

ELECTRIONIC BOOK

By Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami

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Every Day, Just Write

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Going Out

and Coming Back

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Also by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

Shrila Prabhupada Lilamrita

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November 25, 1998, 12:00 Midnight

"There is no doubt about Lord Krishna's being the Supreme Lord, otherwise how is it possible for Him to kill a giant demon like Putana. . . and to overturn the cart, and uproot the Arjuna trees." (*Bhag. 2.7.27*) All these activities would be impossible for anyone but the Lord Himself.

Calm yourself. M. is already in the house. He can't sleep because of his leg pain, and he doesn't want to wake Chaitanya. It's a domino effect: one person disturbs another disturbs another. But it's minor disturbance, and we can tolerate. When major needs are disrupted or people think they are disrupted, they may riot and kill.

What's this about everything going haywire on January 1, 2000, because the computers will stop working? They say we'll run out of food, heat, and other utilities. It's "very, very possible," they say. Then it will be "a whole new ball game," meaning, whatever savings, job, or so-called civilized standards we enjoy will be wiped out. Can our karma change because of the millennium bug? Maybe the bug has been sent by Krishna to change the world's karma, or rather, as an installment of karma. At least I'm hearing some devotees call it "a blessing in disguise." They see it as another way to turn to Krishna and to better realize that we depend only on Him.

If such a worldwide disaster occurs, will the devotees appear heroic and help people? Or is it better for us to lie low in our own houses and temples stocked with grains, canned food, and plenty of fuel for the wood stove? I could make that a writing theme for 1999: going to the *bhajana-kutira* in your backyard to prepare for the millennium bug by chanting starkly on my beads.

God is Krishna. Few people believe it. I am writing notes while reading *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*. The *Bhagavatam* attests to the fact that Krishna is the Supreme with its *krishnas to bhagavan svayam* verse. I've found Him and I won't let Him go. My "complaints" are against my mind, and they're not *so* serious. They're serious in that any disruption of pure love and faith mars my service, any offense to the Lord, His name, and His pure devotee is held against me, but at heart I believe in my relationship with Krishna. And I appreciate what Prabhupada and Krishna have done for me. No, I won't let go of them, and neither will they let go of me.

God maintains all living entities. Krishna doesn't need to undergo penance in order to become God. He showed this in His childhood activities. "The Lord in any condition is Lord of the universe, and He can act as such in any form, gigantic or small, as He likes." (*Bhag. 2.7.27*, purport)

He also punished the venomous Kaliya snake and saved all the residents of Vrindavana from a forest fire. All of Krishna's acts are superhuman by their transcendental nature. Whoever knows this and becomes attached to hearing of them "and develops the greed to serve *this* Lord" "becomes eligible to enter the kingdom of Krishna after leaving the material body."

Krishna showed His mother the universal form within His mouth. By the effect of Yoga-maya, Mother Yashoda thought that Lord Narayana was protecting her son. Lord Krishna saved His father Nanda Maharaja from Varuna, released the cowherd boys from the mountain cave, and awarded promotion to the highest spiritual planet to the people of

Vrindavana. "All these acts are transcendental and certainly prove without any doubt His Godhood." (*Bhag. 2.7.31*, purport)

"In the *Bhagavad-gita* it is confirmed that to be in association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead by full surrender in transcendental love frees one from the miseries inflicted by the laws of material nature." (*Bhag. 2.7.31*, purport) Do your duty in Krishna consciousness and you'll experience the highest *samadhi*; the material miseries won't disturb you.

We are traveling to Belfast today.

Serving Krishna.

Writing a record that traces a journey
and all that.

No preconceived theme or title.

Look forward to minimum outside disturbances and maximum faithful writing.

Focus.

On my compass, Krishna is all the direction points, yet He's especially North. When I'm lost, I take out my compass and write due north, toward Krishna. Something like that. Wherever I go, however, even if I don't head due north, I see everything in relation to that northern point, because east, west, south, and all the points in between are also Krishna.

* * *

Had a strange dream. We were in Guyana, driving a car that somehow had some part of it that stayed in the water. A dolphin attached itself to the back of the car. When we stopped, we were informed by an authority that according to law, the dolphin would have to have an eye removed. The Guyanese government considered the dolphin an offender. The government officials didn't want dolphins attaching themselves to other people's cars. We had to submit to the violence, and I felt horrible to have had to be involved in something so inauspicious. When I awoke I realized just how auspicious that dolphin was, and I continued feeling sorry.

