saved from the ravages of time. Time takes all the things we could never keep anyway. Leave them and focus while you are still living on attaining Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Don't waste a minute. I say I am not wasting time when I tell you whatever comes to me. Take it as a lesson as ways to correct the self. Leave a record of mistakes and how you apply to correct them. Reform notebook.

The correction fluid in my brain
is making a better book next time by the
method of doing this one as it comes.
The poem of Mary Oliver's deer is in my
mind and the true Kṛṣṇa book he read to me
at night. I'd like to live a life worth writing about

with stars and stripes forever in
 Kṛṣṇa consciousness,
 the flag of one nation under God,
 dedication to drive out evil by *sāṅkīrtana*.

Sixty million dollars for the Vedic city
 in Māyāpur,
 the task given to me, the way I avoid it,
 the truths will be paid out to you at death,
 and your lacks will make you cry
 perhaps that you spent so much time
 in writing this way
 but I say if you give your heart to this effort it
 will be accepted by God. Because He
 understands your total
 devotion and it doesn't matter in which way
 we express it, but it needs guru's approval.
 I beg him for that.

You've had enough, this chapter can't run more.
 Farewell to the early morning, I will see you on the walk
 of why your writing of Prabhupāda in the diary was a
 nice topic. Gentle rains can't chase us away. May this
 offering be acceptable and may the next ones be better. If
 he tells me what to do, I beg my mind to heed and not be
 a *mūḍha* always.

Chapter Eighteen

Well, dear folks, here is the straight skinny, as we used to say in the Navy (meaning it's the straight information). I am at a crossroads, thinking that maybe I'll do only one of these chapters per day and use my time for something else. This is my row to hoe. Erickson says trust the unconscious. You go into a trance and your unconscious will give you an idea where to go. He couldn't write one paragraph, had a writing block. He went into a trance and then found his nephew's Donald Duck comics on his lap. Weeks later he was still trying to write that paragraph. Then he thought of the comic books and how they are written so succinctly for children as well as adults. Somehow he flashed on how to write the difficult paragraph, "So Donald Duck said to Huey and Louie Ducks . . ."

Erickson's student Sidney Rosen tells a similar story. He had a writing block. He went into trance and felt a tingling in his thumb and two other fingers. It was in exactly the places where you hold a pen. He decided he should write with a pen and dictate later.

Well, fine. One also sometimes has to slow down and allow time for learning and assimilating sensory impressions.

I was thinking . . . this writing of what comes . . . it can be improved on. It really tests the heart. You require so much belief and faith in the process. I look at the whole book I wrote that way, 300 hundred pages of *Last Days of the Year*. It is okay, is a sincere dedication to the process. Why don't you keep it up here? You are feeling the closing up which you know as writer's block. It may be a serious meditation. But it goes like this:

"You have a too slim and raggedy collection of moves in this book. A little quote of Time and comment, a little poetry class of Mary Oliver with comment from a Kṛṣṇa conscious point of view, a little poem, a little this and that picked up so casually and worked through, picked up and put down so quickly and offhand."

Brother, if you don't believe in this, then no one else will.

At the very least, I ask you to give me fifteen more chapters at the rate of only one per day. Then in the afternoons daily you can write something else in another direction which may also be a way to trust the unconscious. Desires for change are not all stifling messages from the gremlin. As long as you keep flowing and changing . . .

You mean a different voice where you think things over beforehand? You have some idea where you are going. You do something for children or old folks in *guru-kulas*. You can write a noncynical book of Kṛṣṇa conscious adverbs. I'm just writing what comes here. You are addicted to it, you might say.

The idea of this book is to keep going and that's what I'm writing now. You either go ahead or you don't. You trust or you don't.

I want to trust, but I am egging myself to trust the deeper and not assume that just easygoing typing is writing (as Truman Capote said). I don't believe in that polished prose and sentence structure and paragraphs of argument. I can't do stories where I think out in thousands of words beforehand some imaginary character who won't make it anyway. Then, then?

If I were in the Samadhi Mandir or Prabhupāda's rooms in Vṛndāvana, I could write, "O Prabhupāda, I have come before you. Sitting here I see the Indian women with bundles on their heads . . . " But I am in Wicklow, Ireland. I watched the recent T.V. shows where the devotees made good appearances. Time is running out. Fifteen more days. I'd like to start something bright . . . but wouldn't it be much of the same? You can't escape your destiny . . .

No one can surpass the time representation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead by material power, by the counsel of ministers, by intelligence, by diplomacy, by fortresses, by mystic mantras, by drugs, by herbs or any other means.

Unless providence is in our favor, we shall not be able to gain victory. Therefore we must wait for that favorable time when our defeating them will be possible.

—*Bhāg.* 8.21.22, 24

It has to be your time, then you can win. You have to wait to see what Kṛṣṇa wants, what He wants you to do. Go into a trance and trust the unconscious. You mean a hunch? At least I may have to wait for some time. You could draw a picture and maybe the idea will come to you that way.

Everyone feels lonely from time to time. The drunkard hits the bottle. You may go into the streets. Take a walk. But don't avoid it . . .

It may take some time, but keep looking and waiting. But you can't wait forever. I especially have a limited time on these retreats and have to go forward with what is coming. It's really easy. I can always follow my nose.

It's just a matter of being attached to a group of chapters already started or something like that.

Yeah, but you've got to keep promises too. You can't, for example, leave your wife if you decide you don't love her anymore. You have to work at the thing.

Yes, that's true.

Evans to Tinker to Chance,
the ball is thrown. I want dynamite not.
I want to be a peaceful reader. Hereby declare,
"I shall read five or eight hours a day
in my spiritual master's books and to hell
with my writing and morning walks."
No, it's your preaching. You need it.
Then what is the difference between
what you want to do and what you should do and
what is best for you and what Prabhupāda
wants you to do and what
the Centennial committee
will say you ought to do if you fax them,
"Please direct me how I can please
Prabhupāda best in 1996"?

Tinkers to Evans to Chance.
You have to smoke out the raccoon in you.
Wait for the ballroom dance to end—
or rather leave it,
run away from bad association.
But be calm, be calm, and you know
Kṛṣṇa will give you a good idea.

I heard some devotes work with a pendulum to know
what to do. I write notes. Maybe a free-writing directed
śāstric thing, or this is one thing right now.

Dear timed book, my allegiance to you is being tested. The arches on the soles of your feet, the upper back of the manmade fibers on your toe and hats. The jungle of Hindu families in the park just outside of Paris at the P-stop—they went for Sunday afternoon recreation, remember?

The true devotee serving your spiritual master. The way people would misunderstand this attempt of mine and how I got caught chasing my own tail.

Say it's just a writing block.

But I have to take serious the only voice I have telling me

maybe it's time for change.

I think I'll go to another mode, like drawing or even walking outside. I need a little time. All glories to the Lord of the universe. Fading out the sense of control over this and let something instead take control over me.

Chapter Nineteen

Can you free-write a story about Malcom X? I don't mean the original Negro revolutionary. I mean one I just made up. Who I am doesn't matter. We are looking for a story. How about . . . pasty-faced Deva-devi and her husband. She thinks . . . I don't give a damn about them. However, I don't have any story right now. I would like to be a better devotee and hop from one thing to another in writing.

Does that mean I'm a poet and can't hang in there long enough to tell a story? Maybe at the same time I can do both. I live in stories but I also have to give my love, one hour or so a day to going on with the once-beloved story which I call *The Best I Could Do*. Why did you so utterly abandon it? Yes, I say, give us an hour a day with that writing that comes into your heart place.

O poem of living flesh,
 you are not St. John of course
 you are a pewter dish, not this, not this.
 I am after the qualities of Kṛṣṇa.
 He should not just be another person
 in your life—
 He lets me write whatever comes,
 He is the emperor of ice cream
 and everything, of all empires,
 of seas, oceans, nightingales,
 and there are clever poets who teach at
 Long Island University.

I was sitting in the living room with Patri asking him how his life has changed since he was rushed to the

hospital. He said spiritually he's doing much better, and his health is better too. They keep thinking that he is a liquor drinker since his sclerosis of the liver usually comes to people like that.

I am hereby launching again this book after several days hiatus.



Please welcome me back in my pants and overalls. I have a Prabhupāda book in my pocket. It may be that these free-write books are good for me because I am able to read Śrīla Prabhupāda and let it flow into the page, thus making the page substantially Kṛṣṇa conscious and also giving me the outlet, to read and write, read and write. You have to not give a damn what any critics and readers will think, but give it your best. These have been your own kind of books.

I have spent a couple of days leaving this project and now coming back to it again.

Now I want to continue it, fill my morning with the story-telling also. I set it up like this: there is a fictional professor who says that he has interviewed Hare Kṛṣṇa sect members for academic purposes, asking them to tell a best story of theirs. What follows is a collection. This set-up is to allow me freedom to tell any kind of story. But I have to invent a feasible, realistic type of devotee to tell it. I suppose I could get more far out with it, but so far it seems best to try to make it realistic and go with it. And then I have this space to be myself and exercise the special art of the timed book which has been my love.

Oh, dear me, you sound a bit sentimental, talking of the love you abandoned two days ago. You sound like an old drunk. So you're back here, huh?

Well, what's so Kṛṣṇa conscious about this?

I didn't read much and it dwindled down. But I have been enjoying hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda speak at 26 Second Avenue on the tapes. He says devotional service is unalloyed. The devotee doesn't want any reward, not even liberation. Just wants to serve Kṛṣṇa out of love. Then he told the nice story of Yamunācārya who cut the

words out of the *Bhagavad-gītā* verse where Kṛṣṇa says He personally bears the load on His back, brings the devotee what he lacks. He told the story of Bilva-maṅgala Ṭhākura and how he blinded himself. Told it in all wonderful details and at the end said his book, *Kṛṣṇa-karnāmṛta*, is very important, was recommended by Lord Caitanya to His devotees. Then he ended the lecture saying, "Thank you very much," and you hear Kīrtanānanda say, "Do you have it?" And Prabhupāda says, "Yes"—meaning he has the book by Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura. We thought, "Oh well, we shall read it right away." But Prabhupāda wasn't recommending it for our reading.

We go up and down in the material world life after life.

So I was talking with Patri. He said, "Yes, we have to be ready for death." We were talking in front of the coal-burning fireplace, I'm glad to say.

I said, he said . . . "I'm feeling good in my connection with you, even though my wife and I don't write to you much."

I whispered, "Thank you," inaudibly. I said, "To live for death isn't morbid. We don't practice like Christian monks who picture themselves on their deathbed." I said we live for life, for doing nice things in Kṛṣṇa's service.

"Yes," said Patri, "I like the example Prabhupāda gave that a million dollars includes all your ten dollar problems. So by serving Kṛṣṇa, all other things are taken care of." (He meant our preparedness for death.)

I said, "Yes, psychologists teach people how to prepare for death, and mainly they're getting them to be detached, to let go, coaching them that you can't possess things, you have to let go to die peacefully. That is

nothing but simple renunciation and it is already included in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

Thus we talked. I said, “Patri, you went to the edge of the cliff of death and you have come back. But you will have to go there again and we all, not only to the edge, but we will have to go over. But it is not a terrible thing. It can be wonderful going back to Godhead, to Kṛṣṇa.” I said . . . death . . . I didn’t really know what the hell I was talking about. I have not been to the cliff.

But he has, and he became sobered by it. His hair is growing again, and he has lost the unhealthy fat. He is not a liquor drinker, but he thinks that by eating so much carbohydrates (potatoes and fried things were his sole diet) and not in protein, he got the same disease an alcoholic will get. That made me think I should eat right.

I don’t want to die. I told him I figure I may live twenty more years and get a good warning and go to Vṛndāvana. “But you, Patri, have showed us that one may not get such a warning. It may happen while we are out selling paintings at 1 P.M. and there’s no warning.”

He told me how he was put in the respiratory ward where he saw three old men die. Now you could put all this in your story, right? But why not keep it in here in the timed book where it has appeared?

