

*I Am  
Prabhupāda's  
Servant:  
September Catchall*

*Satsvarūpa  
dāsa Goswami*

Series Title: "Books Among Friends"

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## Author's Note

Books Among Friends was started to provide a forum for me to speak to my disciples or just to share with them writing that is perhaps too personal or even experimental to be published for a wider audience. For example, *Litany For The Gone* addressed a private topic—private to me and private to my disciples. This book, *September Catchall*, is in a different category of privacy. It is a quiet book, telling of my personal, day-to-day life at a relaxed pace. Therefore, it may not be of interest to those who are interested in the Vaiṣṇava topics I may write of in books such as *Niti-sāstras* or *Qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, but who are not interested in me for my own sake. (One reader wrote me, “I liked your new book, *Qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa*. I am a fundamentalist and books like *Radio Shows* do not appeal to me.”)

Also, I write a lot, so one of the functions of Books Among Friends is to keep books flowing into print in addition to the slower pace of printing by regular Gitā-nāgarī Press standards. Therefore, I am offering you *September Catchall* in this Books Among Friends format as a way of sharing with my friends. I hope you will like it.



## August 30, 1995

One day, after eight hours of driving on the highway, the Visiting *Sannyāsī* and Narahari dāsa rested in their van at a P-stop. During the night, the Visiting *Sannyāsī* dreamt that somehow his diary was picked up on the Internet and was now available for everyone in the world to read. He woke startled and turned to see what he had written in his diary that day. He read it still in the emotion of the dream that his diary was now public domain:

In ISKCON, being a writer means making propaganda or philosophy by writing expository essays and books. No one writes of themselves. It's considered vanity or *māyā*. I tend to approach this subject in a tangential way, taking pot shots at a monster.

Newcomers, I tell you,  
will be able to conduct  
this Kṛṣṇa consciousness  
movement even  
after I'm gone.

The old guy who wrote  
Prabhupāda's biography  
will shuffle off the stage  
in his worn-down bed slippers.

Dig his jive,  
him an avid reader, fanned  
with a *cāmara*  
while he fell asleep and  
everyone took advantage  
sinking his USS Sheffield  
with a single meteor  
that hit his brain.

Quick  
what was you thinkin' of  
at the time of Death?

No teeth/ pilot pens/ business class/ a last laugh/  
Kennedy Space Center, space suit./ last conversations of  
Therese of Liseux. One of her hands holds the other.  
She says, "I want to go to God and pray. I want Him to  
be happy, want to uh . . . Bless all souls to love Him as I  
do!" Such an ecstatic girl even in suffering. But  
Prabhupāda in Hyderabad said that the Bible has only a  
little love of God, a little info. Some saints took it a  
long way.

Dream: I was working in a welfare office. I was "called  
on the carpet" by the boss, an old man. As we spoke,  
however, he turned into an attractive, red-haired lady.  
What was I doing wrong? How much of my cheating  
were they aware of? Had they seen me smoking  
marijuana? They wanted to interrogate me, maybe

reprimand me, but the supervisor beat around the bush at first.

I said, "Tell me straight what you think I'm doing wrong. Whatever it is, I can hack it." I felt I could.

She gradually told me one item, and even that she fudged on. She said that others probably did this too. She didn't really come out and say what it was, but somehow I knew that they wanted to know if I took more than an hour for lunch.

I said, "Tell me the rules straight and I'll be able to follow."

If I could reform, why didn't I? I seemed to lack motivation. I was not inspired by the office. The dream did not clear up these and other issues. Maybe this is a dream where my various selves are trying to tell me what I need to do to make serious advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness during my remaining days. But they can't just lay it on the line for me. I should ask them to be more clear.

## August 31

Wicklow, Ireland

Announcing, beginning tomorrow, the Catchall September Book: including travel writing, lecture preparation, poems, pain journal, confession, fiction, drawings, all done in free-write sessions; and more—portraits as honest as I dare of people and places and dreams and attempts to improve and step forward and surrender to Kṛṣṇa.

Readers welcome. Don't be ashamed. I'm not trying to trim this writing, but catch it all in this sacred book. Our schedule in September provides for this variety: we'll be traveling over two islands, two continents, and four countries.



# September 1

1 A.M.

When you read *Bhagavad-gītā*, you become aware how degraded and dangerous human life is. Whether you are the Visiting *Sannyāsī* or SDG or an anonymous author, it behooves you to save yourself and to help others. I read that in Ireland there are 3.5 million cattle. The country “exports” 2 million of them per year and earns 2 billion dollars from it. Prabhupāda tells us in the fourteenth chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā* that cow-killing is the most vicious form of animal slaughter, that it is in the mode of ignorance, and that those who engage in it fall into animal births in their next lives. So much for “pious Ireland”—and the rest of the European economic community, the rest of the world.

We should get out and get our children out, or at least give them the chance.

We planted a tree here yesterday called “the pride of India.” It symbolizes Śrīla Prabhupāda and will be surrounded by trees that will be offering *ārati* to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

We gathered around and chanted and placed the little tree into the earth and watered it and braced it with a pole. All glories to the pride of the earth, the pride of the spiritual world as well, her divine emissary, His Divine Grace, “who is very dear to Kṛṣṇa on this earth.”

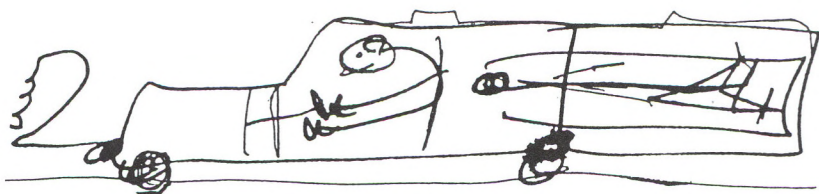
Remember the dark, rich soil on your hands? Yes, they took photographs of the event.

I’ll be sorting it out, trying to find a space for the Visiting *Sannyāsi* who is worried that the world of ISKCON has now read his inner thoughts. Neither can I escape that there is a me, an “I” who reads and writes and hopes to get through the wonderful Rādhāṣṭamī celebration tomorrow without a headache. A headache would cancel his participation, but he has a nice lecture ready just in case, and blissful *bhajan*as for the evening. It’s as Kṛṣṇa desires and wills. I’ll send my body and mind and see what happens.

Reading that statement about Ireland’s cattle made me sober about wanting to live here in any permanent way. I always see cattle in the field just outside my window in Ireland. They create a pastoral scene, but the whole little country is going to hell because of it. Yet rural Eire seems peaceful—a nice place to take walks and to write. There’s less crime, so we sleep quietly at night. Aye, you humans sleep peacefully, but not those cows.

A short life of misery, a worse life follows. The humans are drunk and degraded. Those who teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness are compassionate. Let me not desert that preaching field.





Belfast, here we come. Wanna little rest before you travel, pardner? Got somewhere to rest your head? Travel on.

My literary problem is not so much a problem as a choice. I'll tell you when I can what happens with Eldridge and Sandipan and Sassafra and Alfalfa of the "Little Rascals," and silent film stars and candlelight discos in India. Tell us how you plan to escape the modes of passion and ignorance and to attain the nectar of spiritual life even in this body. We'd like to know how you're gonna do it. It will set a good example.

You cannot move blithely beyond the troubles of this world by spinning words. Rather, you have to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It's not irresponsible to go to Belfast to observe Rādhāṣṭamī with the devotees. Helping to keep the solidity of a Kṛṣṇa conscious community and to maintain the mode of goodness, to discuss *kṛṣṇa-kathā* with the devotees, is my duty, privilege, and happiness.

Is it my duty to tell a real or imagined story, to sing a song?

You have to be like that, happy in the early morning, but preserving energy on September 1 for a three-hour car trip. Not so easy for an old guy.

6:15 A.M.

I am Prabhupāda's servant but not always a good one. Last night, I forgot to put him to bed. He sat up overnight with his beadbag in hand and lightweight saffron *cādar* over his shoulders. I want to make it up to him with renewed attention to his personal service.

Noon, Belfast

A few letters awaiting us with fantastic tellings. Someone says a *gurukula* boy in Vṛndāvana, while bathing in the Yamunā on Janmāṣṭamī, saw and spoke with Lord Kṛṣṇa. A woman about to die described the spiritual world as she saw it. A lady disciple of Jayatīrtha, still faithful to him, communes with him and says he was present dancing with us at Ratha-yātrā in Dublin. I don't see or hear such things. But sometimes when I look at Prabhupāda, I am moved by his beauty and aliveness. I wanted to draw his picture and felt "do it with devotion." Palpable feelings.



Belfast armed police cars and police in white shirts out on the streets blocking a side street that we didn't enter.

Bhaktin Mary waiting for us at Michael's house where we are staying. She gives us the key and goes away. In a letter she says she likes the Belfast temple, but feels suffocated to have people always watching her and telling her what to do. She wants to move out but continue to attend the morning program. This is a welfare state and I think you can get flats for free. Mary may do it, but it would be better if she could find a lady devotee roommate or two. It's not my business, however, to give such direct advice.

This afternoon, I'll ready my lecture notes and familiarize myself with *bhajana* tunes for tomorrow. Rādhā is the *hlādinī-śakti*.

Someone wrote me that they enjoyed Ratha-yātrā, the "nice vibes," the wonderful *kirtana*, the delicious *prasādam*, the excellent play, and, "It was also good to see at last your good self in the flesh (well, what's left of it!)." It's true it seems—there's not much flesh left.

You mean it's all becoming spirit?

Or is it just decaying and disappearing?

September, still not cold.

Rest back and wait for lunch. I know what you want. You want to know the difference between the V.S. and me, SDG. Well, be patient. I'll tell you gradually as it comes. Don't expect to see Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Yamunā or even yourself as two. Yes, Mary, why not move out? I too



need “head space,” but when I was your age, I never dreamt of it.

Ten to 5 P.M.

Madhu is out buying airline tickets and other things. Cars go by. I’m alone. I have already outlined tomorrow’s lecture. I am free, but I am too restless to write. I went downstairs and checked out the bookcase. *Taming Toddlers*, by a Dr. Green, who lives in Belfast. His writing is witty and British. He says there’s no harm in thumb-sucking and that it probably doesn’t push children’s teeth forward. Full of funny illustrations. A waste of time for me to look at, but I gained a little appreciation of parents and toddlers.

Back upstairs. Why don’t I write something? Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa: “Without Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā has no meaning, and without Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa has no meaning.” Be sure to tell them that tomorrow. (If I really want to be sure, I have to write it down on a note.) It would also be nice to mention that as all Lord Viṣṇu forms are expansions from Kṛṣṇa, the original Personality of Godhead, so all Lakṣmīs and *gopīs* in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* are expansions of Rādhā. Rādhārāṇī and Her expansions are not different than Kṛṣṇa.

But . . . I don’t feel it.

I’ll speak it in the small room anyway. We worship Rādhā-Mādhava in one small room and speak the lecture in another small room. The rooms make for intimacy. I’ll be there just one day; on Sunday we are scheduled to take a ferry to England.



Tomorrow afternoon, we'll sing Sanskrit *bhajan*s, then Madhu will sing two Irish melodies with English lyrics about Rādhā's meeting Kṛṣṇa at Kurukṣetra.

"I still am Rādhārāṇī  
but rather than meet Him here  
My heart yearns for Vṛndāvana  
and Yamunā's banks so dear.

"I long to hear His sweet flute play  
its all-enchanting air,  
My heart yearns for the fifth note  
within the forest there."  
(by Jñāna dāsa)

Madhu's been singing it over and over for days. I've also been repeatedly listening to a tape I made of my reading from TLC and Cc. regarding Rādhārāṇī. We call it rehearsal, but it's also a way to bring our minds to the desired subject matter.



Twelve minutes to 7 P.M.

### Night Notes

Whoosh. Cars lay a ribbon of constant sound. In another letter, a wife who is happy in her little rural house with her three children and big garden and good husband, asks me, "Is it wrong to feel happy?" She spoke with a Godsister who said, "I'm constantly frustrated and suffering in material life. This has increased my desire to go back to Godhead." The happy lady wondered whether she should expect suffering or what?

I'll reply that I only know what I read in books. They say that if you think this material world brings happiness, you are in illusion. We should be pessimistic about this world. However, spiritual life is symptomized by happiness: *brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā*. If we feel morose, Prabhupāda said, then we know we are not making spiritual advancement.

Dear happy lady, and dear frustrated one, be spiritually happy and materially exhausted. Don't love your house as if you could live there forever in sense gratification. When you rise above the modes of nature, you can taste nectar even in this life.

You see what I mean; I quote from books.

Madhu just arrived. My life is nice and I'm happy too.





## September 2

The Visiting *Sannyāsi* woke and worried about the fact that his private diary could be read by any of the hundreds of devotees who monitor the Internet. Of course, he'd written similar things—but not so candidly—in his published books. Most of his brothers didn't read those books. To put it on the Internet was to wave a red flag at a bull, or at many bulls at once. They'd be likely to think, "Why has he addressed this stuff to our attention on the Internet? Who does he think he is?"

The Visiting *Sannyāsi* read some *Bhagavad-gītā*, his early morning routine. He came upon the symptoms and behavior of one who has transcended the material modes: he remains neutral, "He performs his duties in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and does not mind whether a man honors or dishonors him . . . does not hate his so-called enemy. . . . Social and political issues don't affect him." (Bg. 14.22–25, purport) One can attain this by determined, full engagement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The Visiting *Sannyāsi* thought, "This doesn't describe me, unfailing and full Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but at least I



should try for it. Stay busy, pay attention to lecturing and other services.”

He looked again at the diary segments that had gone onto the Internet. Maybe it just passed by their tired or feverish eyes and minds like more rapping. So many people were putting their opinions into this computer; it wasn't exactly a gossip line, but sometimes. Yet the fact that the diary spoke so much about himself. The poetry, the confession . . .

He was not reading the material on the Internet, but a friend sent him a clipping of a sarcastic response someone had made.

Won't mention it here.

Why not?

What'd they say?

Something like, “This guy is a poet from New York. I'm surprised he's writing this poor excuse for poetry. Prabhupāda said Sanskrit is perfect, and English, especially free verse, is nonsense. Why not write something Kṛṣṇa conscious like putting Kṛṣṇa book into rhyme?

I wondered where that

Visiting Sannyāsi was. I think he could use a dose of good old surrender to devotional service duties.

Too much head time in cuckoo land.”

That was not from an official, a GBC man. He feared them more. He worried that his diary might lead to

some official censure. Diaries are meant to be private. And that was the pinch—it appeared that he had deliberately broadcast the thing society-wide. Should he print an explanation that it had gone on by mistake? No, that would just call it more to others' attention.

Let it go and hope they will forget.

Dreamt something about Baladeva getting me a car, but it was too expensive a model and I worried that I might be criticized for it. Two devotees rushing to get me something in two different cars. The cars bumped slightly into one another. Staying overnight somewhere in the car? Why this attempt? This adventure is not done efficiently. Why accept this service from others? What is your mission that you require people to be your servants? What is your service that you should be facilitated and treated specially? What is this dream trying to resolve?



*Rādhā-kṛpā-kaṭākṣa-stotra*: when will Rādhā cast Her sidelong glance of mercy on me? She is the best devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa because She loves Him the most.

In Belfast town we  
came to celebrate the  
sweet day of the year  
when Rādhā does appear,  
eternal consort of our Lord.

I won't be bored  
but sing and chant and speak  
of She who is proud and yet meek  
She's *hlādinī-śakti*  
and we all worship Her  
as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Although we  
don't deserve to know  
the intimate details of Their love  
yet we want to sing and pray  
for protection on this day  
in service to Jagan-mātā,  
mother of the universe,  
whose name we call upon  
with every Hare Kṛṣṇa.

I'll go now and chant *japa* by candlelight. I pray to be  
able to hear "Hare" and "Kṛṣṇa" and "Rāma," but I'll  
chant softly so as not to disturb the neighbor on the  
other side of the wall.

And my heart yearned for Vṛndāvana  
it's there I want to be  
on the banks of the Yamunā  
'neath the trysting tree.  
And I yearn to hear His  
sweet flute song  
playing upon the fifth note . . .

Rādhārāṇī at Kurukṣetra. She is always a young girl, modest and respectful. Her love is pure, but it appears crooked. She keeps Kṛṣṇa under Her control. She is compassionate; She is especially attentive to Her devotees. She is the most beautiful of all Kṛṣṇa's consorts. She is *bhakti* personified and the shelter of all *bhaktas* who therefore call out, "Jaya Rādhe!" "Rādhe-Śyāma!" and who appeal to Her, "Please tell about me to Your Kṛṣṇa. Please offer Him my service."

I may read my own poem, "Rādhāṣṭamī at Gītā-nāgarī" today and explain that we all serve Rādhā.

Written in temple room just before *māṅgala-ārati*:

Prabhupāda, I pray to you today, the day you initiated me. Please let me write strongly and purely in Kṛṣṇa consciousness to purify myself.

The faultfinding mechanism is always going on in my mind, but I don't want to take it seriously. It's just noise, I tell myself. But it could be seriously damaging my hopes for Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Be kind. Relax, smile, forgive yourself and others. Now practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness more deeply and clearly on focus.

When you speak from the scriptures on Rādhā, find earnestness in yourself, damn the skeptic within . . . Praise the Lord's best devotees and ask them to reveal Kṛṣṇa consciousness to you. Pray to Supersoul for the strength to carry it out.



10 A.M.

Spoke of Rāmānanda Rāya's talks with Lord Caitanya, how they went higher and higher, from *mādhurya* to *parakiya* to Rādhā to Her *mahā-bhāva* and *prema-vilāsa-vivarta*. Rāmānanda Rāya told us to follow the *gopīs*, to be a *gopī-mañjari*. A devotee asked me if the circle is closed. "No," I said, "more can enter, but you have to be qualified, pure, and in that *rasa*." Someone asked why Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa was not taught before Lord Caitanya, or was it? I stumbled through an answer to that. Someone asked, "I heard some devotees worship Rādhā without Kṛṣṇa." What else?

"You said we are servants of Rādhārāṇī through the spiritual master. Could you explain that?"

Went for one and a half hours talking, no breakfast. Don't approach Kṛṣṇa directly, says Śrīla Prabhupāda, but through Rādhārāṇī. Similarly, don't approach Rādhārāṇī directly, but through Śrīla Prabhupāda. Surrender to his instructions, to his mission and preaching movement. One day it will be revealed.

I poured it all out. Most of them had heard these things before, but that doesn't make it less nectar. They had forgotten it, not used it. I refreshed our memories as to our ultimate aspirations in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Give the flower to Rādhā and She will give it to Kṛṣṇa.

Now I'll get my head shaved and then partake in the feast offered to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and later today, the *bhajanas* . . .

*Tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta jīvanam*

*Kuṅkumākṭa-kāñcanābja garvahāri gaurabhā  
pitanāñci tāvja gandha kīrti nindi saurabhā*

Yeah, mon, letters, betters  
fettters of lust and doubt,  
bettters of devotees—so  
many better than me,  
and letters I got to answer.  
Wasters, tasters, fasters—  
don't waste time,  
take nectar of selfless  
service and fast for Lord Hari.

6:15 P.M.

Sure, the concert went well, but I felt strained after an hour. The songs went well. Maybe the words of *Rādhā-kṛpā-kaṭākṣa-stotra* were too intimate as the sound vibration went out into the room to the ladies' side and to the *brahmacārī* book distributors, disciples of Harikeśa Mahārāja. It's only one day in a year.

I plunged ahead. *Kadā kariṣyasiha mām, kṛpā kaṭākaṣa bhājanam.*

I get tired, exhausted,  
and the day ends. Walked back to the house . . . Gave each person a plum. Bhakta Rodney said he heard it was Rādhārāṇī's favorite fruit. I was the master of ceremonies, "Thank you. Śrīla Prabhupāda *kī jaya*." The book distributors' spokesman, a young man, stopped me outside and asked me to sign their one-volume *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*. I signed it, "To the Dublin *saṅkīrtana* party. All glories to your service of distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books." I said to them, "I mean it.

You are doing the best service.” It was a chance to bow at their feet and hope to get the blessings of those who go out and meet strangers cold and ask them to take Prabhupāda’s books. As stated in the *Gopī-gīta* verse, *tava katāmṛtaṁ* (*Bhāg.* 10.31.9), “. . . those who spread the message of Godhead are most munificent.”

A writer seeks the art of Kṛṣṇa conscious expression in his life.

Good-bye again in early September as we part not knowing when we’ll meet again. Will Mary get a flat and move out of the suffocating temple? Will that young man marry that woman who is older than him? Will the stalwart young lads of the Dublin *saṅkīrtana* party go on and on despite the war? Long may they do so. May the ladies manage this temple according to their motto, “Serving Kṛṣṇa together.”

We have the right idea, the life of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, as given to us by Prabhupāda, if only we can carry it out.

O Prabhupāda, we saw you do  
what no one else could do.  
You live in your instructions  
and your followers live with you.

Hare Kṛṣṇa. Rest soon and be up for tomorrow's adventures. Into that little temple room again to sing at *maṅgala-ārati*. May Rādhā's hand bless us with fearlessness. I said, after we sang *Gopī-gīta*, "We don't know the meaning of what we sang because we don't know Sanskrit, but even if we hear the English translation, we can't know because we have to be completely free of material desire and possess the rarest love of God. Even the four Kumāras don't know this, or Prahlēda, or the Pāṇḍavas, or Nārada. It's so rare."

Yeah, you said it.

You who know

the art of punting

the art of pervading a

page with ink marks.

O Kṛṣṇa, I pray to make  
sincere renderings.

As we sang

a drop of nectar—a mili-

meter of a drop—fell

on our hearts. Because

Rādhā is kind and Her

representative in this world

is Prabhupāda,

who likes devotees to gather

in Western rooms

and hold *kīrtana* and honor *prasādam*.

And preach

preach

preach

as long as

we live.



## September 3

What I may do in writing or otherwise is determined by Kṛṣṇa; everything comes down from Him. I repeat the version of the Supreme. Śrīla Prabhupāda said his secret to success was that he only repeated what Kṛṣṇa said. "Have you marked it or not?" he asked his disciples. Yes, we noticed. He pursued that method relentlessly, and he was successful. He broke what seemed to be impenetrable ground.

Now, now

trying to make a new art

when everything has already been decided and researched. There is always more to say and a new person needs to say it.

A new person? Well, I am old too; I've been in this world for many lifetimes. But it does seem new. Certainly Kṛṣṇa consciousness gives us a new life and opportunity to get free. In the pure, liberated state, every moment with Kṛṣṇa seems new and fresh.

So I say "new" and also "old."

Today will be a little stressful—early morning in the temple, then waiting in line at the ferry, then the

crossing itself, sitting in public with lots of people and pop music to ease the journey.

Our heads are freshly shaved. Will they think we are one of 8,000 skinheads worldwide? Our saffron dress belies the fact that we are probably Buddhists or something stranger, wearing skirts instead of your ordinary manly pants, and so skinny with our tilaked foreheads. Maybe we're cultists of some sort, Hare Kṛṣṇas.

Newspapers in their hands, these folks are afraid the IRA won't get rid of their weapons in a hard-line stance just before a big peace talk between Ireland and England.

Woke up with marching melody on my mind to Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare. Some few days ahead at the Newcastle farm where we may live in our van and pursue reading and writing, if Kṛṣṇa allows—allows the eyesight and hand movement a little longer. I pray to use it well to help myself and others in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Got to use my time for *japa* now before the long day's travel.

### During *tulasī-pūjā* in temple:

Write as if it's the last September of your life—so the “ordinary” and actual events of a life within Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be portrayed as fully as possible. Always write as if it's your last chance.

For example: we walked from the house to the temple in cold, black rain. It was 4:15 A.M. A fast moving car passed us and beeped the horn twice. I figured it was some drunk revelers mocking at the sight of skirted Hare Kṛṣṇas, one with a peaked hood top, the other with a shaved head. I thought as I'm getting older, I need not

be concerned as much with catcalls and odd looks as we move among the nondevotees in this illusory world.

### Belfast–Stranraer Ferry

Thought I saw a triangular-shaped head sticking out of the water. Pop trash rock organ drums and guitar playing. I want to switch onto something transcendental in reading or writing or thinking, but the mind says, “So many distractions, what can you expect?”

No privacy or concentration. I keep a light on inside myself and wait for a better time. This ferry reminds me of the Staten Island ferry. We were so homebound, me and my friend, John Young. Despite our complaints and cynicism, we felt comfortable in our parents’ homes and the relative quiet of the neighborhoods. Or did we? We weren’t ready then to move out on our own.

Captain Ian Thompson of Seacat “Scotland” just announced good morning and will keep us advised of our progress. All gray overcast Sunday morning. We say good-bye to some of the devotees gathered at our van. “Until we meet again . . . ” We were both played out from previous thank yous and good-bye exchanges. Now it was just time to go. A visitor like me is welcome as long as he moves on and keeps his status as a Visiting *Sannyāsī*. We like it that way.

Everybody wants to live, seagulls too, and the folks on this boat and everyone all over *Mṛtya-loka*, but I’m just a tiny soul who will leave too and would like to realize before I go that I’m not at a great and final loss by death. Be humble about that, but while you have life, serve Gurudeva, who genuinely wants as many souls as



possible to receive Lord Caitanya's message. Write it here—pray to work as an instrument for him.



Up the channel we go toward the sea connecting North Ireland to Scotland. Gray, drab, rippled water. Slowly the Seacat crawls across the top of it.

The captain told us to sit down because the sea is rough and there is a strong northwesterly wind. Water splashes like pebbles against the windows. I get alarmed at first as we go up and down in the boat, but then I think of Prabhupāda on the Jaladuta. He said it was “always tottering.” It creates anxiety. You want to reach land. Similarly, we are souls in unsteady bodies. A video screen shows us “Scotland’s” progress through the choppy water.

While looking upon Rādhā-Mādhava this morning, I thought of dreams. During the *ārati* I thought of published diaries—Dorothy Wordsworth, Captain Scott in the South Pole, Kafka. I thought of the feel of a paperback book, the sight of it. I like books in all varieties and shapes. I’d also like to get a compact *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, English only, with not-small print, if the BBT has published one.

The boat shakes. No one is walking around, but the cheap music continues. It would continue even if we

sunk. Anyway, it won't be long before we reach the English coast and are able to continue down the peninsula.

M. is reading the Foreword I wrote to Brother Aelred's book; we will discuss any changes.

How is Svevo? How is the Visiting *Sannyāsi*? Are those characters sleeping as one puts Deities to sleep in a box?

I'm starting to feel a strain. Hang on.

## England P-stop, rain

My desire to make "literature" may be holding me back from writing. My desire to make it "come out right" may be holding back a rightful outpouring. Old fellows—the inner censor and critic—are not dead.

I ask for release to write in September. These are good opportunities. Rain coming down on van. Parked here, lunch soon, something they prepared for us in Belfast, which Madhu is warming up.

All right, not everything I do is worthy. It's not all activity of the soul. Not all directly a mouthpiece of *Bhāgavatam*. But let me write.

I don't know.

Headache, hold off. I'm not going to overwork. Just wanted to say hello.

## Night Notes

Writing is just one of many things I do, admit it. I'd like to be a more religious writer, both in the sense of *kṛṣṇa-kathā* and dedication to practice, but the "secular" stuff, the body ills and all that and my mind telling me to report what honestly preoccupies me. The arresting dream is hardly religious in the usual sense. I was

religious before I met Śrīla Prabhupāda in terms of dedication to writing, making the sacrifice, but it was in vain, and sad, sad, Rilkean sad, and mad, mad LSD self.

Now I have a better chance and some years left perhaps to do it.

Got rid of animal-product candles. Bhakti-rasa knows where he can get natural ones, so we've arrived at this place they call the Newcastle farm because they have a garden in the backyard and it's remote and their kids play on the land with no botheration of car traffic. Just hear—only wind now. Relax the old body and do something in the morning.

So Svevo and Sats, I mean Svevo and V.S. went to make a phone call and they left me here to clean up the van. I found old Kleenex and extra ear plugs and cleaned the floor, and when they come back, it will be orderly and he can lie down and sleep and dream and wake.

I do the best for him.



Yeah, well, that best may not be good enough, my friend. We want a religious dinner, we want a religious winner. Hare Kṛṣṇas are superb mantras, but you have to chant them with devotion.



### Poem by V.S.

Vat was a rough boat ride  
up and down in troughs  
and crests the "Scotland"  
rode and Cap'n Ian had no  
fear 'cause he goes back and  
forth each day but I  
was scared a little and  
prayed me fictional mantras  
on the horoscope  
of Eden—as we free-writers  
say or he how-you-scope  
the words on a freedom  
run  
confusing yourself and  
God is Kṛṣṇa  
mighty good.  
Gun shot!

I heard again and again some local hunter. You can't  
escape the cruelty.



## September 4

Start a little disheartened, thinking there's nothing new under the sun of SDG's expression. New? Novel? Can't you be satisfied to write what is and what you desire? Go to Kṛṣṇa and hear from Him. I just did that in *Bhagavad-gītā*, starting the fifteenth chapter. One has to be free of pride, which is born from illusion. Take your place as Kṛṣṇa's eternal servant. Hear and chant and aspire to cut your attachment to the material world and go back to Godhead. There it is—your work cut out for you. The body is not for pleasure and you should be detached from its pains. Yes, "should be." Don't be cynical about that. Work for what should be.

Choose something and write about it. I wish to be a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. I assume I am one in a distant sense. Walk around with the *daṇḍa* and saffron cloth as if proclaiming, "I'm an advanced soul." I know better than that. Don't delude others into thinking you are special. Yet you allow them to render you service. What do you give as payment in return?

I say, "This. This writing. I give some lectures. Prabhupāda approved that we become *sannyāsis* and be given



accommodation so that we may be comfortable and preach lifelong.” He didn’t want us to falsely renounce *sannyāsa* and its duties. If you practice external and extreme humility—accept no food or van, no facility—then you can’t facilitate preaching. It requires assistance. Still, be careful. It is easy to fall into complacency and think yourself worthy to be served, advanced among contemporaries, etc.

I still ought to recall that for nine years I acted as if I were one of the twelve or fifteen people who were the only ones in the world qualified as gurus in ISKCON. We accepted obeisances from our Godbrothers (but I returned them too) and sat above them on an elevated seat. Accepted hundreds of disciples. Too many. Don’t forget all that.

Hare Kṛṣṇa. Two families live in a house here on the “farm.” We are parked outside. At 2:30 A.M. we will enter and use their bathroom. Then come out here again and start *japa* by candlelight in the van. I placed Śrīla Prabhupāda in a caravan and will go wake him maybe 4 A.M., have a little *ārati*.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord. I want to write here, but how can simple writing practice constitute a book? I don’t have to think of “achieving excellence” (false standard) or that I have to entertain readers. I can practice and I can try to help myself.

I am an integer. I am a fellow. I am not this body. I like to be here in the Newcastle farm although I keep

projecting myself into the future or past or into bodily consciousness.

Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa. Read of Him. Pick out songs to sing by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

9:10 A.M.

Dreamt I was punished. Cut on forehead, front tooth loosened and almost removed, bloodied and cut and poked here and there. Taken around by the punishing guards so everyone could see me. I was supposed to be punished but had gone almost untouched all day. Other authorities had let me go by thinking, "He is a nice, good-looking (white) *sannyāsi*. Let us pretend we have punished him but leave him with his honor." These last punishers caught me with a vengeance at the end. As I was taken from place to place, I accepted the pain and ignominy and the fact that I was being permanently disfigured (losing my good looks) because I remembered that Christ had suffered like this. Finally they let me go. I washed the blood off my face and looked in the mirror. I looked like a different person. You couldn't see my eyes properly. My ears were clipped to points like elf's ears. It wasn't so bad.

What does it mean? Do I still have to be punished, and is it good for me? Is it part of real life? It seems we ought to accept dreams as real and not avoid the scary parts. We should try to control the dreams or even defeat the adversaries that appear there. They stem from something deep. But what do they mean? Anyway, Kṛṣṇa is in control.

10:30 A.M.

This is a shaky table. I prepared some topics on which to speak on Thursday for Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's appearance day, mostly incidents from his life. We've heard these stories from Prabhupāda. I'll also sing two *bhajan*as.

I still have to prepare something for Friday for the disappearance of Haridāsa Ṭhākura. Probably I read mostly from the Cc. We honor our saints or else we'll turn to honoring Christian saints or material culture heroes. September has numerous holidays. They might seem minor compared to Janmāṣṭamī, but they are full of significance. They may be minor in terms of the ceremony we perform, but not minor in terms of the greatness of the Vaiṣṇava or incarnation—Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Haridāsa Ṭhākura, Lord Vāmanadeva, and Śrīla Prabhupāda's taking *sannyāsa*.

Ordinary post peon you can still write. Why does he talk of the weather?

Oh, I am sensitive to it. You see, I was raised in a country part of New York City called Staten Island and there we had four full seasons, plenty of snow in winter, plenty of scorchers in summer (the tar melted on the road), autumn foliage, leaves to rake, spring. The weather affects you. Now we can connect it more to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I toddle along, though. I don't get the breakthrough after which nothing would ever be the same in my life again.

What? Do you want one of those every day?



When Bhaktin Mary asked, "It's exciting when devotees come for a festival, but how can I be enthused when it's quiet?" I told her it is good to be quiet. We have more of a chance to find Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the quietness of routine. Then why am I asking for a big breakthrough?

Scotland ISKCON prints their pamphlets in the Scottish dialect. They concentrate on preaching to the local people and their mentality, and launch an effort to spread the Lord's glories. They get good results. The guru resides in the temple and spearheads the campaign.

M. has been hinting that perhaps I am not happy in our little 12-foot van because I often take a room when it is offered and I find it hard to worship my Prabhu-pāda mūrti in the van or to type there. I assured him that I like the van and find it good for my creative life. I wrote *A Book of Pictures* in the van in Assisi. As long as I don't succumb to claustrophobia, I have the books and a heater and a bit of sunlight coming through the skylight. Most important, of course, is that no one can crowd in on me because there isn't even room for anyone else to sit down with me in there. If I get any breakthroughs in there, I'll let you know in the writing.

Svevo had a dream that he met V.S. on a newspaper route, and they discussed whether to go into the local tavern called The Standard. They decided it was not becoming a Vaiṣṇava. They wanted to be devotees. If they broke the principles, they would not be allowed to lecture and no one would read their books.

You mean both those guys wrote books? Which is the poet and which the novelist? Which was the guy who got punished and his face cut?

Before September's over, I hope you'll have that sorted out. I want a consistent set of characters, one to be the V.S. who is in some way different from SDG. As for Svevo, why drag him into this?

The writer flows on, unconcerned about consistent characters. Rather, he lets them all flow into one another—various egos and selves all seeking the true soul, the eternal servant of Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.

*"My heart yearns for Vṛndāvana,  
on the bank of the Revā."*

Madhu goes on singing that and I pick it up too. I awoke singing the other line from the marching song:

*"The Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa is in everyone's heart  
and each living creature is His beloved part."*

Don't kill the animals. I wish you blood-crazed people could feel others' pain. I wish you could become devotees again.

Svevo wants to be celibate.

Asked one devotee whether he wanted to remain *brahmacārī*. He said he's not completely fixed. He said the austerity of *brahmacārī* life would be eased if he could read the scriptures at a regular time every day, but the demands of being temple president keep him up late at night. He has no time to read other than a half hour a day at best. It's a hazardous job for a *brahmacārī*.

Distribute books, distribute books. His GBC man approves and gives him advice how to manage the center. If need be, sell the buildings, rent a flat, and go on dis-

tributing books. If the congregation won't do their part to pay for the buildings, then you don't need a temple because your main preaching is book distribution. I could not make such bold decisions about how to preach. At least I should make bold decisions on what to write. Small bursts of writing throughout the day. After attaining some purpose.

I want to write of things I know.  
Warm-ups turn into finished pieces,  
let it go.  
I write of writing, want to throw  
away the mirror.  
“Dear Anne Frank,”  
writes the activist poet  
and her book's blurb says  
“Nationalism and fascism are still  
undefeated international diseases.”  
What do I know better?

When I read of Lord Kṛṣṇa long  
ago in the Sudharma, hearing the messenger  
of 20,800 kings kept in prison by Jarāsandha,  
do I know it? Is it relevant?  
When Nārada speaks in *śāstra* or  
Uddhava or Kṛṣṇa Himself,  
am I moved and attentive?  
Give us some conclusion.

I don't want to push followers even for the great aim  
of preaching. But whoever speaks the glories of Kṛṣṇa is  
His best servant.



I want to glow, be true, be  
myself as He wants me to be.  
In peacetime I offer these  
words of simple,  
routine surrender.

Dear Anne Frank,  
and all the world's books—  
novels and poems and film scripts  
and songs and lyrics and theological tomes,  
what is your worth when  
dear Lord Kṛṣṇa turns smiling  
to Uddhava and asks what  
does he think? Kṛṣṇa knows  
and I want to hear from Him,  
how the world is illusion and we suffer  
when we take it for our own,  
and forget our duty to the Lord.  
I want to hear His promise  
of eternity and love.

written in duty-love,  
September 4, Newcastle farm

ISKCON Scotland took a full page advertisement in  
the newspaper with an article headlined, "Who Am I?"  
It contained this dialect:

One day ah bumped in ta this wee man in a pink  
frock. He shued a book intae ma hand, and then  
started preachin' tae me aboot no bin' the body. He telt  
me that ah wiznae the body! Ah says tae him: "Whit

you talkin' about, no' the body? Man, ah 'm 18 an' a half stane yer jokin'!" Then he says that we could dae a wee experiment tae show that ah wizne the body.

(By the end of the article, the Scotsman is convinced to become a devotee.)

Ah must admit oor wee man had me really thinkin'. He's right you know, ah'm no' the body, ah'm the consciousness. Ah'm eternal, the soul never dies. Ahve been chanting as well and it's guid *fun*. Ah'd recommend it to anyone. Try it yersel'. See whit you think. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Could you write so honest you wouldn't want anyone to even read it? Could you write with detachment and not even care if you saw it later? I don't think I could do that.