* * *

8:00 a.m., En route

Street light still on. In traffic approaching Belfast. Fifteen minutes to go, he says. I sit in the middle of the van imagining what it would be like if I broke my only pair of glasses. Thinking too of the man I'll meet this afternoon. I'll ask him to tell me about himself. Breakfast in the van: date balls, apple pieces, and some banana slices (that spilled on the floor).

As soon as we get there, we'll have to unpack the van and move in. I wonder what the neighborhood people think in *dhotis* moving into a house on their street? I'll speak about liberation tomorrow, explaining how in India, millions attend the Kumbha-mela in order to attain *moksha*. Carl Jung thought Hinduism did not teach *moksha*; he thought it was a Buddhist principle.

What does *moksha* mean to your average Hare Krishna devotee in the West? It means returning to the spiritual world. We want to be careful that we don't come back here to this world of *samsara*, especially, perhaps, in Northern Ireland, where the war continues.

* * *

9:00 a.m.

We have arrived at Bhakta Fergus's house. It's comfortable, but I'm feeling that lacking I know so well "that lacking that tells me I'm not expert in anything. I *used* to be expert in headaches, but right now I don't even have those with me. I get indigestion pretty good, and can putter around with books. I should read the *Bhagavatam*. That would be best. But I have used up all my energy just to move in. I'm still trying to get an extension cord for my digital clock "this and that. By the time we get a routine figured out, it will be time to move on.

Although I appear to live in my own world, I don't live here alone. I'm dependent on so many others here. More than the average person, I think. I'm aware of the debt I owe to the great sages and my spiritual master, who has given me a transcendental lift above what I would have normally achieved. I should try to repay Prabhupada for his gift, but what can I do?

* * *

10:00 a.m.

Tired. Not a tough-guy intellectual like that Norman Mailer. When I look out the window, I see a typical Irish rowhouse and a gray Northern Irish day. Saving my energy for this afternoon's meeting. That will be today's main event. I plan mostly to listen to the devotee who is coming to see me. Does he see me as a father confessor? Who can actually improve his life if he hasn't done it himself so far? We all face that question.

"Is Radha-Govinda comfortable here?" I felt like answering in terms of *my* comfort. If I am comfortable, then Radha-Govinda must be? Instead I said, "I don't know. They don't have all Their paraphernalia here." Still, I have a simple but steady altar with a picture of Lord Chaitanya, the Panca-tattva, the Six Gosvamis, and of course, Radha-Govinda. My hosts have provided some small vases with short-stemmed flowers bought at a florist, and they have covered the altar table with a saffron cloth. I thank them. Yes, the Deities are comfortable.

When the clock strikes midnight on January 1, 2000 . . . when my ellipses fade. Will I still be able to publish books? Chaitanya says he's frustrated by the long wait in seeing my writings published. It seems he'd rather see them come out in any format just so that he can read them sooner. But beautiful, edited books are our standard "books that will last.

* * *

11:48 a.m.

That verse I thought I would lecture on about liberation is not tomorrow's verse. Caitanya phoned the temple, and they told him I would be lecturing on *Bhag.* 2.9.44. I

almost think they saved it for me because they think I'd like to speak on that particular purport. Shrila Prabhupada says the *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* was spoken in four nutshell verses and explained in ten subject matters, which require many, many verses to explicate, but the *Bhagavatam* will never be complete. It can be expanded unlimitedly. We will always be able to elaborate on it more and more. For example, Lord Caitanya explained *bhakti* briefly to Rupa Gosvami, who expanded on it elaborately. Subsequent *acharyas* took the subject matter even further. "We are just trying to follow in the footsteps of all these authorities . . . It is unlimited in strength, and however one may expand it according to one's own ability, the *Bhagavatam* can never be finished."

Today I'd like to appreciate just a few of the *Bhagavatam's* verses, but I love the concept that God is so great that we can elaborate on His character, pastimes, and philosophy unlimitedly. I also like the idea presented in this purport that God is both small and very great. What should I say about that in my lecture? I'd like to speak about faith in a *lectio divina* sort of spirit.