Yes, he saw the dying. One man was surrounded by his relatives, “Just like in the *Bhāgavatam*.” The son was shouting, “Keep breathing! Keep breathing!” Patri said, “I saw the old man was running out of his breaths.” (We say that one has a limited number of breaths in which to live a lifetime.) The son was shouting, but the old man was running out, and there was nothing he could do. Patri saw the priest with a chalice

who said some prayers but when the man died, he said to the mourning relatives, "I'm sorry about your troubles," which is what every Irish person says in a conventional way to survivors. He expected the priest to say more. Patri said that I wrote him a letter in which I quoted Śrīla Prabhupāda saying, "Philosophy means to keep death in front of you," and that was better than the priest saying only, "Sorry for your troubles."

Sorry
 for your troubles.
 But please give me a piecemeal.
 I ate two muffins only, with whipped
 cream atop them and couldn't chew the *capātis*.
 No use even trying. And this is
 the song of the wayfarer, in the last yellow
 cottage on the lane just before the hill
 and the sheep, and the lambkins are coming here
 every day chewing grasses, the lambkins
 are too young
 to know any food but the mother's milk.
 And this is the song limping
 and the story has its place.
 I think I shall not abandon the
 oh timed, rhymed book,
 book of babbling no sense—you are
 not that, but my own true thread, the stuff
 of days and I better feed the fire.

Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, that was the song
 he sang the night he left us
 at JFK in 1967,
 Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, he was thinking
 of going to India, back to Godhead

and now we hear it again
sung on the tape.

Haribol. Sir, can you tell me more about your story-telling adventures, while you were away, for I am your charge, I am your children waiting at home. (In a similar way, I am waiting for Madhu to come back from Dublin. He said this morning that he better not spend the whole day out because he's feeling a strain in his back. I will ask him about it. He is trying to get insurance but this country is not interested in selling insurance except to women over 30. They are not in competition. They want to take people's insurance money but not with any chance that they may have to give it back from an insurance claim. So Madhu is begging someone to sell him insurance. A company in Italy is quite willing, but will they be able to cover our van in that international way, now that we have switched license plates to Irish? And then also Madhu has his American visa canceled which is serious and I'll tell you about that when he goes to the American embassy. I write these books like this, just flowing from actual life and don't give a damn if someone says this isn't the way to write.)

So the story-telling is creeping along. Better you just read them. I have been taking notes also to help me. Chekov stories are the current diversion or interest. But I didn't mean to so completely go on a marathon so that all else was dropped. Maybe now I can talk some stories, just whatever comes during my morning walk time, be confident about it, just make something up, like someone steps up and says, "Here is my story," and let it rip.

I don't think I will give more quotes about Time. You get the idea. We are all pushed along by time. Kṛṣṇa is many things, not only time. But time is His biggest aspect in the material world and in an impersonal sense. Nothing is greater or outreaches time.

Prabhupāda said that he saw a very nice, strong building being torn down on Chambers Street to make way for a skyscraper built with much glass. Think of him getting acquainted with various areas of Manhattan, watching the ball and crane knocking down the good building on Chambers Street, knocking and building, breaking and building, that is the work of *māyā*.

Time destroys and men think that they can do it. This cottage is a secure place, but sometimes cars come and shepherds come and I sit up here and keep studying. If you had to die, it would be better to be thinking of Kṛṣṇa's qualities rather than a story you made up. That's true, but the story is part of preaching the culture. It's a true preaching effort. But you have given me a good word to the wise. Don't divert without giving people Kṛṣṇa consciousness in each and every story.

Stretching out here. Do you like to? I have not seen any mice in this house. They leave food out, but they don't come. Our belongings are strewn all over the house. The porch is filled up with our luggage and stuff, stationary, books, clothes, papers, you name it, all piled and strewn about. This happens when we stop in Ireland and they let us come into their home. Then we pack it up when we leave. They are kind to us.

I am writing letters. I am a boy with a cheek-shaved jowl. I look in the mirror and then I may forget who I am. I used to be even skinnier. I used to live in India and

go to Mathurā in search of *rasika* tidings. Now I am different. I have a great responsibility to myself not to throw away this human life. So trim your sails or whatever you call it and get back to the basics. Then you'll be in a position to tell us your Hare Kṛṣṇa stories. You may shoot from the hip using your cane and body English and writing stories by girls and by boys and old men. You want them to be heart felt and all . . . but I say be a back-to-basic man and then you'll be able to afford it, and not in any way out on a limb too far extended and then sorry you have to drag yourself back.

Welcome back to the timed book. I think it's nice and we can continue tomorrow morning. I also (speaking for the unconscious, the elves and the leprechauns of creative effort—but I can't speak for the Supersoul who actually gives us the stories) will be rooting for a nice handle to a story which will be given to you probably in the morning during *japa* time or at least as you go out of the house at 6 A.M. almost too busy to notice and revel in the morning's glory of chill air, richest time of the year. Do stop a moment and breath in the pure, fresh-smelling air. And then tell, tell, the story of a Kṛṣṇa conscious person's experience.

This land produced daffodils and crocuses and the earth in morning is clear this time of year. The birds like robins alight almost on your hand and every day—I want to say—I met a large, swaybacked horse. He is on the other side of the fence. He has an unruly, black mane, and even a black beard. A brown body and big belly. He looks strong, but is probably old and just left out to pasture. He roams around and often stays close to the fence. I see his eyes, alarmed, they're just bulging,

staring at me. The only sign that he sees and recognizes me are those eyes which seem crazed and wild. I don't go too near him because I am not familiar with horses as I am with cows. But he is there every morning, the only one I see on my walk, and I say, "Hare Kṛṣṇa" to him and will remember him . . . I hope.

This is the return mission, recoup, to have faith in writing one way or the other.

Kṛṣṇa killed the Kāliya and He can kill your own poisonous nature. He will protect your devotional service but you need to give your time to hearing about Him and that I will do right now.

Chapter Twenty

A person named Kakudmi took his daughter to Brahmāloka and inquired about a husband for her. When he arrived there, Lord Brahmā was engaged in hearing a musical performance by the Gandharvas. Kakudmi waited, and when the performance was over, he saw Lord Brahmā. But in that period of time, huge amounts of time had passed on earth. K. asked Brahmā for some help in getting his daughter married and Brahmā laughed. "All those who you may have decided to accept as your son-in-law have passed away in the course of time." Twenty-one *yugas* had passed by. The descendants of the proposed son-in-law were also long gone and "You cannot even hear about their names." All the kings of those *yugas* had faded from memory into obscurity. "This is the way of time as it moves through past, present and future" (*Bhāg.* 9.3.32, purport).

Yet here I am, composing my book. Norman Mailer wrote, "If my books are still read in a hundred years, I think that *Barbary Shore* will be considered the most important of my first three books." Ah, but it all has to go down the drain of time. And my work is not an exception (although you secretly hope it may be because you have connection with the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement).

The fact is that the devotion you put into it will not be lost. Therefore, that should be the most important ingredient. I don't mean merely the labor of love, not that kind of devotional meaning. But devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Glorifying His pastimes—that's what will make a work eligible to be read by thoughtful persons in the future.

When you just write what comes to your mind . . .

We get up and it's cool but we are not dying from the cold. We bathe, the water gushes out from the rubber tube over the head and shoulders, first hot and then cold. Steering to Kṛṣṇa, we hear the words of Prabhupāda coming from the tape recorder which is placed on top of the toilet. He is saying . . . it was just a few moments ago. He said when he sees the moon and stars in New York City, he thinks, why do they consider me a foreigner? It is the same moon and stars as in India. I am not a foreigner. Everything is God's property and we are all His children. We all have a right to live by His grace and no one has a right to kill, even the animals. He said if he speaks his own words, that's relative. The substance is different from himself. But when he speaks Kṛṣṇa's words as in the *Bhāgavatam*, it is absolute. Everything comes from Kṛṣṇa. Whatever we see here in this world, its origin is in Him. Śrīla Prabhupāda is rolling on, pouring out, the pure words, convincing us in those days and still to become the devotee of Kṛṣṇa, accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It was never done before. Who thought you could introduce what they called Hinduism and monotheism of Kṛṣṇa? Yet he did it. He said he could do it because it was a fact. He just repeated the words of Kṛṣṇa proving that His potency will be accepted all over the world.

Why didn't he come sooner? You weren't ready for it.

Woke up around 11 P.M. and thought, "Okay, no harm if instead of trying to get back into sleep and your dreams, you go on thinking real easy now about the stories you want to tell when you go on your morning walk." I felt more open and accessible, and then one after another, they all formed for me. They are actually people I know and how we can adapt them to some fic-

tional changes so that people won't be hurt and yet you can tell them. The people, imagined by me, will speak on the morning walks.

A story about a devotee who went to China for his own purposes but also to serve the movement there. A story about a soul who was conceived by Kṛṣṇa conscious parents and everyone expected the most from him, but just before his proposed initiation, they found out that he's not following all the principles. And that creates a nice breath of honesty into his situation. A story about a teenager who observes the scene when a guru cancels his speaking engagement, and a hundred people show up. The story of a girl—her story is just to tell a Prabhupāda story.

And the one taken from Śrīdama, which I will turn into a story about a woman who is helped by New Age therapy, cranial adjustment, and the Christian doctor tells her to be forgiving or giving . . . and she does it and it works but then she wonders, "Why didn't I learn this from my own devotee colleagues in the ten years I've been in ISKCON?"

You learn how to mine the stories, how to work so you don't get consumed by the story-writing and you have time for this timed book also.

It is a timed bomb like the hand grenades of World War II. You saw them in World War II Hollywood movies. The G.I. would pull out the pin and throw it, lob it into the machine gun nest of the Japs or Nazis and so many different scenarios. Sometimes someone would throw the grenade back at the soldier or someone jumped onto the grenade to save a friend or the Japs were blown up in clouds of smoke and chemical explosion. You in the Strand Theater gobbling up popcorn and the film-gorry heroics of the G.I. heroes.

And it will all go into obscurity. The Strand Theater is already gone and the Chelsea house is gone, your house at 125 Katan Avenue still stands but different people live there and maybe your parents have already moved on to their next lives. And you too and Dr. Alexander and your black coat and your short novel about Svevo is already gone and Steve Kowit don't write you anymore. Maybe he is gone or soon will be, disappointed in his attempt to be happy in a house remote near the Mexican border. But if one does a little devotional service, it doesn't suffer loss or diminution. Write about that this morning—about devotional service.

About Kṛṣṇa who is heroic and gentle and forgiving. He has all qualities to an infinite degree. He is all-perfect and also shy.

As for the material world, it is like hell. You have to see it for what it is. Lord Kṛṣṇa told the kings who had been imprisoned by Jarāsandha, "This material world is misery, life after life. You kings exploited others, and now you are suffering the reactions. Material nature is cruel. We should get out of her clutches by surrendering to Kṛṣṇa and go back to the spiritual world."

When the Supreme Personality of Godhead approaches as death or the supreme controller of time (this is Prabhupāda saying this), He takes away everything. "In other words, all opulence, prestige and everything we possess is given by the Supreme for some purpose (*Bhāg. 9.4.54*, purport)." Follow the order of the Supreme. Don't disregard Him. That's what Brahmā said to Dūrvasa and he said he couldn't help him, he would have to ask forgiveness from Ambariṣa.

Yes, there are nice and many stories devotees can tell. I will be the fictional mouthpiece. The devotee named Sattvika is like me. He will say sometimes these stories by devotees are okay and let's not forget Kṛṣṇa. Stories of Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda will appear also . . . someone said I witnessed the death of a nineteen-year-old girl in Vṛndāvana. She was hearing from Kṛṣṇa book but then especially wanted to hear of Rādhikā and the gopis. But was she qualified to hear this? It is a controversy. JS mentioned that Śrīla Prabhupāda, in the middle of the night, in his very last days on this earth, asked JS and others to read aloud from *The Teachings of Lord Kapila*, which was recently published then. That was an example. I want to be able to hear whatever he has written when I am dying and almost dead. Please read to me from anywhere in this book, it is like a sugar doll, wherever you bite it, it is sweet. You will hit pure devotional service wherever you open the book. Divining rod, all nectar . . .

You have your own song
 you are a Hare Kṛṣṇa boy,
 don't call yourself a jerk so many times.
 Wearing a knit hat if you are cold
 but tell about Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa.
 Speaking to his devotees,
 waiting for the right moment and then you say
 Prabhupāda. They know
 of whom you are speaking, his followers,
 they know, and you are giving them
 the treat of American free verse.