S. writes a short letter on flowered paper: "I will look forward to hearing your classes on Thursday and Friday. The disappearance of Haridāsa Ṭhākura is one of my favorite sections, so I'm sure it will be special when you speak on it."

Special? No, I will just want to say what it actually is. I am a faithful classroom teacher, and I just try to clarify or expand a little on what is already in the scripture. I'm confident when I do that.

Rigor mortis. Don't run away from adversity figures in your dreams. See if you can stay in there longer before you eject yourself from the dream or turn into an observer. See reality in the dreams. That's quite a challenge. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

If you repress the inner life activity, the energy will have nowhere to go. Admitting to some *māyā* in a dream isn't the same as engaging in *māyā* when awake. One dream expert wrote, "Through dream work we can more fully experience the dark side of life than we can in our life with its societal and ethical restraints." It's stuff coming in dreams, so it's already in my life, my karma. I don't act as an advanced lover of God in my dreams (neither do I act or think like one when I'm awake). In dreams I'm less exemplary than when I'm awake! So in the relatively harmless field of dreams, I am more able to admit who I am and acknowledge the demons that are coming at me—and not run away from them, but see them for what they are. It's a test of how earnest we are in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or how strong we are to endure the rough ride. If some stuff gets lived out in dreams, it won't cripple our waking life.



5:45 P.M.

Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa

I am alone in the back of the van.

September means it's not cold yet.

Some more days but it's

colder. You sleep delicious only a

few hours. Let me rise and chant

and dance.

Let me walk with *japa* beads

in my hands as a monk

of solitude and God's love,

God's holy names,

no sex desire,

it's not necessary,

I've transcended.

Let me go from here

back to Godhead.

Cry out Hare Kṛṣṇa, go now into that garden and  
chant, it will be good to get out and chant there.



## September 5

Ekādaśī, 1:08 A.M.

This little man, does he know where he gets the fire of his digestion? Who holds the planets in orbit? Do psychologists know this? They'll say a dreamer "in a burst of feeling is able to acknowledge the Source, energies, which some people call God. We use the generic, more functional terms to distinguish energy from a religious concept." Why not acknowledge the Supreme Person? Why pussyfoot around it? Are they afraid of turning off clients who are turned off from religion? Are they themselves turned off by "religion"? Maybe so, maybe so.

But those who don't know the Supreme Person as maintainer, object of sacrifice, Lord of all planets, and best friend, cannot find peace.

That's *jñāna-cakṣuṣ*. We have to accept this descending knowledge. Don't remain dumb or reject it in favor of non-religious "functional" speculation. "Functional" means taking knowledge from God's creation by observing a tiny sample of the creation's laws and by using the powers of perception, experience, healing, etc., to expound it without acknowledging the actual source.

They don't want to accept a "concept" of God because it requires that they trust in authority. We can sympathize to some degree with people's cynicism about religionists, but such cynicism shouldn't be directed at God, scripture, or the disciplic succession.

No, I don't say I'm a spiritual master. But I say  
the veggies are nourished  
by the moon.

If you want to know how, ask  
the moon.

But that you cannot do face-to-face.

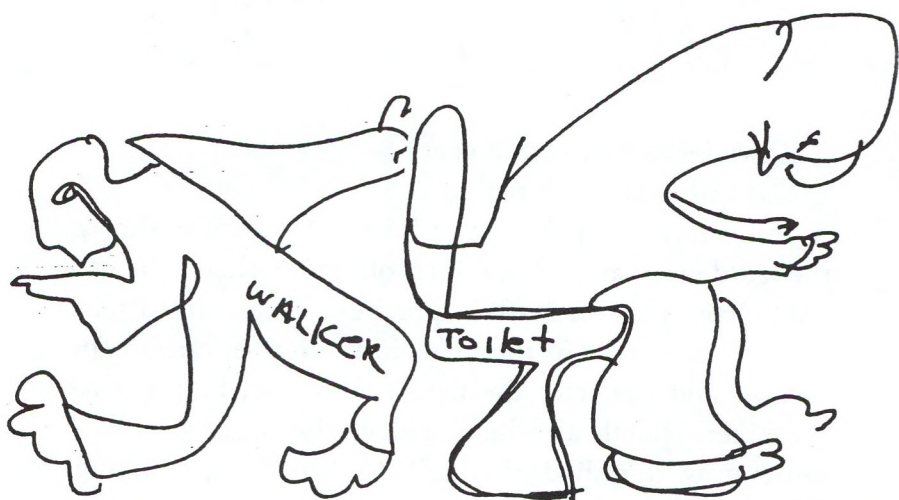
So you rely on knowledge coming down instead of trying to ascend and write your own "*Bhagavad-gītā*," which could only be "the song of a puffed-up scholar and psychologist." You are playing around on the beach of eternity, picking up pebbles here and there, and then cheating by proclaiming yourself "teacher" and "hero."

Yes, I defend myself as one who hears in *paramparā*. I'm keeping the channels of submissive hearing open and kicking off other influences.

Good morning. The early morning news broadcast from my still-functioning brain. For a while longer. Seek to appreciate the Supreme Person from *Bhagavad-gītā*, 15.12–20, as He who holds the planets in orbit and is the goal and giver of Vedic knowledge. Feel secure there and come closer.

I did meet the gardener. He was sawing tree limbs for firewood, using an electric saw. He showed me how the garden is still producing. I was impressed to learn that September and even October are harvest months. Ap-

ples require another month before they are ripe. Squash and pumpkin too, and other stuff growing strong in September. It's not winter by any means, but it's still a transition time for the weather and the earth. I am already using an electric heater in the early mornings in the van. (I'd put on my sweatpants, but can't find them right away and don't want to make more noise while Madhu sleeps.)



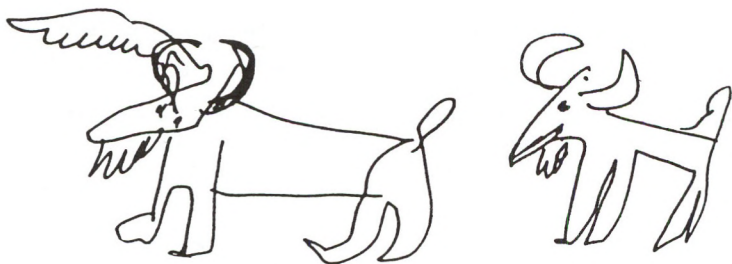
God holds the planets in orbit like dust in His fist or else they'd scatter. God in the blue sky. I chanted loud and foolish. I am in garden rows, seeking shelter, and realizing that it takes more time and effort, much more purity and attention before I'll reach the nectar of the holy name.

I can write, but not a book like the *Gītā*. Notes while reading scripture is a different thing. This is not a wisdom book, although it contains the sparks of higher



knowledge that I have contacted by my spiritual master's mercy. Call it a diary of a struggler.

The sky enters the prose.



Please note they own a goat  
and gathered fleece but don't

know how to spin it on a wheel. Gradually, slowly, the gardener says. Don't bite off more than you can chew. His spiritual master approves. Take care to raise children and cows in the field, in the house, oneself the servant and leader of the family. His wife, he says, has the green thumb and he just does the digging work. I went away refreshed after talking with him, thinking, "Here's a man who likes what he's doing. Now get into your van and do *your* work."

I remember chewing a fingernail, seeing a bleached rock, a blond woman snuggled into shoulder of her man in the seats in front of us on the "Scotland's" sea crossing. Can he save her? Can God save us? Yes. No mortal can.

I dreamt and thought it over afterwards, but now it's erased from my mind—I kept no written or spoken record. It was something about suffering of some sort. Maybe I tried more to allow the dream to continue without trying to get out. I like that challenge because



it better allows me to consider, in a stage between inner and outer, what happened in the inner.

I'm awake now, of course, and reading *Bhagavad-gītā*. That is better, clearer knowledge than what the dream self delivers. It is transcendental to man and woman, pain and pleasure, to temporary life. It's what I most need to know, what is most valuable to my spiritual life—that knowledge coming down.

I thought of asking M. how I can write more and better or use my dreams in my writing, but ultimately, I am stuck with that question myself. A series of notes? I desire to write a good book. Admitting that is an act of honesty because it exposes my motives.

I am also facing my lack of desire to do sustained reading. I'm sleepy while I chant. I realize that success in *śravaṇam kīrtanam* will in itself make me a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa and will be followed by preaching. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura praises the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and indicates that a serious reader lives in the transcendental realm. "Once enter into it and you are transplanted, as it were, into the spiritual world where gross matter has no existence. The true follower of the *Bhāgavata* is a spiritual man who has already cut his temporary connection with phenomenal nature and has made himself the inhabitant of that region where God eternally exists and lives." (*The Bhāgavata*, p. 14)

Although I am cheerful and patient, I am undermined by weakness in reading and chanting. I tell myself to keep going and I have no alternative to that. There is no other way: *harer nāma eva kevalam*. Still, I am undermined. A devotee wrote me that he has become

cynical about his own complacency in spiritual practices. He said that his inability to practice *śravaṇam kīrtanam* seemed to be as irreversible as his graying hairs and aging flesh. Well, he can improve.

I have been extra tired since being here. The little bit of travel to get here from Ireland seems to be the cause of it. What will happen when we travel much longer distances to France and Spain? I propose to do more regular reading and better chanting, but the travel always weighs down on me. Pray for Kṛṣṇa's grace in this and concentrate whatever energies you have. It is a matter of consciousness.

I am Prabhupāda's servant. He will like to see me reading and writing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Preparing for Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's appearance day, I notice what a great writer he was not only in quality, but quantity too. He wrote for hours each night, from his youth until the end of his life. I thought, "Yes, me too, me too." I can't write like him, but perhaps my writing is also a form of Kṛṣṇa conscious expression, written for people like me.

I can't remember anything. Anything I want to retain has to be put down in a note. I will be cheerleading myself here, "Read! Read! Read! Chant! Chant! Chant! It's the Centennial, Prabhu! Get it together!"

3 P.M.

Just woke Prabhupāda. He's situated in a caravan in the garden. Bhakti-rasa stays there overnight. It's nice, but a bit cold and not always heated. I can't take him out in our van because it's too crowded and he might get

hurt by something falling from overhead. My Prabhu-pāda mūrti—I could stay with him all the time, but that would not be preaching. Still, one could achieve Kṛṣṇa consciousness in that way too. Any way that is sincere and offered fully. You can pray to your spiritual master, ask how to be with him, but I am flowing in various ways and claiming that it all comes under the umbrella of “I am his servant.”



I was putting off answering a small batch of mail handed to me by devotees in Belfast, but I realize if I don't get it done in these quiet days at the Newcastle farm, it will be harder to do. Soon we start our travels and temple visits, which take up the rest of September. Now I'm going to push to get the letters done this afternoon.



Hello, hello, I wish you well. No, you cannot try for happiness in the material world. Happiness can be achieved if you do things—home, garden, and family—in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. How? You know.

Yes, you should continue to write to me even if you can't follow the rules. No, you should not give up your chanting of *gāyatrī*. Rather you should return to the standard of your vows. No, I don't think you are hopelessly fallen. Yes, I liked the photo of the house you wish to buy, and yes, I would like to visit you there and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa with you and the other devotees . . .

Reading and writing. I am trying to proceed in the chapter of the life of Haridāsa Ṭhākura. Lord Caitanya used to visit Haridāsa in his *bhajana-kuṭīr* at Siddhabakula. Haridāsa was not allowed to enter the Jagannātha Mandira, but Lord Jagannātha Himself, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, would visit him every day, calling out, "Haridāsa!" and talking with him as part of His daily activities. Read about the last episode which Prabhupāda told at one time so nicely and cried tears of love in separation. Do you remember, Haya-grīva?

I make plans and I can't always carry them out, but I have to keep trying. So once again, I say that my purpose in life should be to read and chant.

Sarasvatī and her husband and their teenage daughter all came over with the Ekādaśī lunch they cooked. It was very nice. We chatted awhile afterwards. Jokes about the Irish and English and me happy.

Prabhupāda says that a *sannyāsī* is prohibited from sex life and association with women. I accept it. It's not



repressive, as some psychologists and dream workers say. We shouldn't look for "compensatory" dreams to make up for it in our sleep. If we have developed a way to wake up before sex encounters happen in dreams, we aren't denying ourselves wholeness. Rather, such strategies are part of our strategy for leading the wholly celibate life that we desire. Why should we have to submit to the lower nature? The psychologists may say that this repression leads to sickness, but we have to consider deeply the Vedic instruction that sex life is to be completely avoided, especially for one in the renounced order of life. If sex desire comes during sleep despite our intentions, then we don't have to become overly upset about it. We know some roots of desire remain. But we shouldn't agree with the theory that says we should not try to control anything in dreams. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

O Prabhupāda we saw you do  
what no one else could do.  
You live in your instructions  
and your follower lives with you.

I am writing this in the caravan a few inches in front of His Divine Grace. I'll go back now to our van and finish the last of those letters. Then I'll read. Why not do it hour after hour, going through the Haridāsa Ṭhākura chapter and the segment on Śrīla Prabhupāda taking *sannyāsa*? Gather things to talk about. Draw a picture if you like. This is your simple life as long as it goes like this.

In several letters they ask me about predicted world catastrophes. They are happy, but should they expect a catastrophe? I don't know. It will come of its own accord. Yes, take the peace that is coming now and use it in His service. I say predictable things and sometimes don't feel them deeply, although such questions deserve a long, deeply thought out reply. I want to make myself more fit to answer in truthfulness. I am answerable to those who write to me—answerable to be sincere and focused on the Kṛṣṇa conscious life that we espouse. Letters I write are a by-product of the main thing, my non-hypocritical practice.

Time bomb, he said. He said he is not a fan of jazz. I was surprised how he could not appreciate Charles Mingus. Anyway, I am not a fan of anything either, except pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If occasionally I give myself the freedom to take an extra sweet, it's to pacify the mind and tongue so that they don't rebel against the complete abstinence. This is who I am right now. But that doesn't mean I cultivate sense gratification.

Please take me home, master,  
take me home on your chariot  
to the spiritual world where I will  
devote myself to serving Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.  
Let me be an actual Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee,  
not only in dress and speech but by simple heart  
carrying out these *bhajan*s whenever  
I get a chance so that when I talk  
in lectures  
it's what I actually do.

There is no joy in Mudville even if Casey hit a game-winning home run. It was only a one-night frenzy and drunk. Then they had to face their own lives.

The hometown of baseball champs is still in the grip of repeated birth and death, of bodily sufferings. Who has escaped from that? Swamiji assured us of this even in 1966. Be sure of it, he told us, despite the Puerto Rican kids shouting in at the open door. He persisted and told us, and I heard him fully and I am carrying it out, that real liberation means serving Kṛṣṇa. In those days, I gave up jazz and mundane books and all kinds of sense gratification. Why can't I continue that trend? It is absurd for an old man to still be a buff of sense gratification and to collect mental speculation theories up until the end. He will die as a New Age rat. Please let me not become a plaid monster, an old man wearing Bermuda shorts and knee socks with his bleached-blond wife, both holding up liquor in glasses, dancing and cavorting in old bones while Death chortles, waiting. Let me go, let me go to the land of service to the devotees, surrendering, hearing the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and liking it.

### Night Notes, 6:35 P.M.

Here close to Prabhupāda. When I walked into this flimsy caravan, it shook at the slightest movement. But there is Prabhupāda waiting for me to be Kṛṣṇa conscious, to think of him. I am faithful to him. I came here with a volume of poems by William Stafford. Thought I'd look at one and then write something—anything—of my own. But seeing you, Prabhupāda, in your gray knit cap and *cādar*, and knowing that you



have been alone here all afternoon because I couldn't arrange anything better—it's either this or to pack you in the box stowed under my bunk. This is better, although it's not the best. You ought to be in hearing range of devotees chanting and talking with life, even if they are sometimes troubled by demons. You like to hear their plans for temple construction and book distribution or the GBC or something about ISKCON. "Always be absorbed in ISKCON thought," you said.

I have come to be with you and want to write something like that, and to say hello.

Oh yes, I do think that this "catchall" may be converted into a new exciting literary project. Another *One Hundred Prabhupāda Poems* or something similar.

I don't seem to be able to do that now. At least this moment of entering and seeing you and feeling you are my friend and master was nice. I am your boy, grown old, but your boy. Very much boyish.

Heater on. What can I do for the poor souls? I can write. I can dance in the van to an Aindra *kīrtana*. I can, Madhu suggests, take a dictaphone on the walk. I had told him to tell one of the devotees that they could accompany me on my walk, but Madhu suggested that since I get so few chances to walk alone, why not take a dictaphone instead and speak into it?

He remembers his son. I remember my guru. My guru has not died. It's not that. He has triumphed, gone back to Godhead. We are sure. He didn't die and lose. Still, he left us here alone. That's how we followers of his see it. We are bereft. What to do now? Keep on working. He



told us to work together. It is a hard order. Who can claim he's doing exactly what the old man wanted? Why call him that?

I don't know. I don't mean harm. I know he's not an old man, but a pure spirit, pure Vaiṣṇava. But old man is not a bad word. I am one too. He was a very old man, 82. And he's "the Old Man," as they say in the Navy, meaning the captain in charge of the ship. The old man of the sea, the patriarch, the wisdom figure. He's the old man who calls the shots.

He's the general. He's also the sweet teacher of Vṛndāvana. He's the memory of him, the *mūrti* we can relate to tenderly and talk with and take care of. O master, you are leading us in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union. What do you think now of all that has happened since you left—the falldowns, the *ṛṭvik* schisms, the this and the that, the spreading out of ISKCON into non-temple life, the independent rural communities? Stop here. It's profitless.

It's getting darker in this room. It's raining outside and I don't have an umbrella with me. I am a young old man, the son of an older old man, the pure devotee. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja also became old, and Rūpa Gosvāmī and Raghunātha Gosvāmī. Good, let's march on and meet death without complaint. That would be a heroic stance. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura looks old, heavy-bodied, bare foot, dressed in *bābāji* white, chanting *japa*, shut up in a beach house in Jagannātha Puri.

Look forward to that, but write tonight, closing this 5th of September. More tomorrow.

Pack up and go in. I feel good that at least the deity is warmed and that even for this little while, he isn't alone in the cold. He is mostly alone though. I too am mostly alone. Now Madhu suggests I be alone even on my walk. Okay, he's right. I would like to be alone, especially if it meant finding a great idea for creative writing. That would be great, worth being alone.

Alone, but friends nearby bringing breakfast and lunch. My life is not so ordinary compared to most folks in this world. Each life is unusual. I am a routine Hare Kṛṣṇa, I suppose. When I meet active Godbrothers whom I have not seen in years, they seem predictably the same. Then I think, "I am not so far off. They are what they are, just as they used to be. I am too." I don't have to worry that I'm off. I'm simultaneously like them and different from them. All of us are doing the run of the mill things as we always have been. My writing is not so way out there; it's just that I spend a lot of time alone. That's good too, I suppose, as long as I associate regularly with devotees. That's my secret: I live alone sometimes during these later years near friends who give me shelter, and I write these notes.

## September 6

He asked the Durham public librarian for a book on poems about September. She is a public servant and willing to do the research. She found twenty poems published in various books and now they will photocopy them. I am impressed by their service attitude. I thought librarians were helpful, but not *that* helpful. Usually they're just willing to hand out suggestions, "Why don't you try such and such?"

Our van is parked near some old stone buildings on this estate the devotees rent. Last night, it rained and I closed the skylight. It was a simple act. It took me awhile to fall asleep, so I assured myself of how peaceful the situation is and how pleasant is the rain. I relaxed, counted blessings, gave up fear.

When I finally fell asleep, I dreamt but no longer remember what about. I'm not overemphasizing the idea that I can remember dreams because my main direction is to study *sāstra*. I need to hear from the *puruṣottama* as He speaks *Bhagavad-gītā* to me.

I like the ending of the fifteenth chapter where Lord Kṛṣṇa declares He is above the fallible and infallible and that He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead; we



should engage in His devotional service and thus reach the perfection of all our endeavors. Surmount the two weaknesses of heart.

I write to keep the hand moving. It is quiet at this hour. They let us enter their house at a designated time to use the bathroom, 2:30–3:30 A.M. I take another shower at 11:30 A.M. Yesterday, we saw the man of the house seated before a fireplace blaze, chanting *japa*. I became embarrassed that he might think we would judge him as a someone attached to hearth and home. I said cheerfully, “Now the change of weather has come and we can warm ourselves by the fire”—I extended my hands toward the fire to show I liked it. He said, “It’s too warm.”

When we enter at 2:30 A.M., we find cats and kittens in the outer room, the two kittens bundled together. Sometimes there’s a stuffed toy animal thrown on the stairs. Quietly we use our flashlights to shine our way upstairs. The bathroom has no lock on the door, so Madhu sits outside while I go through the ritual of attending to my body, all in silence, thinking of what to do (*japa*) when I return to the van. We are at home in other people’s homes as long as they are hospitable. Usually they are, especially if we don’t stay too long. When we arrived, he had asked, “How long are you staying?”

“Until Saturday.”

“That’s a short visit”—his way of being friendly.

“It seems like a long visit to me.”



They are planting a tree for Prabhupāda in the public park in Newcastle. A white, blossoming cherry tree with a plaque saying that it was planted in his honor. A Centennial gimmick, but whatever it takes to help the nondevotee public remember His Divine Grace.



Haridāsa Ṭhākura used transcendental trickery to convert the prostitute. He was compassionate. Sounds like he had psychic powers and he knew what others were doing. He knew Rāmacandra Khan was sending a prostitute, or maybe a friend found out and told him. "I could have left this place at once," Haridāsa said, "but I stayed to deliver you." She was a devotee at heart; we all are. When she surrendered to him, he told her to stay *always* in the hut—he had turned it over to her—and to always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa night and day. She picked up the 300,000-name quota. He went on to Caṇḍapura (near Hoogli) and continued chanting in a thatched

cottage. People insulted him. He was tested by *māyā*. All glories to Haridāsa Ṭhākura.

Tomorrow is the appearance day of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. I was married by Śrīla Prabhupāda on that day in 1968. Remember? Yeah, I remember—stepping into the shower in a Lower East Side apartment, and as I did so, feeling myself enter bodily consciousness again as a preparation for marriage. I had been free of it, but now I'd take it up as a married man. It was a noticeable change. They tied our *dhoti* and *sāri* together. It was a no-win situation though. We knew that if we were happily married, we must be in *māyā*. But to be unhappy in marriage wasn't good either. Fortunately, he got us out. I say Prabhupāda got us out when he offered me *sannyāsa*. Whew.

All glories to the Lord of the universe. On Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's appearance day, describe his contribution. He appeared at a time when the reputation of Lord Caitanya's movement was low due to deviant sects. It's somewhat low again due to anti-cult propaganda, the existence of "bad" cults, and the pervading atmosphere of Kali-yuga materialism. We don't share the same values as mainstream society. Therefore, we are forced to be humble—people don't honor us, but see us as weird.

Now let's chant again. This will be a whispering and a prayer:

Please, Lord, let me be aware of *hari-nāma*. I don't want to pray merely for a sweet taste. To ask for pure love means I have to be willing to suffer difficulties, to break attachments, to work, to suffer. It's the only way to attain something so rare. Too often my concept of

spiritual desire may be to ask for a sweet taste. *That* is what I desire, but that's sense gratification, not service.

Maybe that's why I don't make rapid progress. I don't want to suffer—I'm not willing. I have to learn to face the rough and go through it depending on Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa will manage everything; I am not in control of anything.

Sweetness is nice, but prayer has to be more than that. Dear Lord, dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,

Michigan

New Hampshire—

you have to exclude stray words when you pray.

Say "Kṛṣṇa,"

"Supreme Lord of all," "Puruṣottama," "Please reveal Yourself to me, Your servant."

Enlighten me

to easily overcome my false ego—that which seems so difficult I can do easily by Your grace. I could become a new person and leave this attached person with a weak heart behind. He has a desire to be the lord, and he is attached to matter, loveless and unwilling. Still, he wants You. His soul is in You, even when he forgets and becomes absorbed in matter.

The secret is to hear from You—Your teachings, Your pastimes and names and about Your form. Yet we have to earn the right by service to hear with love. I pray the service spirit may overwhelm me. I can serve You and be happy in service to my Gurudeva.

Am I slow Westerner? A cowpoke? Not a Hindi-speaking Indian? Am I so attached to Western ways and places? Yes. But Prabhupāda gave us the way to transcend no matter where we are or what we were. He



was lenient, like Bhaktivinoda Thākura who wanted to establish a worldwide religion. I pray You give me the courage to distribute Your message as my spiritual master wanted me to. Let me be effective in writing books and doing book distribution and lecturing from an exemplary life. Let me pray and praise You.

Pleasure—carrying a cold, damp *gamchā* into the bathroom and placing it over the warm radiator. By the time I am ready to use it after my shower, the *gamchā* has dried and perhaps become a tinge warm.

Caravan, 4:20 A.M.

Light on, cold, but warming up. Can we justify heating the caravan and lighting it just because my Prabhupāda is in here? Why not? If a flesh and blood person were here, you would certainly allow it. Let us allow it for him. Dear Prabhupāda, you are here waiting for me. I sing the *samsāra* prayers quickly and suddenly they're over. I can go back to the van and look over the goodies that Bhakti-rasa picked up for me in New-castle—candles, and maybe the typing got done. Instead, I prefer to linger awhile with you. You have your pink, wool scarf on over the full-gray *cādar*, the lighter one made of wool. Under that, a heavy cotton *cādar* and your light, silk clothes. You are not exactly dressed for outdoors, but warm, I hope, with a gray, wool cap.

You sit on a comfortable cushion, but you have no backrest. There is no end to the nice services we could arrange for you. Soon it will be time to offer you breakfast. Madhu will bring it in to you and say the



prayers. You have your book and water cup here, and you are surrounded by pictures of Pañca-tattva, Nṛsiṃha, Rādhā-Govinda, and the spiritual masters. I offer my respects to you this morning. You are my master in this form or in the form of your books and your instructions. I seem to be going my own way merrily, as if I think I'm a creator and all that, but at heart I'm your servant and keep to that standard in whatever I write and speak. Anything else is deviation. Sooner or later I see it and come back to you.

I would like to read you more and better. The *Gītā* session this morning was good. Reading your words means reading Kṛṣṇa's words because He speaks in the verse and you explain what He says in the purport. Kṛṣṇa says, "Surrender to Me," and you explain, "Surrender to Kṛṣṇa"—the same message. You are a pure devotee and want us to be devotees. You say the best service is to give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others. You assume we ourselves have it already, or at least enough that we can help you in your mission.

Sometimes, however, we are the most in need of the preaching. *We* need to hear Kṛṣṇa say that He is the greatest, the supreme person above fallible and infallible, and that to reach Him we have to detach from the material world. *We* need to hear the *sāstra's* knowledge and contrast it with whatever we have learned of material speculation. *We need* to hear it from you. Therefore, I want to read your books today. I am preparing to speak as your *sannyāsi* disciple tomorrow, to whatever devotees gather.

Twenty minutes to 11 A.M.

I haven't been getting much time to write because I have been doing some more polishing of my lecture for tomorrow. Now I have decided to read a fragment about Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *nāma-haṭṭa* activities. He invited everyone to come and get the holy name from Lord Nityānanda. The only price is love of God. Just show a little love—a tear in your eye, something—and He will come and deliver it to you.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura recorded in his diary the details of what the *nāma-haṭṭa* party did, how thousands chanted together and heard him and his friends lecture all day and into the night. I have half a dozen books stacked up with short references from each. I hope the audience doesn't find it dry. Is it pretentious to try to describe the ecstasies of the great saints? Better that than something else, I guess.

I also couldn't write this morning because I chanted more of my rounds than I usually do by this time, I had to read and edit an issue of "Among Friends," and time slipped by. Now I'm in the caravan. At 11, I'll begin massaging and bathing His Divine Grace. I forgot to bring a tape recorder so I can listen to his lectures in the storefront, despite interruptions.

This is the free-write cabin of mercy. I am not a poet or a shmo-it. I am a tar baby of the inane. The words that ran. I'm glad, glad they are publishing my works and that people like *Radio Shows*.

I didn't bother to read Dorothy Wordsworth's diary because as I remember it, day after day there were very short entries such as, "Went to see sunset," "William

wrote a poem on a butterfly," "My teeth are falling out." And she's not a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. I don't remember her as a God conscious saint. Is there such a diary? I recall Ignatius' diary where day after day he said, "Many tears today," and, "Again tears of contrition," etc. That was a private diary of his religious symptoms. What do I want?

Looking to the future, so many things seem interesting and exciting, but when they actually happen, when you actually get there, you might be threatened with a headache or feel nervous about an upcoming flight or come across something else to disturb you. The present, the present, why not stay always in the present?

After saying that, I looked down at the white typewriter keys. I like the present, but if I go into it too much, my head gets strained. I need to coast a bit—that's my semi-invalid rule. I tell you this as a way to explain why we are not more on fire with the flame of love or the flame of intense writing or any other effort. We need to be quiet. By "we" I mean me, in the cosmos, a particle of dust wanting to be connected in eternal devotional service.

3:02 P.M.

Rehearsed two *bhajan*s, the one I used to sing each morning—the introductory song to "Śaraṇāgati"—and "*Jiva jago*." Can I enter the meaning of these songs? Sure, why not? My spiritual master would want me to do so, and by his mercy, I can.

What else did he want you to do?



He wanted me to work along with my Godbrothers in pushing on this movement.

Are you doing that?

Yes.

He prepared the text. Creaky table in this caravan. Day by day. Meandering non-suspenseful book. ISKCON Press book, you open it and sometimes the binding splits.



“I want to know,” said Svevo, “where we stand.”

You stand in a barroom with sawdust on the floor.

Ah, no, let us be at home in a *kuñja* in India, or in a pious setting.

Yes, okay. You meet with other Vaiṣṇavas, gather on Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s appearance day, you and what’s-his-name—V.S., yeah, and Narahari.

What’s the plot of this writing?

Just that we meet and sing *bhajanas* together, one harmonium, one drum, one set of *karatālas*, and us singing, fasting, and then feasting. Okay?



But what about the story? What about COM and feedback and anger and adrenaline? What about conflict?

I don't know. Just thought we could meet and sing "Jīva jago." It's all under Kṛṣṇa's control . . .

To teach mankind the holy name, he came into this world . . . O Prabhupāda, we saw you do . . .



5:34 P.M.

Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja asked Lord Kṛṣṇa one day, "I would like to hold a *rājasūya* sacrifice to prove to the world that You are the Supreme Person and those who worship You are victorious over all. Is that all right?"

Lord Kṛṣṇa replied, "Yes, it is all right. Very good. But you will first have to conquer all the kings of the world and exact taxes from them for the sacrifice. Send your brothers out to do this."

The Pāṇḍavas traveled to all the different directions and collected taxes, but they couldn't conquer Jarā-

sandha. Then Kṛṣṇa told of a plan that Uddhava had suggested. Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna, and Bhīma would go there and beg a fight. Jarāsandha accepted them at first as if they were begging *brāhmaṇas*. Then they revealed themselves. Jarāsandha laughed and said, “You fools, yes, I will fight with you. But I won’t fight with Kṛṣṇa. He has proven Himself a coward in not fighting with me once. Arjuna is not equal to me in size and expertise, but Bhīma is a fit match.”

Bhīma and Jarāsandha fought for twenty-seven days, but they were so equally matched that despite furious club fighting, neither could gain victory. Then Kṛṣṇa gave a signal to Bhīma. The Lord picked up a small twig and ripped it apart. Bhīma ripped Jarāsandha in two in the same way.

I am telling this story to purify myself. I will then read the rest of the chapters and see what happened.

This flowing river of days, this hopping progress of a story, the month of September growing cool.

The man of this house came by the van and said his wife had made a cake and they would like to give us a piece. Madhu said we don’t eat in the afternoon, so he said he would save us a piece for tomorrow. I asked Madhu to give him the children’s magazine, “Bhakti-latā-bija,” that we were given in Ireland.

Then I felt the urge to come out here to the caravan. I thought if I could be with Śrīla Prabhupāda, I could write something.

On Janmāṣṭamī, I was relaxed and happy, speaking to the devotees about how wonderful Kṛṣṇa is. Keśava

dāśī said that sometimes she doesn't think it's wonderful that Kṛṣṇa is always killing this demon or that demon.

I said, "No, it is nice. We can't be squeamish about the demon-killing. See it for what it is. They deserve to be killed."

Then I told the story of Pauṇḍraka, which is a funny one—the imitation Viṣṇu who challenged the Lord and sported an extra two arms and imitation dress. When Kṛṣṇa saw him, He laughed heartily.

It is wonderful, but Keśava dāśī was being honest. Yes, sometimes it may not seem wonderful. It may even seem mythological. That is only our prejudice, Prabhupāda said. He stands between us and the world of agnostic speculation. He is like a dam against the rising waters of doubt and envy of God. He is the latest representative of the stalwart ācāryas. I place my life in his shelter. I want to read now as I did in Boston, full of innocent faith. I pray to be the devotee of the spiritual master in these stories.

Svevo is wearing a black sweater and V.S. has his *sannyāśī* dress.

Does V.S. wear the top-piece in front as a begging apron or over the shoulder the way Prabhupāda wore it? Let's say he mostly wears it the way Prabhupāda wears it, but sometimes the other way. He likes to do things the way his spiritual master did them. On Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura's appearance day in 1968, a devotee asked if he should fast. Prabhupāda said, "There is no question of fasting. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura is 80% lenient.



All the *ācāryas* are lenient.” We were excited to hear our Guru Mahārāja speak like that.

You said the fictional characters will gather and sing with us tomorrow. Could you tell me more about that?

No.

What about September? Are you trying to evoke a particular mood this month? Something poignant like wisteria or weeping willows?

September. My sister’s birthday. September 29 is Michaelmas day in the Catholic Church. It’s also called St. Michael’s Day or All Angel’s Day. They believe there was a great battle and Michael the Archangel who has wings and wears armor and carries a sword smote down legions of devils. The angels defeated Satan and all his armies. That’s at the end of the month.

I needn’t mention it, I know, but when the September poems come from the library, I may give little samples and purports. It will be like using crayons and coloring in some emotion about the ninth month. The obvious emotion is that summer is over and everyone starts to feel that they can’t live at ease forever. September is sweet, like the smell of apples in harvest, but there’s an underlying scent of death. The dwindling of the remaining days in our life.

I remember we want to be devotees. We take an examination for *bhakti-sāstra*. We go eat *prasādam*. We met together, eleven gurus, and said it is ordained that we should do this and be the chosen ones. It was wonderful. Thus with good intentions, we created the old



boys' club in Māyāpur. I too was as happy as a young schoolgirl to think that I had become "supreme," the worshipable guru who could love disciples just as Prabhupāda had loved us. I'm not going to mock it further here now.

I remember prying the metal emblems off the cars. You use a screwdriver.

No, they say. Don't tell those details. We are your followers and don't want to hear it. It's a turn-off.

Okay, say I was an altar boy and wore a white, silk sash on my arm. I prayed to God and Jesus. I prayed, "Oh, one day may I meet my guru." I was a saintly person who studied world literature with a desire to do something pure and good. I wanted to express the inexpressible. I sacrificed. I wanted to do good for others. Is that what you want to hear?

We want to hear stuff that happened after you met the Swami.

Okay, I will tell you. He heard the jokes and jives and threats from people in the neighborhood. He was not afraid. He said, "I was a Calcutta boy." He had seen *gunḍas* in his boyhood. He was a brave person, depended on Kṛṣṇa. Really did. He was exceptional. How else could he have come to America with no money and so old? Yes, he was very special, and I was glad that I met him. I warmed up to him quickly. I wanted to take his teachings seriously. You don't joke around with a guru. You try to learn from him and you render service. I could do it. Getting along with his other followers wasn't too hard either. You could succeed at this, you fool, you perfect fool.

And you gave up bad habits. (I won't mention them because you don't like the sordid details.) I will say, however, that I became happy, gave up old friends, and kept going to his classes, taking in the newfound Vedic *Bhāgavata* and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Paramātmā, the soul, the easy journey to other planets.

Tell us another story, Mac. And forget what time it is, forget your mom and pop, just as they forgot you. It's Prabhupāda who is your father now. And your mother, he said, is the *Vedas*. Far out.

## September 7

My father died. That means I'll die too. He died of a heart attack. He was about 79 years old.

Who am I? Am I the son of my father, or doesn't that relationship count for much? What about my being Prabhupāda's spiritual son? How many other sons and daughters does he have? Does that make a family? Do I see it that way?

Oh yes, I identify with Śrīla Prabhupāda as my father. Yes, it is a big family and I move in it, sometimes on the outskirts, sometimes in the heart, but always a part of it.

I am spirit soul.

I am living in the ISKCON conception of *sannyāsa*. *Sannyāsa* is for preaching. *Bhagavad-gītā* tells us that *sannyāsīs* are fearless (*abhaya*) and purified and cultivate knowledge. They also depend on Kṛṣṇa and stay clear of association with women. They live a clean life.

We hear that we should protect the cows and work the land—everyone—but how much can one devotee do? How many causes can one devotee support?

They have newsletters with return address envelopes. Send your money in. Their causes are just. Pay up.

Write this opus of September, this not fooling around burrowing. Prabhupāda says if one fails at an attempt, he shouldn't panic or become discouraged, but keep going. That's Kṛṣṇa conscious.

September started suddenly. We knew in advance it was coming. We gathered at the end of August and made plans, felt anticipation, tried to calculate how to launch into it, made up a story to carry us through. Then it actually came: September, and the ride to Belfast from Wicklow. Actual life with its inner and outer factors, staying at Michael's house, going to the Belfast temple on Rādhāṣṭamī, our evening concert when we sang *Tava-kathāmṛtam*. Now September is a week old and one-quarter done.

Standing on damp grass outside the caravan (yesterday) and feeling only a tiny bit something of the pace of time in my life. Is it rushing headlong? Is it under my control? Is not enough happening? Is it good to be peaceful and quiet with outer events not "eventful"? The sky is not so clear these days over the fields of cabbage and yellow squash and pumpkin. Feel it (time, your life). Feel the steadiness, the holding and flowing beyond my control.

Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna, "You have the divine qualities." By birth? Well, if the parents conceive right. But even if you start out in life acting as a demon among demons, you can change when you meet a pure devotee



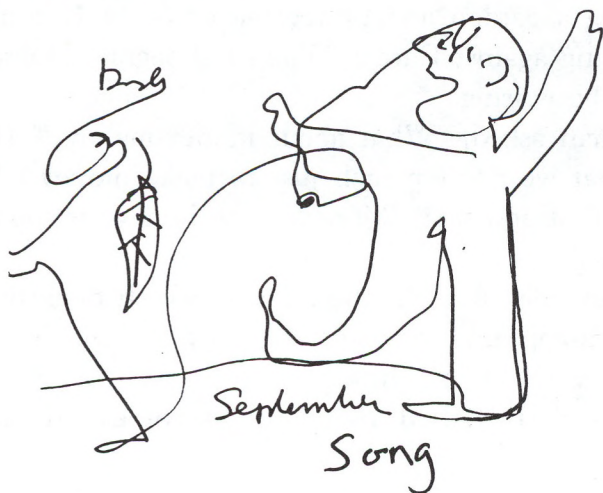
or his followers and take up the Vedic way. Sure, most people won't do it—won't even be sympathetic.

We are so grateful when some guy says, "The Hare Kṛṣṇas are not half bad. They have some decent habits and interesting ideas. I ate lunch with one and his wife."

We ingratiate ourselves to them, the leader of a humane or vegetarian society, as if it's some kind of connection. Yes, we are in exile just as the Pāṇḍavas were in exile.

Here I explained why I write, "September." It's a "catchall." It's like in this relaxed family life in the house here, you'll find a toy on a chair, a comb in a box, things mixed together. It's not sloppy, but relaxed, intermixed in a big house with rooms. The adults have their own room and the kids have theirs, but the space is not so strictly divided. *They live together.*

We are on the earth. It's September. No big deal. *Just a passing phase.* I too am just passing through. A whole life can be seen like that.



*Don't rush me.* I want to savor this mini-scene. It's a way of appreciating God. He's here too. This ninth month has its features and they are nice. I like to always savor and note the world. It's a way I can admit and recognize that I live in the world. Rather than writing about computers or city life or vice, I can see the sky, the season, and see Kṛṣṇa there.

10:30 A.M.

Madhu lost an essay sent to us. He'll have to ask them to send another. Don't let it irritate you or spoil your writing mood.

No lights on in the temple room of the house. I read from and praised Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Closed my eyes and rattled out what I'd prepared to say. I meant it. Praising the jolly enthusiasm of his *nāma-haṭṭa* preaching evoked a question from Bhakti-rasa dāsa: "How can we have that enthusiasm for preaching?" I said that we had to be convinced of the holy name and the guru's order. Within ISKCON, we have to find some preaching arm that enthuses us. It might be growing a garden and protecting cows, or it could be preaching against Darwin. Then I thought of myself: it might be writing.

A man asked, "What about money-making?" (I had said that we don't preach just to make money.) I balanced that and said, "Money is the honey for the liberated soul."

A devotee asked, "If the times in which Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura appeared were so covered by Western influence and deviant sects, how was he able to find pure devotees?" I replied that pure devotees are always

present, but they may not be appreciated by most people. When the great *ācārya* comes, he calls for such devotees and they join him in the *sankīrtana* movement. Or, he recruits devotees from the ignorant and covered souls, as Śrīla Prabhupāda did in America.

The *mātājīs* had no questions.

Devotees asked me to bring Śrīla Prabhupāda into the room, but since it was raining, I decided not to. I thought, "He's confidential." But maybe he would have liked being with the devotees and hearing the lecture and *bhajana*. I think I will do it tomorrow.

During *ārati* to Śrīla Prabhupāda, I thought that I often do things that *seem* good—I do them to get an effect, to make a show. I pretend. Thus I pretended to think, "Śrīla Prabhupāda worship is private, so I won't bring him in here." Or the opposite, "Prabhupāda should come in here with the devotees." Either thought is pretentious. Try to find the real thing in yourself. What do you actually think? What is real for you?

11:25 A.M.

I am Prabhupāda's servant. Do I mean like Kṛṣṇa dāsa, who was Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's personal servant for many years and who has his *samādhi* tomb next to his spiritual master's? Do I mean like the personal servant of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura who also served him for many years? Do I mean like Lord Caitanya's Govinda? No, alas, I am not up to that. I failed that test. But I know it. And I know I worship the *mūrti* of my spiritual master. Even this simple service I don't do with enough devotion. Still, I do it and I like it. I like his garland and I have been with him for many



years now. I hope he will stay with me. Even if the *mūrti* leaves me by becoming broken or lost somehow, then I will take another one. That's also true of my red beads. I want to hold on to these beads unto death, but if they get lost, I will take up another set because the blessings he offers on the beads are eternal.

I am his servant. I massage him at 11 A.M. and then bathe him in warm water. I do it with assistance from others who bring the warm water and wash and iron his clothes. If I had to do these things alone, however, and cook for him, offer him the first plate, I would do it somehow or other.

I don't perform this worship as austerity, but because I want to worship him. I mean, I want the feeling that comes from it. I want to situate myself as his servant, and this is a good way. This and reading and being with his people and serving his cause. Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, chanting the mantra he gave us. I have to help others. He stressed that.

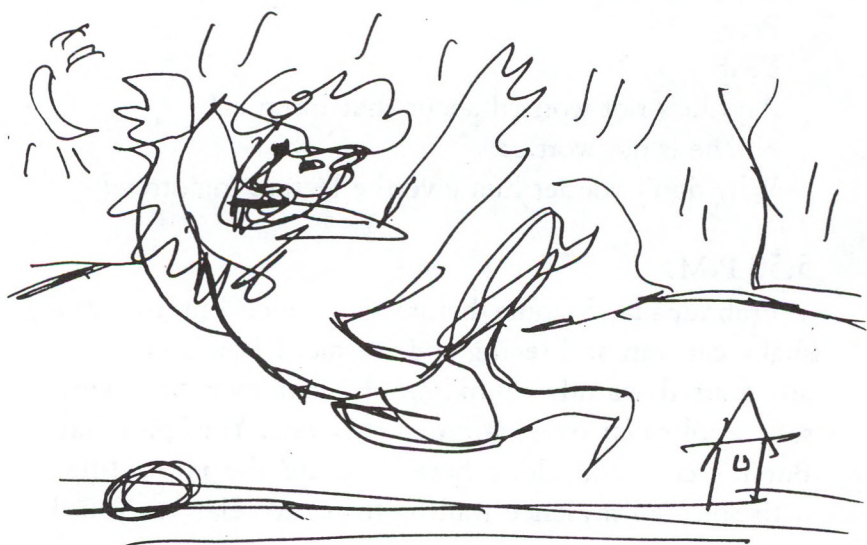




As I write this, I see a goat out the window. He's standing in the downpour. He's dumb—thinks mostly only about eating grass. Right now he's in a more “meditative” stance. Anyway, I hope they don't kill him.

4:50 P.M.

Books lined up for tomorrow's talk, including a tape excerpt of Śrīla Prabhupāda speaking to Hayagrīva in 1967 on the disappearance of Haridāsa Ṭhākura. Tomorrow is also the anniversary of the day Śrīla Prabhupāda took *sannyāsa*, so I can tell of Prabhupāda's dream in which Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī beckoned to him, “Come, take *sannyāsa*.” Now *that's* a dream to follow. But it took several dreams over many years before Prabhupāda was able to act on it. He says when Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura appeared again in a dream in 1959, he seemed to say, “Before this, the time wasn't right. But now you can do it.”



So writing self, it's not that I was in *māyā* all these hours. I rested a little, I prepared the lecture, and now here I am, looking for "September Catchall."

Rain, rain all day and now too, tinkling all over the metal roof and on the plastic skylight of the van.

Hey, was the V.S. at the lecture?

Sure, didn't you see him? And Nārada and Brahmā were there too.

Ah, you're joshin'.

No, I'm not. I forgot to tell you to look for him.

He didn't stay in the rain? Where's he staying overnight? Is that a picture of him flying over town like a witch or a spirit or ballet dancer?

Maybe. But he wears a vest sometimes. He's a *sannyāsi*, you see. So mostly he wants a dry place, just a little room with a table and a lamp so he can read a Vaiṣṇava *smṛti* and maybe write down a note and speak to any person who might come by.

Preach?

Yeah.

And he's not worried about that Internet?

No, he is not worried.

Why don't you let him give the lecture tomorrow?

5:50 P.M.

Prabhupāda, I come before you. Nice entering the shaky caravan and seeing you see me. I bow down. You are dressed warmly—pink, wool *cādar* over light gray, soft, wool *cādar* over saffron cotton one. Your pink hat. But it's cold and alone here. You are the *mūrti* filled with spiritual presence waiting for us to relate to you. I

don't understand it all in terms of whether a *mūrti* has pastimes. When devotees fully serve a *mūrti* and that deity's made comfortable, then there's more scope for reciprocation. If you leave your *mūrti* alone and don't feed him, then what can you expect? Any neglect will bring a lack of reciprocation. He doesn't have to reside in the *mūrti*, but he understands that especially in household or on-the-road worship as I do, there has to be scope for sometimes putting him to sleep (or trance) and then bringing him out again. The worship has to be convenient with your way of life. Within those bounds, you still have to do what you can to be affectionate, caring, reverential, and to work for him, think of him, and follow the main elements of the standard of worship you agreed to do.





That's all there is to it. I just came in to say hello and to warm up the room for him. I warm it more than it needs to be because after I leave, it will cool down. Bhakti-rasa will be here by 9 P.M. to spend the night with Prabhupāda. Bhakti-rasa has been out distributing books all day. He's also the temple president of the Newcastle temple, but he spends two or three days a week distributing books.

Maybe in the future I'll make some arrangement that Prabhupāda can be with me every day and I won't have to stow him away even while we travel. It won't be long before we'll be on the road for several days, driving to France. I hope I can keep up a record of things and fly into the space above and beyond the days' happenings. You can come too.

It's not so wonderful that words come together. We know Lord Kṛṣṇa allows it. He can do everything and anything because He is the supreme intelligence. The best engagement is not to go fishing for fish or words, but to render loving service at His feet. Only in that way are words any good.

Therefore, sometimes I look at those who are word craftsmen to see how they do it, but it often becomes tedious. Either I can't understand the point, or I discover their meaning and I realize that they mean nothing at all. Or they express little mundane thoughts or try to tug at the reader's feelings. Or maybe they say something that touches something unnameable and we can offer some respect to that. Unless they beam in on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, however, and home in on that



*bhakti* current, I don't want it. I have to turn away and come back here to my own attempt to combine words.

Walk in rain, the ground is muddy. The garden—some unripe apples have fallen. Tomorrow the devotees will gather in that room. Why don't they put the light on when I speak? Do they like the atmosphere of no lights?

Dear Lord, please give me encouragement to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and *gāyatrī* and to pray whatever may come from me. You may think I am not worth speaking to, but I ask You to please teach me in a way that gets through to me. I will at least speak the message tomorrow and it will be all right. I do it to serve You, and to offer service to the Vaiṣṇavas. I am not so great; I don't stir up the opposition or brave the objectors by going forward to speak Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but I talk to the devotees. That's my way. It's also why I say I can't stay away even for a few hours from this work of writing and thinking about it.



## September 8

Raining all night. You begin to wonder about the consequences, soft, wet ground. Can we drive? Floods? At the time of devastation, people see these things. The *Gītā* (Chapter 16) describes the demons. Lord Kṛṣṇa doesn't hold back or smooth it over. Although elsewhere He says, "All souls are My parts and parcels and the devotees should see everyone equally on the basis of the spirit soul," here He distinguishes and condemns the asuric mentality.

They don't know or believe in scriptures. We look within ourselves, "Am I a demon?" We don't want to be. Not mad after sense gratification and as a result, full of anxiety. Not unclean within and without. Not proud —*īśvaraḥ aham bhogī*. May I become a devotee and spread the holy name.

As the humble devotee follows the scriptures and the order of the spiritual master to preach, however, he is bound to come up against the demons and arouse their anger. He doesn't avoid that. Therefore, a war between devotees and nondevotees takes place. In this world, the *asuras* seem more powerful and in control than the devotees. The demons pay lip service to piety and

morality, but, “Money talks” among the great powers as well as among the masses. Demoniac qualities hold sway—disregard of scriptures, acting as if there’s no next life and no karmic reactions, going after sense gratification at all costs. And of course, they feel the anxiety such a life causes. Although they have laws to punish criminals, they don’t always realize that almost everyone is a criminal because they are breaking the laws of God.

The billy goat and his mate were loose last night—broke free of their ropes. Cāṇakya warns us to avoid animals with horns. Going to and fro here from van to house or to caravan, now more things to watch for—mud, puddles, goats, rain, and darkness.

Today’s schedule in Madhu’s absence: Dhanañjaya and Sarasvatī will bring my breakfast and later my lunch. They will open the side door of the van (I won’t have to open it for them, but can stay in back) and put the pots and my meal on a plate. Dhanañjaya will take Śrīla Prabhupāda’s plate into the caravan and offer it to him. Sarasvatī will knock on the back door of the van and I’ll know this means that my meal is in the front of the van. I could do it all without them seeing me, but I don’t want them to think I’m anti-social. As one person wrote me, “You are a bit of a hermit.”

I plan to sit with devotees for one and a half hours this morning, speaking the glories of Haridāsa Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s taking *sannyāsa*. I always hope to be well enough to do that.



We have been talking about going to a health clinic. If we go, Madhu wants me to take the health reform seriously; don't just use it as a writing retreat. Okay, I'll do both.





3 A.M.

Last night when I was inviting myself to drift into sleep, several songs were going through my mind. One was "September Song":

Oh, it's a long, long while  
from May to December  
but the days grow short  
when you reach September.  
When the autumn weather  
turns the leaves to flame  
one hasn't got time for the waiting game.  
Oh, the days dwindle down  
to a precious few, September, November!  
And these few precious days  
I'll spend with you.  
These precious days I'll spend with you.

And then sometimes I was recalling the opening lines of "Danny Boy" as we heard at the Ratha-yātrā skit a couple of weeks ago:

O Danny boy, the pipes  
the pipes are blowing  
from glen to glen  
and down the mountain stream . . .

"Danny Boy" in particular haunts me. At the time of death am I still going to be thinking of ridiculous songs? I hope if that happens, Kṛṣṇa will sort it out and finally deliver me with some straight Kṛṣṇa conscious thoughts. Better to remember the *bhajana* we'll be sing-

ing this morning: "He who brought the treasure of divine love and who is filled with compassion and mercy—where has such a personality as Śrīnivāsa Ācārya gone?"

## September 9

5 A.M.

Headache pain began yesterday before morning lecture and built up all day and all night sharper—penetrating into dreams. I still have it. I couldn't and cannot write here hour by hour today.

In one dream, I was stuck trying to get to my childhood home on Staten Island. As usual, I had no money and was cheated, this time by an impostor-devotee. The headache was present in the dream. It got so bad I woke up asking myself, "How much pain and suffering must I take to achieve Kṛṣṇa consciousness? Can I go through more and more? Is it good for me? Is it required? Is this my penance? It seems so."

Tired of lying down in bed, I sat up and silently "chanted" seven rounds. Please forgive me, holy names.

10:20 A.M.

When you have a headache, you get down to basic acts. And you don't do them well, such as how you chant on beads. As for writing, it becomes impossible and extraneous. If I do write, it has to be to the point; no games. It tends to be just what's happening.

The cat playing around the backyard tent, me walking in the garden fingering “terrible” *japa*. Laghu Hari comes out to hang wash on the line.

I say, “You’re optimistic that it will dry out here.”

He says, “The forecast is for showers today, but we have run out of places in the house to dry clothes. They predict it will go up to 70 or 80, but I don’t know if that’s for this part of England.”

Back to silence. What comes to mind, Bing Crosby and Bob Hope? Are they both dead? And Carmen Miranda?

I thought you said no games.

Oh well, a little cricket possibly.

You must be getting better. Headache clearing?

Or worse.

On top of the solid foundation of your life, you build to read and enter the spiritual world through *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Outlined a Sunday lecture, “The Ultimate Goal of Life.”

Yes, things are getting better.

11:20 A.M.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda *mūrti*,

I want to care for you and for you to care for me. My semi-invalid life lends to this service. You are with me in any quiet room. Sometimes I am too ill to render even the simple service I do for you. Yesterday I was showing B.R. how to do it. “After lunch,” I said, “you put on this sleeping blanket, then at 3 you switch back to the other *cādar*.” As I said it, it seemed to be mechanical and routine, switching one blanket for another. One has to do it



with feeling when taking care of you; that mental life must accompany the acts.

As we start our travels, I will have to keep you in a box. The question is whether when we arrive at the temple I can take you out. If we stay in the van, then I will have to keep you in the box. If I take a room in the temple, then I risk losing my privacy when another guest comes. I prefer to stay in the van, but that means you have to stay in the box stowed under the bunk. One does this, I've heard, by putting the *mūrti* into a "trance" with some mantra and then waking him again. I may have to do that. However, I prefer to worship you every day and I look forward to the time when I can do it again.

Even in terms of writing, when you are out and I can see you, then I can address you better, writing my prose-poems to you, a prayer, just as I would offer you a *cādar* or food. Maybe I can do it in separation.

I hope to be with you in this relationship until the end of my life. I'm not going to make a pledge or vow for that, but you know I desire never to lose that taste. It is a tangible thing. Neither do I want to do it to show off my devotion. But the fact is I am your servant. So be it. Let me massage, bathe, and dress you every day as much as possible, as I did today.

Signed,  
Satsvarūpa dāsa, Svevo,  
and the Visiting *Sannyāsi*.

3:40 P.M.

We are going into Newcastle. Canceled my participation in the street *harināma*, but I hope to be up for a

two-lecture Sunday plus a meeting with two devotees. Prabhupāda is going with us. We're leaving the van here on this peaceful farm and will return here Sunday night. Monday we pack and Tuesday off early for the south. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Little adventurer, wish thee well, you know of course ye must die sooner or later and at age 56 it's more likely to be sooner. Are your works done that you most wanted to do? If not, what can you do to finish your business?

But you see devotees more elderly than you and even those who did superexcellently, still move at an elderly pace. Or do they?

But we are talking about you—and you and you. I can say I've done what I've wanted for free literature, but I *want* to do more.

As for spiritual advancement, I'll be telling about that tomorrow night, the ultimate goal. I want to say we should to go back to Godhead, but we don't know if we'll make it. Humility and honesty forces us to say we cannot. Therefore, we pray, "Next life, dear Lord, please let me have the association of Your pure devotees. I'd rather be with one of them even if he's a petty living being in this world compared to a Lord Brahmā who is not a devotee. Bless me with love (in service) for the unlimited Lord Kṛṣṇa, association with His devotees, and compassion for all living entities."

That's a nice prayer: *tādera caraṇa-sebi-bhakta-sana bās, janame janame hoy ei abhilāṣ*.

I'm a servant of Prabhupāda and  
the Six Gosvāmīs.

To serve their lotus feet  
and keep association of devotees  
is my only business  
birth after birth.

## September 10

12:12 A.M.

A basic faith in the Supreme Person is rare and yet also common. It's at least a natural trait, but it gets destroyed by atheistic association. We should cultivate our basic theism without whimsy. For example, those who follow "natural theology" believe in God without reference to scripture. Or there is religious belief such as we might have had before contacting Kṛṣṇa consciousness. These are allies with us in theism, but for our own spiritual life, it is best to be nourished by attraction to Kṛṣṇa and the logic and argument in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books—worship of the *puruṣottama* by the little *puruṣa*.

Here we are in Newcastle. Noise from the street. I had a dream in which I won the right to chant my *japa* without interference from a sports contest.

Devotees have come here from the south of England to be with me. Hope I don't get a headache. Don't risk it. Rest when you can. Also, don't play up to your being admired and treated as guru. It's easy to play that role, so you should deliberately avoid it—avoid pretending to



be serious and God realized. You don't have to deny, however, that you are after Kṛṣṇa. You *do* want to be Kṛṣṇa conscious. I will convey that to them.



I am Svevo and Sats and narrator and our pet dog, our aging man and Madhu and Narahari and my aunts and ex-wife . . . Hey, wait a minute, who are all these people? One devotee advocates that all these people should bathe in Rādhā-kunḍa. He said that Raghu-nātha dāsa Goswami built ramps so that even cows and buffaloes could bathe in the *kunḍa*. A mass movement, but whoa, wait, I mean in terms of me and my story, who is going to be here through September?

I am renewed by death, thought of my death,  
The dry scent of a dying garden in September,  
The wind fanning the ash of low fire.  
What I love is near at hand,  
Always, in earth and air.

—Theodore Roethke, *The Far Field*

9:40 A.M.

V.S. is holed up in an attic cubby hole. Narahari is photocopying. My *kūrta* is soaked in sweat generated by lecturing that *God is a person*. Don't look at me cross-eyed. I'm sorry I don't write all perfect. This here is all I got in a spare moment. But at least I'm here.

Prabhupāda collage in this room, 6' x 4' with dozens of blown up photos of His Divine Grace. I like it—my sight wanders around. Yes, you should not see a *sādhū* but hear him. However, it's good to see and touch too.

O spiritual master, I did repeat  
your words.

We have to believe in feelings and be convinced in intellect that God is a person. We think with our hearts—it's the heart philosophy, that God is the supreme, eternal, blissful one and we are all His servants.

Happy to repeat those words. Yes, I know it's not from my heart utterly. I am sorry I don't have more heart and soul and mind all for Him. Please give me more. *Yasya deve parā bhaktir*.

This building is packed with devotees—a beehive—today, I hear their feet above, their voices next door, a few loose exchanges between men and women, probably because of the crowded conditions. I told M. I overheard a woman call out, "Hey, Bhakti-rasa Prabhu!"

M. said, "That's formal! At least you heard a Prabhu and a Bhakti-rasa. Sometimes it's 'Hey, Bhakti!'"

Hey!

September sunlight, no hats today; the last days of warm weather before the Cool. And the winter, even.



In car back to Newcastle farm

We should be serious and not practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness only for a few hours on Sunday. Sometimes Prabhupāda said it was easy to go back to Godhead in this lifetime and sometimes he said the required *laulyam* was extremely rare. Whichever way you take it, you have to strive: "Easygoing life and Kṛṣṇa conscious-



ness do not go well together.” Be hopeful; work hard toward the goal.

The *brāhmaṇa* and the cobbler both asked, “Nārada, when you see Lord Nārāyaṇa, please ask Him how much longer before I get my liberation.” I don’t ask. I do follow the policy of my lecture: to pray as Mahārāja Parīkṣit did—if I have to be reborn, let it be with complete devotion to the unlimited Lord Kṛṣṇa, in the association of devotees and with compassion to all living beings. O Lord, please grant me attraction for Your holy names. “Before the next death, we must become *fully* Kṛṣṇa conscious.”



Saw an old woman asleep in the back of the room while I spoke. A veteran congregation member, Greg, listened keenly. A girl asked, “I heard if we come back in



the human form of life, we take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness with greater determination. How is that?"

I made a fist and as I did so, a camera flash bulb lit up. Sats in a determined mood. I said, "Mahārāja Bharata grew more determined not to make the same mistakes. Determination becomes part of our pious karma."

Mahānta dāsī asked, "Can we get *laulyam* from someone who has it?"

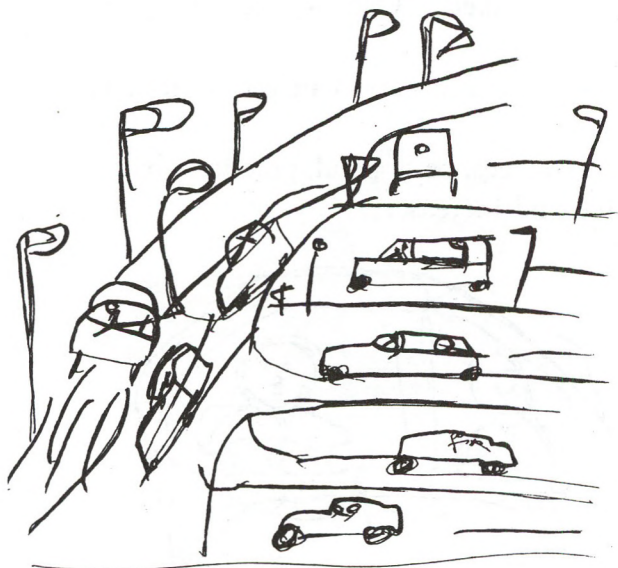
"Yes, it is contagious." You can get it from Prabhu-pāda.

So friends, devotees, be hopeful, practice whatever you can, but strive and increase.



Back to  
Newcastle farm  
tight cave home of  
van one more day  
please write a poem

and think how you will live  
without daily Prabhupāda *pūjā*  
when you travel.  
I'll have to do the *pūjā*  
in my mind.



## September 11

Of Autumn months, September is the prime,

Now day and night are equal in each Clime.

—Ann Bradstreet, “The Four Seasons of the Year”

Woke cold to alarm clock at twelve but didn't get up for thirty minutes. Re-entered a dream where a man had a sword and was killing people up on the train. Could they stop him? Was this me? Am I the killer or the victim? Crowds on the train, as in India, arrested the sword killer. Instead of fleeing the dream, I entered it again and questioned it in a meditative state, “What do you mean? Who is the killer?” But I couldn't find a resolution. I'm willing to do that, however—treat the dream as real, question it, not flee it. Don't be afraid of the dark side.

Hare Kṛṣṇa—come out of the dark, the *Vedas* say. Go to the light: *tamasi mā jyotir gama*. Turn on the desk light and read *Bhagavad-gītā*. The end of the sixteenth chapter discusses the psychology of demons. Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna to rise above this and take to devotional service or all his efforts in the human form will be spoiled.

I'm aware that travel will pose a strain on my 8-12 rest time and my midnight rising because we won't be sleeping in such quiet, safe places. Still, I try to accept each place we stop at as Kṛṣṇa's shelter. Writing toward that end, and toward depending on His mercy. Turn the mind to Lord Kṛṣṇa and to the spiritual world. *Śāstra* can do this for you if you develop the habit of turning to it.

At least our schedule is now fixed. We will do a seven-day *japa-vrata* of sixty-four rounds a day during the last week of September. That may mean *September Catchall* dwindles down. During last year's *vrata* I wrote a report on my daily chanting, but it seemed I couldn't capture the essence of it; chanting was chanting and writing was something else done before or after the chanting. I am looking at that journal now (M. wants to see it too) to warm up for the *japa-yajña*.

Last day here on this peaceful farm and it's raining again. Two families live here. One of them is planning to move to Bhaktivedanta Manor and that jeopardizes the farm. "It's a changing ISKCON world," a devotee commented yesterday.

I thought yesterday to try lecturing without so much preparation. I did prepare for yesterday's lecture, but I would like to try to enter the mood of fullest expression only while giving the class. However, one devotee who listens attentively wrote me appreciating that the lectures are well planned on specific themes. Maybe I shouldn't give that up after all. The alternative is to



use reading time for my “unmotivated” study and then improvise on the *Bhāgavatam* purport.

New Māyāpur temple is next, with French translation and the beauty of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda-Mādhava, Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, and Gaura-Nitāi.

Next hymn, September, marched eke on foot;  
Yet was he heavy laden with the spoil  
Of harvest's riches, which he made his boot,  
And him enriched with bounty of the soil;

In his one hand, as fit for harvest's toil,  
He held a knife hook; and in the other hand  
A pair of weights, with which he did assoil  
Both more and less, where it in doubt did stand,  
End equal gave to each as just as duly scanned.

—Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queen*

10:27 A.M.

All morning I've been doing an inventory of my belongings in the rear of the van, rearranging and occasionally jettisoning something. Things are neater now, better packed for travel. I also have a fresh recollection of where everything is and how I plan to use it. A computer would do better than my brain in this. Drawing equipment in orange bag, kept on the floor and ready for use. Plenty of pens and paper and tissues, etc. Not low on anything we need.

Now the van itself is now in question. The speedometer cable is broken. The main problem, aside from that, is that it cannot accelerate worth a damn. Once it gets rolling, it hits a good speed, but on a hill or when

asked to make a quick move in passing traffic, it works up M.'s nerves by its inability to pull. We are at full weight for this van, some 3.2 tons. M. is studying various brochures and dreaming of a new one.

Last day here and rainy. My own head is spaced. After-breakfast nap produced a rapid series of dreams, all riddles. On waking and returning to my inventory assignments, I sense unreality—half in dreams, half in inventory of pen refills, Post-its, legal pads, bin spaces. Find a space and shove it in. Make it neat. It's supposed to give me a sense of order and smooth operation, but it leaves me dizzy and unsure and not deep. I've been aware that I could have been writing during the morning, but I did this other external stuff.

When I do free-write, I don't want to leave a silly record—3,100 Loony Tunes technicolor cartoons for posterity. I'm supposed to be on the path for the ultimate goal, *kṛṣṇa-prema*. It's serious. What kind of a record am I actually leaving? It is what it is by now. Some credit and some discredit too. Should I have spent my days laboring in temple management and more with my Godbrothers? No, I say, this is all right and I cannot do more. The inventory tires my headache-prone-behind-the-eye part of the head and I need to rest. Sure, you would like to do something tremendous and terrific at every moment, every day, adding to a masterpiece of literature, confession, spiritual book, but you can't. As you cannot bear temple management, you also have your limits in writing. We all do. All you can do is to keep doing whatever you can.

The book is called *I am Prabhupāda's servant*, but now for about ten days my Prabhupāda mūrti will stay in the sleeping state in the box. I will serve him nonetheless in all I do—travel, lecture, writing, offering *prasāda*, hearing his lectures, reading his books, and everything else. When you meet a bona fide spiritual master and serve him, your salvation is guaranteed. I heard him say that this morning from a '66 lecture. We believed it then and we believe it now.

11:25 A.M.

Prabhupāda, we saw you do  
what no one else could do.

On walk I daydreamed that *Radio Shows* became a runaway ISKCON best-seller and I was widely praised. As a result? I revised that daydream and withdrew it. It's not a prayer; I'm not asking for it. I don't want fame. Rather, if I want to write better and better, with actual excellence in the direction of *Radio Shows*, then better I be allowed to work in obscurity.

The real thing is to please the spiritual master. Kṛṣṇa knows the good (and the falling short we do). We don't have to sell it to Him or bring it to His attention. Write and help people in their struggle to maintain Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "Yes," I thought, "better to go deep. That means staying alone and digging and receiving and praying for and practicing Kṛṣṇa conscious writing.

Now I've massaged Prabhupāda and bathed and dressed him a last time. He was cold from being alone in the cold caravan (the electricity went out, so we couldn't



run the heater). After lunch I'll put him to rest for the ten-day period. I hope I can do it with a proper consciousness and ask him to enter the *samādhi* that *mūrtis* enter when their worshippers are not able to maintain *pūjā*. They must have had to do something like that when the Deities were rushed out of Vṛndāvana and put into hiding before the Muslim invaders could attack Them. In my case, I have to travel. In the future, we'll equip our van so the *pūjā* can go on at all times. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Five minutes to 6 P.M.

*Oh, it's a long, long while  
from May to December,  
but the days grow short  
when you reach September.*

I just got a book on Salinger. He made a statement that novels written about World War II were too strong, mature, and well-crafted, as if to please the critics. He said he wanted to see a book written with glorious imperfections: "The men who have been in this war deserve some sort of trembling melody rendered without embarrassment or regret."

I'm not living through World War II. We are traveling in our van. My challenge is that there is always something worth writing about, even when we are not on a gun patrol in enemy territory—this night, with an airplane cutting through the sky over the peaceful Newcastle farm where it's been raining all day.

I need to tell truth, cut through. Don't pose. So often one is posing—I'm a writer interested in Salinger, I'm



an honest fellow, sincere devotee, servant of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I don't want to go crazy analyzing this as if I were Jean Paul Sartre talking about himself. I do catch myself at it, however—at pretending even when I think I'm being honest.

Simple folks don't bother about this.

Okay, thieves, Jeeves,  
and M., you better get your side  
of the van ship-shape by 8 P.M.,  
'cause I don't wanna hear  
any noise when I go to sleep.  
I want to drift off to  
unconscious dreaming and even  
not dreaming then wake up refreshed  
and ready to go at midnight—  
read what Śrī Kṛṣṇa has to  
say in last verse of  
sixteenth chapter.

Then last preps, tighten your seat belt,  
and go by 5, south  
to Manchester, south to  
the very tip of South Britain  
by night time.

Yeah, sir, Jack Benny  
and Rochester. I do declare I want to be  
alone and walk with a *japa* round  
on spongy wet,  
seacats here, last time,  
I may not come back  
but you'll have to be born  
unless you are perfect—

then pray for best next life—  
with devotees you love,  
with uh, love for Kṛṣṇa  
and compassion  
and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* you can read—is it  
too much to ask to become  
his intimate *śiṣya* again if  
I have to come back?

It will then be many years since he appeared.  
Prabhupāda, why not take  
me to wherever you  
are? I'm your eternal  
son, you even said it.  
Take me back,  
give me service with your  
men. I'll become a  
newcomer again  
and fresh  
and swallow my pride.

## September 12

Ten to 2 A.M.

Overslept almost an hour and forty-five minutes. I rationalized that I needed it. My body needs the rest for the long haul today. Dreamt Bhūrijana Prabhu was at the Strand movie theater and wanted to talk to me while a movie was playing. I told him no, his voice would be heard by the others in the theater.

What does it mean? I don't have time to inquire now. Rushed along. No time for early *Gītā* reading. No time even for usual *japa* quota, which I'll be filling out all day as we travel. But I have not forgotten my essential purpose—to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness and to attain that state of always chanting and hearing Kṛṣṇa's name and fame and using life for that.

Life is for serving Kṛṣṇa.

5:20 A.M.

Stop for diesel. I've been sitting here several minutes looking into the Fina Shop of the petrol station. The walls of the shop are lined with signs, "Chilled Drinks," "Ice Cream," "Fresh Sandwiches," "Motoring Needs," etc. A lone guy is tending the store as well as over-

seeing the self-service pumps and collecting the money. He keeps looking out his store cubbyhole at Madhu, who is serving us diesel at the pump. This petrol station in early morning where everything is in the right place, gives the impression of a neat, functional world, but it's all *māyā*. Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us how to flick one switch to make the world Kṛṣṇa conscious.

I read Hṛṣīkeśānanda Prabhu's memoir of his life in Vṛndāvana. I'll tell you about it later and how it affects me. We live in the West, but we transform it.

8:20 A.M.

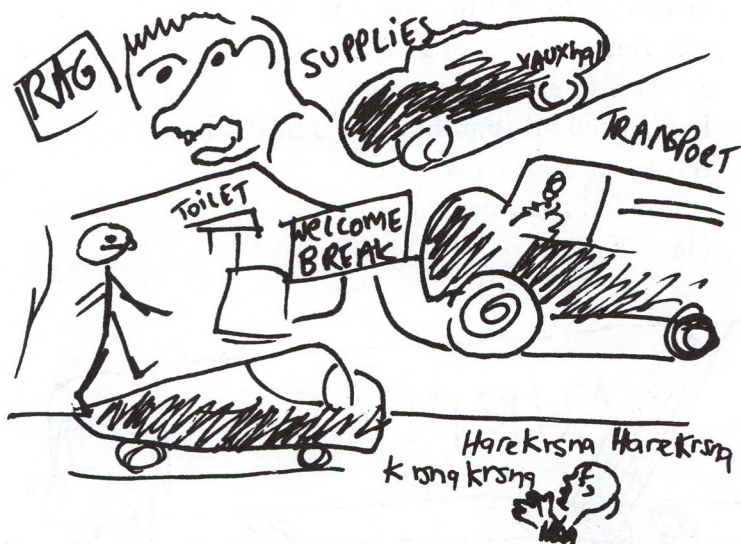
We stopped for breakfast—luxurious fresh cut fruit and apple turnovers with whipped cream. I didn't have sufficient time or presence of mind to get together my picture of Prabhupāda for a thoughtful offering of the breakfast. Try to do better. I have a photo of the Prabhupāda *mūrti*, the one from the cover of *The Worshipable Deity*. This is supposed to help my awareness of the *mūrti*, who can't be worshipped for now.

Bully Englishmen. What else? A billboard: "Gray and reliable, what you expect of a German." What else? I think I'd better go home. I think I ought to rest now; that's what this time is slated for before we travel on. But I already rested peacefully for almost an hour while we traveled.

Deeper issues and poems lie waiting. More Kṛṣṇa consciousness awaits me if I enter the *sāstric* realm in innocence and submission, and if not innocent, then chastened, prayerful.



Odd time in parking lot of typical British “welcome break” place, the shop, many cars parked, people walking back and forth to the toilet and to the shop, the nearby drone of traffic. I know I can’t stay long in a place like this. Hare Kṛṣṇa. *Can’t stay long* is the whole theme of material life, but we miss that point and try to improve the stay as if it’s all we will ever know. We work hard to remove anxieties as far as possible so we can enjoy material life.



Dream: trying to find the numbered classroom for my next class at the college. Is it 302? I walked one way down the hall where the numbers over the doors approached 292, 298 . . . 300 . . . but then no 302. How could I pass the course if I didn’t attend? Oh well, I could miss one class. I sat down in the college hallway and started to read a large newspaper. Then I displayed some Kṛṣṇa conscious literature. An official asked me to stop. It was difficult to get people to stop and buy

literature, but as I sat there, they would come and inquire. Then in the dream, I recalled and asserted *I am through with college, don't you remember? You don't have to attend college classes anymore.*

Oh yes, my life has gone  
beyond that point  
of required college attendance  
or military induction  
or just joining the institution  
of ISKCON and finding a guru.  
Obeying the laws or else.  
A place to stay dependent.  
I've passed all that and now I'm stuck  
trying to attain taste in  
young-old age freedom.  
Hare Kṛṣṇa.



2:30 P.M.