* * *

2:10 p.m.

Just put the typewriter on the floor so I had room for my lunch plate on the desk. The drawing pad and crayons are also on the floor. This room is so small that it's already cluttered. That's okay.

Those darned cookies and sweets eaten in a speeding van did me no good. Why can't they give me a simpler breakfast? But would my tongue be satisfied with simpler fare? Someone wrote me with a saintly attitude toward pain, embracing it as Krishna conscious, a way to be dependent on Krishna, helpless. I think differently. I seek to head it off at the pass. I do it so I can write. Each person has to find his or her own way.

Just now Radha-Govinda and Shrila Prabhupada look nice as I exchange glances with them in the soft light. Lord Nrsimhadeva, the protector, in His picture form nearby. Opened a tape drawer and found cassettes from the 1990 and 1993 book distribution marathons "someone had taped rock songs for the *sankirtana* devotees. Get out on *sankirtana*! Never mind your *sadhana*. Put *varnashrama* on the back burner. They're right too "that's marathon life. Hare Krishna.

Could I find a way to expand the *Bhagavatam*? What does it mean to expand the *Bhagavatam*? Does it mean that you comment on it without only repeating the *acharyas*, but providing personal insights into the texts? But you have to immerse yourself in the *Bhagavatam's* nectar before you can expand it. You have to assimilate it. You have to know Krishna.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

A *sannyasi* Godbrother in town wants to see me. That's a surprise. Should I see him today or tomorrow? They offered me ice cream and apple pie for dessert.

Reading a woman's journal. Her brother died suddenly one winter. Now it's winter again "gets dark as early as 4:00. We don't need to create drama in life; we can just live protected by Krishna. Krishna will protect us with His kindness and mercy, His words.

She quoted, "Man is made to suffer, as the sparks of a fire go upwards."
Sure. *Samasritah*. Death is certain.

Tomorrow I will speak on a verse that says the *Bhagavatam* has ten subject matters, but they will be discussed in the next chapter. This suggests that Vyasadeva was first giving an overview so that we could begin our study of the nutshell verses carefully. We can see everything in four or many, or we can boil everything down to one: Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

What does this mean to us living today? Let us hear *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* and mold our lives according to its principles. Live a *Bhagavatam* life. How we do that, however, will be different for each of us.

* * *

3:00 p.m.

It's quite wonderful how *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* keeps expanding when authorized persons speak and appreciate it. The *Bhagavatam* is not a static entity defined by a set limit. I don't know *exactly* what this all means, but the concept attracts me. Certainly the text has eighteen thousand verses, but whenever we explain it and live it, it increases. *Anandam buddhi-varadanam*. ISKCON . . .

Oh, don't give ISKCON as an example. It has too many problems.

Lord Chaitanya's moon is waxing?

The *Bhagavatam* grows within the people in this movement. I hope to give the devotees some hope that they can learn to relish the *Bhagavatam* and also participate in its expansion. This scripture is dynamic, written in Sanskrit, yet mystically beyond all alphabets, especially when spoken by pure devotees who stick to its essence, Krishna.

* * *

4:37 p.m.

Spoke with a devotee for well over an hour. He says I help him. I hope I do. I can't write about our conversation here; I'm too used up to say anything more. It's not that I always want to be alone. I want to help others, especially those already working for the Krishna consciousness movement. Such persons are commendable. They are the ones who will make ISKCON respectable and influential in the world. Perhaps I'll also have a part to play in that. *Brahmanas*, intellectuals, artists, *sannyasis*, *grhasthas* "everyone will play a part if we are each humble and don't offend others.

Highland spring water in a 1.5-liter bottle. Tonight, devotees will be going onstage as part of Belfast's "Fringe Festival." I wish them well as I sit home drinking water and wishing I could become a prayer-maker, a *Bhagavatam* reader "the work given to me and all of us by the Supreme Lord Himself.

I feel I lack spiritual strength. Spiritual strength descends; it is given by the Lord or His pure devotees. We have to chant Hare Krishna more purely if we want to be better devotees. Insert such instructions into the brain.

The window is covered with condensation and I can't see out. I guess it's fogged up because of the electric heater I'm running. O Krishna, please allow us each to live in this world of grace Shрила Prabhupada created for us by his mercy.