You Hare Kṛṣṇa boy, old man
 I know a Scotsman 58, officially retired

his government gives him money, he's a devotee
 and his poem with Prabhupāda in it
 was included in the vegetarian anthology
 and two other poems in a Scottish anthology.
 Devotees are all over the world.
 We want to hob-nob with the best of them
 and say, "I know such-and-such devotee
 who is famous." And ultimately we want
 to be able to say, "I went back to
 Godhead. You didn't know I was such
 a good devotee,
 did you? Well it's true, I went back to Godhead."

Now they will finally appreciate you
 and erect a monument indoors.
 Someone will interview people
 who knew for your biography but
 they will say, "Forget it." Your biographer
 will gather
 too much damning evidence from your pre-KC days
 the secrets of ex-wives,
 and guys who beat you up,
 said you were a sissy,
 walking around with head in clouds
 didn't know who he was, listened to junk records,
 how can you call this great?
 His saying he went back to Godhead is
 just his bluff, self-advertisement.
 We don't believe.

You want something immortal? Try this scone (scone
 is the word in Irish for the dry buns like rolls). You
 can't eat *capātis*, I heard, because of your "chewing prob-
 lem." So here, try this baked, toasted scone with a little

butter. But is it good for you? Listen, this community is still shocked and sobered by Patri dāsa's being so sick. And here you are, looking for bread. You think you'll be remembered for that?

After millions of years, at the time of cosmic annihilation, when everything, manifested and unmanifested, is annihilated by the force of time, the five gross elements enter into the subtle conception, and the manifested categories enter into the unmanifested substance. At that time, You alone remain, and You are known as Ananta Śeṣa-nāga.

O inaugurator of the material energy, this wonderful creation works under the control of powerful time, which is divided into seconds, minutes, hours and years. This element of time, which extends for many millions of years, is but another form of Lord Viṣṇu. For Your pastimes, You act as the controller of time, but You are the reservoir of all good fortune. Let me offer my full surrender unto Your Lordship.

No one in this material world has become free from the four principles birth, death, old age and disease, even by fleeing to various planets. But now that You have appeared, My Lord, death is fleeing in fear of You, and the living entities, having attained shelter at Your lotus feet by Your mercy, are sleeping in full mental peace.

—*Bhāg.* 10.3.25, 26, 27

This describes Kṛṣṇa who came into the world in Kāmsa's cell. Now the year 1995 has passed by Gaura-Pūrṇimā and had its what? The spring, the summer, good time for going out on book distribution. For the Christians, it is Easter when God's son died for our sins. For us Vaiṣṇavas, it is late spring and soon after

that the Ratha-yātrā festivals start and devotees travel to catch one after another in the U.S.A., a good way to observe festivals instead of rock concerts, car races, and beer bouts. The tents of Rath-yātrā Festival of India and the girls and boys dancing in front of the three tall, silk-covered carts. The festival in the city streets is open for anyone who wants to follow, a kind of parade from one city to another. Whoever goes must have some transcendental fever, he or she is not ashamed to be seen as a devotee in public. But rather, they like it. Chant "Jaya Jagannātha," and feel the bliss and preach to people, give out Prabhupāda's books, work in the temples to put on the high-pitched festival. Sometimes not so many people are watching in the streets. They try to ignore the festival. But sometimes it catches their attention. You can't know for sure, it may rain . . . but the effort is rewarded.

Here here—he pitched some new bags
of Polish coal onto the pile in the back yard
yesterday, I saw him and here here, the spring has
come and the low hills are beautiful.
See and be outside at the best moment
of the day, at dawn, gray light first light
of day, the fools sleep through it,
also at the dead of night it's perfect time, silent
for literary work and spiritual reading.

I'll be out there yapping Hare Kṛṣṇa stories
and soon Rāmacandra's appearance
and then . . . our van
will get insured, Madhu assured me
and we'll be legal to roam European
common market countries on ferries,

on wheels, I intend to get more into the cherished place of hearing in his books what Kṛṣṇa is, and partaking of His life in that way.

You are sad about it, but you don't want to tell yourself or people so much about your ineptitude. Get through this. You'll have to read it later. It should be happy as a poem. A memory maybe, of things everybody likes, like smell of fresh wash on the line in back yard, grassy spring and summer, cherry trees in bloom, the blue jays screaming . . . I ran out and didn't know anything but liked to pick blackberries and put them in the aluminum pot. I didn't know aluminum is bad for health, didn't know, drank Coke, wanted to grow old enough so I could know sex secrets. Didn't know, was afraid of Alvin Galter and my sister hurt me with her words.

I didn't know I would suffer in the Navy, would be sensitive and fall in love with my English teacher. Didn't know I'd be a coward for a physical fight, so much in anxiety always wanting to be accepted but no athlete. Afraid to be a scholar although I could have been and could have then been accepted right away to a good college. My parents didn't want to spend money on it, why, and what money did have they needed to spend on themselves, the house, and all that.

They were not so high on education for a high falutin' budding intellectual who squandered it. I didn't know then that I would meet an Indian guru (as people would call him) and I would be surprised how much my parents abhorred it. I thought it was just great. By the time he came into my life I was ready for it, exhausted all other alternatives and still pretending. I said this is

fine, his brown colors, his *khaḍi* saffron, light tan, his old age, he is not cheating, it's not a sex trip or money trip. He has devotion for Kṛṣṇa whom I never heard of before. But I like the sound of it, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, mystic religion gets you higher than LSD. I like it and now I know the ISKCON movement is not so perfect either as the years go by. But I won't ever leave, this is my home, in some way traveling now, get our van insured and see you on the *autostrade* by summer and may have a hundred Hare Kṛṣṇa stories and even these timed books could keep flowing. You ought to study more, I nag myself, and you, dear reader, keep hearing me say, "Chant better, read better." At least I'm still alive to want to improve.

Now end this one. I may not be back the whole day. I'll wait for you tomorrow. There is a gnawing feeling that we cannot do it justice. But we press on anyway

I read a poem by a woman about being robbed. She's still afraid he will come back and cut through the screen window. She was not home at the time. Sometimes they rob while you are present. It reminds us that this world is not a fit place. We keep writing against the closing of the light, before the next robber. But I also think of that friendly black guy who guided the cars over the funky Pantoon ferry in Guyana. He saw the sticker on our windshield, "Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and Be Happy." So he said it to us. He seemed to like it. I thought that he sensed the good will and saw it in a nonsectarian way. In a world of jive and back-talking and not much money, even though the blacks run the country, he saw the Hindu Haribols coming off the ferry and he directed them, and maybe he noticed the two older white men in the back seat. He was amused in a

carefree, careless way, and liked it. "Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and be happy," he repeated.

Remember this rather than the bandits who came to our temple and made the devotees lie on their bellies for two hours while they stole everything. At least they didn't do worse. I have to remember, I have to get ready now, chant and get ready for my morning walk, tell stories, but be as Kṛṣṇa conscious as you can before death strikes you, before you have to remember Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda for all you're worth.

Do it now, help people, others, to do it. That's your mission in life. He told you that preaching to the devotees is more important to you than preaching to the nondevotees. That seems fitting for me. I don't know if you will all kindly accept it, and I don't want to force it, only if you see some good and interest in it . . . Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare. If you can make your life nice and dedicated, then you can chant, and when it's time to write things down, it will be better. I am working on that. Kṛṣṇa will help. I have to serve Him even though imperfect. He loves me. He loves us all.

Chapter Twenty-One

You can't expect to know so much or feel so much. This "machine gun" is sounding now and Madhu is trying to sleep-rest in the next room with the flu. But I couldn't just be quiet all day, and I think he will understand. The noise of the typewriter is the admission that I am not writing with pen, and a hen-penny for your thoughts will not be enough either. You throw off the other voices as you can as when you walk alone in the morning. Diminishing days . . . I want to be Kṛṣṇa conscious and do some stuff to prove it. The proof of the mercy of Lord Caitanya, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says, is in the saving of Jagāi and Mādhāi, who later became great devotees. That was the proof.

Songs of Narottama, the singing of Prabhupāda is sweet and intent with his explanation of the songs he is often mentioning the names of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. As I write this, I hear in my head the rhythm and pronunciation of the North Ireland Catholics, Uddhava and Patri, who are in the kitchen with me, talking not long ago. They brought a sumptuous lunch for me, finished the brussel sprouts which were raised in his own garden, and the sweet was a sweetbread soaked in custard. Maybe not the best thing for you, but it sure tasted good and I devoured it. Does that mean I'll get sick?

I heard Prabhupāda saying that *bhakti* is practiced by the tongue. If I didn't have a tongue, he said, I couldn't speak to you, and with the tongue we also chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and I eat *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*. With this one part of the body you can become Kṛṣṇa conscious.

I was listening while I ate my lunch on a little table made some years ago by Aniruddha of these parts. And

earlier, reading of Kṛṣṇa's qualities. Even a drop of it can bring you love of God, although love of God is not something so common you can purchase at the stores, but step by step you proceed, starting with *śraddhā*. The qualities of Kṛṣṇa are innumerable and we hear just a few of them. They may also appear contradictory, how one person can have all four very different natures such as *dhirodātta*, *dhira-lalitā*, *dhira prasānta*, and *dhirod-dhata*. But they are all reconciled in Him.

Prabhupāda also told us in 1966 that the *gopīs* are the highest devotees of all, their devotion is unexcelled. Even among devotees there are grades. The next best is Uddhava, and the next best are devotees like Arjuna. Most perfect is Goloka, very perfect in Dvārakā, and perfect in Mathurā.

You should do, you should do, want to obey the instructions of your spiritual master.

Earlier today I felt threatened that I am reading too many stories by mundane authors in order to make myself better as a story-writer. So I was about to cut it off. Got to give my time back to reading in Śrī Kṛṣṇa. But it's all right if in a limited way you take in some stories. But don't expect it to make you a serious art author. You will still only tell the little stories you are meant to tell, and later today I'll go over that with you, what you might change and tell the stories from the lives you are tuned into. For the purpose of telling the nature of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Many plants and sticks, unable to stay together, are carried away by the force of a river's waves. Similarly, although we are intimately related with friends and family members, we are unable

to stay together because of our varied past deeds
and the waves of time.

—*Bhāg.* 10.5.25

Vasudeva warns us, although he was speaking to Nanda Mahārāja, that all of us who are together now will be parted. It is karma that brought us together, apparently by chance, or we may think that we made hard endeavors to be with each other. But by time, according to the rules of past karma (all of this ultimately unknowable to us), we will also be parted. Yes, just the fact that you have a material body is karma and guarantees that you have to get wrenched away from the scene. You look upon some earth as yours, such as these Wicklow hills, but how long can you stay here? In an interview, they asked one of the ladies here, "When will you move?" She replied, "Not until I leave my body." That was the longest period she could conceive of. And then she modified that and said, "Of course, it is up to Kṛṣṇa." But even if we stay here our whole life, that won't be long. We whistle that song, but who knows the actual meaning and feeling of it? I admit I do not.

Looking out at the low, stone walls put up by men now dead. Look out at the branches of this tree by the window; the buds very tight in late March . . . It too sings a silent song of time, and the wind chuffing and puffing is moving the branches . . . moves my soul in the body, wind that moves the cloud moves my green age, the poet from Swansea said.

Take off those sweaters and sweatshirts man
and write what you can a little longer.

The truth contained in pictures
does live in a very little and old boy
long enough for him to enunciate it

with his fresh speaking in his chest and
if he's inclined to write I should not dissuade him
but don't say we need it, more unnecessary
reading matter.

But if a soul wants to say Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, he is
always encouraged by the Lord.

That is the advantage of being in a line
of succession from our Prabhupāda, you can
honestly repeat what he said
and you live it.