We are going to push on all the way to Portsmouth and try to find a place there to stay overnight. It's raining now and we are parked I don't know where. No electric hook-up, so it's dark back here. I don't feel transcendental—not able to read with great desire or to chant. It's my predicament. Neither do I want to amuse

myself with something not Kṛṣṇa conscious. That would be a distraction. I've slept enough. Can't seem to do anything with taste. (Lunch was cheesy pizza and I couldn't eat much of that, but I managed to drink soup and biscuits, so I've got post-lunch heaviness.)

Rain, rain, speak to me.

Little Johnny wants to play

but can't taste Kṛṣṇa consciousness as he  
imagines he'd like to.

Maybe I can try again. I can try, but I can also continue to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness even if I don't experience taste. I read the opening verses of *Bhagavad-gītā*, Chapter 17. This Saturday is the anniversary (30th) of the day when Prabhupāda arrived in America. I spoke in August about the poem he wrote that day. Not so inclined right now to analyze that poem again, although I know they'll ask me to speak about the occasion.

We visited the pier with Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1968 and Pradyumna asked him, "What if the people don't want to hear our message?" Prabhupāda said we speak to please Kṛṣṇa, and He will arrange for our success. Don't be after pleasing the people.

This remark can be applied to Prabhupāda's own case on arriving in the U.S.A.. In 1968, Prabhupāda mentioned Jesus and Prahlāda who met with opposition but who triumphed, despite appearances. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has also triumphed and taken root and is growing in Western countries. It is bound to succeed even though we meet so many problems. Bound to succeed. Take courage. Our attempts are small com-



pared to Prabhupāda's. He was alone. We have more association.

Rain, see the trucks, Jolly?  
Yes, I see—cloud laden  
with dark *śyāma* water.  
Thunder rumbles, trucks parked in rows, wet  
tarmac shines  
and from our van streaks  
a rainbow from leaky  
engine. M. points it out:  
another reason why  
we need a new one.

Sluggish. Out here driving;  
only a tin strip to keep us  
dry. We chant and  
the thunder bowls  
down the bowling pins;  
puddles tinkle,  
space-out; afternoon  
lengthens quickly. Better  
move on.

5:50 P.M.

Finally stopped for the night. Portsmouth was unfriendly for ferry travelers—no place to park overnight. We had to drive back a half hour on the motorway until we found this Welcome Break. Stop and unwind. M. recommends chamomile tea before taking rest.

I found a nice September song in Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Light of the Bhāgavata*:



The autumn began, and there were no more clouds in the sky. All the reservoirs of water became crystal clear, and the wind was no longer forceful. Lord Kṛṣṇa, along with His elder brother Lord Baladeva, lived at Vṛndāvana in this auspicious season.

The sky, the sky grows clear  
this time of year and  
Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma appear  
to save conditioned souls.  
It's either go back to Godhead or  
rot in material birth and death.

Young guys in Portsmouth outdoor  
cafe smiling, and the old  
black submarines decaying  
it's the birthplace of Charles Dickens,  
doncha know you got  
to suffer here?  
Come on, pay attention  
to the mercy of *bhāgavata*  
in the autumn season  
before it's too late.

## September 13

1:45 A.M.

I couldn't get up earlier, had pain behind left eye, still do, but had to get up. It's cold in the van and I am not sure how to operate the heat. M. is resting. Here is a verse from *The Light of the Bhāgavata*:

In autumn all the reservoirs of water become enriched with growing lotuses. The muddy water again becomes normally clear and decorated, just as fallen, conditioned souls once more become spiritually enriched in devotional service.

These are descriptions of seasons in India and don't exactly correspond to the West. We don't have a rainy season followed by autumn, so our September is not quite the same. Still, autumn in India does come after the heat of summer and it moves toward the cold season. Cāturmāsya's last month is coming up soon whether we are in the East or the West. Besides, the spiritual instructions derived from the seasonal changes are the main point.

Prabhupāda writes, “We should not be disappointed in our muddy life of material existence, for as soon as we voluntarily take to the devotional service of the Lord, our whole life becomes clear, like water in autumn.” The lotus of knowledge gradually grows and blossoms, ushering in transcendental bliss.

Prabhupāda describes various kinds of yoga as steps on a staircase. The top rung is pure *bhakti*. “Such unalloyed devotional service in favor of the Supreme Lord was displayed at Vṛndāvana when the Lord descended there, and thus the yoga exhibited by the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana is the highest unalloyed love of Godhead, the perfection of *bhakti-yoga*. To rise to this stage of love shown by the *gopīs* is very difficult, but this stage is attainable for serious conditioned souls.” Śrīla Prabhupāda goes on to say the cheap neophytes imitate a show of the transcendental ecstasies of the *gopīs*, “thus clearing the way to hell by such unwanted caricatures. Serious students of yoga, however, practice it seriously, and thus attain the highest perfection of *bhakti-yoga*, as stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *yoginām api sarveṣāṃ . . .* (6.47)”

It is enlightening that Śrīla Prabhupāda should write to us in this way. I take it he means that service to the spiritual master on the basis of *vaidhi-bhakti* will lead us to the stage of unalloyed love of God and will qualify us to become actual followers of the example of the *gopīs*. Not that we imitate *gopī-mañjarī-bhāva* and try to think as women do or indulge in one-sided efforts to serve *only* Rādhā and not Kṛṣṇa, etc. Or we disdain preliminary works like *Bhagavad-gītā* and disdain even *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* cantos 1–9 or don’t even want to hear about Lord Kṛṣṇa’s childhood pastimes, or that we



don't preach to common people, and so on. However, neither do we maintain a phobia against *gopī-bhāva*. "We have not taken a vow to boycott the *gopīs*." They are our worshipable deities. It is their pure example at this stage of my life that should be a guide, rather than their intimate dealings in the *kuñjas* with Lord Hari. They gave everything to please Him. They didn't care for the heat or cold or for any sense gratification; they claimed no security and no privilege in return for their services. They just loved Kṛṣṇa because they were attracted by Him completely to the point of super-*samādhī*. They couldn't think of anything else but Him, couldn't do anything other than think and talk of Him.

It's cold in this tin box. I hear M. coughing, so he's up. Maybe we can have a little heat in here at some point if the gas heater works.

I don't feel that I'm in England. England is only one level of reality—Portsmouth, the parking lot, the laws of the land, realities of money, ferry ticket, operations. I feel like I am turning to Kṛṣṇa. Of course, the easiest way to attain that feeling of being close to Kṛṣṇa is to chant. I'll be doing that soon. While I light the candles, I also want to heat the inner fire and pray to increase the flame of love. At least keep the flame steady while I utter the holy names and hear Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

" . . . unless the *sannyāsī* is freed from all cares and anxieties, like a white cloud, it is difficult for him to do



anything good for society.” (*The Light of the Bhāgavata*, #30, purport)

Ah yes, that one. Don’t worry about money or the GBC or the customs and immigration in France or even nuclear war threat or crime or pimples or laceration—any hell in dreams or awake. Have a cool brain by practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness and help people engage in spiritual life. Don’t become embroiled in politics, even within the religious movement. Be absorbed in Vedic studies and enter the essence of *bhakti-yoga*. Be free of cares, and read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

The *ācārya* knows the scriptures well and teaches them according to his disciples’ capacity. “Therefore he sometimes speaks and sometimes does not speak.” Śrīla Prabhupāda compares him to the “professional preacher” who indulges in speaking *rāsa-līlā* to please the audience. “Thus the professional reciters earn money from their so-called admirers.” The *ācārya* doesn’t pander to the public like that. He trains them step by step up to the Tenth Canto. This is why he sometimes speaks and sometimes is silent. He can restrain himself because he’s not a hired swami who has to speak what his clients want to hear.

I pray to pray. It would be nice. I could ask the holy name to appear and beg for the nectar of the service mood. May I understand that Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Person, is pleased as I chant. I seek His protection in this dangerous world. Thank You, Lord, for being with us all in Your holy names. “We must always merge in

the transcendental mellow of *kīrtana-rasa*, for *kīrtana-rasa* is the safest situation within this material world.”

5 A.M.

At the petrol station again, M. filling the van with diesel. This time it's an Esso shop. Again, one guy with shirt and tie taking care of the whole place. Sign on the pump: “Petroleum spirit highly flammable. No smoking.” Glad I discovered *Light of the Bhāgavata*. I sang *Guruvāṣṭakam* prayers before the photo of my *mūrti* and the back cover photo of Rādhā-kuṇḍa from *The Nectar of Instruction*. I do it every morning because I aspire to serve him *in essence*. I hear from him, serve him by repeating his talks, and take his mercy in my own words and extend it to others.

Line up at ferry to Le Havre. Motorcyclist standing and sorting out his belongings. A kid about four or five years old is dancing and living in a world of his own in the parking lot while his staid parents stand to one side. It's pre-dawn, but plenty of electric lights, white, red, sign board announcements in colored lights . . . chanted my twelfth round.

Thought of Vṛndāvana. Two books published recently by my Godbrothers about Vṛndāvana, and I have also been reading *The Light of the Bhāgavata*. Goloka manifests in Gokula, Vṛndāvana in India. While here in Europe, therefore, I can fix my mind on Kṛṣṇa's names and it can be as good as Vṛndāvana—if I'm a pure devotee. “But your mind is in America.”

Cold fruits and yogurt.

Moving lights form letters: "Please visit our travel center . . . shopping . . . ticket office is open for all departures . . ." The same machine could be giving out a message from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Onboard "Portsmouth" to Le Havre. There was a *Daily Telegraph* newspaper in the cabin. The headline read, "Patients to be Given Pigs' Hearts." The front page also directed us to page 14 for a discussion on "Science Versus the Bible." On page 14, this headline: "Why a Big Bang is Evidence of an Open Mind." No pro-God headline. Another article had this blurb: "The triumph of the 20th century is to have learnt that we and the Earth come from stardust." It's frightening to consider. It's lucky we have Sadāpūta Prabhu and others to strike back at their foolishness and that Śrīla Prabhupāda led the way.

Small pools of water accumulate during the rainy season, and in the autumn they gradually dry up. The little creatures playing in those small pools do not understand that their days are now numbered and will end very soon. Thus they are like foolish men, who not caring for the nearing day of their death, become absorbed in the so-called enjoyment of family life.

—*The Light of the Bhāgavata*, #34

The family men—whether heads of a small family or a nation—don't see that time is running out, their little pool is drying up. They are so foolish that they think their attachment to their family might save them at the time of death. Śrīla Prabhupāda: "One must retire



from all sorts of family life, big or small, at the age of fifty, and thus prepare for the next life." We see from the *Daily Telegraph* that humans prefer to think there is only one life.

Stealth bombers hit Bosnian Serbs; the Princess of Wales arm in arm with Italian tenor in a concert in Italy, pigs' hearts are saving thousands of patients awaiting heart transplants. Photo of the man who "created" the genetically altered pig, and photo of the pigs.

Sunlight across the page, the sea calm. We spoke with an aging British biker who recognized us as Hare Kṛṣṇas. "How are you guys?" He thinks out loud, nervously, making jokes at everyone's expense including his own: "I must be mental at my age" (to be driving a motorcycle to South France). "Cheerio."

Ship trembling. The world is with us and we are part of it as we travel peacefully on the roads, use the diesel fuel, and are able to park overnight because the Western nations maintain their stability at others' expense. Therefore, we have to purify ourselves of those things that implicate us by serving Kṛṣṇa. Our movement in France is tiny and without influence, but we still have the pure teachings. I don't know what to say except that we should keep hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda said that if a pack of asses applaud, what is the value? We want our certificate from Kṛṣṇa that "this person has served Me." Preach to the ten directions, whether they hear you or not.



When the small pools of water become too hot because of the scorching heat of the autumn sun, the poor small creatures, with their many family members, suffer terribly, as poor householders with too many family members suffer economical strains and yet go on begetting children because of uncontrolled senses.

—*The Light of the Bhāgavata*, #35

Uncontrolled senses bring misery. You enjoy a little now, but you get a reaction later. Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Spiritual culture means pursuing a better engagement in life. When a man engages in such cultural life, the desire for mating automatically abates, and the sufferings of uncontrolled family life are mitigated without artificial means.” We believe what Śrīla Prabhupāda said because of his authority. He convinced us not to accept the atheistic or agnostic version although we don’t get actual proof until we are fully self-realized. We get initial evidence, and with it, the ability to restrain from sin, attachment to chanting on the guru’s order, and aspiration to be elevated “to a higher status of life for real and eternal enjoyment in personal contact with the Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

With the progress of the autumn season the moist earth and muddy places begin to dry up, and the green vegetation begins to fade. This drying up and fading resembles the gradual disappearance of the false sense of affinity and ego.

—*The Light of the Bhāgavata*, #36

These are great promises. We may hear them as high sounding words that we don’t wish to rebut, but do they create a tangible hope in us? If they are not true, then

they are empty rhetoric. Without faith, we keep our false ego strong to cope with material life as the all in all.

Dear Lord, I pray. I *have* lost some of my false ego. I would like to do the much more I have to do, by Your grace, to achieve surrender unto Your lotus feet. At that time I could rise above the waves of the material ocean, just as our ferry boat plies smoothly over the water. I believe it. I wish to read with attention and taste, statements such as this one: "Human life . . . is the process for preparing oneself to be promoted to the spiritual kingdom. No one can adjust the sufferings of material existence, but by spiritual culture one can elevate himself from the effects of such miserable life." Śrīla Prabhupāda compares the liberated soul to a dry coconut in which the outer skin and inner pulp have become separate. The spirit soul can feel himself existing in spiritual life, "even though apparently within the dry skin."

With the inauguration of the autumn season the rough sea becomes calm and quiet, just like a philosopher after self-realization, who is no longer troubled by the modes of nature.

—*The Light of the Bhāgavata*, #37

Yes, I want a smooth sea. Sometimes I think I want it too much, as if it is my main desire, and Kṛṣṇa is fulfilling it. "As they approach Me, I reciprocate," He says. I am begging for that really in heart—to be left alone, at peace, to read and write in a backyard shack or

here on a ferry out of reach. The Lord knows my heart and what is best for me.

Certainly too much external work for sense gratification is condemned. *Asuras* never stop their difficult industrial enterprises, “but men in the mode of goodness have an introspective mind and after a regulative struggle for existence they retire at a ripe old age, and engage their time in cultivating the human spirit.”



Time I am, says Kṛṣṇa.

It's 12:30 and we will eat again, not like austere *brahmacāris* in a poor Indian *āśrama* who don't eat until 2 P.M. and then eat rubbery *capātis* and a *dāl* with no veg other than a single rotten one they begged from the

market. Pebbles in the *dāl* too, and plenty of chilies. No, we will have fresh fruits and biscuits and tea. Not bad for a ferry crossing.

Smooth weather.

Time I am, He said,  
and I destroy all.  
Don't fret because the misery  
will be over soon.  
Don't exult because the joy  
of this life-body will  
also fade away.  
Turn instead to that which  
is enduring. And kill  
whomever would kill your  
spirit. (I don't mean "kill."  
I mean, don't  
let them stop you.)

After the rainy season, the farmers begin to rebuild the partitioning walls of the paddy fields so that the water will be conserved, just as *yogis* try to use their conserved energy for self-realization.

—*The Light of the Bhāgavata*, #38

That dratted newspaper article, "Big Bang is Evidence of an Open Mind." I didn't read it or the one that discussed how we all came from stardust, but I know they laugh at the mention of the Lord and His energies. I simply have to part from those atheists and not be influenced or affected by them. I can try to fight back, but finally, I just have to forget them and hear Vedic evidence with submission and intelligence.



Our conserved energy should be used in the internal energy. This reminds me of retention of semen. Yogis raise it to the brain, *urdhva-reta*. Don't release it externally. In other ways too, sense energy or mental power should be dovetailed in the internal way of devotional service. The result? "After attaining Me, the great souls, who are yogis in devotion, never return to this temporary world, which is fully of miseries, because they have attained the highest perfection." (Bg. 8.15)

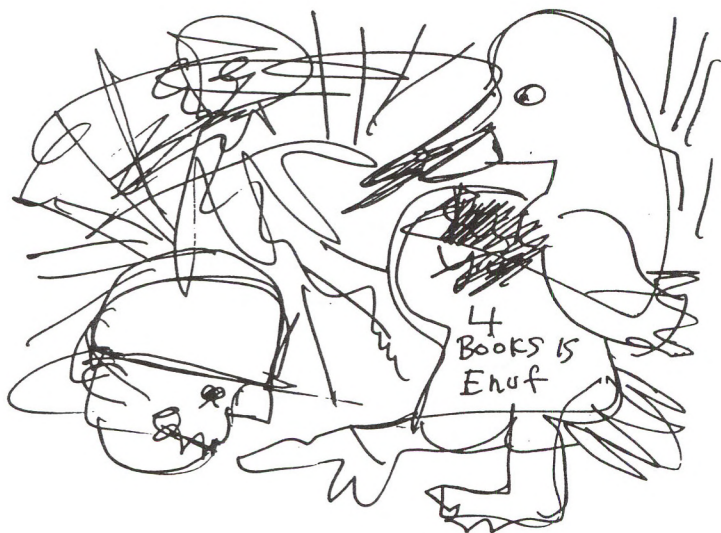
The conclusion is that the regular practice of *bhakti-yoga* will lead the devotee to the plane of intense love for the Lord, and that is the single qualification by which the conditioned soul is allowed to reenter the eternal life of bliss in the kingdom of God.

—*The Light of the Bhāgavata*, #39, purport

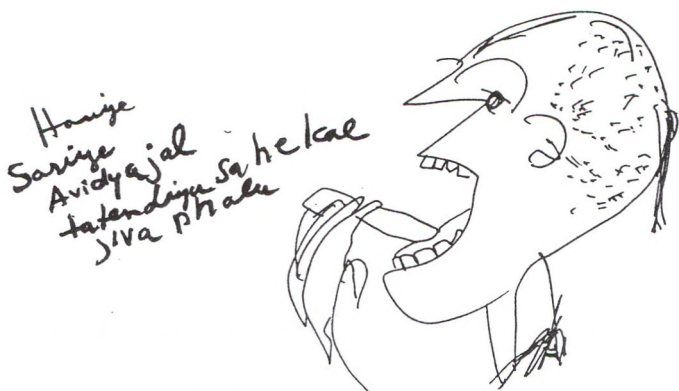
Twenty to 5 P.M.

Nantes, France (west of Paris). We've stopped here for the night, P-stop near trucks, restaurant, etc. The "surf" sound of traffic on the *bonne route*, punctuated by occasional motorcycle whine. While riding in France, I listened on earphones to Ātmā-tattva Prabhu lecturing on "Four Books are Enough." It made me want to go on studying Śrīla Prabhupāda's books with a fresh eye and never say I'm finished. He said, "Have you read *Easy Journey to Other Planets*? Do you know how much information is in there?" I need to read to overcome the tedium that comes at first. I'm too familiar with it and I sometimes hanker for something else. When I read

with a more positive attitude, however, I go directly to what he is saying—how he cuts through material nature and gives us spiritual reality. I am not always up to it.



What about my books written in an imperfect, “mad” state? How would they be categorized? I call them footnotes or expansions on what Prabhupāda wrote. Maybe they’re not part of the Vedic canon, not *smṛti* or *Purāṇas*, but they are Western literature describing how the first generation of *mlecchas* took to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and how they expressed themselves in poems, confessions, and writing sessions in their own language. They have their precedent in Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura’s simple songs written in Bengali or the broken language of another, but they are all true to the spiritual master.



This is the September I went to Europe successfully and we lived on tea and biscuits during a crossing to France and then headed south. We stopped for the night before Paris en route to New Māyāpur. This is the time of year that is neither too cold nor hot, when I hear cars and chant Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa. I want to chant some day in the best consciousness and go back to Godhead as our profound Swamiji ordered. Yes, I was close to him sometimes and he said special things, but mostly he was frank and simple and down-to-earth (as Ātmā-tattva asserts), and he said, "Chant sixteen rounds of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, read *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, take *prasādam*, distribute my books, live in the temple and render service, follow the four rules and other rules, and you'll go back to Godhead."



## September 14

1:24 A.M.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that intense love of God is the only qualification by which we are allowed to re-enter the spiritual world. Of course, that intense love comes from Kṛṣṇa Himself, His *hlādinī-śakti*, which he confers on the conditioned soul. The Lord wants us to attain this. In *The Light of the Bhāgavata*, autumn in India is described as days of scorching heat, and nights cooled by moon rays. Similarly, Lord Kṛṣṇa is like the moonlight come to deliver us from the scorching heat of material life.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is so merciful that He descends to reclaim suffering humanity and preaches *Bhagavad-gītā* with the intense desire that all living beings give up all their engagements and take shelter of His lotus feet. This is the most confidential part of all revealed scripture.

—*The Light of the Bhāgavata*, #39, purport

That moon is also described as Lord Caitanya and the *saṅkīrtana-yajña*. “Just worship the beautiful Moon of Godruma’s forest bowers.”



Where am I, and where are you when this moon is beaming? Let's not miss it.

In the clear autumn sky the twinkling stars appear brighter and brighter, just like a transcendentalist with clear vision of the purpose of the *Vedas*.

—*The Light of the Bhāgavata*, #40

Don't think Vaiṣṇavism is a cult, said Ātmā-tattva Prabhu. "It is sanity." Crazy people worship demigods for material desires or desire to merge into the impersonal effulgence. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead "without a doubt." Enter, enter, and don't look back. You are leaving the "Stardust" worshippers forever, the pigs' hearts manufacturers, the Big Bangers and the Princesses of Wales in low-cut gowns and arms linked with Italian tenors, the books, the books of deep study that are devoid of surrender to Kṛṣṇa, including the books of Sanskritists. (Ātmā-tattva said that the scholars of Benares are so learned that when they pass gas, it comes out in Sanskrit syllables, but do they surrender to Kṛṣṇa? No. He called the *smārta-brāhmaṇas* "smart-ass, clever donkeys.")

Leave 'em,

Sats, why not?

You can trust the Swami.

You did, you do.

You won't lose out

for not knowing why NATO

chose to be on the side of

Croatia and not the Serbs.

But know and practice with  
all your stealth, the  
Vedic essence in your  
spiritual master's books.  
You won't lose out  
and the gain is very great.

Just see, Śrīla Prabhupāda is writing of the *gopīs* and of Kṛṣṇa's love for all beings. You want love of God? You want *lectio divina*? Read a verse and purport slowly—or quickly—but nicely. (Madhu just came in and said it's cold and late and we'll leave by 5:30 A.M.)

In the clear sky of autumn, the beautiful moon among the beautiful stars becomes the cynosure of all eyes, just as Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the central attraction in the Vṛṣṇi dynasty or in the family of Yadu.

—*The Light of the Bhāgavata*, #41

God is a person. He appeared in the Yadu dynasty. What about Jesus of Nazareth? He is a *śaktyāveśa-avatāra*, a son of God. Understand it in this context. If you can't handle the comparative study of religion, don't bewilder yourself. Four books are enough. Those four books don't include the Bible, the Koran, or the Lotus Sūtra. Four books—keep reading them. You don't need to bathe in the Ganges or in Rādhā-kuṇḍa, because you can achieve the same effect by the easy process of reverent and disciplined devoted hearing and serving.

Yes, you too, you in your van, you in your Piper Cub, you in your kitchen in Cincinnati, in Akron, you in your temple at Kṛṣṇa House in Ohio or New Vrindaban or Boston or Scorched Plains, Nebraska. You have to

undergo austerity, but it has been made as easy as possible for us: read these four books and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. That's all. Serve and be grateful.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is a specific person with inconceivable powers. He has specific pastimes. For example, after Bhīma killed Jarāsaṁdha, Kṛṣṇa released the 20,800 kings that Jarāsaṁdha had imprisoned. It's not a made-up story. The sages are not like Hans Christian Andersen. It's historical and transcendental knowledge. The kings had become so Kṛṣṇa conscious by seeing Lord Kṛṣṇa (four-armed, and yet He's Kṛṣṇa) that they didn't blame Jarāsaṁdha. Rather, they blamed themselves. They said, "We harassed citizens for our sense gratification." Lord Kṛṣṇa gave them excellent food and clothes befitting kings and sent them back to their kingdoms, where they served Him. Read on.

Remember how you asked Swamiji, "I am trying to understand the *Bhagavad-gītā*, but how can I accept that Lord Kṛṣṇa had 16,108 wives? I have trouble with that."

He said, "*You* have trouble? The greatest scholars also have trouble accepting this."

You'll always have doubts as long as you are doubtful. Few people appreciated Lord Kṛṣṇa even when He appeared on earth. But, "One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna." (Bg. 4.9)

But there are foolish persons who take Him to be an ordinary man, not knowing the essence of His transcendental features. In *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Lord affirms this: 'Fools deride Me when I descend in the human form.



They do not know My transcendental nature as the supreme Lord of all that be.' (Bg. 9.11)

At night in autumn the atmosphere is pleasant because it is neither very hot nor very cold. The mild wind blowing through the gardens of fruits and flowers in Vṛndāvana appeared very much pleasing to all—all but the *gopīs*, who were always overtaken by heartfelt sorrow in the absence of Kṛṣṇa

—*The Light of the Bhāgavata*, #42

Everything, everything—we'll get everything from his books, even this sometimes forgotten little book, *The Light of the Bhāgavata*. Do you want *gopī-bhāva*? Do you want philosophy? Prayer? Personal consideration? Poetry? Nature description? Everything all in one? It is here—and even illustrations from the East.

Lord Caitanya taught us to accept worship in *viraha*. "In the present state of affairs we cannot make any direct touch with the Personality of Godhead. But if we practice the *viraha* mode of worship we can transcendently realize the presence of the Lord more lovingly than in His presence." (*The Light of the Bhāgavata*, #42, purport)

Develop that love. You already have a kind of separation from Kṛṣṇa, although it is not the acute *viraha* the *gopīs* experienced. You've got chanting and complaining-lamenting. Okay, just do it and be happy. Learn to pray. That day may come.



4:30 A.M.

About to leave. M. studies map, I chant my eleventh round, my mind all over the universe.

"Will you stop for diesel before we begin?"

"No, we will stop after breakfast. At the same place."

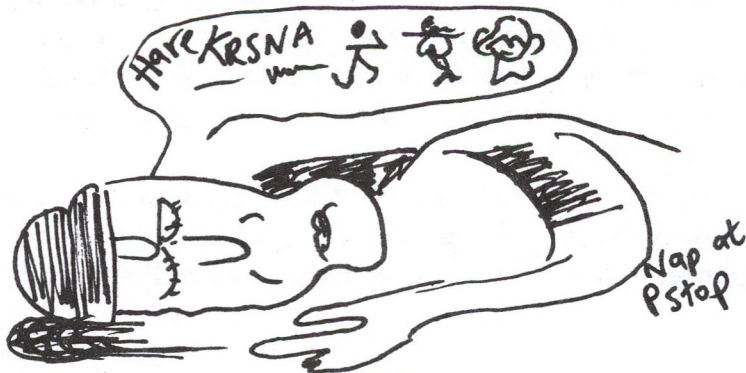
We've been here before. Lord Nṛsiṃha blesses our travel. When we arrive at New Māyāpur, if they give me an official reception and ask me to speak, I'll say we have come from Ireland and England and the preaching there is good.

6 A.M.

Antar diesel stop. I've been resting in my sleeping bag. M. up front listening to tapes. I almost feel not welcome up front. The tapes are better company for him than me chanting *japa*. They keep him awake while he drives. I also get nervous watching him creep up on vehicles and then pass them.

We are going to go back to Godhead eventually. For now on Earth, we chant and serve. Never be ashamed you are a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee or of the movement or Kṛṣṇa's devotees.

8:40 A.M., P-stop



Dream: shifting scenes—I was Śrīla Prabhupāda's personal servant, but couldn't or didn't want to get close to him. In one exchange, he told me to have a pamphlet prepared, an introduction to Kṛṣṇa consciousness that he would give out because he was starting to give evening meetings in a certain place. I asked him whether a new one should be written or would an existing one be good enough. He told me to look it up and see what was best and show it to him. Then I went to his quarters in a house, but I was on the outside. Hari Śauri was his servant. Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja had just been in with Prabhupāda and he was beaming. He was talking with a lady who was also satisfied because she had just done some direct service for Prabhupāda. Hari Śauri wanted to talk to me. Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja said he knew that the talk was going to be about him. When I spoke alone with Hari Śauri, he said the ISKCON gurus and others were in the same revolutionary spirit as in the older days of guru reform. Changes were going to come about. I could not find a service that satisfied me or that I knew Prabhupāda wanted me to do.

I woke and thought of re-entering the dream. I asked, "Why don't you go into the dream and ask Prabhupāda what he wants you to do?" I didn't or couldn't do that.

Now awake in France, not far from New Māyāpur. Does this dream apply to me and how? Am I going through motions instead of really living? What would I do if—if I did what? Am I doing what I know I must or what I want to do?

Anyway, go ahead into New Māyāpur and lecture a few days. No big change for me. Keep trying to know, however, what is most satisfying and what Prabhupāda

wants of me. Headaches limit me. Can I think more deeply or get more access to what I should do with the remainder of my life?

Certainly the plan to read his books is a good one, and writing something that will go as directly as possible to vital concerns—something directed to Prabhupāda's service.

In the dream I spoke with a freewheeling *sannyāsi* and said that I was Prabhupāda's servant. He said hardly anyone does that nowadays and that I was humble. I said to him I know how blissful it is to be freewheeling and to have your own program as a *sannyāsi* and yet be actively serving the movement preaching. That was agreed.

Okay, get ready to travel in waking reality. Accept what you have. Live this *September Catchall*.

## New Māyāpur

Waiting for electricity. I liked the talk I gave about dovetailing interest in the four seasons of the year with the flow of events on the Vaiṣṇava calendar. Pretty good. Not me, but the topic. This summer and feeling the cool coming of autumn and Kārttika. I said the harvest of the land is offered to Rādhā-Govinda-Mādhava along with the *saṅkīrtana* results.

Waiting for electricity. We had a *kīrtana* in the front hallway. Nṛsiṁhānanda dāsa, a pillar of New Māyāpur, led the *kīrtana*. He pointed to the very large photo blow-up of Rādhā-Govinda-Mādhava and we sang Their names. Then he pointed to the large portrait of Śrīla Prabhupāda and we chanted his names. And they washed my feet.



Standing in the temple before Rādhā-Govinda-Mādhava, I recalled Hṛṣīkeśānanda dāsa's memoir where he said at Varṣāṇa he did not see Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, but only "charming Deities." That means he saw and liked the statues, but didn't really see with the eye of devotion. I'm not qualified either. And why not? Because of foolishness and cynical attitudes toward devotees and temples.

What's wrong with me:

I'm a jester and clown,  
a fool's boro horse-horse,  
a word play palaver,  
and I ate too much,  
I blew the coop and  
flew the coop and  
fired the Admiral in charge. I, I, I . . .

Danced and died  
grew old and fried  
was preoccupied  
with getting my clothes washed,  
with regular stool passing,  
with when I can pass urine again and  
lay my head on a soft pillow  
and drive away encroaching  
thoughts and  
always put down other people.

"Hey lady, you are short!"

She could say back to me,

"You're no Mr. Gorgeous, you fake-toothed fool."

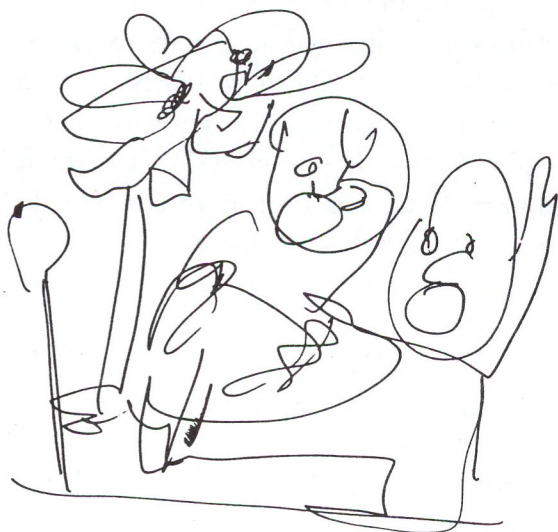
Yeah, that and worse.



I do hanker for sweets  
and don't pray,  
don't hanker for *darsana*  
of the *sāstras*—they  
say a stone melts on  
hearing the pastimes of  
Caitanyadeva, so I must  
be harder than that.

Here's a good quote from Sören Kierkegaard: "Many people reach the conclusions about life and its problems like some of us schoolboys: they cheat their teacher by copying the answer out of the book instead of working it out for themselves, as the instructor has commanded."

The guru wants you to work it out in your own life. Some guys may say, "We don't want confessions, we want *ślokas*." I reply that they might be cheating if they don't work it out in their own lives. You are part of the *bhakti* process, how you take to it. So words are not enough, even *ślokas*. You have to live them.



5 P.M.

In the autumn season all the birds, beasts, and men become sexually disposed, and the bull, the stag, the male bird, the man, and other male creatures forcibly impregnate the fair sex. A similar impregnation takes place as a result of devotional service to the Lord.

—*The Light of the Bhāgavata*, #43

The sexual impregnation is an analogy. We are interested in the spiritual version. That is, impregnation of instructions in *bhakti* by the spiritual master. We have been impregnated. My own impregnation began in 1966. We have to bear the pregnancy patiently through time and trial and dryness. “Just at the right moment, the results of one’s particular devotional service will come, even if one has no desire for it.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport is filled with attractive and memorable statements. He is encouraging. Don’t doubt and don’t hesitate, he tells us, even if you fail. Failure is the ground upon which you will build your success. “We should not consider going back to Godhead a plaything. We must take it seriously . . . For a strict follower, the result is sure and certain, and when the time is right the result will come of its own force. . . . The almighty God awards the results we desire, and therefore we should desire that which is eternal, blissful, and full of knowledge.”

Walked into the forest. Floor strewn with acorns and horse chestnuts in their green prickly cases. M. said he played the same sport that I did, drilling a hole in the chestnut, putting a string through it and then one boy

smashes his chestnut against another's. I told him I didn't know which side was which in the war in Bosnia. We also talked about India and what I might write when I get time. It seems I'll depend on the process. No deliberate project in sight, just more writing. I feel nowadays that it's all I can do to cope and say, "We are at the P-stop and will leave at 4:30 A.M. for travel until we stop at another P-stop for breakfast." It's a wonderful life, just enough adventure for me—a kind of gentleman's, semi-invalid's, footloose wandering from one ISKCON temple to another with stops in between.

Chestnuts, acorns,  
blue skies I didn't notice  
only gray and cool (wore  
sweatpants under the *dhoti*)  
and walking into the meadow to  
the *kuñja* tree that has been  
broken in half but still  
living, doing  
what it does, stout, silent  
perseverant, green moss on trunk,  
low in consciousness.  
Walking, we heard a heavy  
detonation. No comment.  
Walking. "When is *maṅgala-  
ārati* here, 4:15 or 4:30 A.M.?"

## Night Notes

You can write a poem in a clinic near Madras. I can't tell where we are going. I may not even know where, if I travel in the taxi from the airport wearing a black eye mask. Right now, I'm here in chestnut land, the France

farm, ISKCON New Māyāpur. I can't memorize how they sing, "*Jaya Rādhā-Govinda-Mādhava*"—can't get the syllables right.

Here I am, heart is the seat I sit on, my body, my tongue full of needs. A decent mattress and pillow for a celibate. Sleep and wake early enough alone. Kṛṣṇa in nature, Kṛṣṇa-Rāma-Hare—he's singing and I'm writing this to the bottom of the page, staying faithful awhile longer, waiting.



## September 15

12:44 A.M.

I woke from a dream in which I was blind. Gradually, I was helped by a dedicated person to recover my sight through patient and meticulous therapy. Once you lose sight, you become grateful for any sight at all, such as watching a few train cars go by. I tried to feel this appreciation after I woke up, but even more, I related it to the writing process. It may mean I need to be more devoted to the moment to moment existence in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In the Introduction to *The Light of the Bhāgavata*, the publishers have written nicely:

This material world is but a reflection of the pure spiritual world from which *The Light of the Bhāgavata* emanates. Nature itself, as well as the whole cosmic creation, has its original counterpart in the spiritual world. The order and patterns which we see set about in nature are intentionally designed to illustrate spiritual truths. Indeed, the very existence of nature and its intricate balance is proof for any honest man for the existence of the Supreme Being, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa.

I may see this in the acorns and chestnuts and everything else. Even “horrible” things and the cruel acts of men? Somehow, yes, He is teaching there too. In the prayers based on Sören Kierkegaard’s teachings, Bowers writes, “But in our hearts we know, O God, that when evil people cast long shadows, the sun is about to set and darkness is soon to follow. But to us who walk in darkness, You have given a Great Light, a Light that shines brightest when the darkness is deepest. That Light is Love, Love that is always at its best when bestowed on people at their worst. Grant, we pray, that we may walk ever in that Light.”

In the autumn season all the reservoirs of water are full of lotus flowers. There are also flowers that resemble the lotus but are of a different class. Among them is a flower called *kumuda*. When the sun rises, all the flowers but the *kumuda* blossom beautifully. Similarly, lotuslike men take pleasure in the advent of a responsible king, but men who are like the *kumuda* do not like the existence of a king.

—*The Light of the Bhāgavata*, # 44

Let me not be like the envious *kumuda*. I want to blossom along with the lotuses in the Kṛṣṇa-sun. The sun is shining. I want to receive it. Give also to others that light—that is the work of the preacher. He speaks what Śrīla Prabhupāda gave. He holds that light to others and doesn’t change it, claiming it is his light. (The Christian preacher Bowers says that the preacher’s hand and personality should not even be seen as he holds the light of Godhead. I say we may see him too.

He may witness to us how he has been made whole by the light, he may express himself.)

My story. Let it be His glory  
in my life.

After the new grains were cut and brought home from the paddy fields, the people began to observe the *navanna* ceremony everywhere, in the presence of the Lord as Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva.