* * *

5:28 p.m.

We planned our morning schedule: rise at midnight as usual, perform intense *sadhana*, bathroom, then Deity worship. After that, there's still time for an hour-long nap (you can dream if you like). Then breakfast, get into Fergus's car, and drive to the temple.

Madhu's jacket is too big for him.

The devotee I met tonight looked good "nice matching saffron. Me? Face skinny. So what?

Govinda holds His flute.

They say the present moment is forever different. *Gayatri* in a blear.

Ireland means pubs and people drinking ale, pushing through the smoky atmosphere, loud music. I don't really live in Ireland, you could say. It also means old nannies in houses like this watching TV, while healthy and sometimes stupid kids play ball. Who pays the bills? *Karmi* life is inane.

Young girls with school uniform, knee socks rolled down at the knee. He said he was always attracted to women. Of course, I'm a *sannyasi*, so all that is dead to me. My advice is that he simply chant Hare Krishna and follow the rules. When he praised me I felt a constriction in my chest. I didn't like it, but I didn't dare say anything.

Those born into a good family, like Uddhava, are absorbed in Krishna even as children, whereas the rest of us grew up eating chocolate bunnies at Easter, M&M candies the rest of the year, and going out on Halloween.

November 26, 5:45 a.m.

The *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*, which was spoken by the Supreme Lord in four verses and which contains ten subjects, can be expanded unlimitedly. I said I would avoid mentioning or hinting that we ISKCON devotees can take part as writers in that expansion. It's a fact, however, that every time we give a *Bhagavatam* lecture, we are participating in the expansion. Let me take courage at least here that we are all trying to expand the teachings of the *parampara*. When we write in *parampara*, we create "literature in pursuance of the Vedic version." We simply have to qualify ourselves to speak or write purely.

Now I must begin my *japa*, which consumes so much of my time, and which I do accompanied always by the plan-making, distracted mind (passion and ignorance). Is it because I don't cultivate the goodness of being always with Lord Hari? Expand *that* "by having the patience to live with *hari-nama*, if He will allow you.

* * *

I had a dream, but can't remember the details. Something about TKG and I on a subway car. I was in my Navy uniform with the U.S.S. Saratoga patch. I realized that the Saratoga was now out of commission. Three policemen came onboard and I began to stare at the gun one of them was wearing. One of the others pretended (playfully) to hit

me with his club. Then suddenly for some technical reason, TKG and I were being arrested. They told me I'd have to go back to the Navy, although I'm already quite old. It occurred to me *during the dream* that now I was being given an explanation as to why such an unlikely thing, my being forced back into the Navy, appears so often in my dreams.

Anyway, the dream went on. I spent a lot of time after that on the ship, trying to connect with various devotees but meeting mostly schisms. The dream turned to yet another variety of my being lost, wandering in some large place (the universe?), and trying to find my original home but being unable to do so.

* * *

5:44 a.m.

Expand and contract the *Bhagavatam*. Live it, hear it, serve it.

The *Bhagavatam's* specific message is God consciousness. The Absolute Truth is the Supreme Person, Lord Visnu. He appears in many incarnations, creates the material world, and lives in the spiritual planets. His activities are described at length in the Tenth Canto. On His behalf, great sages like Narada and the Four Kumaras, Brahma, Sukadeva, Maitreya, Vyasa, and so many others teach spiritual knowledge. Jada Bharata teaches about the illusion of material existence. Prahlada Maharaja teaches *bhakti*. Many devotees recite philosophical prayers revealing what they know, at least to some extent, about the Personality of Godhead.

Remind the devotees that this is what *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is about. We try to enter it by *nityam bhagavata-sevaya*, by regular hearing and by serving "the person *bhagavata*." We believe it cleans dirty things from the heart.

But more than that. Believe that eternally naked boys do ride the celestial Ganges from planet to planet and arrive on earth with their hair wet. The Supreme Lord rides a bird. Anything is possible. "But we have never seen any of it except in some books of mythology and in the human imagination."

Doesn't matter. We believe it because it's in *sastra*.

Another question: Even if we believe it, so what? It doesn't affect our lives in the here and now. It doesn't change us or bring us peace.

Shrimad-Bhagavatam will bring us peace if we enter it wholeheartedly.