Today I prepared a lecture I may give
in Rāḍhadeśa, Belgium, that well organized
place with the marigolds neatly in rows
around the front walks and the tourists pouring
out from buses, a haven for Hare Kṛṣṇa.
I will say Dear friends, we may sometimes
doubt God's existence and that Kṛṣṇa is God.
And then I'll answer that doubt with well chosen
examples starting with the time

Prabhupāda gathered
us GBC in 1972 and said, "Are you convinced?"
It is him that says it
and we repeat his teachings
over the years,
seeking the message of Kṛṣṇa to the *gopis*
as if we earned the right to hear it
and wanting really to hear whatever is
appropriate and relishing it
and striving, enough labor to earn the right
at Kṛṣṇa conscious poems.

You unworthy fellow. You this and that. Read a story
called "A Peculiar Man" by Chekov about a louse of a

guy who didn't beat people but always spoke to them so terribly. You'd have to read it to understand how bad he was. He hired a midwife for two rubles, but never paid her, and the story is told from her point of view how she goes out in the night and delivers the baby, talks with that peculiar man's wife, who confides that he is impossible to live with. It's not much of a story but a portrait tellingly done, of a man we don't like and a message indirect to avoid people like him and don't become like him, but be like the charitable midwife. We fear such peculiar men. Who knows how they got that way and can anything change them?

Lord Kṛṣṇa is above time. He was born at the right time. Time eats away at us, and the punch is added to by the modes of nature which eat us and force us. Even when he thinks, "I am smoking a cigarette," actually the cigarette is dominating and killing him. He doesn't know.

We arrived in NYC on a cold March day, cold for us because we came straight that morning from the tropics. At JFK outside in the wind waiting for a courtesy bus to pick us up, I saw a man making a phone call. He wore gloves with the cloth cut off to expose the fingers so he could do things like dial telephones and yet keep his hands warm. And he was smoking a cigarette. We saw some people walking from airplane flights, some of them scruffy people, and some fashionable business people. We finally made it to the hotel. I told you all of that or some of it, how devotees were waiting for us. I didn't tell you some of the sad and anxious things going on in their lives and you may be a story-teller now, but

you cannot just expose people's lives. Go back to them, to the memories, and tell some of your own.

Do you remember when you were temple president and you made a rule that no one could go out of the temple room during the *japa* period? You even stationed a man at the entrance to keep them in. One girl whose husband had joined and she just went along with him and lived in the temple, freaked out when she was told she had to stay in the temple room. I think she just left us then and never came back. But this is not a story, although I could turn it into one. The opposite of a well crafted story is this . . .

Give us another quote on Time and don't just make it up. I turned to the index of the book under Time, but first see Temples, Hare Kṛṣṇa in Durban, South Africa, in Vṛndāvana, in India, *prasādam* distribution. The temple in Durban was praised in the newspapers, the devotees' virtues were extolled, rather rare for a journalist, and Prabhupāda was happy like a father and pasted it in the purport in contrast to anti-cult activities, at the time the brainwashing cases were coming in America in 1977. Time has passed and the cults and anti-cults take different shapes. And I do too, one of the oldest fellows looking for benefits of being a Hare Kṛṣṇa. You can get free food, but not cigars. If you want cigars and liquor, maybe another religious order is for you. But in this one, you can thank your stars and thank God and you can espouse that Kṛṣṇa is God in *The Nectar of Devotion*.

Look in the index under Temple Worship (see Deity Worship), Transmigration of the souls . . . ah, here we are, Time. Time I am, and I have come to destroy you, except for you, the Pāṇḍavas, everyone here will be

killed. Time on Brahmāloka. Tiger in Vṛndāvana. Thread, sacred. The cosmos is controlled by time. Kṛṣṇa is beyond time (see also future, past, and present).

The Supreme Personality of Godhead has no beginning and no end, no exterior and interior, no front and no rear. In other words, He is all-pervading. Because He is not under the influence of the element of time, for Him there is no difference between past, present and future; He exists in His own transcendental form at all times. Being absolute, beyond relativity, He is free from distinctions between cause and effect, although He is the cause and effect of everything. That unmanifested person, who is beyond the perception of the senses, had now appeared as a human child, and mother Yaśodā, considering Him her own ordinary child, bound Him to the wooden mortar with a rope.

—Bhāg. 10.9.14

How is it possible that He who controls time can be controlled by His mother? It is true because Mother Yaśodā so much loved Kṛṣṇa that she gave Him the order. She wanted to be the supplier of the wants of Kṛṣṇa. Most religionists go to God and ask Him to be their order-supplier. But Yaśodā and pure devotees like her want to give Kṛṣṇa whatever He wants. That is the difference. Don't pray to Him for your daily bread, but you supply Him the bread. Then if in love you want to tie Him up, He will submit to that. You will be greater than God. But only if you love Him.

These are the lessons we want to give to humankind. Tell them peace and prosperity will come only if they are God conscious. They will say, "Shut up, we don't want to hear from you Hare Kṛṣṇas. We will at best give you a small space on our T.V. show or newspapers,

but then too we will lampoon you and remind everyone that you are a surly and not to be trusted cult and you have very few members so we don't have to be too careful what we say about you guys. You do have some Hindus on your side, it's true, but you are not like the Blacks in America, and so . . . "

Do you like to be a *sannyāsi*?

Yes, sir.

Interview completed. Come back next week.

Do you still like to be a *sannyāsi*?

Oh yes, sir. And don't want to be married. It's needless complication especially for one trying for love of God.

But are you willing to be a priest and function like the public pump?

Well, I sez, I did that and I'm retired now.

News flash: 95% of householders in Kṛṣṇa consciousness may not strictly follow the rules on no illicit sex, which is to have sex only for procreation. Well, I don't want to be the spiritual master who has to counsel people about that. I said I don't want to know about your private lives in the bedroom. I only know in a simple way how my spiritual master defines no illicit sex. So don't ask me to compromise. You should find a way to be affectionate without sex intercourse. Why don't you try to find some *gṛhastha* who is doing that and ask him how he does it? How's that for evasive no-counseling?

Let's face it, I don't have the experience or the inside knowledge and better that I'm not called upon to counsel such people. One lady said, "I chant 50 rounds just before my husband enjoys himself in sex with me. Is that all right, am I following the four rules?" I said leave me, leave me. I better not be the initiating spiri-

tual master of people who are going to come to me with such questions or worse yet, they just indulge in it in their own lives and are counseled by others who say to the wife, "Let him enjoy with you as he likes. It's better that you don't break up your marriage. Because if that happens, you'll be looking for another husband and your spiritual master won't help you no how in a jam like that. He just wants to see the appearance of couples getting along okay."

It's a Pandora's box of the first order, as snakes, worms can up—and I don't want to open it. But you can sight it as another reason to lay off further initiations and be simple and read and chant and tell people, "No more illicit sex, no meat-eating, no intoxication, and no gambling, and do like me." But yeah, I do like sweets. But I don't go to hell unnecessarily.

Yeah, but you don't love God.

Not yet, but maybe next month when I up the quota on my rounds for a week, and maybe when I go to read again I'll be a good boy.

Stone wall low walls . . .
what do I care about?

Right away you think of your soft body
with its bones tucked in under thin skin
and the arteries' precious blood flowing there
remarkable how they hold up strong
but delicate, can be easily punctured
slashed and drained in less than an hour
as happened to Kirtana-rasa's brother when he
was defending the devotee . . .

You think of the body and the help of your
few friends who you care about. What would

you do without them? It may be that you are basically a selfish person. For sure, you haven't been tested so severely yet. More reason to keep writing now?

Doesn't mean you can't write better when you've been through hell. The godless ones go through hell and don't write any better for it. Neither do complacent ones. A quiet life can be full of insight. God give me quiet but He wants to see if I can use the creative potential hours for best books and chant rounds by candlelight and read spiritual master's books. Or else it will be taken away from you and you think regretfully so many afternoons I didn't spend well.

What do I care for? The books I write and in my own way, the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement—I see it floating on the high seas like a tall awkward old-fashioned ship—ship of fools? I didn't say that. But it's congested and thank God, it's not just one big frigate with sails but many in a fleet including whale boats and speed boats, a million boats . . . you even see some lone swimmers but all need to stick together and avoid the nondevotees in their ocean liners and aircraft carriers and space crafts, preach in your boat, practice *harināma*. What do I care about?

To the sacred memory of Kṛṣṇa,
no bad press for our guys.

No horrible falling apart of the whole thing.
 I want to walk on the spinning earth solid
 and the same for my *confrères*.
 I wish the peaceful life and live it
 out. I know we have to die. Wish my own will
 be honorable but want to attain love of God.
 Ah, we say it,
 you mean *bhāva* and *prema*? I don't think
 it is possible to go up through *niṣṭha* and *ruci*
 and *aśakti* . . . I mean love of God though,
 dedicated oneness, giving up
 of the material desires. Even desires
 to eat nice food, to be respectable and
 peaceful and in tolerably good health.
 Material desire includes everything except
 the desire to serve Kṛṣṇa and guru for
 their pleasure.
 I'm a long ways from that.

When I think what do I love
 I think of the body. I produced these books not
 sure even if I love them but I do love
 the chance to write and the feeling
 at start of a morning walk, the coming home with
 a poem or letter or story nowadays
 in my bag like blackberries picked
 and the books come out . . . love maybe
 it escapes me. I do endure and think
 I do thank God and hope to endure
 when it gets hard and not fail those
 who look to me for tolerable good example.
 They know I'm not so strong, I've admitted it.
 Love, I don't know. I am a spirit soul,
 I want to repeat him—he says you are

dormant, originally a lover of Kṛṣṇa, you just have
to learn to uncover it . . . that's what

 this writing is,
scraping and shoveling and hoping
to uncover. Got to go now
and put coal on the fire,
Madhu is sick today,
see you tomorrow.

Chapter Twenty-two

The morning session went well, me speaking informally in the room. At the end, four-year-old Kṛṣṇa dāsa stood before me and asked, "How can I not be naughty?" I told him to obey his *pīta*. Then five-year-old Saṅkarṣaṇa cuddled next to me and asked softly, "Who is your mother?" I told him my mother is the *Vedas*. But that was not good enough, so I said, "My mother is not a devotee. She is an old lady living in America. I do not see her anymore. I'm not so advanced as you who have devotees for parents."

He said, "But you are a devotee!"

"Yes," I said, "because even if you are not born a devotee, if you meet a pure devotee, then you can become a devotee."

Filing out.

Yes, and tell us, I heard you gave away your volumes of *Alice in Wonderland* to the school here. Yes, but with the provision that if I am interested, I can go back again and look at them.

I asked the devotees here to give me suggestions for topics I might use in my upcoming disciples' meetings in Belgium. One said, "Why not talk on how you are satisfied in your service, spontaneously, not mechanically, and how one may find the service that he loves and serve from that platform?" And he said that I have always encouraged them in their own pursuits to find their heart's desire in service here in Wicklow, even though others criticize them for moving outside the temples and not supporting the Deities.

Another said, "Could you speak about relating to the spiritual master with the proper etiquette and yet not blindly? That is, keeping one's eyes open even in this relationship." I asked him to explain that a little further. Does he mean if the guru does something strange, then one should inquire?

Normal life. Rain-streaked window. When I walked out at six this morning, it was dark as night because we began Daylight Savings Time. I flashed my light in the left hand and with the dictaphone in the right hand, began to talk another story, Hare Kṛṣṇa stories, where they end I don't know . . . down the hill, hoping for the best.

In my informal talk, I spoke of the year so far and what it was like from New York City to Guyana and back. Got quite carried away just talking freely, maybe because of so much practice writing like this and living alone. Ended praising Jaya Gaura of Canada for winning the grand prize in a country magazine contest for the best big garden. That piqued their interest and they moved forward to have a look at the magazine article.

Could you walk a little faster
said the whiting to the snail,
there's a porpoise close behind me
and he's stepping on my tail.

In a note to Uddhava I made a mistake, saying that I hope I can always be a part of Wicklow community not only in this generation but future generations. Obviously, I cannot live so long to see the future generations, although I can, I suppose, see his children grow up. I meant that I wished the community well in its future generations, that what they are doing will be the

foundation for posterity. But how can I mean that I will always be here like some Strulbrug of a family guru, older and older and never dying?

And when I have fallen at His feet (so prayed Akrura on his way to Vṛndāvana), the almighty Lord will place His lotus hand on my head. For those who seek shelter in Him because they are greatly disturbed by the powerful serpent of time, that hand removes all fear.