—*The Light of the Bhāgavata*, # 45

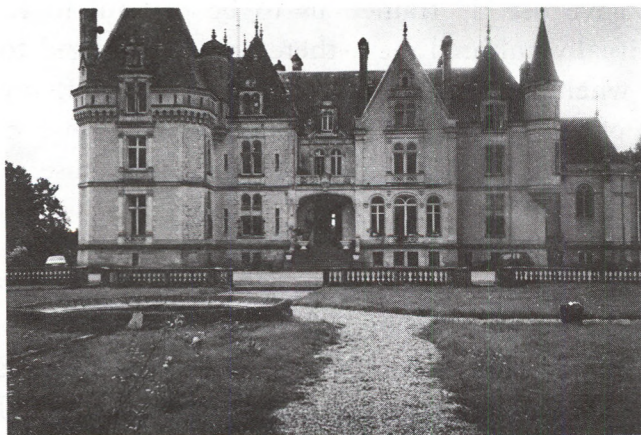
*The Light of the Bhāgavata* is Kṛṣṇa book. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are present. In autumn, people acknowledge God's gifts in the newly harvested grains. They offer them to the Lord. During Kṛṣṇa's advent, they could do it personally. We may do it by preaching, by practicing purely, by following the rules and regulations Prabhupāda gave us. He trained us to be grateful to Kṛṣṇa: "Spiritually cultured men, therefore, feel obliged to the Lord when they get sufficient natural foodstuffs by the grace of the Lord." The ceremony they perform is called *navanna-prasana*, during which there is profuse *prasādam* distribution.

Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa is the cause of all causes. The *sannyāsis* are like the white clouds of autumn, not carrying water. They are free of all family responsibilities and take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness completely without anxiety. They are also compared to autumnal waterfalls because they sometimes supply clear water and sometimes stop. "Similarly, sometimes great saintly persons distribute pure knowledge and sometimes they are silent."



Kṛṣṇa conscious persons are like the calm ocean; they are no longer disturbed by the modes of nature. (Thus peacefulness is a spiritual quality.) A Kṛṣṇa conscious person controls and conserves his energy and uses it only in Kṛṣṇa's service.

I don't claim I've achieved all these states—that I am shining beautifully like a star in a cloudless sky. I'm probably more like the householders, who are compared to fish in the drying up pond, unaware of diminishing time and not rectifying their condition. I appreciate the saintly qualities and want them, though. I take assurance when I hear about them. Practice and preach. Śrīla Prabhupāda: "For he who patiently follows the regulative principles of devotional service, the time will come when he will achieve the result, like the wives who reap results by becoming pregnant."



We are parked in our van, as usual, only a few yards from the old castle called New Māyāpur. It really needs a new roof; the grounds are not kept up—certainly not trimmed with neat marigold gardens as the land is at



Rāḍha-deśa, Belgium. Few devotees here, and they're almost desperate, but somehow they pull on. They are blessed, however, with the most gorgeous Deities, whom they worship at a high standard. It is the one saving factor.

We will go into the temple at 4:15. I would like to lead. Now I think I know how to praise Rādhā-Govinda-Mādhava. If I drop the “jaya” at the beginning, I won't mess up the syllables.

I won't be giving evening classes today or tomorrow. I am here, a pilgrim for my purification. I'll go to the temple again in the afternoon to see Their Lordships.

Flowers for Them. Grains for Them. Work for Them. For guru and Kṛṣṇa. “Try to cooperate among yourselves,” I'll tell them in this morning's *Bhāgavatam* lecture. “The austerity to cooperate in this community is the main way you can work to achieve an alternative civilization to that of the demons who are mad, illusioned, and full of anxieties, killing cows and not performing *yajña*.” What else can they do at New Māyāpur? Live peacefully, work hard for the Deities, maintain the temple and land. We'll also study Hari Śauri Prabhu's diary account of Prabhupāda's visit to New Māyāpur.

O Lord of the universe,  
kindly let me live a little longer.  
If You desire. I want to  
enjoy the writing and traveling life.  
But I also want to do good  
to others. I need to  
improve myself by extended

practice of *bhakti-yoga*.  
And as in my dream last night,  
I need to recover from blindness  
by meticulous therapy  
assisted by dear friends.  
Thank You, Lord, for the chance.  
Please guide us.

In the temple before *maṅgala-ārati*:

I have to treasure what I have and what I perceive.  
Rows of *tulasī* in big pots, Prabhupāda *mūrti*, the metal  
gate creaks as it moves open to allow us to see the  
Deities. Thrill as the conch blows thrice. Life is for this.  
Don't be dull. Feel the thrill in body and soul to be free  
of sex desire. Pray for devotion and freedom from  
faultfinding.

Idea for book: prayers of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Come back to van and write—when I found fault in  
the bossy take-over behavior of one senior devotee, I  
checked myself and said, “Someone *should* be like that.  
We need leaders. Besides, there is no harm.” He also  
performed humble service and took the *ārati* articles  
from the *pūjārī* during *maṅgala-ārati* and offered them to  
each devotee. An older woman was smiling, and a pre-  
puberty girl with a lavish braid down her back—I didn't  
return her curious gaze. Around the *tulasī* we went so  
all sins fly away.

12:25 P.M.

We are without our van. M. took it in to a Renault  
shop to get the speedometer cable installed. They opened

the hood and then discovered that they had the wrong part. They're ordering a new one. I'm staying in the temple in P.G. Mahārāja's room, waiting for the return of my domicile, my home sweet van.

In this room I've been nosing through Mahārāja's books. Glanced at one about *Vaṁsī dāsa Bābājī*, one on *brahmacarya* by Swami Śivānanda. It says we shouldn't read Western novels. I'm not interested in books by other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas or by Prabhupāda's God-brothers. So many books, it makes me wonder where my own fit in. There are almost a dozen of my books here too, but none of the *Shack Notes* variety. I've got both sides and the conservative can read my straight books.

How long will we have to be without the van? M. says he'll get it back tonight, even if it doesn't have the new cable installed. More talk of buying a new van.

I tried preparing for tomorrow's lecture, although I feel a bit spaced out. It's the bull, *dharma*, asking Bhūmi if she became aggrieved because women and children are not protected or because *brāhmaṇas* don't follow religious principles and hire themselves out to corrupt leaders. I don't want to rant about women and children in ISKCON; I don't claim remedies that ISKCON hasn't reached (neither do I say I have the answers ISKCON lacks). I walked back and forth and chanted, then some ideas came for speaking on *brāhmaṇas* who sell themselves out.

We shouldn't flatter the materialists. Śukadeva Go-svāmī said that if one accepts the simple necessities, he won't have to beg and flatter *karmīs*. Bhīṣma is said to have been obliged to Duryodhana for maintenance. Speak about that. If we can control our senses, then we



won't need to depend on others. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* says that one who runs here and there to satisfy his palate, belly, and genitals cannot attain Kṛṣṇa.

I don't know if I can extend this topic so far. I don't have my books; the *Niti-sāstra* is in the van. I'd like to read Cāṇakya's statement on education.

Rain. Take rest in this room if you can. I don't control my mind as I'd like to. Faultfinding, but it's a joke. If I took it seriously, I would go to hell. I'm worse than Rāmacandra Purī. Surely that's not me, disliking devotees and everything in the temple. Me, the severest critic. Take a look at yourself and burn to ashes.

No, I don't take it as my serious, deep self. It's hard to control though, when I'm shifting about with no home.

I've finished going through the verses of *The Light of the Bhāgavata* for autumn. It was a good streak while it lasted. Now two more weeks of September and how shall I pass them in this book of days?

Grant me—

I mumble a prayer.

Confused today from looking

at too many books in

another man's room.

Better I had spent it

in my own study van.

But we can't have things always

the way we want.

The main thing while in a temple is to prepare for the next class and then the next after that. Then go on



the road and arrive in another place. Do they hear me? Do I bore them? They cut string beans and carrots and potatoes with various knives and scrapers while I lecture. Then they raise hands for two or three questions.

“How can our own children be callous to the outer world?” Oh yes, I say, I know about that. We have to be tough-skinned and soft at heart. Don’t care what they say.

While in this room, I picked out the *Mukunda-mālā-stotra*. You know who wrote the purports to complete Śrīla Prabhupāda’s work. One verse says chant the names of Viṣṇu, Hari, Nārāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇa, and don’t care what people say. “Raising my arms, I utter this compassionate advice as loudly as I can: If those in the renounced order want to be delivered from the terrible, poisonous condition of material life, they should have the good sense to constantly hear the mantra *om namo nārāyaṇāya*.” (*Mukunda-mālā-stotra*, verse 41)

He says his mind cannot turn from Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet even for a moment. Let his superiors reject or accept him, let common people sully his reputation. “For a madman like me, it is honor enough to feel this flood of love of Godhead, which brings such sweet emotions of attraction for my Lord.” (*Mukunda-mālā-stotra*, verse 42)

I’m not austere or absorbed in intimate talks with my *mūrti* like Vamsī dāsa Bābājī. I’m not leading troops like those featured in the weekly *saṅkīrtana* newsletters I have found in this room. Not attending the weekly New Māyāpur management meeting announced in a notice I found on the desk here, not so fond of the essay saying

we should follow only Śrīla Prabhupāda and the way of the *gopīs* is to preach *saṅkīrtana* (although I agree with the conclusions, the rhetoric-polemic makes me uneasy).

Then what are you? Who are you?

I am not so generous. I also nibble at my fingernails. I bathe in not-hot water and eat a lunch with no sweet today, but I'd have it otherwise if I could. Don't use a telephone but neither do I chant. Too unsettled to sleep but . . . Anyway, I have my own way—each of us does. Got to find it.

5:45 P.M.

Saw on walk in New Māyāpur woods: green and yellow chestnut covers. If you squeeze them with your foot, the chestnuts emerge. Sometimes there are two chestnuts in one pod, each shaped like half a ball.

I saw plenty of green acorns with their little green "hats," shiny from the rain. I saw green balls with soft, green spikes on the ground and the large, green cones of fir trees. Cherry-colored berries on a green vine around a tree trunk. A big snail in a brown, striated shell-home. Smaller cones. All the animals are harvesting their fruits; we don't share these particular ones.

Chanted a round and then *gāyatrī*. When I started on *gāyatrī*, I said, "This is going to be better than indoors." By the time I reached the *gopāla* and *kāma-gāyatrī* mantras, however, my attention was gone. Rather, I heard the crows cawing and felt the rain dropping in splotches on my saffron cloth as I sat on the wet log.

All those hours were yours  
to spend. Or were they?  
You had no choice. They took  
the chair out from under you,  
drove the van into a shop and  
you were displaced.

Still, you could have done  
something—called in all the  
available devotees and made believe  
you were an absorbed *mahā-bhāgavata*.  
Or at least asked someone to read  
aloud a *Bhāgavatam* chapter. But they  
each have their duties. They left  
you alone. That was considerate.

I did outline a lecture  
and browsed through a stranger's book collection—  
it was what you could expect of  
an ISKCON *sannyāsi*.  
My day? Distracted . . .  
wanted to come here, my love.

I read that Śrīla Prabhupāda said he became  
“a little successful” (more than any  
Godbrothers) because he examined himself  
and discovered it was his 100% faith  
in his spiritual master.  
That's what we want.  
Ask yourself about that.  
Today was not bad. On course.  
Tomorrow, better? Or tomorrow—  
will be a today.



## September 16

12:58 A.M.

My restless son, you seek more satisfaction of the self. Know that it is found in satisfying the Supreme. Be guided by scriptures and guru, and be patient.

This I am, patient and imperfect. Oh, I *am* sorry, but not so sorry. Energy goes into maintaining a coping, positive attitude.

Our van contains many analogies: one is old age's diminishing returns and the concept of turning it in for a new one. It is something I cannot do with this body right now. A new American van is proposed, but then we won't be able to easily get parts in Europe. Maybe a Mercedes, but if the model is too big, it will be ostentatious and unbefitting our profile. Again, as a human being I have no alternatives in this lifetime. I have to keep the 56-year-old model and treat it in such a way that it remains serviceable as long as possible. M. wants a faster van that will pull weight; this slow one makes for nervous driving. It can't overtake other vehicles. This old body, however, is subject to anxieties regardless of what we do. Better not push it. Best not to try to overtake others and certainly don't speed. There



are no part replacements unless you opt for a pig's heart.

We are not so enthusiastic to do extras on this visit. Please accept us as we are, just as we accept you that way. What am I doing for them? Some words of wisdom culled from Prabhupāda's books. We don't even want to create a wave of sensation by holding extra meetings. It would only be a temporary show anyway. The reality is that my visit is simple, not based on attempting to make big changes in New Māyāpur or any of the residents. I come to be purified; I am attracted by the gorgeous Deities and the worship.

O simple, O soul, be peaceful. Follow your own advice from his books.

Tomorrow I will tell the story of how he came to America on the Jaladuta. I will analyze his poem and describe how he spoke to Kṛṣṇa. We want such intimacy with God, but it has to be earned. Put yourself in the dependent situation and you will have to call on God. Don't fancy that you don't need Him.

I would like to be enthusiastic about the messages of Godhead, but I don't want to be pretentious. Children can see it and adults can hear it. At least they won't say he came and put on a big show. What they don't know is my private walks in the woods with an umbrella and how I collected chestnuts, wet my feet, and muddied my socks. I like this place.

O you servant of God, are you steady? Not like a rock set deep in the ground. You have not been much tested

so far. If you were, would you tremble like a feather and blow away?

I could not do something as great as Śrīla Prabhupāda did when he went to a new world. We servants each want to serve him; it's our austerity to take on tasks and see them through even when they are not so glamorous.

Be virtuous and stay away from sin (as Swami Śivānanda advises in his quaint, Indian way, Māyāvādī too).

Don't go to see movies, hear sexually arousing music, or touch or taste in that way. Yes, be pure and natural in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

My master is present in his instructions. I don't want to kick up a row. Be satisfied to go see the Deities at *maṅgala-ārati* after chanting maybe nine rounds or more. If you don't get a headache and can quell indigestion (by not overeating), then you're having a good day. Avoid bad thoughts, especially *sādhū-niṇḍā*. As for lecturing, you've got your notes and your topic. Whether you can "raise the dead" by giving new hope or transmitting something memorable, that's up to the Lord in your heart. *Somebody* has to speak the *Bhāgavatam* each day. Maybe an infrequent guest like me sparks interest. Maybe I am taken as impartial.

Your visit and you yourself in this world come and go, like September, and will soon be forgotten. "Forgotten—like the luscious peach,/ that blessed the schoolboy last September." (W.M. Praed)

Come out, 'tis now September,  
The hunter's moon begun;  
And through the wheaten stubble  
We hear the frequent gun;  
The leaves are turning yellow,  
And fading into red,  
While the ripe and bearded barley  
Is hanging down its head.

The spring is like a young maid  
That does not know her mind,  
The summer is tyrant  
of most ungracious kind;  
The autumn is an old friend  
That pleases all he can,  
And brings the bearded barley  
To glad the heart of man.  
—("The Ripe and Bearded Barley," Author  
Unknown)

**In temple before *maṅgala-ārati*:**

No one here but me, M., and Pitāvāsa, who chants loud, French *japa* before Prabhupāda. I hear the *pūjārī* clapping his hands, waking the Deities. There are some Polish devotees here. They have too many devotees in Poland and not enough room in the temples. If it gets too cold in the winter at New Māyāpur (they have no central heating), however, the temple president assures me they will leave. Yes, they will feel lonely here. Will they return to Poland?

Deity gates open. *Karatālas*. Don't ask me to sing this morning. You can, *Pitāvāsa*, or please let M. do it. He sings nicely.

2:30 P.M.



“Will he have a *darśana*?”

No.

“Why not?”

What's the use? He says the same old thing and says things he doesn't want to say because he doesn't mean them deeply enough.

They will say, “But we wanted to worship our guru and ask a few questions, such as how we can get along with devotees, or how we can manage cows or endure and tolerate things here. What about our children? When you have to earn money, how do you adjust it with the priorities of *sādhana*? How can we not to be cynical toward others or too familiar when we think about them?



How can we just accept that that's the way they are and they won't change?"

You see, I'm not Prabhupāda.

Do you remember the freedom whereby you used to write what came in Vṛndāvana on the marble floor?

Yes, vaguely. I remember I wanted to leave early because of the strain of being there.

So many good-byes in this lifetime. Ending the past, starting a present of mild ascent, a future unknown. The future does keep unfolding as if it always will. I've lived through five and a half decades already. I won't live forever. The days grow short when you reach September, and the autumn weather turns the leaves to brown. There's no time left for guessing or play.

Am I a pure devotee? Am I rendering my best? Whatever I have, I want to offer it to Kṛṣṇa.

From back of van I overheard a devotee giving Madhu a new recipe for pancakes. "They're softer than the others."

"He can't chew them because of his dentures."

"If he can chew ordinary *capātis* then he can chew these . . . new recipe . . . softer."

M. explains, but he insists. I *won't* be able to chew them, but he'll make them anyway. We can't get someone to make what we want, our simple "digestive biscuits."

Oh, but listen. He can't talk for me. I am a self all covered. She writes, "Is it all right to be materially comfortable so that you can testify that Kṛṣṇa takes care of you?"



It depends on your consciousness. Sudāmā Vipra became wealthy but didn't forget Kṛṣṇa. The world is such that you cannot always be happy. Go ahead and try. It's smarter to accept a simple standard and be absorbed in Kṛṣṇa activities, especially chanting and hearing.

One hasn't got time for  
the guessing game and  
the autumn weather turns leaves  
to brown, and these few precious days  
I'll spend with you.

The goldenrod is yellow,  
The corn is turning brown,  
The trees in apple orchards  
With fruit are bending down.

The gentian's bluest fringes  
Are curling in the sun;  
In dusty pods the milkweed  
Its hidden silk has spun.

From dewy lanes at morning  
The grapes' sweet odors rise;  
At noon the roads all flutter  
With yellow butterflies—  
By all these lovely tokens  
September days are here,  
With summer's best of weather  
And autumn's best of cheer.  
—("September Days are Here," Helen Hunt  
Jackson)

One reader said to me, "I wondered why you write about the weather?" Then he said something positive, I'm not sure what. He sees in himself that he thinks of things not beneficial. He was saying that he learns something from my writing.

Why do I write of the weather? Because it's there and everyone knows it affects you. I see Kṛṣṇa in it.

The sky is blue and rain comes down. From a distance in a meadow you see low, dark, *śyāma* clouds, so *dark*. Surely this is what they mean when they say Kṛṣṇa is the color of fresh rain clouds. Other clouds are much lighter; part of the sky is bright blue and cloudless. A wind is pushing the dark rain clouds, but I'm not sure if the clouds are approaching or being blown away. They appear to be hanging over the New Māyāpur château. Why write of the weather? Because it's grand.

It is also in all of our lives. When people talk of the weather—you can do it easily, even with strangers—it's a way to share human experience. We all joke about people talking about the weather as if it's nonsensical or boring, but it's a way to touch each other, to be non-

violent, at least friendly and civil. A conservative banker dressed in suit and tie can say something to a Hare Kṛṣṇa monk while they wait for an elevator—about the weather. An Irishman says to a retired North Ireland homeowner, “Great weather you’ve got here!”

“Isn’t it?” the homeowner replies. Or they allude to the future, “It may change tonight.” Someone has the inside information: “A storm is coming. We’re going to get more rain.”

The weather is cool. It’s becoming autumn. Each of us expresses his poet’s feelings in just a few words when we say the season is changing. The days are getting shorter. “No more sunshine at 8 or 10 P.M.”

“Oh no, that’s all over.”

“No more walks with the sun coming up at 5, or even 4:15.”

Yeah, I know about that.

I talk of the weather too. The weather comes from Kṛṣṇa. I can remember that and don’t even have to say His name if I am with people who can’t take that.

#### 4:15 P.M., Prabhupāda’s room

I live, I say, under his blessings and his control. My service is writing and preaching, following *sannyāsa*, growing old in good standing (sounds like a plant in autumn), and waiting for his directions. I get my orders from him, or I used to.

Prabhupāda, I’m doing as well as the others. Please accept us. Let me speak of you and the *Bhāgavatam*’s teachings. I want to be honest and brave, your man, alive, and not dogmatic, myself. I can be honest and strict and myself for you, Śrīla Prabhupāda.



Yes, I still have material desires. I know they are harmful. I drew a picture of a monster—my material self in one form or another, raging with lust, greed, anger, and fear. Usually, however, I draw pictures of a man with Vaiṣṇava *tilaka*. Even if we are not so jolly, we are still enlisted in Prabhupāda's army with no desire to be anywhere else. I'm a Prabhupāda-for-lifer, not a short-timer. If he'll keep me.

You were in this room for a few days, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and they keep it sacred in your memory. It's bare, the book collection spotty, but that's New Māyāpur. At least it's surviving, like me.

You hold the Sony dictaphone similar to the one you used to have. You are you, seated behind the low table of saffron marble. All glories to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

There are children in this building, a sign of life. Dedicated devotees. Nouvelle Māyāpur.

## Temple room, Afternoon

The kids here are a little wild. Sitting before the Deities, Gaura-bhakta dāsa played sweet tunes on the harmonium as we entered. I sang along. No drums or *karatālas*.

Rādhā-Govinda-Mādhava wear bright pink sashes and pale blue dresses with embroidered patterns. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were installed by Śrīla Prabhupāda, and Gaura-Nitāi.

Sitting at Their feet, my back is bent. It wants support. I'll have to tell it to sit up straight for awhile. I am in the right place physically. Now if only I could be in the right place mentally as well.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said when we were apart we were useless. One of us was a discarded wire and the other a gourd. Now we have come together to become a *tambura*, an international string band for Kṛṣṇa.





## September 17

12:52 A.M.

Things in my life: writing is therapy, I repeatedly work on issues such as, "Is it right to be without deep, close working relationships with Godbrothers?" It seems artificial for me at present to try to attain this or practice it. I need to develop my own nature as a devotee. I work out such questions in writing, but writing also serves as art, a form of preaching. How preaching is an art is also subject to discussion. I work it all out in the writing process. The more time I spend at it, the more I can get answers or pieces of usable writing.

"Here today, gone tomorrow." When you discover your work, then go at it for all you're worth. I've discovered writing. It goes well with alone time. That's the real point of why I don't develop close working relationships with others. Writing requires alone time.

And I'm never alone. ISKCON is a matter of consciousness more than physical association or constant communication. We read each other's stuff sometimes, or we're at least aware of the brothers and where they are working in the world. We are close and sometimes

cross each other's paths. I have a few friends with whom I correspond.

Sunday today. I am scheduled to give a class on Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival in America. I'll tell the story and hope to interject points of application for the devotees. For lunch I am scheduled to go to Kutāṣṭha Prabhu and Kalāvati's house, their "New Rudradvīpa." I'll see his garden and sit with them awhile.

Oh, here is a *Jaladuta Diary*.

Here is a hard seat, a low desk.

Here is my ego and where is my egolessness?

The Vyāsa-pūjā book of 1995—I finally got to see it and can keep it for a few hours today. I went through it quickly. We each assert our dedication. Devotees are saying, especially this year, that Śrīla Prabhupāda is very special, not an ordinary guru. This may be prompted by the issues of whether it was permissible to accept a *śikṣā-guru* outside ISKCON. We should take exclusive shelter of ISKCON or else we will be guilty of minimizing him. Devotees are writing to assert this. When so many write and when there is a pressure to make this point, it sometimes makes you feel uneasy. You agree with the conclusion, but maybe not the loudness with which it is spoken, the high pitch of the trumpet notes. We should work tirelessly in this movement. It is a unique movement. Śrīla Prabhupāda is unique. No one should deviate from his instructions even an inch. We hereby dedicate ourselves completely and exclusively. The GBC homages come first.



Well, that's the kind of book an annual Vyāsa-pūjā is. It's for an internal audience. The gathering of offerings has its particular effect and you are either in tune with it or you're not. If you're not, it comes off jarring and too insistent. "Me thinks the lady doth protest too much."

It's an atmosphere from which you have to escape in order to find your own voice. We call out to Śrīla Prabhupāda for help with that one. We make our little points when we advise others or make suggestions how they should be loyal to Prabhupāda.

It's heavy because this is September, and for a few hours I have had the opportunity to finally see the Vyāsa-pūjā book and these are my comments. It exposes my mind like a mirror. It reveals my impurities and my inability to have the deepest appreciation for others' expressions. Perhaps it's better to read a book like this over the period of a year instead of a few hours. Then we could savor each offering. Trying to jam them all in in a couple of hours is to invite indigestion. It can leave you feeling a little sick rather than uplifted. That has nothing to do with the homages themselves or of course the person to whom they are made, but of a too quick skim through what everyone is saying.

The devotees are sincere. They ask Prabhupāda to bless them and to remain with them, to empower them. I read some and flinch because I see my own selfishness, self-absorption, and lack of preaching spirit.

Also, I won't come under the spell of any one preacher who might want to tell me how to fulfill my responsibility to Śrīla Prabhupāda. It's not easy for me to preserve my individuality and integrity in this large movement.

I need to work at it a lot. I feel like I'm drowning when I am in the company of strong persons. You could say it's my false ego drowning, but I have learned otherwise. It's my own self. I can't go along with the pack. I cooperate with them, I follow them, but I need to make my own homage, as fortunately I did in the 1995 book. My homage comes from a morning walk in Ireland. It has the flavor of my personal approach to Gurudeva. It is who I am and it has a place in the collection. It was not produced by any group pressure or hysteria. I like it and want to continue to keep my own voice to add to the chorus. One at a time we get to make our homages.

I don't want to be different only so that I'll be noticed, but I must preserve a difference so that I'll be true.

Before *maṅgala-ārati*:

"Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda," we each say. You are indwelling in ISKCON. I'm in your temple and will leave tomorrow for another. People *are* seeking to heal themselves in order to serve you, or just to find peace. The 1995 Vyāsa-pūjā book sounds a particular note: "We don't need anyone or anything but you and your mission." It's gutsy and gung-ho. It's in Prabhupāda's mood.

The other is reality too, however: "We need to heal ourselves." ISKCON has caused many wounds because some people have misused ISKCON's power and done wrong. They conducted the movement with impure motives. One batch has been removed. I was tainted. My photo is in *Monkey on a Stick*.

10:45 A.M.

Thirty days hath September,  
April, June, and November,  
February 8'n'20 all alone  
And all the rest have 31,  
Unless that Leap Year doth combine  
And give to February 29.  
—("Thirty Days Hath September," by Mother Goose)

M. removed a wall on his side of the van and now he's filing the wood. He said, "I was getting claustrophobic." He lives in half the space I do, crouched up to read or write or chant or sleep.

The temple president asked me to return the Vyāsa-pūjā book, so that's not here to alert my mind or agitate it either. Nothing here but us bugs.

One Vyāsa-pūjā homage said, "I want to be always engaged in preaching and helping others, and I don't care for my own material or spiritual destination." Another devotee wrote, "I want to go back to Goloka Vṛndāvana to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda." He quoted an exchange where he said to Śrīla Prabhupāda, "I want to serve you life after life preaching in this world." Prabhupāda replied, "No, you should go back to Godhead. Why should you want me to stay in the material world?" There are different angles of vision.

Someone had a dream that Śrīla Prabhupāda came to his temple and said that the arrangements weren't adequate and he should make better ones. The devotee prefaced this by two quotes from Śrīla Prabhupāda on dreams. One said dreams of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the spiri-



tual master are important because dreaming is another way of seeing. A second quote warned the devotees that dreams are not important and that one should be so busy in waking devotional service that he has no time for dreams. Yet the Vyāsa-pūjā homage told the dream and said that shortly after this, they looked hard for a new temple and found one.

When I read the homages, I felt I was not doing the right thing, or if I felt that I was right, it seemed also wrong, like being puffed up. Writers try to excel over each other it seems, as to who can make the most superlative praise of the spiritual master. “He is the *ācārya* of everyone in the world. My praise was better than yours. I challenge you whether you indirectly minimized Śrīla Prabhupāda. My offering is more surcharged.” As soon as one thinks like that, however, his humility disappears and his offering seems proud.

One offering quoted three statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda all showing him to be humble whenever praise was made to him. Thus maybe he wouldn’t like to hear all the tumultuous praises in the book and the clanking of the helmets of the demigod-disciples as they bowed at his feet—I mean, at his lotus feet, his all-saving nectar-dripping—you know what I mean.

Honey oozing from the heart  
of the *ācārya*, one writer  
said, and it seemed a sticky  
image to me. Prefer to  
be with him in plain  
way? But he’s not an  
ordinary guru. Okay.



Hey, Bugs, hey, Bobs, let's cheerlead our way home. In the back of the car we kids used to cheer loudly when the car passed over a marked boundary in the tunnel exiting New Jersey and entering New York. Such were our loyalties or silliness. Then I joined the Navy and it was "Anchors Aweigh." Is it a better song than the Marines' hymn? Is "Yankee Doodle" better than "Dixie"? Them's fightin' words. Too many designations

One devotee, much younger than me, wrote in his homage that he's now two-thirds dead and he regretted not being a good devotee so far. He publicly pledged that in the few remaining days of his life, he wants to make amends by working for others to develop holistic, self-sufficient communities. Help people become better situated. Another devotee pledged full assistance to collect the many millions of dollars required to fulfill Prabhupāda's mission of a grand temple in Māyāpur. Another wrote of his plans for construction and development in Bhubhaneswar. Another reminded us the Centennial is where it's at. Others said book distribution is the main or only thing that really counts if you want to please Prabhupāda. He has taken the Vyāsa-pūjā book away, so I can't tell you more.

Devotee just knocked on the van and called for the Visiting *Sannyāsī*, who went out to see him. He wanted to know if the Visiting *Sannyāsī* knew whether Deities should face the east when a temple is constructed. The Visiting *Sannyāsī* didn't know. Oh, that devotee also told the Visiting *Sannyāsī* that the worse typhoon ever is approaching Japan and this shows that world disasters are increasing (karma). Therefore, New Māyāpur

will be fortunate if they can buy an adjoining piece of land because it has a roomy (although wet) cave.

*Haribol.* You smirk?

You think things are gonna  
go smooth for you and  
your publisher? Just see,  
man, you gonna wind up  
dead. Yeah, you and  
even the eleven-year-old  
girls and boys. Even the  
unborn, take it from  
this old-timer,  
the . . .

Quick before they fade: one homage said he wants to be brave to enter uncharted preaching territory for Śrīla Prabhupāda. (I thought, “In writing too: break the boundaries of what is literature.”)

Another said he wanted to accept Kṛṣṇa conscious duties for Prabhupāda even if they are troublesome (gulp).

One devotee said he has a hard heart. Another wrote a long essay I couldn’t follow. One said, “You saved me and I’m forever indebted.”

Somebody is resistant to writing here. The hours at Kutāṣṭha’s house were nice. We chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa in his temple room with Bhakta Linh on guitar. First I led, then Madhu. *Prasādam* was almost all from his garden—beets, potatoes, “salad,” and a rich dessert. Some ladies were present and we spoke more informally than we would in the temple. He showed me around his

large garden where he works six hours a day growing his twenty-one varieties of vegetables and fruits. Two cows. Gave us some jam.

Yet I was not fully occupied within. Back here for a rest and now I'm still not deeply occupied. Read Tenth Canto chapter on Śiśupāla's deliverance. He called Kṛṣṇa outrageous names: "disgrace of His family," etc., but the Sanskrit may be taken in a way that makes it sound as if Śiśupāla is praising Kṛṣṇa.

M. is busy with last preparations, trying to get directions to reach the ISKCON temple once we are in Barcelona—last faxes, packing. I think I'll take a last walk into the New Māyāpur woods. Don't want to socialize, but I will if I have to. Would like a break and in that time, my well can fill up so that I'm eager to lecture again on the *Bhāgavatam*. As the Vyāsa-pūjā homages state, a follower of Prabhupāda should be eager to preach, magnanimous, not wanting to be alone, etc.

One last walk, chant . . . hear the sound.

The forest is like a big tent protecting me from the rain. I hear it and see it beyond the boundaries of the trees. I can even see the roof of the temple building. Rain is soft in September as if falls on the green fields. Kutāṣṭha said that they can farm during all months of the year here.

Chant and think. One homage to Prabhupāda traced the line of the three ācāryas, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Bhaktisiddhānta Ṭhākura, and Śrīla Prabhupāda. He said you have to be empowered in this life to spread *saṅkīrtana* and he prays he may do so.

Wire fence to keep in cows has three strands from post to post. We are also fenced in, in a good sense, by the rules and regulations. We're also fenced in by the limits (self-imposed?) of offensive chanting and the crippled behavior we've come to accept as the way we are.

I accept and live within the boundaries. Occasionally I dance and write as if I'm free, but the fence is there to keep me in and to keep "them" and "it" out, for better or for worse.

A bird is crying loudly. This is definitely September; it is cool, but not cold. Green, but not the green of spring or summer. The birds are crying.



## September 18

Two minutes to 1 A.M.

Just read eighteenth chapter of *Gītā* regarding actions in the modes. Action in goodness is for the satisfaction of the Supreme, without satisfaction of false ego. It sounds so stark that I want to say "self-satisfaction" is okay in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. My self wants to be, has to be, and needs to be happy. We don't eliminate it. No self-satisfaction means no illusory or bodily sense of self. If we were to have no self at all, that would be voidism, yet Kṛṣṇa consciousness is stark in its renunciation of selfish desires: no false ego. I can't claim to be free of that. Actions should be inspired and sanctioned from within by the Supersoul, or done according to the scriptures and the spiritual master. It sounds simple enough.

M. joined a club for owners of American RV vehicles in England. They claim they can supply any Ford or Dodge part to anywhere in continental Europe within twenty-four hours. Based on this, he's going ahead to find and acquire an American van, if we can raise the money for a down payment.

Morning schedule: write, *japa*, arrange back of van for travel, *maṅgala-ārati*, exit at end of *tulasī-pūjā*, get into van and go into the darkness. Head for *autoroute*. Kalāvati has overworked serving us here. I don't know if we will have our biscuits for road travel. If not, we have couscous.

Knowledge in the modes of ignorance is only for sense gratification, for keeping the body comfortable. That means that all technological arrangements, such as the operation and comforts of a van, the well-built roads, and society's infrastructure are all based on ignorance or passion. Passionate action means hard work with attachment. When such action disregards scriptural regulations and causes distress for others, it's in ignorance. We appear to be within that infrastructure, but we may be free of material action provided we act for Kṛṣṇa. Biscuits and our use of the *autoroute* can be transcendental. The saving factor in such a motoring life is that we serve Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda by writing, reading, and visiting temples to lecture.

One homage writer said he wanted to preach, and not by his "boring lectures." That was a self-effacing and humble statement to make. It could also be taken as an indirect minimization of all lecturing, as if *Bhāgavatam* classes tend to be boring.

It's a fact, though, that we conditioned souls tend to get bored even when we hear a good lecture; and we tend to find fault with the speaker. We are restless and shallow and want to be entertained in novel ways. This homage-writer was saying that preaching for him is not merely his delivery of boring lectures, but organizing book distribution.

All right, I say, me too whose main preaching is to deliver lectures. But I too admit that lecturing isn't as appealing to me as writing and sharing Kṛṣṇa consciousness in that more intimate way.

May we get the Lord's protection as we travel. He is the real auto club to which we belong. Lord Nṛsiṃha-deva is our emblem, our St. Christopher medal, to guide us travelers. We travel so many miles under His sanction and shelter. We seek no material mishaps, even as we go to jinxing Spain. Hare Kṛṣṇa. Whatever happens, Kṛṣṇa is in charge and it's an opportunity to surrender to His holy names by uttering them outwardly and chanting them within.

Let M. get rest so he can drive. Old faces and thin bodies sitting strapped and speeding south today, tires revolving on the society's best roads.

Record it, little bits of it at least. Have faith in this process. O Lord, O energy of the Lord. *Śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu nityānanda, śrī advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda.*

Good-bye for awhile to Rādhā-Govinda-Mādhava. Good-bye to the trees, including the one under which Śrīla Prabhupāda sat, the broken *kuñja* tree and all the others with their pine cones or chestnuts or acorns, the birds and insects, the path in the woods, the lives of the few devotees here who maintain the place for Prabhupāda and their own well-being in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. May we find satisfaction in his service.

Devotees' idiosyncrasies and eccentricities should not be held against them—they have the saving quality of



wanting to serve Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, we should ourselves keep active, keep light, and maintain good will toward others, even if we feel we can't do much for them. If after a lecture they ask me how they can improve cow protection, as if I know something from having lived at Gītā-nāgarī, or how they can get along better with devotees, I tend to say that these questions are not something with which I can help. I don't know. I squeeze out phrases such as, "Taking care of cows is as responsible as raising children," or "Get along with each other from a solid base of individual *sādhana* and satisfaction in personal service"—dribs and drabs.

I try to convince myself that I am acting under Kṛṣṇa's control. If I am not, I had better plan how to adjust myself so that I am following His plans.

Consider the pain Śrīla Prabhupāda went through. Heart attacks on two nights, and on the third night, he had a dream that Kṛṣṇa encouraged him to go on.

Before *maṅgala-ārati* in temple:

Hello, good-bye  
I'll sing  
clap hands *pūjārī*  
open gate  
behold the Lord  
brush aside your gunk  
of mind and see not stone  
and fancy cloth but  
spiritual form,  
Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā  
Gaura-Nitāi.



I'll be gone and They will reign. I too live always in soul. Swami, lead me, teach me, let me be your *śiṣya* and may you always correct me to suit your purpose as you did and I obeyed, 1966–77. We are alone without you. We depend on Supersoul—and yes, your many men in ISKCON.

Poems on the road offered to Thee by me. We dare to roll over rainy roads upheld by Your mercy.

Bells

conch

curtains

see the Lord now.

2:30 P.M.

Travel note—rainy driving all morning. I was in the back. Developed a little behind-the-eye twinge. We stopped at a P-stop where they have artificial “megaliths” resembling ancient stone columns, and cars are parked here. After bathing (two bottles of water) and a 15-minute relaxation and lunch, my head has calmed down. Now I am “free” to do what I want. Wrote on a Post-it: “Get into Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books more. How? A plan for reading—*lectio divina* or a particular book or topic or notes while reading—*whatever will work*.” It will take discipline and persistence through the dryness no matter what method I choose. *September Catchall* catches this too.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says we had better take fully to Kṛṣṇa consciousness—*sa vai puṁsaṁ paro-dharmo*—without interruption and without motive. Those are symptoms of *parā-dharma*, love of God, the first-class religion.