* * *

10:15 a.m.

Tomorrow's verse is about meditating on the Personality of Godhead, as Narada recommended to Vyasankirtana, speak or hear the *Bhagavatam*, then develop the ability to remember Krishna's qualities and pastimes (*smaranam*). We also meditate by sharing what we have with others and by worshiping the Deity. We are not as great as Vyasa, obviously, but we will still get good results. We will gradually learn to place Krishna at our center rather than ourselves.

As for today's lecture, it went all right, I suppose. I said something a little questionable with reference to Shrila Prabhupada's "Joan of Arc" remark. I said that the Bible is within the expanded sense of the *Bhagavatam*. A godly person can "read"

the *Bhagavatam* when he views nature or even another living entity. Wherever he looks, a pure devotee sees Krishna's form. I'm not sure everyone understood what I meant.

Big-shot old *sannyasi* can't remember. As I lecture, I became fearful that a rock might come flying through the window and cut my face or someone else's. Someone threw a rock through a window at the temple a few days ago. I also found myself staring at the stenciled eye on the wall.

Tomorrow's lecture will focus on Vyasankirtanam, etc.

* * *

11:24 a.m.

This afternoon I have to talk to the devotees who live in the temple. I'll start by saying how Prabhupada began "ISKCON" in Jhansi when he started the League of Devotees. Later, he again opened an *ashrama* in New York City. He wanted many temples opened "and kept open "all over the world. "Come live with us," he often said, and indicated to us that all our problems would be solved. Nowadays we emphasize that devotees don't have to live in the temples. But then how is temple life relevant to this movement? We should be certain that it's still needed. I'm sure they'll ask questions. But my bottom line is that each person must do whatever it takes to survive spiritually.

* * *

12:40 p.m.

Waiting for lunch. I repay my meals with prepared lectures. Give me *sabji*, and I'll give you *Gita*; give me dessert, and I'll give you a Prabhupada story. Is that all right?

Looking forward to going back to Wicklow already. After the flurry of lectures and the questions and answers and the high of having said something hopeful subsides, I want to go back to my routine. A *sannyasi* Godbrother said he proposed that all *sannyasis* should get together and overcome ISKCON's impersonalism. He posted this message on the *sannyasi* internet conference. Lots of others criticized him. They didn't agree that ISKCON was impersonal. They said it was a "transcendental organization."

* * *

3:02 p.m.

Take Esgic if needed. Do a good job now. Don't plod through it. Put your teeth in, your head on. Why we live in temple. Gesture respect to those who do it (who literally live in the building and follow the routine) and those who support them.

* * *

4:38 p.m.

Took an Esgic and gave the talk on temple life. Told the history of temple life in ISKCON. Some comments afterwards: some said it helped, some spoke of the needs of the individual as opposed to the needs of the mission, and some spoke openly of the

vandalism and what they might do to stop it. I was relieved that I could contribute, even though I don't live in a temple myself. I'm relevant; I can help. Yeah, the mission, the individual, the temple, memories of temple life, the big Deities of Radha-Krishna (Radha-Kalachandji, radha-Damodara, etc.) in our lives.

I was told not to use Preparation H for hemorrhoids because it contains shark liver oil. I was told to write under the lamp. Made a Marx Brothers joke. Tried to keep them laughing in order to keep them loving. All glories to Lord Chaitanya's movement.

* * *

6:05 p.m., Night Notes

Softy ice cream truck patrols this Protestant suburban neighborhood playing music box "Whistle While You Work" to call the addicts out from their houses to purchase from him. Last night he kept playing his "music" until almost 10 o'clock. All right, I can tolerate it. One more day here. I'm prepared to speak on how we may each personally meditate on Krishna, but I wonder if I do it myself. O Krishna. I'm intellectually aware of so many things, and I'm no atheist, but what do I realize and do? I can't say I engage in *bhakti-yoga* meditation or prayer. rather, I sit here and write a journal. I pray to make it more than a mere personal account of one devotee's life. I want it to deepen as it deepens me.

I realized today that some of these devotees here want to serve me. They also want me to perform as their spiritual master in the Hare Krishna movement. One of the devotees said years ago I brought up the issues that we must consider the needs of the individual and not that he or she should be sacrificed to the mission. Yes, I did.