—*Bhāg.* 10.38.16

The fish swimming in the increasingly shallow water did not at all understand that the water as diminishing, just as foolish family men cannot see how the time they have left to live in is diminishing with every passing day.

—*Bhāg.* 10.20.37

Well, I see that time is diminishing me, but I think I will not be left stranded in the cycle of birth and death because I am practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As I told the young boy, my mother is the *Vedas*. Yes, I have become a devotee. I will not be left stranded.

But I say this to the gent who is possibly taking it too easy as a senior citizen although he thinks it may be sensible for his health now not to push so much. (You better push and not waste a minute. You are going to die. Then you turn to the scripture because you think that is where you belong.) Yes, you want to preach also, and so you write a story and look at one by Chekov so you can get yours right, full of human feeling and maybe just a little more, like a plot with characters although they never seem to be more than anecdotes, testimonies from someone practicing *sādhana-bhakti*.

Could you walk a little faster . . .

I read well this morning, thank you. One quality after another and then I stopped to consider them. Kṛṣṇa's buffalo horn was drunk by a devotee *gopī* who thought that this would be relief from the poison of Kṛṣṇa's flute. But the buffalo horn poisoned her even more. Kṛṣṇa's ornaments, Kṛṣṇa's apparel, the peacock feather in His hair, His friends like Sudāmā. As a *gopī* said to Subala, "When I saw you and Kṛṣṇa standing together, I began to cry." More, read more. Don't think so much about your inabilities and possible doubts . . . don't be stranded like the little fish in the diminishing water. Don't fail to perfect your hearing of the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa.

Yesterday you were writing here, "What I love and what I want." Do you remember that? Yes, I said things possibly ironically and *neṭi neṭi*. I admitted I want to keep my body whole. Well, on Ekādaśī I am still thinking like that and relishing the lunch with long, thin zucchinis half-cooked and stuffed with a delicious thick creamlike, gray yogurt or avocado. And a soft potato patty cake and a good sweet, nongrain. Drank water with it and ate to heart's content. That's what you love. You don't do as *The Nectar of Devotion* said, on Ekādaśī, stay up all night chanting.

What do you love? I use the words loosely. I say I loved sitting and talking to the devotees this morning. When I said that black bears sometimes come to Jaya Gaura's garden, I saw Hare Kṛṣṇa dāśī in the other room where she was taking care of her infant, and she was smiling and very interested to hear. So I liked that indeed, but it's a passing moment. Can I say I loved it? According to my personal methodology, I am supposed

to love being alone, read a pamphlet like "From Loneliness to Solitude." Yes, and I liked it when I could tell funny stories about how Guyana is creepy. You really indulge yourself talking how you are afraid of the black people there. That was honest. The temple had been robbed, I said. Only a mother and her children live there now. Were you laughing at their plight, white man? I said I wanted to get out of there.

At the Georgetown airport, there was no plane for Guyana Airlines, but one landed from North American Airlines. I spoke to its boss, a guy from New York City who said, "You guys got a temple down here?" That story was in me as something I liked. You see, I don't get much experience in the world, so when I do . . . We were standing at a distance from his airplane and I said, "I never heard of North American Airlines."

He said, "Yes, we are a small outfit working out of New York. We take charters." Proud of his airplane he looked it over and said, "Seventy-five millions bucks it cost. And it's only been out of the factory for four weeks."

But that's not love, is it?

Well, maybe that's it, that's what passes for love. I do like walking in the morning and am very pleased when a story finally comes out of me, even when I thought none were coming. For example, this morning I got a total of four. It's maybe like a fisherman who comes back with a decent catch. Four is good for me.

And now I have an accordion file and a file for 4x6 cards which I will arrange to catch all ideas in seedling stage for my project, Hare Kṛṣṇa stories, which is ongoing.

This is your ticker tape of little news . . . Wicklow: Madhumaṅgala still ill but chills went away overnight. It becomes doubtful whether he will be strong enough to go to the city and whether we will have time in this last full week to get the van insured and to get his visa for America so the team of two will be ready to pull out for Dublin and the north on time. Stay tuned for the latest . . .

Come to your own poem.

Kṛṣṇa was making a garland for Rādhā
and She came upon Him
and He smiled sweetly. Keep that a secret from
the nondevotees. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī
writes strongly in the purport
regarding *madhyama-adhikāri*
that preachers must not mix with demons
because it will only cause both of them to
make offenses. Don't pretend to be equipoised
or make fun of the *sādhū's* avoidance of the
nondevotees. It is best. You will get
weak if you go to the powerful
atheists.

So Kṛṣṇa is making the garland
and the wives of the *brāhmaṇas* are an example
of persons who didn't practice all details
for advancement (as their husbands did)
but who received the mercy of Kṛṣṇa.
You have read it in the NOD that
mādhurya-līlā is the best but all *rasas*
culminate in pure love for Kṛṣṇa
depending on the original taste.

The wives of the *brāhmaṇas*,
 the *gopis* unmarried,
 the cowherd boys, eternal youth of
 Kṛṣṇa in His best age . . .
 this is what I read.

Will you read more, Willy, and
 keep telling us about it until you die?
 Yes, what else am I for?
 And will it be harder to stand up from the
 sitting position and will you feel sorry
 for yourself as you do? We hope he will
 be spry even at seventy and continue going to
 that Guyana he complained about and maybe he
 will go down there once and not come back.
 "At any moment," Śrīla Prabhupāda said,
 "we can die."

Then he said we will not die
 but the body will cease to function.
 At any moment. I was also thinking.

I was also thinking while reading that it's really
 best to die in Vṛndāvana
 for security.

I thought of Vamśi-dhāri dāsa
 having that security.

"At least I am dying in Vṛndāvana which is
 very auspicious."

So I thought it's good for me to keep going
 to Vṛndāvana and not avoid it because of
 ISKCON politics. You feel more at home there
 and are drawn there but if you keep away
 because of the external filth and disturbance
 then you'll get further away

so that people come up with a new "pragmatic"
 plan to insure no more falldowns by declaring,
 Let's just all have Prabhupāda as our guru
 eternally and no other
 false gurus before me?
 Sounds good to some until
 you start to think about it.
 But the great responsibility on the shoulder
 on the thin blades,
 big shoes and little feet
 and big heads for being
 worshipped.

Now you are a news analyst trying to claim you don't belong to any party but making your observations from a distance. I know your kind. In one sense, you are not doing enough to push on this movement. But he said by not being involved in nitty-gritty was "brilliant." Don't care now. Just be yourself. You are happy in what you are doing as the car bumps over minor holes en route back to this house where we are staying. It's a little damp and quiet with our man ill.

We have the six hour video, "Jesus of Nazareth" here and if I start to watch it, it will creep into this narrative. One might ask, "Why not see more videos of Śrīla Prabhupāda?" Yes, that is a good idea too. When I get the time . . . But this idea came from Madhu that with the Christians' holy week coming up, why not watch this one time, which I never did. It was a good idea of his to watch the Nimāi/Lord Caitanya films in Baltimore, but this . . . we'll have to see.

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement . . . the story I will tell may be by a girl from Canada. She will say,

“An elf once dropped from the sky like Śaṅkara dropped, and this place is called Efland, North Carolina”—where many *gṛhasthas* gather to show they are devotees even if they don’t live in a temple. They each have a temple or shelf or altar in their home and some way of gathering to be in *sādhū-saṅga*. This is the way southward toward Alachua and you are in Europe now for the remainder of the year. You wanted this and you got it.

Kṛṣṇa gave you what you want. You want stories? Here, granted. You want a nice lunch, with sweets after? Here, granted. You want to write and publish? Here, granted. You want the van working, want to go to India again, want to wear saffron? Here, granted. But don’t desire too much for yourself. Don’t be greedy. And first demonstrate that your priority is to serve Kṛṣṇa, and then the material side will be taken care of automatically. Know the twenty-six qualities of a devotee, starting with friendly and ending with poetic, silent, grave, and expert, and so on. Know them in your mind and heart. Play the tape of your spiritual master to the devotees. Prepare another class. Kṛṣṇa, please give me the best, Your service in selflessness, not attached so much by the body’s demands and fickleness. Please let me always serve my Prabhupāda. You know what is best.

Chapter Twenty-three

Of Time and the River—he had a friend who was a queer, wrote thousands of pages, and Max Perkins had to help him salvage it, dedicated the book to him, and people misunderstood (he thought) that he couldn't write his own book so he switched from Eugene Gant to George Weber who was Simian in build instead of tall as he actually was, so that people used to ask, "How's the weather up there?" And he found that boring and maybe he wrote too much. On top of the refrigerator was his desk and he stood there, lived in Brooklyn and paced the floor above a Chinese guys who said to him, "Could you please not pace back and forth like that all the time?" Of Time and the River, the young man's favorite author—Capote said he read him at thirteen years old, the best time to read him.

I better stop this chatter. But at least I am under way. Underpants. Underwear. Where are underwater sports in Clearwater, Florida? Hold on, mac, we want you to be the speaker at our annual Gitā-jayanti affair in Bombay, but you can't talk like this!

Don't worry, I would never do it. There is a little hole in the floor here and I can see daylight below. Madhu looks so harrowed out from his fasting and illness. Not getting utmost sympathy. People suspect he may be sick from "too much medicine taking," which is not the case.

I am finding a block in the story-writing, and that I know some stories but can't tell them raw or it would violate the priest's confidentiality in the confessional. My career would be over, the one who you tell things to

and later they appear in published stories. Who the hell does he think he is? Well, then, I have to change the stories beyond recognition. The girl who said another in the temple hit her and this hurt her faith, has to be changed into a boy, and not that she's hit but . . . you see what I mean? You start to change it and it is no longer the story that moved you. You think, "Let me go back to my own life in writing." But then here you are . . . limited too in many ways, the sickly self. The Kṛṣṇa-centered person you are not—you've told us. You say you can't do better, and this is the ironic meaning to the title of this book.

This is all I could do. I am sorry I couldn't do better—these are the unintended subtitles and undermeanings of the title. The best, the very best and nothing but the best selected from all that I have done, the best I could do, sorry folks. Is that what it means? I thought it was like the Best of Sats in 1995, a selection from many other works of the very cream of Sats' writings.

No, it means what you see is what you get. It means I am not ashamed to give you what comes right away. It means improvisation is the best I can do. I don't believe I could do better by giving you only a hundred pages in a year. I give you this.

Oh, you are a magnanimous bug. You are giving us your pha, your foam from the mouth, your *baya*, your fear, your *mṛtyu*, your death, your frustration—pah bah mah, and your wish for *apavarga*, to be liberated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness one of these days. And until then, this is the best . . .

We say that commonly, this is the best I could do, meaning it is not the perfection of works. Meaning I am sorry. At the same time, sincerely we hope the person we give it to will accept us with our limits. We mean,

"Given the present circumstances, ill health, the fact that I was handicapped in many ways, by lack of money, have not the highest IQ, was abused subtly and otherwise in my youth, given the fact of the world wars and so on, this is the best I could do."

I could have done better but this is the best of all possible worlds? This is the best of all possible worlds.

Give us some Time rap, man.

Hey, don't get so familiar. "The weekly ritual," Pragoṣa said, when I asked him, "Are you packing up to go out to sell paintings again (on Monday)?" I felt a little guilty that as he is going out, I am staying back writing and reading, which many people would like to do. But Pragoṣa said that compared to nondevotee workers, he has it easy. He goes out on Tuesday and is back on Wednesday night, not the 9 to 5 slave all week. "But still I complain," he said. "Well," I said, "when you get your simple living together, you may also reduce your work." As I spoke this, M. sat haggard on the bench with no strength to speak at all. I paused and then retired, "To go up and do my work." I mumbled that in a very low voice. But I do have work.

The mail arrived with the pictures I am supposed to write copy to. And you have one week left on this retreat if you are going to pursue stories. And today you did already twice good reading of *The Nectar of Devotion* and thought, "Hey, this is the best I could do, really, to read up to three hours a day and without any pretensions, just write some notes while reading. Why don't you do it, mate, and stop all other gab and art genres?"