Yeah, well,  
I know what's  
good for me.

5:05 P.M.

This is a story and I am compelled to tell it. What is deeper? Philosophizing? A brilliant idea may come for reform in my life, or a metaphor for a book I could write, but to carry out the bright idea takes ordinary steps one after another. Learn to live in that steady walking and even reposing, sleeping, dreaming, waking.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness in my shoes—deck shoes, loafer style (no shoelaces), dyed saffron. Put them on and walk the circular path at this P-stop. It's dark, thundering, and there's no one out to disturb me or say "Bonjour." I walk and walk and stop to exercise a little.

Yes, that brilliant idea would have to be accommodated in a life which has limits and rhythms. For example, the idea to start another reading reform notebook. I have tried this sort of thing often. Lord Kṛṣṇa says that any attempt, even if we don't carry it out perfectly, is never lost. If someone goes to medical school for five years (in India) and doesn't pass the final exam, then the government still allows him to practice legally as a physician, but not with the full credentials awarded to someone who successfully passed

the exam. But why plan for the benefits of failure? Because it may happen. And we want to encourage ourselves that we should make the attempt regardless of the likelihood of failure.



Thinking, thinking, what can I do  
the mind spaces out.  
The days dwindle down  
to a precious few  
October, November!  
And these few precious days  
I'll spend with You,  
*mahā-yogī*, Lord Kṛṣṇa,  
You spend life with me  
so I pray to You for help  
to transform myself.  
Please show me the way.  
You can do it and I need  
a benediction so I can be  
more pleasing to You while satisfying myself that I  
am living up to the expectations of individual honesty  
and fulfillment.



Praying for mercy to see the path he may take for practical improvement, he surrenders to Kṛṣṇa in his own way. He doesn't want fame, but an indication that he should keep going or be shown the better path, and in either case, shown the way and given the *bala* to do it.

“O my Lord, powerful as fire, Omnipotent One, now I offer You all obeisances and fall on the ground at Your feet. O my Lord, please lead me on the right path to reach You, and since You know all that I have done in the past, please free me from the reactions to my past sins so that there will be no hindrance to my progress.”  
(Śrī Īśopaniṣad, mantra 18)

“How impertinent and imperious we are that we feel the need to tell You, the Omniscient, what You already know! Make us humble enough to acknowledge that You have more to impart to us than we have to impart to You. May we who shout to get the world's attention



learn to wait in quietness and trust for the whisper of  
Your still, small Voice. Amen.” (Sören Kierkegaard, *The  
Mystic of Prayer and Prayer*, edited by George Bowers)

## September 19

1 A.M.

Did you note what *Bhagavad-gītā* says regarding understanding, determination, and happiness under the three modes? Still finding traces of passion, ignorance, and conditioned goodness in yourself? Not one hundred percent pure yet? I noticed the worker in goodness doesn't expect anything from his work; he's not overly attached to a particular kind of work or any sensual results. He remains enthusiastic (working for Kṛṣṇa) until the work is completed.

What about when we find our lives humdrum and ourselves not making great advancement? What about when we notice that we are not deeply tasting the preciousness of God-given time and experience? Well, that's it. We can still pray, even in that state of indifference. Ask to be given the knowledge how to please Kṛṣṇa, but we should continue with the work assigned to us.

Rain all night on this roof—the atmosphere outside is alien, although I feel safe and dry in the van. It's not comfortably warm, but I don't turn on the gas heating system; I don't want to use it up. Put on a coat, turn on

the 10-volt spotlight, and read the sacred *Gītā*, moving now to the concluding verses of the last chapter. I read like a school student, and that's okay too. I have to accept it; it's good. I worship Kṛṣṇa with my mind when I read and try to understand and retain (with *śraddhā*) the Lord's teachings.

People depend on me; I depend on Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Therefore, when I walk, ride, talk, I don't act whimsically or passionately. I don't look for results or act in ignorance by disregarding scriptural injunctions. I try to work for Kṛṣṇa. I also ask myself what that means and examine to see whether I am actually doing that. I keep doing my work.

We plan to reach a spot near Barcelona by tonight and then stay in a gas station parking lot. Then we'll spend three days with devotees in the city, then drive to a place where we can do a seven-day *japa-vrata*—sixty-four rounds a day—joined by a couple of devotees. That will take me up to the end of the month. Three weeks' worth of forwarded mail should meet us in Barcelona. These are the activities that will shape these last days and I'll try to record them here.

It's a part-time exercise to write this, but I hope it reflects something wholehearted. I have a desire to write a record that goes deep and that attains Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The record itself will survive and be of help to some and perhaps of interest to some others, and it will help me too.

The demons and their senses. They try to find happiness by combining the senses with the sense objects. All they find is misery. We should avoid that path.

If I take pleasure in the warmth of my sleeping bag or in the sound of rain on the roof, is that material? Yes, if I live for it. However, it is not material to note it in the context of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That's my contention—that mine is a Kṛṣṇa conscious life. The *Gītā* purport says that one tries for material happiness and fails, but when and if he meets a great soul, then he can take up a life of true happiness. Then his work, understanding, happiness, and determination become transformed into something spiritual. It's not that we'll stop feeling all sensation when that happens, but our understanding of those sensations and our participation in them becomes Kṛṣṇa conscious.

Here I am, traveling for Kṛṣṇa; I'm a devotee; I am a servant of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I get up very early to read and write. The nicest part of this travel is the feeling of the Lord's protection. I feel the need to take shelter, and I see through the illusions of material wellbeing.

As fallible human beings, we do not seek to be put into miserable states. We are not so advanced as to seek or pray for trouble to body and mind. Our test is to accept trouble when it comes, or perhaps even not even notice it much. To remain enthusiastic through the completion of work is in the mode of goodness. We don't have to worry about success or failure, but just keep working for Kṛṣṇa. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

"I can feel my heart bumping," M. says, "after I pass a car or truck and the van is failing to accelerate." He



starts to pass someone and the van doesn't give him the expected speed; rather, it starts to slow down. That's another reason he wants a new one. Can we afford it? Do we deserve it? Is it material to seek one? I let him go into it. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote me that I should be comfortable (in my motor home, 1975–6) and that a devotee should have a first-class vehicle. That was the vision of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Don't be ashamed or shy or guilty; take it and use it in Kṛṣṇa's service and not for sense gratification. It is a facility for convenient reading, writing, traveling, and preaching, for a sublime life. Now M. is reading brochures, and as we rode yesterday, we spoke of the features we'll seek in the new van and how we can find them.

When do “wet” and “dry” make us comfortable? Discomfortable? Our senses demand the comfort of both at different times. Wet ink soaking into a page is good, but then we want it to dry. Wet rain on the roof is all right, as long as it doesn't flood the highways or impede our travel. We measure things in that way—in terms of our Kṛṣṇa conscious duties. A good worker doesn't become depressed in any condition, though.

Time for *japa*. I am whispering my rounds for the first hour and a half because Madhu is sleeping. He needs his rest in order to drive. I am merely a passenger. I whisper them, but try to bring the mind under the Self, to approximate, to approach the holy names of Kṛṣṇa. I cherish the act of chanting. It's something I can actually do. It's not a farce or a trifle, nor is it impossible. I can say the name over and over and know

its potency. Even if I don't manage to chant with attention, the results are great. Thank You, Lord, and thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

5 A.M.

The Visiting *Sannyāsī* said, "Hey, we are entering Spain. I was there last year. I wrote poems every day and breathtaking descriptions of the land. I called it Machado's Spain. Can you match that?"

Yes, the author mumbled, but this year is different. You were at the end of a fictional roll, *A Trip to Spain*. I'm in a different place.

"Still," the Visiting *Sannyāsī* insisted, "you could try *something*. Tell about the day it rained and you were afraid attackers might surround your van and cut you up or at least throw you into the cold and rain in your slippers and sweatpants. You said, 'This is it, now. We have to depend fully on Kṛṣṇa.'"

As the Visiting *Sannyāsī* spoke, Narahari started up the engine of the 747—I mean the Renault Master van and I ended this here, for now.

The scientists say we don't even bother to discuss the argument from design (for God's existence), but Sadā-pūta Prabhu bopped them with examples of how the atheistic scientist himself uses the argument for design inadvertently to support his theory that everything happens by chance and only we humans are here to declare it.

Visiting Sannyāsī was saying  
in Spain Machado wrote  
great poems and I  
penned at P-stop  
urgent song, don't make fun  
don't tread on me.

According to our fictive story  
the GBC made a jibe at a poet  
and he then poured out  
closet verse.

Hail

rain full of grace  
the Lord is with thee.

I am blessed too,  
although I don't live in Vṛndāvana.  
I keep a picture of Rūpa Gosvāmī's  
*samādhi* or *kuṭīr*—I

don't know which is which.

The picture is better for me  
than "reality" because  
the monkeys unnerve me  
when I go into the  
caste *gosvāmīs'* courtyard.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote me I  
like your mobile temple  
and will see it when I go  
to Detroit.

"Keep yourself comfortable  
so you can work nicely.

There is no need for  
dry *vairāgya*."

Wipe the windows from the inside. Rituals of our driving life. I wear slippers while riding up front and sleep when I get tired, like Śrīla Prabhupāda did in New York City days in 1965–6.

France has the best highways with their park-like rest areas, but we hit a patch where they are extending the road, so it was a twisty morning. Had to stop on a small patch just off the highway for breakfast and rest. Heard Śrīla Prabhupāda lecturing from 1966.

Machado's, Jiminez's Spain.  
My experience, toothless, hurried  
never mind, I am a devotee.  
Does that mean I can do  
no wrong? Don't need to  
rhyme or measure line in  
a poem? No, it means  
please accept this.

Time shaped this line because  
it was written before taking rest  
inches off the highway, cars whoosh  
past our heads, two more hours and  
we pass over the border showing  
our passports as if they were  
secrets  
and then we can flourish  
in Spain.



No, it will be the same there—  
good, rest for lunch and then—  
highways. It's sterile you say?  
I say keep in *Bhagavad-gītā*,  
I know no countries or  
peoples but Śrī Kṛṣṇa and  
my master and those words  
that lead us back  
to Godhead.  
This is not Machado's  
Spain.

Ten minutes to 10 A.M.

Re-starting after breakfast rest. A few hours from  
the border.

Rev up, sit back  
trust that Madhu can drive.  
Your rapid series of dreams  
you don't remember  
are not important now.  
Chant on beads awhile  
as you rattle on the road.

Mammy? he cried.  
I want to not cry.  
I dreamt someone had  
to go at once into a  
two-week naval reserve cruise,  
but I didn't. I was  
through with such obligations.

Could spend all day  
savoring. In the dream I  
wasted time in bad  
association. Someone was  
throwing away *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* volumes  
and we were picking them up.  
I woke and knew we were  
just off the highway.

Montpelier is a big city  
ahead. We don't expect  
much inquiry at the border.  
Van has started up  
rattle, rattle, here goes . . .

Farm fields flooded, as are some of the access roads  
onto the highway. The main highway seems okay. We  
are headed for A-9 *autoroute* south. Church steeples. M.  
plays a Spanish conversation lecture tape.

Beziers, Toulouse, Barcelona ahead.

First sign of the Bull, profile billboard on hill—Feria,  
it says. I look but don't see or feel much, just say to M.,  
"There's the bull!"

## Twenty minutes to Noon

We are wearing our *dhotis*. Stopped for diesel. Last  
stop in France. It's a Total gas station. I was sitting in  
the back thinking how Machado fled Franco's army in  
1922, crossed the border into France in the back seat of  
an old car, his mother sitting on his lap; he died a few  
months later in the French Pyrennes. I was thinking,  
"When I die, maybe it will be interesting."

The Visiting Sannyāsi thought, "When I am close to death, maybe I won't write so much. Then people will understand, 'He was more attached to life than death.' I will be very honest about it."

Oh, it will not be like that, a gentle, literary event. Write while you can.

España, Señor Mattei  
taught us how to speak  
Castillian *español* in  
Tottenville High School,  
Staten Island, New York  
in a past life. Happy now  
to be in ranks of  
devotees.

We stopped and paid our fare, getting off the *auto-route*. French gendarmes were spot-checking cars. They didn't stop us. M. said there have been bombings in France by Algerian Muslims, so the police may be looking for Arabic faces. Ours are white in this white van with Irish plates. I thought *that* was the international border, but the international border is still ahead. "Be calm," I tell myself, "this is nothing." Live with Kṛṣṇa within.

Still rainy, cloudy, but warmer. We are climbing into the Pyrennes, talking about the time we were "entering the life of prayer."

Here's the border, the monument on the pyramid hill.

## Noon, Spain

There was a tight queue of cars being checked one at a time and not so quickly at the border. In a parallel lane, a camper cruised up and we went close behind it. The agents paid us no attention as they queried the car drivers. It felt as if we were sneaking, but that's it, we are over. What did you want, some adventure to write home about?

4:30 P.M.

We are parked overnight at a gas station two hours from Barcelona. Devotees say it's difficult to find the way through the maze of one-way streets in the city. They were supposed to send us directions, but never did. I recall in past years devotees who lived in Barcelona getting lost in the city. Madhu just bought a map and said it doesn't look so difficult, so we will head off at 5 A.M. and trust in the luck of the Irish. I have a few hours free tonight, but seem to lack settled resolution to work at any one thing seriously. I'll go look at a chapter in the Tenth Canto. I'm up to Chapter 75, which is about Śalva's airplane.

Just thinking about reading *Bhāgavatam* makes me aware again of how our van is a world apart from the material world. Even now at the busy Spanish gas station, I hear the material world around me, but I remain in the transcendental atmosphere of my "room," which has pictures of Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda on the walls and Prabhupāda's books strapped into their bookcases. I'm buried in the center of it—his books, lecture tapes, the images of devotional life. All I need is adequate lighting, relative quiet, and time, and I can produce golden



hours of Kṛṣṇa conscious *sādhana*, gold threads woven into an immortal *cādar*.

Bang! He slams that door  
so hard coming back and going out again,  
Madhu on the phone or getting water  
and I do the equivalent back here—  
bang! The sensitive poet sounds  
his heart, criticizes self before  
his friends, fetches water,  
reads that Pradyumna  
refreshed himself with water,  
put on armor again and  
returned to battle. Kill Śalva!  
Kṛṣṇa did it Himself.

Bang! There he goes again,  
I'm getting used to it.  
Don't speak of meters,  
light meters, serious balanced  
very carefully—takes years—  
composed poems. I have only  
a few minutes before light is  
gone. No grave thoughts. Live  
peacefully in España gas  
station safe from robbers,  
safe from bombers, safe  
in this body. Ain't no  
safety but His lotus feet—  
I pray.

## September 20

1:04 A.M.

A gas station's solitude in back of van and black ink flows. I read *Bhagavad-gītā* for half an hour. Soon I'll have "finished" it again and will have to decide what to read next. This is simply my diary, written for myself and anyone else who cares to read it.

Do your work for the Lord. Those verses are reassuring in the eighteenth chapter summaries. Every work has some fault, just as fire is covered by smoke. Work with it anyway. Don't give it up for another's work. Do the work you are attracted to by nature. Work it out, purify yourself by determined occupational acts rendered as offerings to the Supreme Lord.

The writer's life is also like that. I won't say I thrive on imperfection, but I'm aware of them. I don't strive so much to craft something perfectly. I just keep serving imperfect, smoky work in prose and poems with devotion.

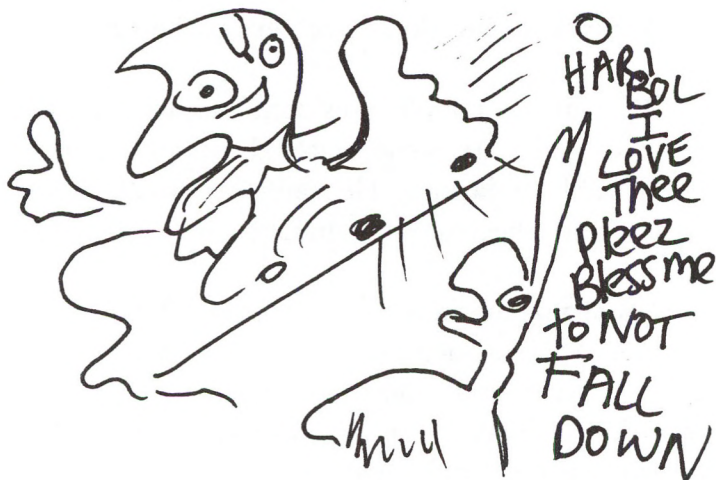
Is there a higher stage where you give up occupational work? Yes, but even in ISKCON, the transcendental society, there is occupational work. Some work as *brāhmaṇas*, some as *kṣatriyas* or *vaiśyas*. They shouldn't give up

their work. Of course, we should not indulge in occupational hazards. That is, we should try to make our work as pure as possible. But don't stop, even when there are risks.

A GBC man or temple president has to deal with nondevotees and learn some material arts of communication or public relations. He can't be afraid of such things. He won't become contaminated if he does it for Kṛṣṇa.

In my *Gītā* reading notes, I listed some of the defects in a writer's life: association with nondevotee books while doing occasional research; avoidance of other duties in order to concentrate on writing; self-absorption; delving in memory and dream worlds, etc., to attain evocative images. A writer doesn't have to do all these things, but some "smoke" is inevitable. Work through it. Mention Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya and Śrīla Prabhupāda on every page and direct the heart of the writing to become sincere, usable service in the *saṅkīrtana* movement.

This catchall isn't getting so much of the richness of an autumn harvest, but it's what I picked up and encountered in these days of travel and temple visits. It's my awareness that we are protected by the Lord's grace and my gratitude for His blessings. I ask His forgiveness for any and all complaining I have done. He is not withholding His mercy and protection. He knows me even before I reveal myself to Him or before I pray. He knows even what I don't say. He knows me better than I know myself. He will arrange for everything in due course and in the best way. He is the expert mystic.



I worship Him who is described in *Īsopaniṣad* and in all the *Vedas* directly or indirectly. I want to be absorbed in studying His words and life, in His service. As a lecturer, I try to assure devotees that they are secure in devotional service, and that their position is supremely good. All they have to do now is work toward the goal with determination while they depend on Kṛṣṇa for the results. *Tat śṛṇu*, just hear from Me, the Lord says.

These few precious days  
I'll offer as devotional service  
calling it September is a  
convention of the material world.

I am your servant . . .

Oh, one thing I'll look forward to in this last week is bringing Śrīla Prabhupāda out on our altar in a room during the *japa-vrata*. He will give us his *darśana* and I may compose some odes to him or talk to him while I



resume the daily *pūjā*. Thus the theme, “I am his servant,” emerges more. He is always with me in any case.

4 A.M.

Remembering a day in Newcastle with disciples. It was a loving festival. *Prasādam* too, and aromatherapy—drops of an essential oil in a clay burner placed in my room. Did it help? I don’t know, but it was a nice offering from Bhakti-rasa dāsa. The ladies cooked lunch. In the attic temple room with the low ceiling I asked him, “What Deities do you have here?” He replied, “A picture of Pañca-tattva and a full-sized *mūrti* of Śrīla Prabhupāda.” Across the street what used to be Leaze’s arcade (many stores) is being renovated after a fire got into a basement nightclub. The upper floors will be used for student apartments. Will it be good for preaching? The nightclub will not make a nice neighbor, but perhaps the students will come to the temple.

We bathed and a little lake spread out from our van into the parking lot. Never mind, we’ll be gone. That’s all the time I can spare.

12:25 noon

Barcelona temple. Mail. It makes my catchall writing feel diffused. Much of ISKCON news appears shallow and superficial. In some cases, the activities themselves may be superficial, but it’s the media coverage of them, the newspaper story and photos and way of telling it. Much of spiritual life doesn’t lend itself to this kind of communication. When Prabhupāda was present, we didn’t have it. Even *his* acts could have

been reported with less than good taste—as sensational or newsy or I don't know exactly what. It doesn't seem completely right. And there's too much of it with all the various stories out on the pages and the ads—a dozen tape ministries and other articles for sale. Even a serious, alarming story of devotees being attacked in Russia by thugs who came to the temple seems hard to take in that format.

But we are a society in the world and that's the way it is. What a proliferation of cassettes, video series, books, magazines, projects, persons, and opinions. Sometimes these things would be better to be carried on more privately.

For example, by letter. I received a letter from a devotee who has been reading *Radio Shows*:

Somehow or other, just about every night, I tune into your radio shows. And sometimes, when there is time, during lunch I tune in and wait for you to say something that will send my heart soaring like, "I have no other alternative but to keep trying." And the very first broadcast you did where you talk about time running out and preserving life by art and writing. Wow! I was wondering how do you do it? How do you always manage to say what I'm longing to hear? And it is good to be with you (thank you) as your writing takes on different avenues of Kṛṣṇa conscious expression and creativity and saves my life.

Another devotees writes:

I have read *Radio Shows*. It was such a nice book. I am always enlivened when reading of your feelings and strong desire to become a better servant. You once wrote me a letter saying that your writing is extremely

personal. You said that if it troubled me to read your “confessional” writings, I shouldn’t hesitate to speak to you about it. Actually, I find the “confessional” writing to be the most attractive to me. I don’t see these “confessions” as the faults of the spiritual master. Rather, I see them as the intense desire to deepen one’s Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This desire is the highest desire. To want to be completely absorbed in the service of guru and Kṛṣṇa. So I enjoy books like *Radio Shows*, *Shack Notes*, and *Wild Garden* because inside these pages you express your intense desire to use everything in the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa. That desire and urgency is what I most desire to have.

These are not for news broadcasting. I wouldn’t want to blurb it somewhere and have someone write back and say, “I don’t agree. I think his writing is schmaltzy.”

Answer the mail—the world of devotees with problems. Someone had a baby. Someone is learning a lesson. Where am I at? A newspaper article makes fun of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. Do we deserve it? But they don’t know the inner nature of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. How easy it is to judge from externals and be mistaken. Influx of ISKCON news and ads makes me want to preserve my own way.

I lecture tonight in the temple on the second verse of the *Īsopaniṣad*. The purport says, “A humble God-centered life is more valuable than a colossal hoax of a life dedicated to Godless altruism or socialism.”

Don’t be too quiet and alone, Sats. Preach your message. But no polemics.



4:20 P.M.

I was going to do a marathon on letter answering, but I can't. It's not physiologically feasible. Also, it's better for the integrity of the correspondence that I answer each one slower and with care.

These few precious days. Want a transfusion of energy? I trust in Kṛṣṇa and you trust in Kṛṣṇa and that's the way it is. You trust me. I will tell you something good for you. You discover that people are walking all over you; it's a painful discovery and you say you don't want to let it happen anymore. I say you are right and reaffirm what you have discovered. I give a gentle hint and reminder.

How are you?

I'm in the van across the street from the temple on a small piece of land. Someone tore down a building and created a cleared piece of land. Now they use it to park cars. Just outside on the road below, a small tractor is scraping the road. They dig it up. There's a man working with a jackhammer. It doesn't bother me much. This is a big city. We went to an eyeglass place and I'm getting new frames for my glasses because the ones I have don't fit. They kept slipping down my nose. I told the girl who sold us the new frames that I was not particular about style (they couldn't find the exact style I have on the present glasses). I left them there to be fit. The new ones will be two-toned, black and brown. Later I asked M. if he thought they were too flashy or strange. He said no, the two colors are conservative. "It's different, but not flashy. But then you're talking to



someone who used to dye his hair green. I'm not the most sedate person."

That's what I want: to look staid. I'll put my "green hair" into my writing and drawing. As for physical appearance, I want to be sedate—that's the word, not staid. I don't want my appearance to reveal the other side of my nature. Then I can come out with it more in creative ways. Anyway, the two-toned frames are on order and I'll have to live with them.



## September 21

12:25 A.M.

Had headache all afternoon yesterday, so I had to cancel the *Īsopaniṣad* lecture and take rest at 6 P.M. I had sharp pain all night. Dreamt a car accident threw us high into a palm tree where I grabbed onto the trunk. I was unhurt, climbed down, and thereafter did whatever I wanted (because I had survived), but my acts were not enlightened, not Kṛṣṇa conscious.

I still have the pain, so I will turn off the light and lie down. Doesn't look like I'll be attending the morning program.

One letter in the pack was from a devotee who has been in the army for twenty years, during which time he hasn't been practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now he is reviving his spiritual life, found my address, and wrote me a letter:

Mahārāja, after your letter to me, I thought instantly that it would be so nice to meet you again. Not needed now, after absorbing your *Shack Notes*, I feel I have met you again, and have conversed with you. I feel I know your devotional self, as you are most courageous and so honest to write these books, revealing yourself and masterfully

focusing on Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I attempted free daily diary writings, my internal critics stifled me, the entries instead of flowing turned into "Had lunch today." After reading your book, I am taking your cue, and have started another daily diary entry program, focused on my Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and striving to tap into my creativity.

I have always been "bitten by the writing bug," and now will channel energy.

Mahārāja, please write another book on *japa*! *Japa Walks*, *Japa Talks* was a great consolidation of so much info and input from so many devotees . . . of all your books, *Shack Notes* appears to be your baby born a couple of years back. I hope that child is doing nicely and thriving!

I liked this letter because I felt this devotee was insightful in his understanding that *Shack Notes* was special to me. I'll tell him that the baby has been multiplying and that I'm still going with the roll that began with that book. I'll tell him about *The Wild Garden* and *Churning the Milk Ocean*.

Another devotee is sharing an apartment with a devotee to save expenses. The devotee he lives with is almost fifty years old and is now suicide-prone because in recent years, both of his sons have died and his wife divorced him. My correspondent writes me:

I shared a lot of sadness with my roommate. I tried to listen without philosophizing and I think he's feeling better now. Still he's almost fifty and he says all his hopes and dreams in this life have left him. He wants to die. There are lessons in his life for me. Aren't all devotees' lives intertwined? Can't we just be humble and



learn from others' pain? I'm trying to learn like that and not give in to feeling good that someone other than me is feeling sorrow. Soon enough, sorrow will come my way. But now I ain't crying. Life is all right.

Not all my letters are fan mail or sharing sympathetic thoughts. I got two in which I was criticized for preaching allegiance to ISKCON, which is another way of "blanketing over the problems." Mail from ISKCON critics isn't unusual. I even get hate mail. But these two were unusual because they were from disciples who want to see me as a spiritual master but can't stand it when I seem to go along with the ISKCON authorities, in whom, for various reasons, they have lost all faith. I'm mulling over how to answer their latest letters.

11 A.M.

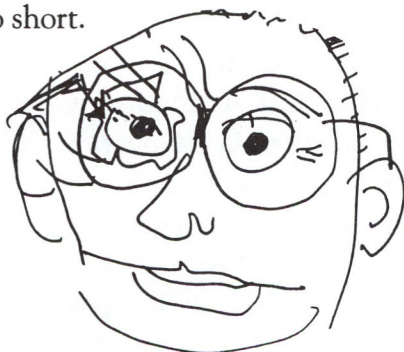
I can imagine a time in the future when I'll be headache free, fully cured, and leading the kind of life I most want to. You can imagine it in a trance. Can you actualize it? Some people get rid of headaches by imagining they are warming their hands over fire; that makes the blood descend from the head. We may need a special experience to jar us loose from the inner focus on pain. Or it could happen by a sweet, easy imagining of a delicious aroma or other pleasing sensation and thus we will imagine ourselves out of pain and into pleasure.

I could imagine going into the past and being with Prabhupāda, being lost in those feelings again, especi-



ally his blessed, warm assurance. Imagine becoming whole, integrated, pain free, a servant.

None of those imaginings seem to banish my present state of pain. I write this down at the risk of incurring prolonged pain because I want the record of September 21 to not be too short.



Even if I don't get cured by that way of imagining and intending in trance, and even if naturopath-yoga doesn't do it, I will still get clear time in which I can write.

I imagine I'll write more timed books and usable writing sessions, prosey poems and poemy prose. Kṛṣṇa conscious cataracts, aqueducts, tears, and sermons to the mob, concert-going sophisticated book distribution. ISKCON, ISKCON ploys and ads and Centennials. Blow the horn, the day is here.

Do you know what I mean?

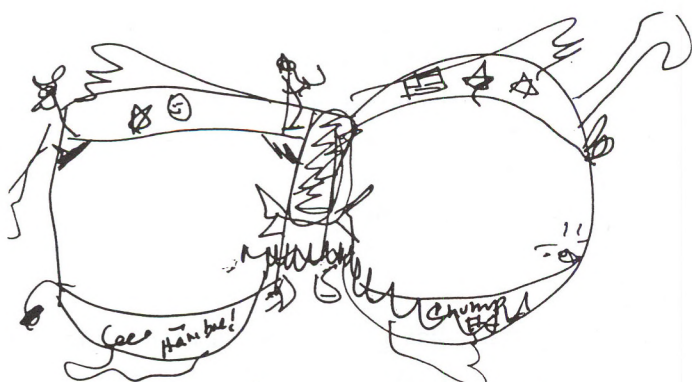
5 P.M.

Headache pain has gone down and I'm planning to give a class on *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*. In the meantime, M. handed me an envelope with a letter from someone here. The letter expresses his bitter feelings of his life in ISKCON, attacks against me because he remembers

when I was a GBC zonal leader, and stopped him from distributing books and told him to sell bumper stickers instead to collect money for one of the ailing temples. He describes my order as "evil," and says, "When people try to draw lines between you and humility, they discredit themselves and display their ignorance of the word. . . . In fact, you never showed much of anything but the face of a frustrated writer. Certainly bliss is not a word commonly used in connection with you."

I sent him a letter saying I'm sorry for the mistakes that I made when I was managing. As a result of such mistakes, I intend to never manage again.

Do you think you've left the past behind? Have you really attempted reform on the path of honesty? Suddenly the past looms up again in the angry face of someone who holds you responsible for his suffering. You apologize, but it's never enough. You can only try to go forward.



New eye glasses bought in  
Barcelona

## September 22

1:12 A.M.

I welcomed the rain and thunder during the night because it blotted out the noise of local traffic. I also thought it might curb thieves, vandals, and other mischief-makers. Let it rain. I slept blissfully. (Yes, I do sometimes feel blissful.)

Now it's Friday. Plenty is wrong in the world, but I will speak on a *Bhāgavatam* verse that says King Pṛthu was a servant of the devotees. Say in this connection that the world is upsidedown (don't say "topsy-turvy" or he won't be able to translate it).

Devotees shouldn't be sorry that they are not honored. One who is always looking for honor cannot surrender to the Lord. Haridāsa Ṭhākura didn't want honor, and he did not fight to obtain the right to enter the Jagannātha Purī Mandir.

We shouldn't even think of ourselves as devotees, but as servants of devotees. A Vaiṣṇava is elevated and his influence is great. We should seek only to serve Kṛṣṇa and please Prabhupāda whether or not we are honored.

I overslept, so don't have time to write now. I need to make up for the terrible, silent rounds I chanted yester-

day due to the headache pain. I feel fortunate for whatever pain I feel—I deserve worse—but I’m also glad and grateful to be relieved of it and able to get back to my service. Yes, what I do is tiny, just as ISKCON Barcelona’s influence is tiny in this big city.

A motorbike whines nearby, but I’m safe and dry in this van. Even if we were to get attacked, Kṛṣṇa would still be here in my heart.

People have to pay for their crimes in this life or the next. That’s karma. They come back in their next life and are subject to their reactions. People kill other people in all different ways; victims, refugees often, are pushed into open graves. Atrocious. Kṛṣṇa consciousness can solve all the world’s problems because it teaches how to leave the world behind and go back to Godhead. I spoke the solid truths of *Īsopaniṣad* last night—*asuryā nāma te lokā . . .* Evil-doers go to hell. Devotees are honored in the spiritual world.

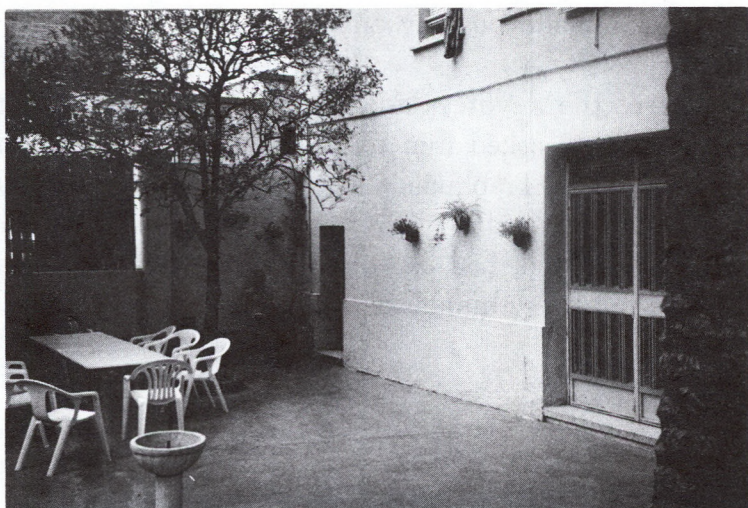
I am sorry if I hurt anyone’s Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now I want to work in my last days to set a decent example. Die trying.

Last few days of September  
but by His grace we get more time.  
Use it well. Chant and  
dance and lecture and when you  
eat, be grateful to Him.  
Regret your wrongs, pray,  
Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda . . .  
let me hear holy names.



The Barcelona temple is actually in the city of Barcelona, unlike many temples in ISKCON that go by the nearest city name. For example, the Prague temple is not actually right in Prague, and the Philadelphia temple is in the suburbs of Philadelphia. Traffic buzzes right by the front door of the Barcelona temple. It's noisy and it's hard to find parking spots. Right now, the street is being torn up in front of the temple—it just adds to the chaos. Still, the temple has a small, fenced-in, cement-covered front yard. The fence is high—you can't see inside from the street—and the yard is sunken about three steps down from street level.

In this yard are two tall palm trees. It makes it feel like a haven, a monastery, in the middle of the city. Whenever I go through the gate (which we have to enter with our key), I feel the peace inside that yard. I find it appealing and protective, especially because it exists within a city.



One time we went in there and I saw a *mātāji* walking back and forth chanting her *japa*. Another time a *mātāji* was wheeling a child in a carriage. The ISKCON devotees can go to the temple there and get that shelter even though it's just inches away from the street. The devotees also have tables set out front, and in good weather, they take *prasādam* out there. All glories to the sanctuary that ISKCON offers to the material world.

Twenty to 4 P.M.

My excuse for not writing today has been that I've been answering mail. Tomorrow we leave at 5 A.M. Madhu told Hṛdaya-Caitanya and Yadunandana that I will leave the temple room just at the end of *tulasi-pūjā* and M. will be waiting in the van. I will get into the van and it will start moving—so they had better be on time. I can't remember when we last had four people in the van. It will be an interesting adventure, stopping for breakfast and pushing on to reach our *japa* spot by lunchtime.

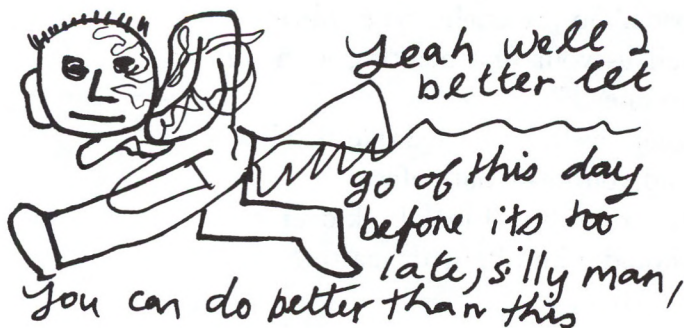
One of the devotees asked me to speak tonight on Prabhupāda. I asked him to have questions ready. I'm not preparing a Prabhupāda lecture, but hoping to speak it extemporaneously. After this talk, I won't give another for a week because of the increased *japa*. I just want to put everything aside and chant the holy name.



Oh, you think  
whatever you  
draw or write  
or think is

interesting worthwhile Kṛṣṇa consciousness? No, I don't say that. I say the men who dig up the street put some new pipes down, then put cement over them, and now they're putting cinder block squares over that. They make the finishing touches neat.

Walking out the temple front gate, I stepped into the fresh cement sidewalk. Of course, the cement was still wet. I didn't think it was my fault—they should have put a board across it—but one of the workers grumbled at me. I couldn't speak enough Spanish to express an apology, but I gestured that I was sorry and also that I was helpless to avoid it since there was no sign or warning or means for me to have known it was still wet. I think he realized that. M. said they should have been glad to accept the foot impression, but they didn't see it that way.





Yeah, if he asks, "Tell us about Prabhupāda's compassion," I can start with his compassion toward me. Don't be afraid to repeat old stories or apologize for them. You've come all the way to Spain, a place unfamiliar with my vintage stories. That's one of the reasons I have come here. I can tell the story of my giving Prabhupāda a mango or even the one I told in Zurich last month of how Prabhupāda saved lunch for me, or when I bought the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* volumes from him, or the time . . . whatever comes in that setting tonight. Maybe the devotees will be happy to hear stories of His Divine Grace and I can turn some of them into instructions for us today.



"Tell us about Prabhupāda—  
our baby's first word was 'Pabu-  
pada.' So you ought to be able to  
tell us your first meeting with him—  
go ahead."

Yeah, well, he looked like Buddha.  
Did you hear that before?  
Is it true? Can I look back over  
shoulder and be with master?



Maybe fib or fudge a little to make it  
come out nice like a pie slice  
or the way the brick layer is forcing  
the cinder blocks to line up  
in a row just right.

He looked like Buddha. Long earlobes,  
I see his smooth golden skin,  
no *kūrta*. He is saint from India  
in Lower East Side. We  
didn't know. We chanted  
with him. One day I had  
to stay in late at my office  
and couldn't go for noon lunch. Noon lunch  
with the Swami. So I phoned him and  
said, Swamiji? I said, This is  
Steve. Do you remember me?

Yes, he said.

I said I can't come at twelve today,  
can you save lunch for me?

He did. He put the plate on the  
floor the way you would for  
a dog.

Don't stop me if you've heard  
this. I need to continue and get in  
touch with the best things that ever  
happened to me. I need to honor them,  
give them a fresh airing and speaking.

Oh yes, it may seem like I'm claiming, "I'm very fortunate." But it's just my way of praising him by real live remembrance of the person whom we all want to know—or what's the Centennial for?