Anyway, time to rest. First, let me put Radha-Govinda to rest. Slower and slower my rounds seem to get "up to nine minutes, thirty seconds each. What's happening? Is it my medication or am I afraid to step on the devotional accelerator?"

November 27, 12:13 a.m.

Does Krishna consciousness mean we strive to obliterate all the memories of a lifetime, all sense of ego, all personal variety, until we become as white as the snows of the Arctic? Last night just before taking rest I looked at a color photo article on the Bengal tiger, the grizzly bear ("immensely powerful"), but didn't have time to read about the white shark or the Nile crocodile. Killers each one. Shrila Prabhupada often tells us about such creatures and how we may become one of them in our next life, given the right consciousness in this life.

I shouldn't resent it when a devotee raises his hand after my class and tries to reverse everything I just said. He's trying to help clear confusion. Today I'll speak on Krishna meditation, whatever that is. *Bhakti-yoga* is not like ordinary yoga. We can't do what Vyasa did. It looks like I'll be saying predictable, oft-repeated words on this topic. I'll try to be confident that there's nothing wrong with that.

I'm reading a book by Holzer in which she suggests a journal writing exercise where we try to perceive how things are looking back at us and write from that point of view. I'll try it later today maybe. "It is sometimes labeled intuition. It has to do with listening,

letting the thing tell you about itself through its color, its sound, its movement, its way of being. It has to do with not imposing yourself on the thing. . . . it has to do with being receptive to the unknown language of things . . . This is when the journal becomes more than a friend or a confessional, more than a record of our daily events and feelings. This is when the journal becomes a network of revelations, both the revelations received from listening and observing, and the insights that come from writing this down." (*A Walk Between Heaven And Earth*, B. N. Holzer, p. 59)

I don't want to use my writing time in an obligatory sense, just to make a quota of pages or even a book. I want more essence. Surely the *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* is the real essence of this book. One devotee told me he discovered that he has dyslexia and that's why he can't read. He says he has invented his own method, however, by which he's able to decipher Shрила Prabhupada's books. He says they are different than other books, because they require him to think about each sentence. He said if we read just two or three pages of Shрила Prabhupada's writing, there's as much to think about as if we had read more, infinitely more than in some other book. I think he's right.

Turning to my slow *japa*. This is my Krishna meditation. If I could tell the class some good news, at least I could admit that the struggle goes on. I haven't given up. Or do I not try hard enough? Perhaps the "struggle" is not really such good news. During meditation, do I space out so much that the "meditation" hardly counts? To introduce someone to *japa* is to introduce them to a lifelong struggle, although Lord Chaitanya assured us that chanting was easy. Did I think it would be *so* easy? Hare Krishna.

* * *

4:00 a.m.

Holzer's book is subtitled *A Personal Journal on Writing and the Creative Process*. The purpose of the book is to convey what she teaches in her classes on journal writing. I appreciate that she chose the genre of journal in which to write her book. She not only teaches different techniques but says her strongest intention is "to let each journal entry come forth from the moment, to keep my focus on the subject of writing, and to record this." She admits that it is not her private journal covering the period in which she writes it but a specialized journal about the writing process. However, while writing she tells us of her life, her brother's sudden death, her attendance at his funeral in Austria, her home in San Francisco, her writing classes and students, etc.

My reason in mentioning this is to say that her words have helped me gain respect for the journal as genre. In one journal entry, she reflects on how she wants to write a book, but wonders if her calling can be fulfilled by writing a journal. She ends with this affirmation:

It's one thing to keep a private journal and to record the daily flow of life. It is another thing to write a book, to keep the focus on that essential writing process, and not drown in the flood of life events. How can I write a journal for my students and document the writing process when my daily life is being ripped open by such events?

Maybe the truth is that the creative process works in all these places, and everything that breaks into one's life is part of it. *Perhaps only in a journal can one see how life and art intertwine and that they are really only one great journey.* [emphasis added]

That has also been my conclusion: "Only in a journal can one see how life and art intertwine." My journal documents my quest for Krishna consciousness. It is meant to be a book "and therefore literary art "and to teach my students how to proceed in Krishna consciousness as Prabhupada presented it to us. But almost more than anything, it is itself my personal quest.