Well, I just might. I just might. Yes, this is what a *sannyāsi* is for, and what we expect a mendicant to do. To immerse himself in reading about Kṛṣṇa. Rādhā cried

like a *cataka* bird. Mother Yaśodā, when she heard the thunderbolt was afraid for Kṛṣṇa. The different ecstasies, the examples given by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Prabhupāda handing it out in a nice way. I'm getting used to it and liking it. But soon you'll be finished with the book again, and I hope ready to read the others and write the free-write and reading notes all in one. But can you refrain from all other writing and is that the best?

Even fools like me, who proudly think themselves universal lords, quickly give up their conceit and directly take to the path of the spiritually progressive when they see You are fearless even in the face of time. Thus You punish the mischievous only to instruct them.

—Bhāg. 10.27.7

Lord Kṛṣṇa cannot be limited by time. Why don't you pay more attention to the qualities of the infinite Lord instead of the tiny shrunk and in *māyā* part and parcel, yourself? Or at least see yourself as the pure servant of the servant, and speak of that desire to serve the Lord. That is the best thing you can do. Getting back to this book title, the best you or anyone can do, is to give up all designation and speculation and serve the Lord twenty-four hours a day under the direction of the Swami. He said the boys are doing that, someone is typing or writing or distributing or cooking, we're always serving Kṛṣṇa with practical devotional service directed by the spiritual master. If you are not doing that best, then why tell us of your inferior status?

"The passage of the days and nights is the drinking of Your eyes," says the *ācārya*.

Prabhupāda was proving to us that there is a soul in the body, and that's what makes the body active. So when the active self comes out of the body, he remains active just as when you get out of your Chevrolet car, you remain active. Don't think void or impersonal. He said this is a crude example. He spoke strong and said spiritual life is not something uncommon, but we can make the whole spiritual by applied Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Who is crazy? Who shall decide? They say the Hare Kṛṣṇa people and the Swami are crazy and we say those who don't associate with us are crazy. Who shall decide? The answer is you have to come to reason. Anyone who takes something which is not to be the actual reality—is that person not crazy? Yes, and that's the materialist who accepts that he is an American, that the land is America, and a host of other designations which are not reality. Sixty years ago I was not this person in this body. And next life, I don't know who I will be. Why claim that this is me? Therefore, I am crazy. This is a challenge to the world. Surprising he was to throw out a challenge. Someone coughed in the December 1966 storefront and someone cleared his throat, somehow as a way not to be impinged on by the spiritual master. But some of us loved it by then, and among us how many are strong and true to that challenge? I can't claim I am a perfect disciple or anything like that.

"This is the best I could do." This is the best I could throw. This is the worst I could stew. Or the title, it could be worse.

When Henry Jewish Brooklyn College actor invited me to supper in pre-Kṛṣṇa conscious days, he cooked and served chicken. I was a budding vegetarian and mused

whether it was best to eat the bird. He said, "Listen, it could be a lot worse," implying that we were virtuous in many ways, nice guys, not at each other's throats or genitals or killing or disturbing any other people. So what if we choke and cook a chicken? And besides, we didn't kill him, we only bought him in the market. That was 1960, when we thought nothing of eating hamburgers at Wolfie's luncheonette. Well, Henry, here's to you, you were dead wrong. We can do a lot better than eat meat. That's the theme: you can do a lot better.

I walked the cold road early in the dark (Daylight Savings Time just beginning). The weather a throwback to the night and the cold, and I said to myself, "Go ahead, tell a story, just rap." But I couldn't and wouldn't do it. They are not so easy or whatever. I just couldn't come out with it and finally I did a little self-essay on Dawn. I did not give it straight. Listen, if it's so hard, I mean, if you have to be so roundabout, like a person reaching around his head before he touches his nose, then is it right? Maybe you are meant for practicing the most direct writing possible.

So I'm not sure if I can keep up the story-writing even though I now have a filing system to store away little possible stories and sparks. I was thinking, "Okay, if it's stories you want, then let's drop the poses and not have to be students who are writing at the professor's request." But the meaning of the stories is that there are many kinds, like free-write versions, just any damn thing, and you can include them all. So the beauty of the series should be that all kinds are allowed and some can be more typical stories. Don't quit on me yet.

I just threw the book *Garbage* by A.R. Ammons in the garbage box, not as an intended pun-joke, yet I smiled and snorted after realizing the poetic justice. I have the great advantage and responsibility to write in the Kṛṣṇa conscious *paramparā*. Don't be a blabbermouth and write roundabout. Writing a lot is not bad, I say. We need more books in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda said we have enough books on Kṛṣṇa that if you were to read twenty-four hours a day for your whole life, we would be able to supply you. I thought someone might doubt that, but if you could add my books, if they would qualify as books about Kṛṣṇa, then we have a good bit more to fulfill the promise of twenty-four hours a day reading. Give it to someone. Therefore it's fine to write a whole shelf of books provided they are actually Kṛṣṇa conscious. And up to snuff. I think it should be as direct as possible. True, baby, honest and all that.

A divided line's poet knows the terrain.
He will skip to my lou. I've got a
bunch of pictures I drew of the Swami and me
in imaginary scenes of those days
it just arrived and I'm supposed to talk freely
whatever I can as I look at them.

You don't have to write a careful poem for
each one although every reader likes
divided line, at least I do.
But I don't have time or heart for that.
Just speak what is direct as can be.
Just speak what you really feel and she can edit
from it and discard the rest.

Sounds like a good project and one you could sink your teeth into.

But does it mean I have to give up my newest program to read *NOD* and the hope for stories of Hare Kṛṣṇa and this promise to do a timed book until the time is up? Best I could do is stick to it this week and do all the projects, do them all but that's not possible, is it?

At least I threw away the jazz tape, at least I will not be consumed by mundane story-reading because they may teach me a little but not a lot. You can speak whatever you can.

Hare Kṛṣṇa, there are many ways to be a devotee of the Lord. Kṛṣṇa is the best form of the Lord, *The Nectar of Devotion* is the best kind of book and you are best used when you sit before it and read and write.

Sorry this is the best I could do.

Eschewed the formal praise and the ceremonies and the managerial haggles and meetings.

Avoid the pose, avoid the city dump and the Irish rabid dogs and keep something private.

But not much, you may tell us in polite words but tell us what is true

and what you are.

Doing to justify your Swami's

giving you the super-title Goswami.

If you are not doing the best then

you can change and do something better.
Heigh-ho, heigh-ho.

What do you love? I loved the dried scones she baked for me. I loved the dessert which was almost like a scone but with whipped cream on top and apple in the middle. The veg was very good too. I ate a bit. The morning meal is measured out to the minimum and the lunch expands the waistline. We think how to relate to the sick. They want to be left alone. They want to be cheered up and some of them know exactly what regimen they want to follow for recovery, so there is not so much to suggest. You wait with them and at least don't be sarcastic or pour duties on them which they are not capable of doing right now. Be gentle, be gentle as you would like them to be gentle to you in ill health or even now.

I thought, hey, I am also sick. Come, doctor, check my pulse too. Why does my secretary have higher fever than I? I want 104 too. And we want 108 and die, so goes the story. Lower the fever, be Kṛṣṇa conscious cool-headed and work for the Lord.

It is good in a sense that you have so many projects you can't get them all done. But at least tell the direct truth in each one.

When you don't care for something, that is sad. You want to be able to love what you do. If you can't do that, then adjust it somehow. Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is the saving grace, something we can do in any case. Conditional activities are good only so long as we are in good health or get the right kind of cooperation from other people. But chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, when done by a sincere soul, can go on at all times. The pure devotee surrenders to Kṛṣṇa, does what He wants. All this was told

to us by Swamiji in his earliest lectures, and in his *bhajan*as to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. *Mādhurya*, he said, is the conjugal love which is most prominent especially in Vṛndāvana. There Kṛṣṇa is at home. Don't let the jerks in.

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, may I find the time to do nice things for You, literary too, and pure Kṛṣṇa conscious as best I can, dish it out like giving out *prasādam* at a festival. Let me give out what I heard from my spiritual master. And when I have to admit that I'm having trouble, then say it in a way that's true, and show that Kṛṣṇa consciousness gives hope. Almost all the writing that passes over my desk as fiction or poetry has very, very little implicit God consciousness and no explicit God consciousness. So what's the use of it? It is a pilgrimage for the crows. I have the great fortune and I have to do it nicely.

Kṛṣṇa is punching and punishing Kāṁsa. He looked at him like a prostitute. He was just waiting to jump at him. Vasudeva heard Kāṁsa insulting Nanda Mahārāja and asked Kṛṣṇa for assistance in killing Kāṁsa. Kṛṣṇa also smiled when talking with the wrestlers and preparing to fight with them. That must have unnerved them, this miraculous boy was not the least bit afraid but genuinely pleased and smiling to talk with them with whom He was about to fight to the death. And sure enough, He finished them off, He and Balarāma. I don't think that's a fiction story. It's the real story.

Your people who line up to tell the professor a story, what about them? Are they warm, are they real, Mona Lisa, or are they just a cold and lonely work of art?

Get back to you on that . . . don't give up something just because it's hard. But you need to love it and not be contrived. If I can tell a story straight from the heart as my own, then (this is the question) why not do so instead of trying to say, "This was thought of by a girl named Daivi dāsi in Canada"? If it actually is you who loves the dawn and is walking, then why not tell it? Well, there are reasons. For example, it might captivate readers more as fiction. But I don't know. But M. might say this is also a lie, fiction and the truth, is allusive, and the truth is whatever is the best way to say Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Okay, amen.

Chapter Twenty-four

I'm writing this in hand because I don't want to pound on the typewriter after having seen the first hour of the film, "Jesus of Nazareth." Profound, powerful. I shed tears again and again. As soon as I saw Mary. Oh, you mean the actress who was playing Mary. Yes, that's right.

I shed tears with Joseph and when they saw the star and when the shepherds came . . . again and again.

Jesus shall be his name . . .

To Mary—"And a spear shall go through your heart." The king gave her myrrh, the most sacred of the herbs of the East, and the most bitter.

I was thinking, this story, this story, is the one I was born into. The son of God is born in immaculate conception and not in power but in humility; he was born in a manger in Bethlehem.

I was thinking, I could develop great dedication for Jesus. It is natural. You mean—what? "Become a Christian?" No, I am not going to leave the lotus feet of my spiritual master and Lord Kṛṣṇa's sweet pastimes.

(You could shed tears also if any equally expert director, and with a lot of money, could make a film of Nimāi.)

You can love both. But there is a time when you go to one and a time when you go to another. Fortunately, Śrīla Prabhupāda loves Jesus too. He's a *śaktyaveśa-avatāra*.

It's the scenes of the film . . . the impressions of the faces. And because I already knew the story so well . . . The enunciation, Mary informed, hand-maiden of the Lord . . .

I want to see more of it soon.

Blessed is the name of Jesus. And blessedness in God's eyes, God's will . . . danger in carrying out that will. Being guided by the star. We know those things also in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

We get bogged down. You can't *become* a messiah or even know one. But I knew a very great soul, Śrīla Prabhupāda, Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee. I have been faithful to him and he expects this.

Are you flirting with a notion that you would switch your allegiance from Kṛṣṇa to Jesus? No, it's just the effect of a powerful film.

Seeing how God's will acts through people. Mary, Elizabeth, pure women among the Jews . . . Israel . . . Herod . . . the Messiah . . . Protected by God.

God comes in many incarnations. Lord Caitanya said that they're all told in the scriptures. Śrīla Prabhupāda counts Jesus Christ and Mohammed among them, even though not mentioned in the Vedic scriptures. By their deeds, influence, followers—they spoke only God consciousness and going to the kingdom of God. They did not teach such an advanced form of God consciousness.

Scriptures in modes.

Purāṇa-amala.

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Kṛṣṇa and Yaśodā. Great similarity between Kāṁsa and Herod, both hearing predictions that the newborn would kill him and both evil kings killing all children just born. Kṛṣṇa killed Kāṁsa sixteen years later.

Believe in your Swami
stay true.

But there's no harm

if this old-growing man sheds some tears watching the film. No harm at all.

Would that I could do it more often, and even more important—would I could follow my Swami more to his liking, shall I say, more boldly? Would that I could taste the nectar of the holy name.