It's just a matter of my surrendering to the memories and telling them without embarrassment, "a trembling melody without regrets or embarrassment."

Swamiji said the mango is the king of all fruits. He said they are not available in this country. He said Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura renounced eating them and we cannot understand what a sacrifice that was because we don't know mangoes, golden ripe mangoes.

So I thought Swamiji would like mangoes if I could get one. I found a place on First Avenue that kept them in the cooler, one dollar each, wrapped in soft paper. Got one and brought it to him. He was pleased. Then every day I did it. One day I brought one and he said, "Very good boy." As if I was a nine-year-old child. The other men laughed. "No," Swamiji corrected their mood. "This is love. This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

He said it and remembered it  
more than once in later years. Even  
in late 1977 when he was leaving us,  
one day sitting on his bed on the roof  
of his Vṛndāvana residence, while  
Gaurasundara from Hawaii was fanning him,  
and others, he remembered so sweet  
to note each of us, and said  
he remembered that I used to  
bring him the mangoes.

I wasn't even initiated then. He remembered  
that innocent act, pure . . . ?

So folks, it just goes to show—

love is true

and the Swami remembered and I am

a dog,

but his dog.

## September 23

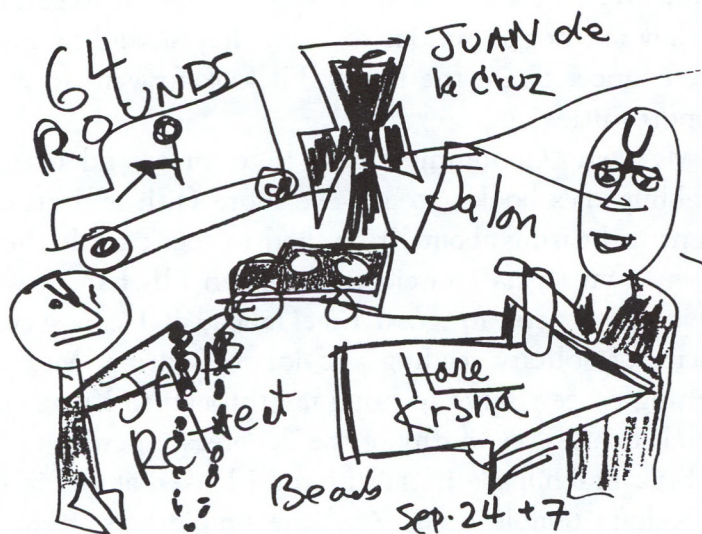
1:10 A.M.

I went to read *Gītā* and felt a flash how little I actually, deeply know or believe. If I had to die now and terminate my progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this life—if it had to be summed up right now—how far I would fall short. And what Śrīla Prabhupāda is giving is the best thing. I have no time to lose. I should study Kṛṣṇa's words and pray to Him: I know You don't reveal Yourself to everyone. You can be known only by devotional service. You say one must be *fully* devoted to You and then one can enter into the kingdom of God. Lord, I don't want to be left behind to take another birth in this world, but I am weak, attached to comforts in this old age, and I seek relief from anxieties of the immediate sort. You know me. I am bound, limited, in so many ways. I ask for strength and improvement so I can serve You. Help me to do my spiritual master's work. Help me to help others in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

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



Some words are weak and can be discarded. Whatever you send me, Lord, I speak. Some thoughts are “mine,” not worthy, or it may be said that they come from Your material energy and are coming under *māyā*’s direction. I don’t speak purely or recite entirely from scripture. Please help me to hear You.



Hṛdaya-Caitanya brought *mahā*-sweets from his Rādhā-Gopinātha Deities in Belgium. I ate one *burfi* and one and a half small *sandēśa* with tea at 5:30 P.M. It made my stomach feel heavy and I felt the onset of headache symptoms. I told M., “Please,”—it was he who offered them to me and I who accepted them—“let’s keep strictly to our policy of no eating after lunch. I can’t digest things.” An old man can’t eat too little and a young man can’t eat too much.

I felt last night’s temple meeting was a bust. One man asked me strategic questions about how to conduct

the Centennial in Spain. It wasn't what I expected or wanted. I wanted to speak about Śrīla Prabhupāda. They didn't give me scope for that. It was good, though, that I was forced to think positively about the Centennial. I saw that they need to have realistic goals. A gathering of devotees in any city is important; they should be given the best *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. I want to give it. Regardless if they are not so serious to hear, they should be given the chance. Share the basics. I'll look forward to more opportunities.

My own "Centennial" goal is to write and to read Prabhupāda's books, to achieve more faith and attachment to hearing about Kṛṣṇa, and to speak to the heart of my own Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Then I'll share it with devotees. There are good times ahead if I can survive them for solitary reading and lots of writing. May the writing process serve to bring me through to Kṛṣṇa conscious expression worthy of the devotees' interest.

Śrīla Prabhupāda in *mūrti* form, I looked at you in the Barcelona temple room. And the simple brass forms of Gaura-Nitāi, each Lord with one arm upraised, dancing. And the gathered devotees.





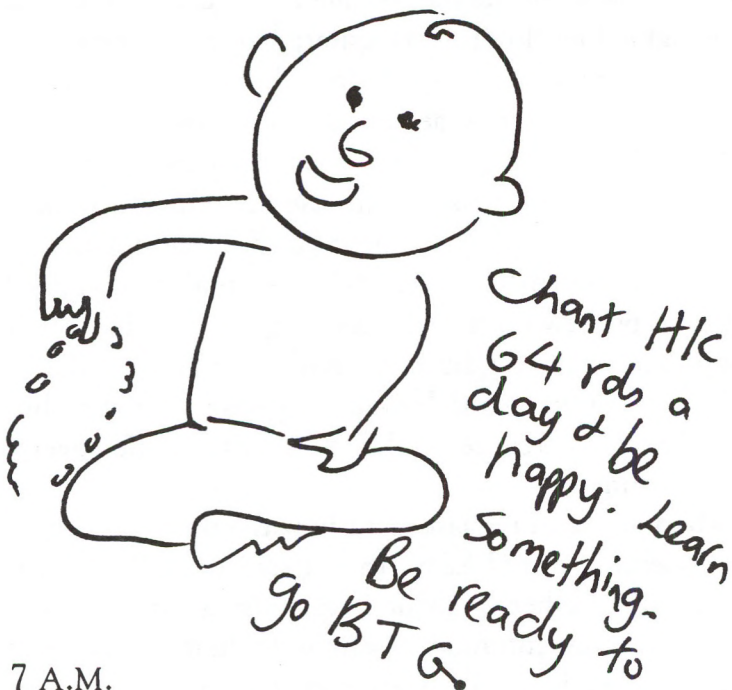
On my way out, he handed me a fax. Life in the van. Overnight four hours was quiet; ear plugs kept out most street noise and I slept. In a dream, many persons were candidates for some military-uniformed order run by Catholics. Brahmānanda was a candidate. I was one of a few who didn't make it into the uniformed. I wanted instead . . . to be a Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee but have a friendly relationship with the spiritually advanced Catholic priest who was the residing guru of that other group. Kīrtanānanda didn't fit into their group either.

What does it mean? I want to please Śrīla Prabhupāda. I want to realize my life as a writer. Offer everything to him.

When he asked me last night how the devotees can be more friendly toward each other, I said we will attain it by serving together in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but we may also hold some informal meetings to help. I also said that we shouldn't take too much direction from non-devotee psychologists. Rather, follow the six loving exchanges taught by Rūpa Gosvāmī.

What I didn't say: that in my opinion, the ISKCON family cannot realistically be one in which *everyone* loves everyone in a friendly and intimate way. If we can find a few close friends, that's good enough. Help each other.

He said, "We are superficial in our 'Haribols,' and we do other superficial things, like touch each other's feet." I know, I know, but what do you expect? I don't see how we could all be so loving. A guru and his disciples might be able to achieve that loving family relationship and then work in the larger ISKCON family, however.



7 A.M.

Stopped along the road for breakfast. We're on good behavior, taking care of our two guests. They mentioned yesterday that they had never chanted sixty-four rounds in a day and that they were nervous about the upcoming week of increased *japa*. Don't worry. All they have to do is try. Each attempt brings a new surprise.

I will certainly try for sixty-four a day. I don't want to overeat and suffer indigestion. I don't want a headache, although that's not in my control. This isn't a time for increased writing or reading either. Give all to *harināma*.





Ten to 1 P.M.

Arrive at Jalon, Alicante after a long, tiring drive (5 A.M.–12 noon). The house is small but pleasant, and located in a quiet area (it seems) with olive tree orchards adjoining and a yard in which we can walk. Only two rooms, so one room will be a temple room and one for the men. I'll use the van for sleeping, eating, and midnight rising.



Śrīla Prabhupāda *mūrti* came out and looked beautiful—tangible, almost cuddly, but commanding, the guru to touch and serve.

“Watch out for flies,” the man who is lending us this house told us. “There are plenty of them at this time of year.” I see them—one in the van now and one in Prabhupāda’s room, landing on his head.

4:30 P.M.

Ironical, self-deprecating . . . that’s my voice, to some extent. Anyway, here we are in Jalon in a house beset with flies (but otherwise pleasant), cool but not cold, during this last week of September. We are gathered, four of us, to chant sixty-four rounds a day for a week.

I just browsed through *Nāmāmṛta* and *Nāma-bhajana*. The holy name is the way to realize Kṛṣṇa. The way to overcome offensive chanting is to chant constantly. It is the way to realize *prema*.

In this house, there is a Vyāsa-pūjā book by the disciples of His Holiness Jagadīśa Goswami. He states that ISKCON devotees may chant for many, many years and not attain a taste for the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra because they do not chant with attention. The *Nāmāmṛta* states that even casual chanting brings great benefit. Unless we chant prayerfully, however, we can fall down in this dangerous age of Kali. I’ll mention some of these points to the devotees tonight in our pre-retreat meeting.

I hope to get a few times a day to write something as a reminder of the time. I’ll tell you what we are doing—names and places, maybe a few impressionistic drawings sketched quickly (not unlike the rounds them-

selves), and about the flies because they are symbolical of the mind's inattention. (The last time we chanted like this for a week, we pictured a rickshaw. Our minds were the rickshaw *walla*, so he was supposed to obey our command and hear the holy names.) The flies will not obey us; we will have to tolerate them and go on chanting. We will try to drive them out the back of the van, but in the house, there are simply too many. Then turn to the chanting more and more.

We will gather in front of Prabhupāda in the temple room. We will gain by the association. The schedule has little structure, only that we meet at 4:30 A.M. in the temple room and sing "*Gurvāṣṭakam*" while I offer incense to Prabhupāda. Then we chant either together or apart. At 6:30, we offer breakfast to Prabhupāda and then go on chanting. (As for me, I will set the alarm for midnight and the first thing I will do is read a bit about the holy name, then concentrate on writing until 1 A.M., then chant for two hours until 3, then come into the house and use the bathroom.)

At 11:15 I will begin Prabhupāda's *pūjā*, then take my own bath. Maybe I'll be able to type a little after that before offering Prabhupāda his lunch. After lunch, rest and then chanting. We'll meet at 6 P.M. to discuss for an hour how the day went. Each of us will say something. Either he can read his own notes, read quotes from the books, or just say something he would like to share.

That's it. Most of the time we will be on our own in the desert of poor chanting, trying to bring the mind under the control of the higher self. That means bringing the mind to the sound of Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa,



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

The *ācāryas* following Lord Caitanya have stressed chanting. How can we *not* give it importance? This retreat is for remedial work. It is to make up for missed rounds, poor rounds, and to show Kṛṣṇa that we take His order to chant seriously and that we are willing to do something about our inability to chant properly. Sure, remedial work could be done in other service areas, such as preaching or book distribution, but the main emphasis is the sincere effort we make here to improve the most essential practice: hearing and chanting the holy names of the Lord. The chanting process is easy, but we have to take it seriously to try and improve it. May Lord Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda look kindly on our efforts.

6:30 P.M.

Had our first meeting. Hṛdaya said his natural inclination is to think of practical things and not “spiritual” thoughts. Therefore, he wants to work on his chanting. I said I have a strong theoretical attraction for chanting, but it’s not completely real. Yadunandana has recently undergone a change in his service; his management has been reduced and his preaching increased. Now he hopes to be in a better position to improve his *japa*. Yes, I said, for a lecturer of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement to become more convinced about chanting—how necessary! Madhu said he is pleased that my disciples Hṛdaya and Yadu are taking on so much responsibility in ISKCON. He’s glad I’m giving them the opportunity to work on their chanting. M.



said he thinks how he tends to talk *about* chanting but that he doesn't actually chant. He said he is like Hṛdaya in that he has an inclination for practical things. Therefore, this week will be a good act of surrender for him.

I quoted the verse *nāmāparādha-yuktānām, nāmānyeva haranty-aghām*—by chanting again and again, one will become free of offenses. Chanting will protect us from falldown.

I know it will be a big mechanical chore, but I hope for more, for essence, for prayer.

## September 24

12:28 A.M.

Why listen to me? Better listen to *harināma*. But I also have to chant Him with my tongue and hear with ear and mind. O *harināma*, please let me receive You.

I am not just talking to myself in a void. All is not meaningless, absurd and I give it meaning. Kṛṣṇa is the supreme.

Follow the Vedic way. See the good in other *bhakti* paths in world religions. But when you want to save yourself and develop *bhakti*, do it in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, your longtime chosen *dharma*.

“Please accept me.” The prayer of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Today starts the *vrata*.

This is morning and only a little time is allotted for writing. This week, “Keep the hand moving” will mean passing the beads through my fingers. “Voice” won’t mean talking on paper with pen, but vibrating the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. “A good ear” will be the receptive channel for the transcendental vibration. Śrīla Prabhupāda says *bhāgavata-prema* is the receptive power to pick up

the transcendental vibration of *nāma* from the spiritual world.

Are you a *nāma* cultist or specialist? Wish I were. This simple doctrine is profound. Only the holy name will be effective in Kali-yuga. I like to speak of it and excite an audience, but why pretend? Attain it. Practice it. That's why we are here this week.

I will have to be constantly vigilant that I don't over-exert and begin a headache. This is not a vacation, but is meant to be hard and careful work for *yajña*. It is to please Lord Hari, not myself. That transcendental pleasure of serving Kṛṣṇa is the greatest thing.

"May I please?" I ask *harināma*. "May I please chant the holy name with attention?"

This feeble one  
cries out  
in a van in a  
fragile container  
with weak receptive power,  
broken antennae,  
leaky roof—  
please Lord come here,  
unqualified as I am, I wish to receive You,  
in the home of my heart—  
please help me chant.

Hare Kṛṣṇa mantras uttered by me appear to come and go, yet they are eternal acts of devotion. I understand little and I wish to fall at the holy name's feet, with no false prestige or cynical disbelief or weakness of heart or desire for name and fame.

Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa  
the sixteen names are the  
only counter-force to  
the rotting of Kali  
the death of my age.  
It's the way to love  
of God  
most recommended—  
why don't you try?



Yeah, he's chanting, the Visiting *Sannyāsī*, the riotous bust, the quiet old man, Santa Fe style, he's in the groove in the desert, old hackneyed poet, taster of abominable things and giver up of those bad tastes—he wishes to receive the Holy Communion on his tongue.

He wishes to enter ever-fresh service to Kṛṣṇa's holy names. He and thee and all of us Hare Kṛṣṇa chanters with our wooden beads, *tulasīs* and flesh hearts, muscles, and blood.



One said he was ill because he's allergic to the marigolds growing around the house. Maybe we are also "allergic" to the surrender required.

Let us try, let us do,  
and pray for His mercy.  
An invocation.

6:15 A.M.

I've got twenty-eight rounds chanted. Some were awake, some sleepy. Our temple room is small, especially when all four, or even three, of us are in there chanting. I left the room and went out under the stars. It's cool out, almost cold, but nice. I see the stars and I felt better chanting out there.

But I want the men to see that I am with them. I didn't ask them to gather here so that I could walk away from them. But they too could walk outside if they get drowsy. We don't know each other well yet. Standing on appearances. I want to appear like a chanter before them. They have certain images of me I don't want to fail.

Now they are fixing breakfast—fresh fruit. I want to keep it light. We are not cooking or preparing much.

Taste the holy name? I'm afraid not. I push them out. I push them out, I count the count. Had you forgotten what a block sleepiness is? It combines with inattention and a general restless indifference to the holy name. Makes the *yajña* not so wonderful. But I am determined, going up to thirty-two and then upwards from that. I will certainly hit the peak of sixty-four even though it's mostly just counting.

We count for the *yajña* of pleasing Kṛṣṇa by chanting His name. Please, Lord, I commit offenses. I need to be more attentive.

Pray, pray, the dark road, I walk and can't see where I am going. Distant car headlights moving. It is quiet out here, but I don't step on the road, I don't know . . . Thinking of the NATO bombing of Bosnia, how the planes take off from Italy nearby to go there. What if they fight back?



12 noon

I have chanted forty-five rounds so far. Hṛdaya walked over the empty dirt roads. It seemed like he walked many miles. He said, "I have many more miles to go." Madhu said he has been traveling to faraway places in his mind, such as to a motor show in America and other van places. I was slow, about 8:45 or more per round. I don't know exactly why, but it isn't so great. The land and layout here is good for the retreat. We can

chant within sight of each other and yet not even hear or barely hear the others chanting. It's good because when we doze off, we know someone is watching you. It's not a bad pressure, but effective.

This first morning is all counting; the heart and prayer is absent, as expected. Maybe for a few moments at least I take the mind off the track of whatever it's into and tell it, "Why don't you simply hear the syllables of the holy names?" Or I grasp some simple concept that God—the God who created the blue skies here and everywhere, the Supreme One—is present in His holy name.

I think I will tell them tonight that we are chanting for His pleasure. It is an important idea, but I don't actually feel it or realize it. All I know is counting and the feeling that it is right to do this. We hold off for now from what are our more natural and spontaneous tendencies. We refrain. We give these seven days to the names and assure ourselves that we will take up normal duties again when this is over. Maybe we will improve. It is a duty basically, and it's good we had the sense to make sixty-four rounds a day a duty. In ordinary life in ISKCON, this would never be done, but we take it as a routine that once or twice a year, we up the quota to what used to be standard for all disciples of Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's *pūjā* went well, but I forgot to put him to sleep last night. I say I'm out of practice and excuse myself. I hope he will also excuse me.

I listen to him lecturing while massaging him and bathing him in the room as natural sunlight enters



and takes the chill off the room. I better pause here and put a *cādar* on his shoulders.

Now *harināma*, I am speaking to You.  
You are the holy syllables I read  
about in the scriptures. I myself  
have written over a thousand pages  
about chanting, the struggle and the  
hopes and little successes.  
So I may speak to You, Kṛṣṇa in name form.  
Lord Caitanya has said it so well,  
that You have kindly put all Your energies  
into Your names and there are no  
hard and fast rules—but alas,  
I lack the attraction due  
to my offenses.

So holy names, I am asking You  
to please enter my heart and give me  
the intelligence and alertness  
and whatever it takes to  
desire to serve You in this  
easy process. It is easy but of  
course, so very hard to control the mind.  
Easy to say the outer form  
of the names  
but very hard to pray, to  
call Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, please give me  
relief from the flickering mind.



Quiet retreat seems good  
but the mind goes its way flickering  
and choosing some past or present  
but won't concentrate on devotional chanting.  
So holy names, I ask You, please help me,  
please be real, please break up the dullness  
allow me to not be complacent or proud  
or identify with the body and mind.  
Give my soul the light to  
know he is Yours and You are  
the Lord accepting service  
in Your name. That is my desire.

5:30 P.M.

I finished sixty-four rounds at 5:04 P.M. Discovered I can chant much faster if I take a deep breath, then chant three mantras while exhaling. My normal habit is to stop and take a breath after each mantra; that's why each round takes almost nine minutes. It's not necessarily more attentive to do it that way than the three-mantras-per breath. I'm going to try to do it the "new" way. It actually takes more deliberate thought on my part to remember to do it and to measure out the syllables.

Now I feel some twinge in my eye. I don't want to aggravate it by a prolonged evening meeting, but if I can stay relaxed in the meeting, maybe it won't turn into a long thing.

Yadu and Hṛdaya went out on a Sunday social engagement and didn't get back until late. I told them it was wrong. Hṛdaya already knew it and said he won't go

out anymore. We are here for only a week out of the year and they should not break the day-long meditation. It really does build up during the course of the day. My morning was sleepy, later dry, but in the afternoon I started doing better and discovered how to quicken the chanting.

As I write, I'm besieged by flies on the open patio. I'll have to retreat to the van but it is stuffy and too warm in there. Yikes! This body and this world are never comfortable!



## September 25

12:20 A.M.

Combined reading and writing. The *Nāmāmṛta* is a mine of gems of Prabhupāda's comments on chanting. He had great faith in the holy name and preached from that conviction. He also had one hundred percent faith in his spiritual master's words—no doubts.

We say, "I cannot imitate Śrīla Prabhupāda." That's true. But do we have one hundred percent faith in his words? Some openly say they need more than Prabhupāda. He's not enough. His word on any topic is not the last word for them. They want to supplement him with psychologists' talk, etc.

I need to be thoughtful about what Śrīla Prabhupāda says, understand it in the context of my life, but basically accept what he says. Some things need to be adjusted. For example, what about ISKCON? Maybe I could use more extended writing on my relationship with Prabhupāda as I did in *Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda*. Honesty, honesty, searching—but one always wants the relationship of guru and disciple. Once you accept the spiritual master, then you accept what he says. You

surrender your intelligence to him or else you are fallen. But . . .

But what?

You can't do it blindly or dogmatically. Maybe "blindly," but at least you have to seek to better understand why he's saying what he's saying and why something in you can't accept it. You dare to ask yourself, "What don't I accept? What do I have trouble accepting, and how can I overcome this?" In other words, you might investigate your relationship with Prabhupāda "fearlessly," but for the purpose of improving your relationship with him as his disciple. Any other investigation of the relationship would be disastrous.

Such exploration has to be a devotional act. I can do a similar thing in questioning why I don't have a more loving and spontaneous relationship with the holy name. I have to allow myself to be honest and say, "It bores me sometimes," or, "It doesn't engage my mind because I say it too quickly."

In answering these doubts, however, I have to preach as a *paramparā* speaker. Being a preacher doesn't mean I don't listen to the complaints or sympathize with my own attempts to improve. At the same time, I have to correct myself, sometimes gently, and acknowledge that I haven't done the best I can.

This is compassionate work on the self with the aim of helping ourselves become better devotees. We have to find our own integrity—all the parts can come together.

We are each unique persons. How do we feel about the innate cruelty of people in the world and the cruelty of nature itself? How can we deal with the overwhelming



forces and with danger and threat, violence, etc.? How can we sincerely and personally turn to Kṛṣṇa?

Here we are on the second day of a seven-day, sixty-four round *vrata*. The work is ahead. I pray for mercy; Kṛṣṇa will help me.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "If Kṛṣṇa sees that someone is sincerely chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, He will help. He is within everyone." (TLK, p. 184) Kṛṣṇa helps when He sees that we are sincere. Let us show Him that we are.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Revival of the dormant affection or love of Godhead does not depend on the mechanical system of hearing and chanting, but it solely and wholly depends on the causeless mercy of the Lord. When the Lord is fully satisfied with the sincere efforts of the devotee, He may endow him with His loving transcendental service." (*Bhāg.* 1.7.6, purport)

Madhu tries to protect me from falling asleep in front of other devotees, so we've got it figured out that my most dangerous hours are from around 4–6:30 A.M. At that time we take breakfast. It's a little comical, the fact that I actually do fall asleep but that we try to hide it. Anyway, we've been doing a pretty good job of it, not only hiding it but actually staying awake. I stay awake by staying outside. It's cool, but not so cold I can't bear it.

What we did this morning before 4 A.M. was we had a *maṅgala-ārati* and then I chanted one round indoors. I went outside and chanted two more rounds, then came back in for another round, then out again for another two. It was going pretty well, but then one time when I

came in I thought, “Why not say *gāyatrī* now?” As I began my *gāyatrī*, Hṛdaya began his and Yadu kept pacing and chanting. Then—I don’t even know what happened—I spaced out and I probably looked terrible falling asleep with the *brāhmaṇa* thread, and Yadu saw it all. Exposed! On my way out the door, I thought to myself, “Well, that’s who I am.” In other words, I don’t hate myself for it, although I do like to keep a show and not let them know that I am not so exalted.

As I say, the whole thing is amusing, but in a grim sort of way. I’m supposed to be the spiritual master, so we want to keep an image of me as a decent fellow who doesn’t fall asleep when he’s supposed to be in ecstasy.

I was also hankering to get my hands on the typewriter in the temple room, but they were chanting, so I couldn’t use it right away. That’s another side of the hiding: I hide the bad and I also hide the good. So much for formal relationships. In other words, by maintaining a formal relationship, I hide my inadequacies from their view, but they don’t get to see the good either.

### Ten after 6 A.M.

Chanting in the kitchen, I saw the Vyāsa-pūjā book. I opened it and read a few homages. I learn from God-brothers and admire them. We are much alike. Our parents often reject us (Śivarāma Swami wrote that he became like a corpse to his parents when he joined the “Kṛṣṇas”—he also wrote good autobiography as he does every year, with bits of free verse in it—he’s a good writer). We all aspire to be Prabhupāda’s servant.

It's cold outside in the yard and warm in the house. In either case, the chanting is a cry from an almost dead person. Yet I am alive and kicking. If I am envious of my Godbrothers, if I don't deeply respect them, I am committing the first offense in chanting: "to blaspheme devotees who have dedicated their lives to propagating the holy names all over the world." I pray to be spared from that.

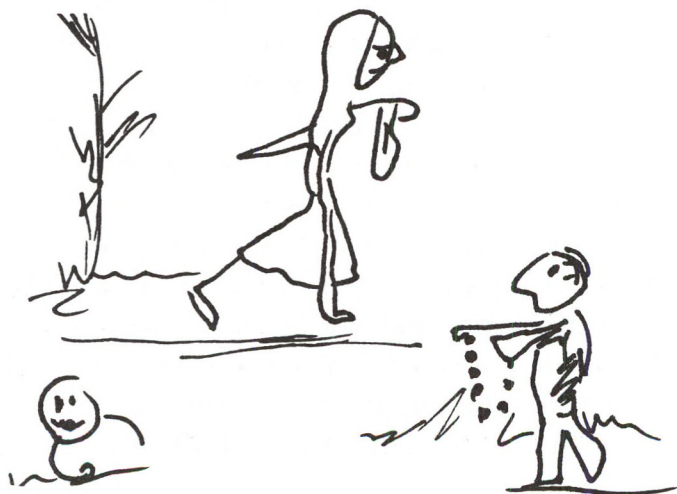
We live in such a nice way with so much facility, actually. To have our own little space—in a van or wherever—where we can read and write to our heart's content, who could ask for more? Yet we must beg for spiritual essences which we so much lack. In my case, I also pray that I don't indulge in the service that others are willing to render me because I was saved by Prabhupāda. I pray to go after the real thing, after attachment to Kṛṣṇa and His names, to service rendered for the pleasure of His pure devotees. To do that, I have to co-operate with the devotees in ISKCON. I also have to use my intelligence and not go along with the crowd blindly. That's part of surrender—finding the whole self and then surrendering it to Kṛṣṇa. Give joy, not just duty and official surrender, to ISKCON's leaders.

Dry as dirt as dust and the ankle hurts  
and the dentures are loose and the  
head is going to fall off  
and the jokes dribble down in my  
... the worst,  
the worst is not even true of me  
please, please he wants to be the best  
yes, he thought of that too, "I am the best."



All stupid stuff, get rid of it  
 the gunk like dirty denture adhesive  
 stuck with hairs and bits of  
 chewed fingernails and feces  
 and old food and smelly things,  
 you, you, your outer shell  
 your ugliness I say to hell with this  
 and serve the Lord of the world  
 Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Ten minutes to noon



Hṛdaya is like a hermit of the desert walking miles every morning as the sun comes up. He continues to walk until noon. Yadu has a cough and the sniffles, so he's less adventuresome. He paces near the house and then sits in a little patch of shade he favors. Madhu likes to sit in the front of the van with the window down and screen up—no flies—and chant and read



Prabhupāda's letters about chanting. I walk too, but not as far as Hṛdaya.

I found the temple room empty around 10 and sat with pleasure in front of Prabhupāda while only two flies played in the sunlight on the rug. I've chanted one round short of the three sets of rounds (seventeen more to go for the day).

This is the forest primeval. You let what comes go in the diary and stick with the rounds, the hearing. I get beyond sleepiness and that's the first big step. The next step is to keep a good pace, which I am doing, by the new breathing system, four mantras per exhalation. That pretty much assures good pronunciation. These are accomplishments from the dregs of poor chanting. I don't rise higher. Not yet.

The next state would be the attainment of hearing. And prayer—calling out to Kṛṣṇa. Then thinking of the Lord's pastimes and form and qualities.

But I don't complain. Right now I'm keeping up the quota. Yes, we're at that stage of attaining the quota, each of us. It's like stacking wood, counting up, working toward the attainment of the grand number, sixty-four.

Prabhupāda looks nice. He let me massage, bathe, and dress him today. The bath water was warm. Madhu puts him to rest; otherwise, I might forget. I am not a great servant, but I do like to massage him. I can't always keep my mind fixed on him as I do so, but I listen to his tapes.

Today I heard the Govardhana-pūjā lecture he gave in 1966. I will tell my devotee audience that this is a very nice tape. The sound reproduction is good and the

lecture long, ranging over many topics. Let us spend our days until the end listening to His Divine Grace's voice.

How silly it is to become jealous of others who also like to hear his voice. Do we think we are the only or the best or deepest of his followers? That only we have love? Do we think, "I'm not a big GBC or a money-raising servant, but I love him in my own way," and then think that that way makes us the best of his followers? Sometimes we get puffed up for sure. Then we banish such thoughts. They are ridiculous and unworthy.

Then we go back to the beginning of just being who we are. We can't all be of equal physical or mental strength, but to compensate, we don't have to create arguments to prove we are better because of our weakness. Just love Prabhupāda, serve him, be part of his family, be humble, and take your place.

During my school days, I was always one of the smallest kids in the class. I had to live with that humiliation. Neither did I have a strong body, nor was I much of an athlete. I wasn't the best at anything. I just had to live with it. We may be like that in ISKCON too, but we don't have to try to be the best. We're not the best anything. Why should that concern us? Rather, we can simply express ourselves and beg that Prabhupāda keep us and allow us to do the service we love. We should worry about helping his mission. As he told me, "Don't simply tour, but do substantial work for the society."

5:15 P.M.

I finished sixty-four rounds at 4:40 P.M. We are having our meeting at 5:30. Kṛṣṇa is pleased when we chant His names. Now I'm chanting six mantras during one exhalation. Does it make me more devoted? Not necessarily, but it helps me fix my mind.

My biggest problem is the fickle mind. Paying attention to the mantras is a good start in controlling the mind. The mind treats the *mahā-mantra* as a trifle, something not worth paying attention to. Imagine speaking to someone who manifests all the symptoms of disinterest, restlessness, and indifference. My mind does that to Kṛṣṇa. I'm trying to correct it and not be hopeless. If I can correct the long-standing habit of breathing in after each mantra, I can also correct more subtle mental habits. Achieving the increase gives us confidence that as we do *more*, so we can do better.





6:30 P.M., after the meeting

Yadunandana said that when he felt physically ill, it occurred to him that chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is medicine. This physical illness took on a symbolic aspect and he realized that he's ill because he's in the material world. The chanting is the real cure. As he chanted, he said, he felt physically well and took the return to health as a by-product of chanting.

Hṛdaya-Caitanya said that it's a struggle to chant all day, but he's happy to be here. He said he feels more sensitive toward all living entities as he chants, even ants. He sees them as spirit souls. He finds that the chanting is a constant endeavor; as soon as he lets up, whatever he has gained is gone. Therefore, he has to chant deliberately. He said he has a tendency to play what he calls the "I role," defending himself, worrying about GBC decisions, temple management, and so on, but he realized that as he chants, he can think of Kṛṣṇa instead.

When he said this, it reminded me of something. I said how much I admire the stage where a pure devotee doesn't worry so much about the world and doesn't worry about defending himself. This seems to be described in the *tṛṇād api* verse. A devotee takes great solace in the treasure of the holy name that he doesn't need or worry about other things. This would be a great state to achieve, that Kṛṣṇa can be our friend in His holy name: Kṛṣṇa, the greatest solace. I said that I had read in Prabhupāda's letters several times that if the devotees were experiencing severe difficulties—sexual falldowns or psychological problems—he recommended



extended chanting. That's Prabhupāda's answer to psychological counseling.

Yet devotees don't have a taste for chanting as solace. Therefore, it sounds like a bad joke, and we say cynically that if a troubled devotee went to a senior devotee for advice, all the senior devotee could say is, "Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Prabhu." In other words, the advice to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa is taken as typical and superficial counseling. Actually, it's profound counseling, if only we could find our solace in the holy name.

Madhumaṅgala spoke about attentive chanting and gave some quotes from Prabhupāda. He said he's working at the stage of *ceto darpaṇa mārjanam*, cleaning his mind of all dirty things that occur to him as part and parcel of his present nature—lust, greed, and anger. He's feeling hopeful, as we all are.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is nice because each new day presents a new opportunity, and that's especially true during this week. A new day for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.



## September 26

12:20 A.M.

“Caitanya Mahāprabhu teaches us that one should only beg God for His service life after life. This is the actual meaning of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.” (TLK, p. 196)

Śrīla Prabhupāda is teaching us how to pray. Prayer is not merely a literary exercise to look at later or to write in a book. Real prayer is a call to God, either in praise or petition or whatever. Writing it down (or reading it later) can also be a spiritual act, but the essence is the “genuine cry of the child for the mother.”

We actually ask the Lord, “Please engage me in Your service.” We have forgotten to serve God; now we want Him to take us back again. “We want to become servants, servants of the servants of the Lord. There is no question of demanding to become the Lord; we just want to serve. That’s all.” (POP, p. 114)

“Oh, how glorious are they whose tongues are chanting Your name!” (*Bhāg.* 3.33.7) They must have already completed all austerities and Vedic studies.

Or else they are like us, trying somehow to capitalize on the downpouring of Śrīla Prabhupāda's mercy. He gave us the chance to chant with him and we are still chanting with him. Yes, let me play the tape of his *japa*, but even without the tape, as long as we follow him, live in the society of devotees, and execute his orders, we are with him. He wrote in a letter to Govinda dāśī (who regretted that due to physical illness she could not serve much or accomplish much in his mission) that all services could be accomplished just by chanting.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that other active services were as good as chanting, but chanting was as good as active service. Chant and serve and do all you can. Chant, serve, praise, engage in devotional service twenty-four hours a day.

*Kīrtaniya sadā hariḥ*. May we always serve You using our hands to clean the temple—or using the typewriter, pen, ox switch, shovel, computer, book bag, cooking spoon, gun(?).

O Lord, let our tongues praise You—and preach, lecture, recite *Bhāgavatam*, talk to newcomers and all devotees, defend *dharma* to the press . . .

May our feet walk to the temple—or the pavement on *harināma*, the airport to approach a book customer, the extra mile to help devotees or potential devotees, alone to think aloud how to serve devotees . . .

Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa. The *mahā-mantra* is the great chant for deliverance.



“Why did a great soul like Haridāsa Ṭhākura take a quota?” Hṛdaya asked. To show us an example. He too wanted to try to attain a goal—a high one—of keeping himself always rapt in Kṛṣṇa-thought. That doesn’t make him lesser. An *avadhūta* may not use beads or count a quota, but Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī did, and so did the other Gosvāmīs. Chanting is for liberated souls as well as conditioned souls, but they’ll experience it differently. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes in *Nāma-bhajana*: “Those who are bent on *bhajana* may be divided into two distinct classes. Some bear only the burden, others appreciate the real worth of things.” The burden bearers are after the heavy load of material enjoyment, unaware that *prema* is the best sap, but they too may come up to the higher standard. Some quota counters want to reach *prema*—they use numbers in the Lord’s service.

Something seems to have bitten me during the night. It left little red marks and it’s itchy. While writing and reading just now, I noticed a spider dangling. Possibly it was him? Am I poisoned? Of course, I don’t think anything fatal has happened to me, yet it occurred to me that it is certainly important that I chant today to save my soul.

Thank you, Prabhupāda for inspiring us to take this retreat. May you infuse all our devotional activities with the potency of a good chanting. May we learn to see that other activities are nondifferent from chanting. Especially may we develop a taste to go on chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.



We're certainly not going to live forever, because that's impossible. The body is meant for death. One man asked Prabhupāda about increasing life duration. Prabhupāda advised him to increase his chanting. He also advised him not to think he could live forever. Better to spend time trying to intensify devotional service. This is a good way to do it. If we prepare for the end, as Kṛṣṇa advises in the eighth chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, we will naturally understand that we should think of Him when we chant. Prabhupāda gave us the mantra, the means: Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.

5:15 A.M.

Heavy rain all night and still it continues. It's not raining right now, but I hear the thunder and lightning preparing to carry the next shower over us. The horizon is dark, but I see something white—clouds or dawn. The sky is beautiful. It's just that I can't pay attention and can't pray and that there are people who hate me and this material world stinks. Why don't I go back to Godhead? Why don't I become brave and forgiving and pray at the lotus feet of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to do better?

I have no love for Kṛṣṇa, but at least I know of such a thing and I can honestly say I desire it. So many words, so many words . . . but at least I'm chanting.

Noon

Starting to get a headache. I want to describe the period between 9–11, but it seems inexplicable. On the

one hand, I was chanting mechanically and could not attain to anything like prayer or even attention. Yet I was chanting intensely in an external sense, getting the rounds done. (I was a little behind, so I was chanting as quickly as I could, mindful of the count, hoping to reach the noon quota.) It was raining off and on all morning. Hr̥daya-Caitanya kept having to come back from his walk because of the rain. After he went in, the sun came out and the wind picked up. Madhu had his laundry on the line. His *dhotīs* were blowing and snapping in the wind. One of them even blew free of the clothespins and dragged across the ground.