Makes me think how my writing spins around with so much impurity. I am not a person with *that* kind of divine favor, like Mary or Joseph . . . But I do follow the star of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as shown by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I write for ordinary men as an ordinary man.
Can't see my way clear yet.

Blessed is the Lord.

My chapter . . . I wasn't going to even write it today. The book, the book has no direction except daily hope and words.

"Oh, it's a mere diary."

Herod's days are numbered.

Flight to Egypt.

The Christians have got it down, codified, institutionalized on a grand scale . . . Lost much of what Jesus taught, but still they follow him in name.

We have gone outside that church and faith and religion. Have gone outside ever since the first year of college. Discovered we never had strong faith and no education and no example of pure devote . . .

Met a pure devotee of God in Prabhupāda. Accepted Kṛṣṇa of India—not India but He appeared there just as Jesus appeared in Mid-east.

What are you writing here?

What I always write—what comes to me.

It has been a restless writing retreat. Started story writing and now finished it. Started this timed book and stopped once and started again but . . . feeling an urge (or something deeper than an urge) to write in more direct Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Maybe the notes while reading *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Notes truly for my own self—a combination of letting off steam and purifying yourself, keeping on the mark.

After watching the film, I said to Madhu, “Powerful,” and he said, “Isn’t it!” And then in hypnotized state I walked up the stairs. I was more under the influence of the film then in touch with the immediate reality—which was to walk up the steep stairs to this room and wake up Śrīla Prabhupāda. He was friendly and understanding as I woke him. The room . . . my place, and out the window, the homey, earthy patch of Ireland, calls me, grounds me, limits me, sets the stage for the work I try to do here . . . the sod of this country, I become accustomed to . . . but not sure if this is the best I can do.

Ah, you’ve hit it again.

Time. The film is one-sixth over. Your life at two-thirds over or more. The universe is 1 P.M. in the day of Brahmā. The state of your own Kṛṣṇa consciousness—how far advanced?

The holy young woman
whom no man had ever touched
conceived the child who
was to be the Savior.
She said I am the hand-
maiden of the Lord and will

do as You say.
 Oh, well-made film
 telling the same story we've
 heard and forgotten of
 Jesus of Nazareth
 who was foretold by the star.

Now you who eat and love to eat, who sleep and need
 to sleep, who writes what comes (as a kind of discipline
 of sorts)

who say he can't do more . . .
 you have to account for
 what you've done and haven't done and
 next life, next . . .

Just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, you don't have to do any-
 thing else but develop attachment to God.

Now read *The Nectar of Devotion*, please, that will be
 nice.

Chapter Twenty-five

I told you the effect of the first part of the film, "Jesus of Nazareth." The second part was less so. Robert Powell as Jesus Christ didn't have that magic effect as the story of Mary and Joseph being the parents of Jesus and his birth in Bethlehem. That was splendid!

Now we are bogged down. Madhu can't get the insurance. I don't want to sully these pages and bore you, dear reader (since it is not your problem, and won't be my problem in the future when I read this), but it is frustrating. He went to considerable trouble to get the ownership of the van transferred into his own name as a citizen of Ireland. But we can't get the insurance in Ireland and neither will they honor the insurance we have with an Italian company. This breaks down into many episodes and repeated attempts, faxes, phone calls . . . The latest was that the Italian company sent their policy to a translator in Dublin by courier mail. Madhu picked it up and took it to the people in Ireland who give you the tax sticker you need to put on your windshield (we already have new Irish license plates and Irish ownership). But the tax guy said he couldn't take it because the policy wasn't filled out on his form in English. Back to square one.

Tomorrow Madhu, who is still weak and in danger of relapse, has to go back into Dublin, this time to the American embassy where today he left his application for a visa. I stay here but it whirls around me and makes it hard for me to concentrate quietly with enthusiasm for this timed book. Last December I was quieter and was able to go to inner worlds. I discussed last year

how the unconscious self wants to express itself but there was a dirty, conditioned covering over it.

Also today I expended my energy on a worthy project, writing poems and prose to accompany pictures I drew of 26 Second Avenue. I am grateful to the Lord in the heart for letting me do that this morning. But I can't just leave this timed book dangling. One wants to finish it off in the remaining days with some kind of continuum.

Reading *The Nectar of Devotion*. Feelings of separation make the devotee comparable to a dried up lake where the lotuses have died. Because of that, the swans (compared to the life airs of the devotee) no longer want to reside in the lake. Burning, feverish, lying inert . . . all these and many more are symptoms of suffering in separation. But it is a kind of transcendental ecstasy. The chapter doesn't even begin to describe the feelings of separation by the *gopis* of Vṛndāvana. I read it from a million miles away. But still . . .

Madhu comes in to tell me his latest strategy. He will go over to Dārūka's to get a form typed and sent to Italy. They will make a facsimile form and mail it to the Italian company to fill out in English and mail back to us. When we talked, he suddenly said, "Look," and outside the window I saw it. "A thrush," he said. It is a bird with a white breast and black speckles over its breast, which makes it perfectly camouflaged for the one tree it sits in. Then the bird moved to another tree, not as well camouflaged. Nice that M. stopped a moment in his insurance worries to see the bird and point it out to me.

One devotee here suggested that I might talk at one of my meetings about how to see Kṛṣṇa in little things, since I seem prone to that. Today I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda say it's a very advanced state, not to be imitated, where a devotee sees Kṛṣṇa everywhere. No matter what he sees, he sees Kṛṣṇa. At least I know it's not a bogus way of seeing.

My little vision is that I can't help but contact the world with my senses. So I take it in and allow it to impress me. But because I also want to be a devotee and not deviate, I try to see all this perceiving of the Wicklow hills and the walk and everything else as a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Not only the chanting and the book, but the thrush, the tree, the stone walls . . . and yes, somehow, the insurance van troubles . . . and the film of Jesus and feeling of burdensome duty like a clerk in the office, by the one who has to pull on with this timed book. See Kṛṣṇa there.

My Lord Kṛṣṇa why am I
a tired horse?

It's afternoon.

You gave me six wild poems this morning
comments on pictures of the early days.

I will go downstairs and check the fire,
put on black coals from Poland.

I will . . . I am a boy in
a sweater, I am lying in my teeth.

At 1 P.M.

Prabhupāda dāsa talked tentatively with
me in the kitchen. He said he'd read my
new book of poetry. His comment:

“They are more free, aren’t they?”
 That’s all he said. So I said,
 “Oh yes, I guess they are more free
 than previous ones.” Then he said
 that I used to write some “discovered poems”
 of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Do anymore of that?
 No, I said.

Then he said he and Gopa-gaṇa have a notebook
 of mine in which I state my intentions
 to write poems. Oh, I said.

Earlier I told him I liked
 his poems and hoped that he will continue them.
 He nodded matter-of-fact and said,
 “I write them probably for the same reason
 you do, because they just come out.
 But when I send them to you, then
 they have a person to read them.”
 I said, “You also have the magazine,
 ‘Shantivana View.’ ” Then he said
 he’d let me get back to my schedule.
 I upstairs and fell asleep.
 An hour later, Madhu surprised me
 by returning home
 early, defeated by the “awkward man”
 in the tax sticker bureau.
 He hasn’t even chanted his rounds for today.
 This is going on.

On the back cover of the book on my desk, Kṛṣṇa is
 rearing back His right arm with tight fist about to
 punch Kāmsa. He holds Kāmsa in His left hand, grip-
 ping his bunch of hair. The big demon is floored on the

wrestling dais. The people in the stadium are going wild. That is my world, more so than the world of Galilee. I listen attentively—do I hear a car engine making its way up the hill? Another interruption?

Today is the afternoon of March 29. That means five more days. Then the day after that, that is the day for packing. We have an enormous amount of packing to do. The van had to be entirely emptied to weigh it in Dublin. So everything is out, scattered, I don't know where, in bags and boxes in various room all over this house. Plus, we have to decide what to take and what to leave back. We can't carry so much. But all that action has to wait until we first get the tax and insurance thing. Or else, M. says, we will just travel anyway.

"Is it illegal?" I asked.

"That's arguable," he says.

"At a border we will be stopped?" I asked. "If they ask where is our tax sticker from Ireland, what then?"

"Probably we won't be asked," he said. So he's focused on that problem and ekes over to me. Also, the ongoing bit with his visa.

And besides packing the van, there is the duty of copying the tapes that I dictate from the various writings. M. hasn't been doing that, and they are backing up. And yet we both have time to watch the Jesus film. I haven't watched movies in years. They are enchanting. Such make-believe. I realized yesterday while watching the brief scene where Joseph is old and dying and Mary is over his bed looking down upon him it's just a movie scene.

The guy who played Joseph was excellent. Now they've got some gray stuff on his beard and you can hardly tell that he is the same wonderful, trusty, sim-

ple, handsome, smiling fellow of the earlier scenes. "That's too much for any man to believe," he said, when he first heard the news of Mary's immaculate conception. But then a voice spoke to him and told him it was true. So he's dying in old age and she's looking down on him. And I realize that she's just a beautiful actress, not actually the mother of God. When I first saw her in the opening scene, tears sprang from my eyes . . . M. tried to avoid the very beginning of the film where it shows the names of the actors . . . But when Part Two began, I saw the name flash, "Claudia Cardinelle (SP?)."

"Oh no," I thought, "isn't she the Marilyn Monroe or Brigitte Bardot of Italy? Which saint does she play? Not Mary, I hope. Maybe Mary Magdalene . . ." Yeah, the silver screen, all color, scenes shot in Tunisia and Morocco, courtesy of those governments. Special effects by . . .

Be grateful that at least you are moving along, not in a traffic jam either . . . You say the scenery isn't so spectacular, just your own plebian mind. Well, it could be worse. No nightmares, you ration out . . . you are lucky . . . you can go traveling even if you don't get the insurance sorted out . . . just go and trust . . .

It's good I no longer read newspapers. Just get a letter once a month from Kirtana-rasa dāsa briefing me on the latest world events. That way I don't have to waste time chewing the chewed on Republicans and Democrats. You are better poised in the book of *rasa* and separation and meeting from Kṛṣṇa. Pay your feeble attention there. I don't want to make fun of you. I wish the best for you.

O dear holy man, can you make the fish and loaves turn into many so all people can feed? Why are you blue-eyed if you come from the East? Who's in charge of casting? Are you the only son of God, or does He have many? It would seem . . . Prabhupāda says we can't say, "I think God is like this." It is beyond our imagining. He has to be known from the scriptures. But which one? The Torah, the Koran, the Bible, the *Vedas*? All of them say something similar. Their representatives and prophets are accepted by Lord Caitanya and Prabhupāda says they are *śaktyaveśa-avatāras*. That is the nice, liberal point of view of the Vedic thought, but Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. All opulences rest in Him. I accept that.

Too Deep for Words is another book on my desk. I look at books quickly like a cashier and push them down to be put into bags and eventually thrown away. Get rid of them one by one. You can't stop them coming in, but you don't have to dwell long on them. Here comes Margaret Atwood, very pretty girl on the cover of her poems . . . take it and shove it down the line. Here's *A Drifting Boat*, Zen poetry. Yeah, I know, very nice, monks and recluses. About time you shove it down the line. What else you got left on your stack on the floor? About time you bought some new ones when you go to Dublin. Or are you going to first finish writing this book before you go?

Give me some good time tomorrow, I ask you for that. For now, enough. You see, I am not so deep at the unconscious self, the pure fountain isn't flowing unobstructed

...

We do bow down
to Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa and
hereby consecrate all works to Him.

Chapter Twenty-six

I want to apologize for the deterioration of inspiration for continuing this book. I apologize for the slowing down and bowing out. I imagine an editor saying, "In this book, *The Best I Could Do*, you ran out of steam and hit one of your writing blocks and went dead."

I realize I don't have to apologize. Don't be sorry. Within myself, I don't feel sorry or bad about it. It went for the duration it did, and now it's time . . . for change.

So I welcome the change. I am a changing person. Why be ashamed of that?

Yeah, but you led the reader along saying this was a book and they got this far and you've got no resolution.

Usually in the timed book you at least go the whole route. That was the contract, so to speak. You said, "I can't promise what I will write, but I will go the whole route . . ."

Yes, but that route is variable. I just read a statement about the message of psychotherapist, Newton Erickson, and maybe it can apply here:

Flexibility in approach is emphasized; there is no preconceived set for the number of required sessions. However, treatment tends to be brief and problem oriented. If possible, even the length of the session is determined by the task to be accomplished, not by the position of the hour hand on the clock.

You don't have to keep going if you don't want to. Maybe you wanted to keep the image of sailing on for the full twenty-four days, showing that you have full love and verve. But there is something bigger than you,

something beyond you that controls the writing of these books. No bluff. There is. And that's nice to notice and admit.

I am not the doer and I could force myself to keep going, and I have done that. But one wants to be sensitive to inner indications. But the signals are that you have done enough, then okay.

But you don't want your stopping here to be a judgment that everything done so far in this book is invalid. I don't even know what I have done, I haven't read it. I don't have to judge it.

Will you admit to us why you feel like stopping, what you think is happening?

Looking for something different. Not content to write the daily events. Don't seem to be doing much than that . . . telling of Madhu and the insurance. Sure, it's an interesting story . . . I don't put it down. The watching of the Jesus film, the watching of spring coming to the land, the reports, the play, the attempts at songs . . . But I feel that it is becoming a forced report.

Perhaps (I hope) up to now it has not been forced. Therefore it won't be bad reading and the reader won't feel cheated to have come this far and then be told—what Woody Woodpecker tells the viewer, after a batch of thirty-two blazing eyeball-fatiguing kids' cartoons—“That's All, Folks!”

Get down, get off.

But where will you go?

I will say good-bye to you. We will keep in touch. I am not deserting you if you wish to be with me. You can come join me in where I am going next.

Where are you going?

I don't know for sure. We are hoping to read more. Write more directly, let's say, write more privately and with less thought of making a chapter performance. We are writing already in another notebook. Just entering the date and writing for as long or short as we feel, raising some classic question about my life and how to best serve and be fulfilled.

The syncopated rhythm
 the syncopated clock,
 the late late show,
 no more T.V. for me
 or even films. Oh dear, oh dear,
 the time has run out? No, not yet.
 But this one has.

Yes, gray day and no more free jazz stuff. He wants to be a more serious boy and chant his rounds. It won't be easy to change a character in deep habit like that. You think five years or more of writing down the bones, and you just switch off? And why?

I don't want to keep admitting embarrassing stuff about myself.

Hey you out there . . .

This is being put aside in favor
 of more adult, mature Kṛṣṇa conscious approach.

Oh yeah, oh yeah, we've heard that before.

Good-bye for awhile . . .

the fading of the light. He's got to
 let some time go by patiently
 and quietly see what turns up.

Give him a chance.

Chapter Twenty-seven

And so my dear friends, although I cannot tell you the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, although I am not a pure devotee and yet I . . . knew . . . say what I can in the allotted space.

This is the way I answered a letter to the man who asked me, "Do we have to believe the guru with blind faith? Can't we be vigilant?" I said even Prabhupāda made mistakes, but we see him as without fault because, as he explained it to us, his perfection is that he is always absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and always preaching the glories of the Lord. Don't find fault with him for something that actually is external. See the internal nature.

Yes, they may say, we can do that with Prabhupāda. But what about you?

Well, I say, I ain't perfect and don't say I am.

But you expect us to read these big books of yours and especially when one peters out in the end. Oh, you were just practicing, is that it? Like a jazz musician blowing riffs across the Hudson River?

I find you are not confidential enough to understand. I cannot even understand it myself or reconcile. But I am willing to give myself the benefit of the doubt.

Bow out without apologizing.

You did the best you could. It takes the title in the right sense now . . . It is not the very best. When I used to receive report cards as a young boy, the teachers consistently checked the line, "Could do better."

Someone of his talent, having been fortunate enough to have been trained by Śrīla Prabhupāda . . . you would

expect . . . but don't forget in his folio you will also find some great mistakes were made along the way (another Romaharṣaṇa). And did he care well and protect what he was given by his spiritual master?

Judge not yet ye be not judged.

This morning, stopped and heard that bird singing its heart out, so many melodies coming out of the creature half hidden in the tree. Dear friend, sing for—whoever you are singing for. I hear the music. And further on, a bigger bird bolted out and flew away in fear. And a horse neighed, hearing me approach in the semi-dark. On the morning walk.

Days running out here, would you believe it, only the weekend left and then a day for frantic packing. Will we get it all done? May have to drive off without the official tax sticker on the windshield. But we do want to go on in this van life.

I've started writing in a slightly different way, calling it, "Daily Writing," instead of "Writing Sessions."

Let me go out now and work in the van. Some physical work instead of in-here writing which I so often do.

Chapter Twenty-eight

You should finish your book. It is not a great holy book. It has so many flaws. It is not even a book but a truncated spectacle. But it's yours and you should finish it. And you should write as many more as you can, on pages of notebooks and offer them to God.

You offer through Śrīla Prabhupāda who is to you as Jesus Christ was to the Jews and is now to the Christians.

they proclaim him the Messiah.

The Christians sometimes challenge us and say, "What will you do when Christ comes again?" Prabhupāda replied that if he comes again, it is welcome. We are not afraid of him, we are with him, not against him.

We must chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

And give up sin.

As Christ taught,
we must not be proud
of our religiousness.

Don't say, "I am a senior
disciple and deserve the first seat
and the best food."

If you do that you are
riding only the
little
waves (*bhakti-taraṅga*)
and cheating yourself.

Ah, write your book.
And what else?

Go and preach
 what did he say? "Your love
 for me will be proven by how
 you cooperate among yourselves
 to maintain this institution
 after I am gone."

Your little book. Your bundle of telling of the days
 collected and fluttered out.

During these days, quite a few
 lambkins were born in
 this neighborhood.
 He has taught us not to kill
 them or eat any meat.
 So preach this.

During these days I counted
 on twenty-four but all except one or two are
 gone now. See and preach
 that life is brief and nothing
 should be wasted.
 Use material things in the
 loving service of Kṛṣṇa.

Last night Madhu couldn't sleep well, he told me. "I
 kept waking up and dreaming that I was trying to get
 insurance for the van."

"I thought you were going to say you were dreaming
 of Jesus of Nazareth."

"No," he said. "It was overshadowed by the
 insurance."

The number of bags of Polish coal dwindles down but
 once a week a man comes in a car and delivers more. Pra-
 goṣa pays for this. He has given us his house to stay in.

We have lived here as if it was ours but now we have to leave.

Robert Powell

rehearsed the speeches
got them to heart and
spoke well.

The others too, even bit
parts were played by highly
accomplished actors and actresses—

Ann Bancroft as the
mother of God,

Lawrence Olivier . . .

Anthony Quinn . . .

Bad men and good men.

And now the lights are turned
off, the video is done.

Face Ireland.

Think of Vṛndāvana. Will I go there
again and live in peace?

Do I seek peace too much?

What about the next life?

Why do I not see it?

Will He give me more strength and a kind of psychic
karma that I once had so that I can face the world with-
out trembling and the fear of the next headache?

Because with the pain,

I can't preach

I can't meet anyone

but I have learned new things,

birds' songs dear to me,

now, Irish mists at dawn . . .

poems,
lines . . .

Are those things convertible into
pure devotional service?

Must I be born again as a
better preacher in *this lifetime*,
in the little time that's left?
Or does next life mean
after the death
when I must return as
all souls do
by transmigration?

I come before my spiritual master
in his *mūrti*
and ask him, Let me
serve you as a masseur,
or in any capacity
once again.

I was lost and sensual and mad
with drugs,
and you saved me.

Now please continue to direct me,
make me humble and
strong and enthusiastic again.

Chapter Twenty-nine

You could write a book in trance. You have so many things to say. Of course, trance ultimately means *samādhi*, fixed in thinking of Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. And then you go to Them.

I have a headache today. The pain is lodged behind the eye. Could you think of it as just a sensation, don't make a prejudiced judgment that it's "pain"? At least think of these different strategies. You could ground yourself in the absolute, spiritual self, and disassociate yourself from the physical, the relative, the pain. I make these suggestions to you but I don't know how much they'll work. They can work if your subconscious will pick them up.

So maybe this afternoon I won't have time to use as I like. Time and life can't always be as pleasant as you want. But no matter what happens, you can think of Kṛṣṇa and it will be good. The pain time is also a learning time. You're tiny, you have to die, life is painful, but Kṛṣṇa is always good and Kṛṣṇa is God.

But tomorrow, your headache will probably be gone and then you can have a nice day reading *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, writing in your book, your new book, which isn't really a book, it's just called "Daily Writing." But then you'll come here also and that will be the last day of the last chapter of *The Best I Could Do*. And that will be nice to finish it.

Chapter Thirty

I don't want the title of this book to be misleading. I'm not saying that this writing you've just read is the best I've ever done or ever will do. But it is what I could do, for better or worse, as of March 1995. Please take it that way.

Today while taking a morning walk, I thought out loud to myself. I *want* to do the best I'm capable of, and so periodically I ask myself about it. Sometimes in order to improve, I think I should make some radical changes. But at other times, it seems best that I just go in a humble yet determined spirit along the path I'm already treading. My present path is one mostly of time alone for reading and writing with the conviction that this gives me the best preparation for making worthy contributions when I'm among the devotees for lectures, and by giving them books that I write out of actual practice of *śravaṇam-kīrtanam viṣṇu-smaranam*. Here is my thinking aloud on this subject, or in the blissful situation of a walk at dawn in the Wicklow countryside:

"I know that I am trying to think about my own Kṛṣṇa consciousness, whether I'm doing the best I can do and how to improve. I want to be a preacher, but I have my limits, physical limits, and unfortunately, limits in desire to sacrifice to experience difficulty in order to give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others. I prefer to do what's pleasing to me.

"I'd like assurance from within that what I'm doing is right. On the other hand, I'd like to have help and the impetus to do better. I want to be humble about the fact that I'm not the Messiah or the next founder-*ācārya* or the greatest devotee. I'm just an instrument

trying to serve this movement. But at the same time, I should have some spark of desire to do something really nice.

"I paralyze myself by thinking, 'Well, this writing is not preaching very much, and I can't do the other kind of preaching, so I guess I can't do anything, and I'm not going to get so fired up about the writing because that's not really preaching'—that's just a paralyzed position. I'd like to be clear if the writing and the emphasis I'm trying to prove to myself by quiet time writing is the best thing I can do now. I want to get into it wholeheartedly and trust that this will develop into whether I can actually be a preacher because to be a devotee, to be a preacher, to please Prabhupāda has to be done individually according to time and place. Maybe the best thing for me now is to really deepen my faith and practices of appreciation for remembering Kṛṣṇa. And then, as I sometimes say, automatically the other will come, the opportunities to give it to others. There'll be more potency to do this rather than just the organizational, institutional propagandistic mode which doesn't enthuse me, and which I don't seem to be so good at anyway, preaching to new people and that sort of thing.

"For several years now I repeatedly go over this and I come to the same conclusion that this is the kind of person I am. I want to spend time alone, and I am going to fashion this as my preaching contribution by writing books and so on, and making myself fit for disciples' meetings and classes where I can help devotees with their thoughtfulness. In any case, no matter what kind of preaching we do, we have to be humble about the results. Our movement is small, so if I spend time improving myself, it's not selfish—it's a way to help the movement. I have to be convinced of that, and I think I

should be because this is the opportunity I've been given according to my inclination. Kṛṣṇa will take it away from me if He thinks it's not good. If He wants me to do something else, He will direct me strongly in another way. So in any case, this is good for me.

"But when we say reading and writing or spending time alone, I really have to do it in a way that's right on the mark, and I think I'm doing well on that regard now. I am reading Prabhupāda's books with not much attention to other books. Now, if I'm writing perhaps, while continuing to be free-writing could be more Kṛṣṇa conscious, always trying to help yourself to do that, question myself or glorify Kṛṣṇa, learn how to preach better in writing, and that will be good too. So we can always improve, but these are the basic ways to do it: retreats, reading and writing, coming out at scheduled times, writing letters, and so on."