For most of this time, I sat on a chair on the edge of the porch facing outdoors. I could sit there whether it was raining or sunny. I was dressed warmly and I felt comfortable and awake. It was there that I was doing this intense external pushing to get the quota done.

Now that I think back to it, I see myself as an old man, maybe a *bābāji*, who has nothing to do except chant. Yet that chanting is a full engagement. Everything else has been deliberately put aside, so he chants hour after hour and nothing else matters. He's not interested even in personal relationships with others, even if people come and go. He avoids small talk. He just keeps going round after round.

Do you see what I mean, that it's inexplicable? Those hours are not completely described just by saying, "It was mechanical and I have no love of God. I couldn't even pay attention." No, the fact that I got "lost" in the world of chanting, and only chanting, is something special. That happens during these retreats.

4:42 P.M.

Just finished sixty-four rounds. It takes how long? More than nine hours. All day basically, with breaks for rest and eating and Prabhupāda's *pūjā*. A good day's work. I don't know what I'm doing, but I do it and it feels good. I know some Vaiṣṇavas chant this many rounds every day. I am certain I want to do other things and cannot chant so much, yet the simplicity of it, the starkness, the freedom from the need to say foolish things.

Madhu said he feels he is too opinionated. Since he sees that as an impurity, he should not assert so many opinions as to what is right. He says it's like judging everything that comes his way. The chanter is like a blade of grass or a tree; he goes on chanting humbly and tolerantly, offering respects to others.

You chant and don't think of Śrīla Prabhupāda or Lord Kṛṣṇa. Reading time may help that. But it's your intellect that "thinks" of them. Chanting is something else. And writing is something else too. And drawing.





## After the evening meeting

I quoted Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, “Some bear only the burden and others appreciate the real work of things.” I said I felt that I was neither a burden-bearer (materialist) nor a *prema-rurukṣu* (one who is earnestly striving for *prema*). I *am* striving for *prema*, but I can’t pay the price (*laulyam*). Kṛṣṇa will have to help me. I’m praying to Him for that.

Hṛdaya-Caitanya confided to us that he had some trouble with his mind today and felt unwilling to chant. He preached to his mind and said, “I want to chant, and the reason that I don’t want to chant is that I’m diseased with *avidyā* and can’t taste the sweetness.” He said that some of the things that come to his mind are important like heavy responsibilities that he can’t just put aside. When he said that, I assured him that his temple management or his need to take care of his family are not responsibilities to be rejected. Rather, he will make himself more fit to carry them out during this week if he can concentrate on chanting.

When Yadunandana spoke, he was flowing with nectar. He started by quoting 2.41, *vyavasāyātmika buddhir*, from *Bhagavad-gītā*. He said that this verse speaks of the determination that comes by serving the guru’s order. Now that determination is focused on chanting as the most important order. He said that this chanting marathon reminds him of book distribution marathons. After a couple of days of book distribution, a momentum begins to build and you really get into it. He’s feeling like that now about his chanting. In fact, he’s thinking that in the future when he does marathons, he’s going to be able to have



more stamina and go for ten hours a day like he's doing here. Thus from the holy name comes inspiration for other services.

Yadu also said he's feeling he wants to chant more rounds when this week is over. I had mentioned last night that the fruitive mentality of wanting to only chant the minimum quota persists even when we do sixty-four. Instead of quitting after sixteen, we quit after sixty-four, and there's no way we'll chant anymore on this given day. Yadu said he broke that tendency by chanting two more after sixty-four. He said he's not making a rigid vow to increase his rounds after this week, but he really wants to make some increase and is thinking of practical ways to attain it, such as getting up earlier.

When he said that, I confessed that I've had a negative attitude. I've been thinking, "All right, *harināma*, I'll give You this one week. I'll go all out and chant my sixty-four rounds a day, trying my best. After this week, however, there's no way I'm going to keep the increase, but I want to get back to my other activities, such as writing, and so on." Yadu helped expose that negative attitude and it made me want to be more positive like him. Maybe I can increase.

Madhu talked about the importance of attention. We sometimes quote Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura saying that all the offenses come from inattention. Yadu had put that in a positive light and said that all the good qualities of *harināma* come to us when we pay attention. Madhu went on to speak more about attention and said he was concentrating on that today. Then he was trying to go further into prayer. Sometimes he keeps a certain pray-

er in mind over a number of rounds. Today he was praying, "Please engage me in Your service and enable me to chant." Later he prayed to *harināma*, "Please forgive my inattention and other offenses." Rather than think of the offenses to the holy name individually, he asked forgiveness for all the offenses.

Madhu said that if he can increase in any way after this sixty-four-day *vrata* is over, it would be nice, but even more important to him is to continue the momentum of trying to achieve better attention.

He read something from *The Wild Garden* on *sādhana* where I discuss how the dry struggle may be even more significant than chanting with elation. When we chant using our will without rewards, it's a positive act of surrender. We're not chanting for bliss, but to situate ourselves rightly.

## September 27

12:35 A.M.

I'm happy to be finishing up this September book in the blessed days of association with serious devotees. Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare. It will soon be time to begin my first two hours of *japa*. This is the candlelight set. I chant these ones alone. The Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is the best medicine; it is bliss, solace, duty, Vedic essence, and the best method of always remembering Kṛṣṇa (*samādhī*). Chanting is the best practice for the time of death (learn it now while you live). It is recommended by Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Caitanya and all His followers. It's easy, but it takes effort: "The essence of all advice is that one should utilize one's time fully—twenty-four hours a day—in nicely chanting and remembering the Lord's divine name, transcendental form, qualities and eternal pastimes, thereby gradually engaging one's tongue and mind." (NOI, text 8)

Here goes.

I think it's worth repeating the different stages of chanting that we "discovered." The lowest stage is



sleepiness and poorly pronounced rounds, or even stopping the chanting. (Of course, below that is not to chant at all.) The first stage above sleepiness is alertness, although that doesn't mean deep, mental alertness. It refers more to an almost physical thing. At this stage, you're chipper, awake, maybe moving back and forth, and the "motor" of uttering the names is moving at a good pace.

I'm afraid some of the devotees in ISKCON reach this stage and consider that they chant good rounds. They're not really good at all. Of course, they're better than when we chant half asleep.

Better than the motor running is actually hearing the holy name. It is possible to chant loud and clear and to not hear anything because there's no prayer, no attention, and no aspiration.

That's why the next step up is to hear the holy name, the syllables, Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare. This, however, is also not a fixed kind of attention. It doesn't really enter the spiritual realm.

However, we wish all good for this attentive stage because once we begin to experience the goal of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, it's like touchstone. When you actually start hearing, then all the good things will be achieved. Attention alone, however, does not yet approach prayer. I'm referring to an inferior kind of attention where you're occasionally "noticing" the sound of Hare Kṛṣṇa instead of paying attention to all the other stuff going on in your mind. When this occasional noticing becomes more often and fixed, then it's good. Of course, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī has described all these stages of recollection in technical Sanskrit language



and Prabhupāda has presented them for our understanding in his purport to text 8 of *The Nectar of Instruction*. What I am describing here in my own words is even lower than he considers.

11:32 A.M.

Putting most thoughts off until later, but writing some letters. There are only three and a half days remaining to this *vrata*. I have to restrain myself so that during the time left, my full occupation is the holy name. I have chanted forty-eight rounds so far today, right on schedule. I have no time to do much else. If I try for other achievements, I fall behind on the *japa* quota.

While massaging and bathing Prabhupāda, I listened to a lecture from 1966. I'm saving excerpts to use later in a seminar in Vṛndāvana where I will play excerpts from his tapes and then speak something on each of them. The seminar has no particular structure, just Prabhupāda speaking in those days on many wonderful topics. It will be a portrait in sound. I hope to recall how things were when he preached to us and cleaned our hearts, when he lifted us up out of the material world and turned us into servants of Kṛṣṇa.

I was alone in the darkness—stars above—and I went for a walk on the road. Some contrary feelings came, such as, "Do you really believe that stuff? Do you really feel it's true for you that you love the Swami and Kṛṣṇa? Isn't Kṛṣṇa something foreign to you? Don't you have other interests and loves? What about Jesus, for example?" On a dare, I spoke aloud the fragment I still remember of the prayer, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the

Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou and the fruit of thy womb, Jesus Christ.”

It's not serious. I don't think you can mix Christianity with Kṛṣṇa consciousness so deeply. I thought of a friend in India who is so much physically, mentally, and spiritually immersing himself in Vṛndāvana and Māyāpur, Rādhā-kuṇḍa, the life of an Indian *sannyāsi-bābāji*. That kind of life assures me of all the specifics to cultivate and support Kṛṣṇa consciousness as it is. Christ is certainly wonderful, but the whole Christian setting—can I actually think of him apart from the history of the Christian religion? Perhaps, but what about Kṛṣṇa? Are you not satisfied with Him and the *mahā-mantra*?

I allowed this to come—or more accurately, it came by itself. It's not something I'll act on, but we have such patches and areas in our lives. In the midst of this ideal setting for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and working hard to enter it with my devotee friends, some contrary thought like that comes up, some unfinished business. It's something I wouldn't bring up to the men here because it's "*rasābhāsa*." It doesn't fit into this retreat. Maybe if it were just Madhu, I would. Anyway, it's a diversion. I don't mean a diversion only in form, but in the actual essence of what I want to cultivate. Life is short and the attention span is shorter. If I divert it even more, what then? Then I went on with my *japa* and all is going well as per the schedule.

Breakfast was quite a feast: yogurt with honey, mixture of fresh fruits, little biscuits, figs, pine nuts. It made up for the sparse lunch yesterday.



Early this morning I called Madhumaṅgala into the temple room alone and told him that I was interested in what he had said the other night about wanting to give up his opinionated nature. He had said that he was noticing by introspection how he's impure, so why should someone like him be filled with so many judgments and opinions about others? I said that I also wanted to be like that, so I was glad to hear that he was striving for such freedom. It would be a good influence on me. I then pointed out to him how when I look at some ISKCON publications, I immediately start to form opinions and make critical and negative judgments. It's not good; it's the first offense in chanting.

I assured Madhu that we don't have to think that devotees will manipulate us or that we will be naive if we take a non-judgmental attitude. We are already intending not to have so many intimate relationships with others anyway, but from a distance, we can offer obeisances and wish them well. We don't have to make judgments; we're not managers. What my Godbrothers are doing is often different from what I'm doing, that's all. Let me go on with my activities and wish them well in their activities, whatever they may be. As for those who may be severe wrong-doers, the ISKCON law (GBC) will eventually find them out and deal with their offenses. It's not my duty.

Later in the day I thought of various references from Prabhupāda's books to support our becoming less judgmental. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, there is a section about Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa. It says that he never criticized any devotee, even if their faults were pointed out to him. The same nature was attributed to a priest-

friend of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja in Vṛndāvana. In the chapter on Rāmacandra Purī, a purport mentions that one should be neutral and neither praise nor condemn people, but of those two points, the more important one is not to condemn. Also, my introductory essay, "Seeing the Good," from Volume One of *Lessons from the Road*. There are also some good statements by desert Fathers on non-judgment:

The old men used to say, "There is nothing worse than passing judgment."

Abba Pastor said, "Judge not him who is guilty of fornication, if you are chaste or you will break the law like him. For He who said, 'Do not commit fornication,' said also, 'Do not judge.'"

A brother sinned and the priest ordered him to go out of the church. Abba Bessarion got up and went out with him saying, "I too am a sinner."

Finished sixty-four rounds at 4:27 P.M. Heart dry and heart like the caked and baked earth here in this south Spain desert. Oh well . . . the *sāstras* say I'm doing well, doing the right thing.

I walked, I thought nothing, then I met him coming the other way. I am nonviolent; I am not humble; I am not a devotee of Kṛṣṇa or anyone. I want peace in this body, in this life, and to wake up at death and go to the spiritual planet. How is it possible if I don't believe, don't know, don't love? I serve mechanically. I don't even want to talk to someone about it. Who can explain?



I did my sixty-four. That's all. Do another? No pub, no girls, no baseball or jazz or sex or TV with mom and dad (he's dead). Mickey the dog (who slept by the oil burner) is dead, and Madeline, who knows?

We all get swept away. Chant. Chant and realize the supreme Father. I wish I could, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Your extraordinary words spur me on. That's all. Please accept me.

### After the meeting

I'm feeling a bit of a headache and want to take rest now.

## September 29

12:10 A.M.

Couldn't sleep well, even though this place is *tranquilo* (don't even need ear plugs). The midges were biting my hands and head, ears, cheeks, despite the citronella and spray. I can sleep better at a noisy truck stop if I'm tired. Maybe I don't need so much sleep. Anyway, so many bodily functions are not under my control.

Oh, it's a long, long way/ from May to December/ and the days grow short/ when you reach September./ And the autumn weather/ turns the leaves to brown;/ one hasn't got time for the waiting game.

Chanting is substantial. The *Nāmāmṛta* proves it. It's not that we do Kṛṣṇa a favor when we chant. We do invoke love of God, however. I wish to read and inspire my Kṛṣṇa consciousness to chant and to hear and to serve. Don't forget to chant with attention. We can do it while engaged in our occupations. The *sannyāsi* should be free to chant.

"It is to be understood that any person who is constantly engaged in chanting the holy names of the

Lord—Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare—has attained a transcendental affection for Kṛṣṇa, and as such, in any condition of life, he remains satisfied simply by remembering the Lord's name in full affection and ecstatic love.” (NOD, p. 382)

This means even if somebody goes to a hellish place where there are obnoxious smells and sights, he can maintain his life by remembering the Lord's holy names, and in fact be satisfied. You can't expect to see the Lord's form, however, in any artificial way while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. “The chanter, therefore, has to concentrate on hearing the vibration, and without extra endeavor on his part, the Lord will automatically appear.” (*Bhāg.* 4.8.53, purport)

The real test of chanting is whether you become eager to render service to the Lord. If someone is engaging enthusiastically in Kṛṣṇa's service, that means he's reaping the results of chanting the names of Kṛṣṇa and Hari. Why just sit on those laurels? Let's chant more and serve more enthusiastically.

“Only when one can understand that there is no difference between the Supreme and His name can one be situated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. At such a time one no longer needs to make dramatic adjustments. Rather, one becomes more interested in petitioning the Lord: ‘Hare Kṛṣṇa—O my Lord, O energy of the Lord, please engage me in Your service!’” (TLC)

2 A.M.

I'm feeling sleepy and thinking I didn't get enough rest. Should I go back to sleep?

Please, Lord, give me the strength to stay awake and chant the holy names and hear with attention. *Nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo.*

Go ahead, throw yourself into it. To chant, you really have to give yourself fully. It's not a small act. Therefore, when you think of increasing your rounds after these seven days, it's not a token idea; you have to actually do it if you're going to do it.

The agnostic asks, "Is there life after death?" I ask myself, "Is there life in my chanting?"

For my first set of sixteen rounds this morning, I learned that I can't expect yesterday's success to automatically be today's success. Each day I have to give my due surrender. This morning I lit the candle, turned on Prabhupāda's *japa* tape, sat down ready to chant, and started the motor. But it just didn't happen. Toward the second hour I started chanting quicker and more intently. I stopped indulging in thoughts. We really have to make a physical and mental effort.

Pre-dawn walk under the stars with Śrīla Prabhupāda, who said that when he was a householder, when his second son was four years old, they were once walking together, father and son. The son asked, "Father, why is the moon going with us?" Prabhupāda said in a similar way that as the moon can go with us as we walk, so Kṛṣṇa comes with us when we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Wherever we are—walking, talking, working—we should chant Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare



Hare. I want to be with Prabhupāda as he chants the *mahā-mantra* on tape. Let me hear from him and chant along. I wish to do this for the rest of my life.

8 A.M.

Workers appear in the olive groves, scratching and scrubbing something or other. How different they seem to us, but are they really so different? They're not chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. I am shy to walk past them, but Hṛdaya-Caitanya is steadfast. He keeps to his road, shining back and forth in his *gr̥hasṭha* white.

9 A.M.

Now the chanting seems to me as uninteresting as a basin full of spare mechanical parts, like plumbing pipe sections, useless things that I know nothing about and about which I don't care.

9:45 A.M.

In the temple room. Madhu is chanting softly and me too, but Yadunandana is loud and guttural. I think of St. Therese of Liseux and how she tolerated that one sister who used to clang her rosary beads in the row just behind Therese. All these little inconveniences Therese offered as sacrifices to Jesus and did not speak out against anyone. That's at least what she tried for in her little way. Can we do it?

10:10 A.M.

Thinking ahead. What kind of notebooks will I use in October? Shall I use the luxury Italian ones (good for drawing while writing) or the cheap-o ones (to use them

up)? I'll read *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* starting from the beginning and try to finish it in five weeks. As for now—getting through the quota and no more.

Now the other two men have left and I'm alone in the temple room. The altar: Jagannātha Deities are becoming my friends. I don't have to think of Them in terms of *mādhurya-rasa*. What is Their *līlā*? I like Their forms and know that They are thoroughly integrated into ISKCON's history. Lord Caitanya also worshipped Them. I like Them and They like me.

The midges continue to bite. They leave little swelling marks as if they were tiny vampires. I scratch, then notice blood marks on my *kūrta*, which I try to rub out with water. I told Madhu that the citronella and the spray are not good enough. He said, "I've got something else. But then you can't go into the van for a couple of hours." I silently approved. He gets out some spray and does a job. Chilling. Is it justified?

I finished sixty-four rounds at 4:28 P.M. today and each round took only an average of six minutes and fourteen seconds with loud whispering method.

### After the evening meeting

The devotees, especially Madhumaṅgala, have been joking about which order they speak in at the meeting. They don't like to be last. Therefore, I began by announcing the batting order for tonight: I would go first, then Yadunandana, then Madhumaṅgala, then Hṛdaya-Caitanya.

I told about my day, how in the very early morning I saw that what worked yesterday didn't automatically work today. But things went better when I made an effort and chanted loudly. I told them how during the second set of sixteen rounds I felt close to Prabhupāda while hearing his voice on the tape recorder. I felt inclined to devote my life to chanting, and I was convinced that it's a worthy ISKCON engagement for me and for the preaching. During my third set of sixteen, the rounds were slower—8:30 each—but steady. I met no big blank-like I did yesterday. The future is starting to seep in with plan-making and decisions during *japa*, but I also felt strength from the sixty-four rounds and thought that strength will carry into my other services. I don't know, however, what will happen once I abruptly change the *japa* quota from sixty-four to sixteen. I hope I will retain the sense of priority for attention in *japa* and continue making a good effort. Even though I go down to sixteen rounds, the times when I chant should be as far as possible without distractions and in good physical time and situation.

I described how I felt this afternoon when I began the fourth set of sixteen. Each new set I start with zero as if humbly on my first round. Then I have to build up the momentum again. It's a surrender of time, tongue, and ear, a sacrifice. I'm encouraged in my own convictions for chanting when I see the other men taking their quotas seriously. When I was in the home stretch with about three or four rounds left, I was in the temple room with Yadunandana. I lost all self-consciousness. I no longer thought whether either of us was bothering the



other with the way we chant *japa*. We just chanted together.

During those rounds, however, I got a “great idea” for what I will read and write when this week is over. I wrote it down. Later it turned out to be a possible idea, not a definite one. By allowing that idea to come, I lost my simple motive in chanting.

I then played a tape segment from Prabhupāda glorifying and recommending the chanting. He said that Kṛṣṇa can always be with us if we chant His holy names. Get out of this dangerous material world and be with Him by sound vibration. Kṛṣṇa is so kind to appear in this way in this world.

Finally I read and spoke about chanting at the time of death. If I do get warning about my end, I’d like to go to Vṛndāvana. That’s one of the reasons I like to visit Vṛndāvana, India while I’m living; at the end, it won’t seem so stark that I go and feel like a stranger there, “going to die.” Rather, I’ll feel at home. I’ll also be acquainted with the austerity and sweetness of the *dhāma*.

Similarly, by analogy, the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is the crucial practice at the time of death. In the very last hour, we’ll make all effort to chant or hear with the help of our bedside friends. If we are fortunate to have a few weeks’ notice, then we’ll wind up our activities and increase our *japa* quota. These *vratas* for increased *japa* quota will help us in the end. We will already be so familiar with the feeling of chanting with no other purpose that we will be able to lean on the strength of the holy name. In the eighth chapter, where Kṛṣṇa



talks about thinking of Him at the time of death, Prabhupāda repeatedly refers to chanting as the way:

“Remembrance of Kṛṣṇa is not possible for the impure soul who has not practiced Kṛṣṇa consciousness in devotional service. Therefore one should practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness from the very beginning of life. If one wants to achieve success at the end of his life, the process of remembering Kṛṣṇa is essential. Therefore, one should constantly, incessantly chant the *mahā-mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare. Lord Caitanya has advised that one be as tolerant as a tree. There may be so many impediments for a person who is chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Nonetheless, tolerating all these impediments, one should continue to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare, so that at the end of one’s life one can have the full benefit of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” (Bg. 8.5, purport)

Yadunandana spoke next and presented the verse *sata-tatam kirtayanto mām* (Bg. 9.14). He examined the words “always” and “with determination.” He said sixty-four rounds is not much compared to “always” chanting. As for *dṛḍha-vrata*, he said he wants to chant more in his life and keep an increased quota.

Yadu mentioned how the men came to the orchard this morning and were collecting almonds. (I thought they were olive trees, but they’re almond trees.) He said that the men might think that we chanters pacing back and forth weren’t working, but we are working for the soul.

He also said that he became distracted during his third set of sixteen rounds. He thought of some devotees who had been criticizing him and it disturbed his chanting. Then he decided to be careful and not to commit *sādhū-niṇḍā* by holding onto ill feelings toward them. Once he overcame this distraction, his *japa* improved.

He also gave us more thoughts on the *ṭṛṇād api* verse. He said that usually we think we have to become humble before we can chant, but it can also be taken the other way, that by chanting an increased vow, our humility will also increase.

Madhumaṅgala said that his experience on this *japa-vrata* has been a consistent and continuous one, a solid struggle to try and hear the names. He said it exposed to him the roots of his distraction. His mind likes to work at many things, not just at one thing such as chanting. Today he said that as hard as he struggled with his mind, his mind fought back with different thoughts and plans.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Arjuna says that to control the mind is more difficult than to control the wind. In the purport, Prabhupāda says that it is possible to control the mind, and that the easiest way to do it is to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, “the great chant for deliverance.” It should be chanted with all humility. Lord Kṛṣṇa also says it’s possible to control the mind by constant practice and determination. One way to attain this determination is to hear more about Kṛṣṇa. Then it will be easier to pay attention.

The chanting is a great blessing on us. As a result of chanting, Kṛṣṇa will remember us and we can be with Him.

Madhu says he's struggling, but he wants more than just the struggle to pay attention. He wants devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. He quoted *Japa Walks*, *Japa Talks* where I say that when we're just at the struggling stage, then the effort to control the mind is our offering of devotion.

Prabhupāda said the prayer of Hare Kṛṣṇa means, "Please accept me." Madhu likes to address this prayer to the holy name.

He spent his last round chanting before a picture of Rādhā-Govinda-candra (the Deities at the Vraja-maṇḍala farm in Spain), and that helped him to personalize his chanting by chanting for Them.

Hṛdaya-Caitanya said he had a good start today and had three sets of sixteen done by 11 A.M. Hearing the other devotees talk about prayer while chanting inspired Hṛdaya to also make a prayer, which he said he was actually thinking while chanting. His prayer went something like this: "Dear Kṛṣṇa, let me desire to chant Your holy names with rapt attention and absorb my senses, or else these senses will pull me into sense gratification. My dear Lord, please take sex desire out of my heart. My Lord, You know that I like to make arrangements in Your service. That's all right, but let me not make arrangements for my own sense gratification."

He said his last rounds in the day were not so good. It was as if his mind was refusing to listen anymore. Hṛdaya then read to us from *Japa Reform Notebook* the



statements about how the uncontrolled mind makes us unable to chant. We have to work to control the mind in chanting. Be like the parent who keeps trying to correct the little child no matter how many times he makes the same mistake.

Last night, I mentioned that people sometimes make an argument that it doesn't seem devoted to call on Kṛṣṇa by such rapid and repeated chanting like ISKCON devotees do when they chant *japa*. Hṛdaya had some thoughts about it tonight. He said that Rūpa Gosvāmī states that he wants to have millions of mouths, tongues, and ears with which to chant and hear. Once the heart is pure, we want more and more. Lord Caitanya says again and again with emphasis, "There is no alternative, there is no alternative, there is no alternative."

At present we have no taste, or the taste we do have is bitter, for chanting. This is temporary. When we chant sincerely and repeatedly, the mantra itself will cure us. Therefore, we have to chant at least sixteen rounds in the way that Prabhupāda taught us. After that, if we want to chant more slowly or "internally," we may do so. Hṛdaya also said that when we follow a leader or spiritual master in the process, we no longer concoct our own methods. We may have so many questions before initiation, but once we accept a guru, we should follow his process. Don't concoct. If we chant "silently," we'll fall asleep.

Madhumāṅgala added more on that point. He said that he empathizes with those who object to rapid, mindless chanting. The main point, however, is not fast or slow, but that chanting is done with devotion. Rapid



chanting can also be done with devotion. Prabhupāda himself criticized slurred, rapid chanting, and he even gave scornful imitations of it. “Don’t chant like that, but chant with *prīti*, with devotion.” We should not speculate about whether chanting should be different from the way we have been taught by Prabhupāda. Just hear how Prabhupāda chants on tape. Our process is simply to follow our *ācāryas* and chant so we can hear. Prabhupāda chanted quickly and repeatedly, but he also enunciated the words carefully and with devotion. That is what we are working toward.

Madhu said that if we saw a person in danger, we would repeatedly call their name to alert them. I also said that we can just imagine some advanced devotee—a *gopī*—repeating Kṛṣṇa’s name over and over: Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, pronouncing it rapidly. Of course, she wouldn’t be reciting it in a mindless or mechanical way, but in ecstasy. Rapid and repeated chanting does not mean that in itself it’s without devotion. We’re not chanting to attain speed or to accumulate rounds, and we’re certainly not chanting without care. We’re chanting in the way Prabhupāda authorized us to chant.

## September 30

“Of all the regulative principles, the spiritual master’s order to chant at least sixteen rounds is most essential.” (Cc., *Madhya* 22.113, purport)

“ . . . Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura used to say that unless one chants at least sixty-four rounds of *japa* (one hundred thousand names), he is considered fallen (*patita*).” According to his calculation practically everyone of us is fallen, “but because we are trying to serve the Supreme Lord with all seriousness . . . we can expect the mercy of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu . . .” (NOI, text 5, purport)

This means the minimum rounds (sixteen) should be done with our best effort at attention and prayer. Also, we should be aware that sixteen is the rock bottom minimum and try for more each day. (I say “we” and “should,” but I know starting tomorrow I’ll be making the sharp descent from sixty-four down to sixteen.) “Serve with seriousness” may also mean that all other activities done within a twenty-four-hour period should be done in Kṛṣṇa’s service.

Don’t stop this process of chanting and hearing. It’s like watering a plant. If you stop, powerful *māyā* will see

her opportunity to strike and we will at once dry up. “If you continue this chanting and hearing process, you will grow and grow and actually reach Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet and there relish His association.”

And so, dear friends, as we ushered September in, we must announce that it is over this year. How many more seasons do we have? We may dwell on that, but what’s the profit? We don’t know the answer. It could be none or ten or twenty. All we know is that this one has come and gone.

The Visiting *Sannyāsi* opened our story by dreaming that his diary ended up on the Internet. If anyone reads it, it won’t harm them, and neither will it harm the Visiting *Sannyāsi*. Ah, the shy Visiting *Sannyāsi* behind barbed wire, in fictionland, comatose,

with no teeth,  
unshaven but I will shave him,  
asymmetrical in head as he came  
out of his mama’s womb  
but that ain’t no crime,  
Lord,  
Lord,  
let us serve You.  
May we have the *bala* this  
day,  
Mr. Headache we read your  
flash warnings (like lightning in  
a morning sky)  
but ask you to cease and desist.  
We won’t overdo beyond  
physical capacity or play a role  
someone else insists.



We will arise and go now to  
the isle of Inisfree and chant  
Hare Kṛṣṇa in the house of wattles and  
outside we'll walk and chant  
hearing our eternal master chant.  
And now by candlelight,  
the first of four installments of  
sixteen rounds.  
All glories to the Lord  
of the universe.

4:45 A.M.

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, please direct me and inspire me as to what You want me to do for Your pleasure. Kṛṣṇa consciousness means pleasing the Supreme Lord, not just one's self. How will He steer me?

I told the devotees that we're like newcomers who have just been initiated into the holy name by this week-long *vrata* of sixty-four rounds a day. At least it's an introduction to a further stage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Interesting to think of it like that—as an initiation.

I have to hurry and hurry in order to get the quota done. There's hardly enough time. As the White Rabbit said, "I'm late, I'm late for a very important date." Alice was quite surprised when she saw him run down a rabbit hole looking at his watch nervously. She had never seen a rabbit talk before, what to speak of one speaking so nervously about being late.

The point is to pay attention while you're chanting, hear the holy names. I was able to do that this morning while walking before dawn. The other thing is to feel sorry, at least a *little* sorry, that you don't chant with devotion and free from offense. Prabhupāda says over and over that quality means chanting without offense. I don't seem to be able to understand this. Why not? Because I'm a dunce. Because I don't study the ten offenses and think about it more.

The other point is to express your personal feelings to Kṛṣṇa and to pray to Him: "Please forgive me for not chanting nicely. Please engage me in Your service. Please, it's all up to You. I know I can't do it by myself."

### Five minutes to 11

Dr. Samuel Johnson said that he felt satisfaction for *having completed* writing a poem. The actual writing of the poem was not a pleasure. Rather, he would constantly measure how many lines he had left before he was finished. He was eager to be done with it. This is a rather anti-romantic view of a poet.

But I felt this way this morning, and in fact all day while I chanted my rounds. When I finish a set of sixteen, I become elated: "I made it again." The actual chanting, however, brings me no joy. It's just the usual mechanical runover. To mention this is also mechanical. I'm sorry about it.

Earlier I said to myself that I was actually attaining a stage of attention and beyond that a stage of wanting more than attention, and even a prayer to Nāma Prabhu. Now I have a more disappointed interpretation of that attainment. Now I see that even that so-called

attainment is superficial. The real thing is the intensity. To make a certain mental note that, "Now I'm paying attention," then to say to yourself, "Now add to this a desire to do even more than pay attention." And then while holding those two concepts in place, add a third concept, "Why not speak personally? Or address Kṛṣṇa and feel sorry for your shortcomings?" But if it's just a mental balancing act, then where is the actual remorse and where is the actual attention? Hare Kṛṣṇa.

I really don't want to sound down or cynical, like a Dr. Johnson saying that poetry is no fun. Still, I had to tell the truth because I don't want to write cream puff pastry in the name of *japa* notes. *Japa* is hard work. It's being willing to be disillusioned enough to see your lack of even the smallest mood of devotion. There's not a single drop. You're in the desert.

Well, will you give it up? No.

I remember when I worked at the welfare office in Dorchester, Massachusetts, a red-haired Irish-American girl used to say at the end of the day, as a kind of farewell to the fellow workers in our unit, "It was real." Her remark was grim, meaning that what we had experienced was another grueling afternoon of joyless office work. It wasn't nectar and it wasn't even compassionate. It wasn't even fun. It was only real. I think my *japa* is like that. At least it's mine, not an imitation or jargon borrowed from others.



3:45 P.M.

This afternoon I think of many things to mention to Madhu, but then I pass them up and don't mention them in favor of concentrating on *japa*. I *will* mention that I looked out the window and saw a lizard as big as an Indian squirrel. He stretched his neck, looked around in the bright sunlight, and entered the wood pile.

Finished sixty-four rounds at 4:13 P.M.

Last chances to say it:

Remember September 1st? Rādhāṣṭamī.

These same moonlight nights of spring,  
the *mālatī* fragrance there.

*Kadamba* forest breezes blow,  
balmy as before.

That self same youthful heart thief  
is again My master now,  
but there's no solace for My heart  
and it's there I yearn to go.

. . . How deep the sadness in My heart  
again I want to be  
upon the banks of Revā,  
'neath the same trysting tree.

. . . My heart yearns for Vṇḍāvana  
and Yamunā's banks so dear  
I long to hear His sweet flute play  
its all-enchanting air;  
My heart yearns for the fifth note  
within the forest there.

Remember staying at the Newcastle farm, the mud and puddles, the kittens and the cat? Remember going to see Prabhupāda in the cold caravan and warming it up for him, typing in front of him on that rickety table, glancing at him?

Remember the headaches? Then the drive that Saturday afternoon to Newcastle? That was a treat. My disciple is the temple president, and other disciples also gathered from south England. It was a like a reunion. He lit an essential oil in the room. I smelled his devotion and my head felt at ease. He had a collage of Prabhupāda photos on his wall. I looked out the window and heard the city sounds but stayed with our own little group, just for a weekend, our world within ISKCON.

At Newcastle in that low-ceilinged temple room, I gave the Sunday Feast lecture and asserted that our goal is to go back to Godhead. If we can't make it in this lifetime, we should pray as Mahārāja Parikṣit prayed: "Again, offering obeisances unto all you *brāhmaṇas*, I pray that if I should again take my birth in the material world I will have complete attachment to the unlimited Lord Kṛṣṇa, association with His devotees and friendly relations with all living beings." (*Bhāg.* 1.19.16)

Leaving the Belfast temple the morning after Rādhā-ṣṭamī, the ladies' management out to say good-bye to us, but we had used up our good-byes and quickly departed until we will meet again at the lotus feet of Rādhā-Mādhava.

The car trip down through England to the unfriendly southern port where we couldn't find a place to park.

Portsmouth, smooth journey the next day, our comfortable cavern, that newspaper, arriving in Le Havre, everything okay. Waved into France by a mustached policeman. Signs of September on the *bonne route*, France's gracious highway system. A park where we stopped, gray clouds. I took a walk before it rained. These few precious days. Sentimental Steve. Happy as long as he's got his traveling biscuits and his own van. Oh yes, talk of getting a new van.

Then Spain, parked in Barcelona on a little hilltop created by a ruined building just near the busy street and the temple. The hate letter I received from that American devotee. I keep thinking about that one and how he must be right, but as Issa says, "It's a dew drop world, and yet . . ."

### From the evening meeting

I told them about my day, how the first set went well chanting in the van, even though it was mechanical. I was aware, as Prabhupāda says, "Mechanical chanting is not as powerful as offenseless chanting of the holy name." At least I was not indulging in other thoughts, but I was into the effort of struggling. Kṛṣṇa is not yet in my thoughts or my devotion.

I chanted the second set while walking on the road. I was paying attention to the syllables as Prabhupāda instructed me in that letter: "There is no such requirement that japa should be done silently and chanting should be done differently. Loudly or silently, everything is all right. There is no such restriction. Only thing is that we should chant very attentively, hearing the vibration very distinctly."



Externally I was well ahead of myself all day and I finished the third set by 11 A.M. But that set was mechanical and dry. I asked myself, "How is this in any way different than when I was chanting before this sixty-four-round *vrata*?" My answer was that now I'm not indulging in other thoughts. I face the dryness, although I don't feel keen regret. But when the rounds are over, I feel sorry and aware that I'm falling short. This awareness is humbling; better than a big illusion that I'm an accomplished chanter. I have no intention of quitting. Kṛṣṇa will give me His mercy one day.

During the fourth set, I was actually in the temple room and felt distracted. I didn't tell the devotees why. I just told them that I couldn't enter deeply into the chanting. My heart isn't soft enough, and I wasn't tasting the Vṛndāvana mood.

Now I'm ready to open the floodgates on other activities since my *vrata* is done. But I did it and I'm glad.

I also read some quotes from *Nāmāmṛta* to ease us in coming down from our sixty-four-round quota. In one sense, we have been acting beyond our capacity and now we have to return to our lesser quota and our regular duties. At least we should be aware that it's very important to keep the minimum.

Madhumaṅgala told us that his main focus has been on trying to pay attention again today. He's really examining his lack of attentiveness as offensive. He tried, but could not attain attention by his own prowess. He told us that he's been trying to refrain from eating sweets in order to taste the sweetness of the holy name, but today he binged on different sweets and even raided the ice box. He said it was so humbling to him that he

cried out in his helplessness, “*Ayi nanda-tanuja kiṅkar-am.*” He’s back to the simple basic mood of crying out for help.

Yadunandana chose the verse, *kaler doṣa-nidhe rājan*. There are many defects in Kali-yuga, but the one great boon is the chanting of the holy name. He tried to finish the marathon well and he thanked us all.

Hṛdaya-Caitanya said today the distractions were stronger and he was less able to hold them back. He feels that he’s failed after fifteen years in such a basic lesson as attention to *japa*, but he’s grateful that he realizes his position and that he has hope. He knows he has a lot of work ahead. Habits formed early are harder to break.

Then we called it a night, called it a *vrata*, called it a September. If Kṛṣṇa desires, we’ll be happy and grateful to welcome October tomorrow.

## Epilogue

The Sixth Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* recounts how Dakṣa's sons went to perform austerities before entering *gṛhasṭha* life. Nārada met them and convinced them not to produce children, but to fully engage themselves in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Thus the *Bhāgavatam* says of Dakṣa's sons, the Śavalaśvas, "Like nights that have gone to the West, they have not returned even until now." (*Bhāg.* 6.5.33)

Similarly, the thirty days and nights of September 1995 have been taken away by time, never to return. September will come again next year, with or without me, and the material world will, after its destined time, be annihilated and then return again. September 1995, with all its particulars, will never come back.

I have called this a "catchall," but I have only caught a few infinitesimal fragments, a record of devotional service performed under Śrīla Prabhupāda's order. That written record will also be lost in time, but the writing life will not go in vain because it is service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even a little of that devotional service never suffers loss or diminution and can save one from the greatest fear at the time of death.



In its outer form, this September Catchall 1995 is temporary, but its inner form is truth (*sat*). I am an eternal servant of Śrīla Prabhupāda.