"One needs to be willing to write at any time, willing to try that out without assuming to know what will happen before one discovers what voice is talking to us and at what time of day. . . . Once you notice that five minutes here and twenty minutes there can be used for journal entries, your day begins to take on a different perspective. . . . Sometimes after having found a small space to write, one finds another one that day, and another. . . . You become that voice that speaks inside you, and all those other things aren't half as urgent as listening to that voice and forming it on paper. You begin to sing to yourself, and soon you are walking again in that open place, which is timeless, because any time you spend in it you are at home." (*A Walk Between Heaven And Earth*, pp. 24 - 25)

Today in the class I will say this about Krishna meditation: "Fortunately Krishna is absolute. Therefore anything we think of in relation to Krishna is also Krishna." I'll then tell the anecdote about Gopalacarya asking Prabhupada, "But if your disciples think too much about the Hare Krishna movement, will they forget Govinda?" Prabhupada replied that because Govinda is absolute, His movement is the same as Him.

I want to make meditation practical and accessible. I'd also like to explain how we can shift from one form of meditation to another just as we shift services.

Last night at the meeting with the temple devotees, Bhakta Fergus asked about vandalism. He said some devotees say we should sell the temple. I replied in a kind of relative way. I feel foolish for speaking like that now. I told them how they should first make sure that they fully protect the temple with sufficient security measures "if possible, shatterproof windows, a well-guarded gate, high walls, etc. Padma-malini then made some remarks that were more assuring. She said she's been attending neighborhood meetings to address this problem. It's not only the ISKCON temple that is being vandalized. The Jehovah's Witness church is going through the same thing. The vandalism seemed to be unbearable for a number of people at the meeting. She said the Jehovah's Witnesses are trying to educate people in religious tolerance in order to bring about a change. Her remarks helped me. This is also Krishna meditation "to protect and maintain the temple.

* * *

5:30 a.m.

In a dream during my nap, Godbrothers wouldn't let me sleep. We had to share a large room with many devotees. The room where I was trying to sleep was under my charge. I declared that we would conduct it as we did in the military. We would play "Taps," then announce "lights out. No talking." No one respected my authority. They said they had to talk after the lights were out, because it was their service to deal with urgent problems in ISKCON. I was too intimidated by my own shortcomings to oppose them. I ended up going to a house in Vrindavana somehow, but the people already staying there didn't

want me to sleep. There was an insinuation, as in the previous place, that pro-active, surrendered devotees don't sleep.

I'll tell B. Fergus that if I get head fog this afternoon I won't take an Esgic just so I can make the video. I'll make it if I'm clear. Already two Esgics this week.

* * *

7:20 a.m.

I have to plan them out. I'm not like that devotee who embraces pain as a way to deepen Krishna consciousness. Pain means I cancel lectures, don't read or write, put down my beads, and fall silent. I could *learn* to go deeper, but for now, off to the temple.

* * *

10:36 a.m.

Indigestion, head pressure, mental distaste, time eaten away by commitments here. I'm waiting to see if I'll be able to do the video interview I promised. But I have to be in a sweeter mood than I am in right now. He'll want me to remember Shrila Prabhupada. I'm feeling distaste for young people and for my somewhat superficial persona when around them. They act respectfully toward me, but at the same time place so many demands on me. I want to be released. No sooner than when I leave here, I'll have to perform for a couple of days at Geaglum. Pray for gravity.

Chaitanya is a person with bright ideas, ready conversation, and suggestions, even if all I want is for him to do what I say. This morning while lecturing, he thought I was about to refer to a book and reached out to hand it to me. I had not said or shown anything to indicate I wanted a book at that moment, and even if I did, it was within my own reach. But I appreciated his gesture. I understood that such gestures are made when you don't know a person well. M. and I have been together longer; we're more in tune. But he's off to London to see his children.

* * *

2:45 p.m.

A twinge. Took a feverfew, then four hours later, an Esgic. I'll try sitting for the video of Prabhupada remembrances. Let me say a prayer that I may remember him nicely and forget my own pain. Maybe it'll even go away! Fergus has a long list of questions. Do I remember . . . If Shrila Prabhupada came before me today, what would I ask, etc? How would I answer such a personal question on video? Do I want to look good? Am I willing to grope in front of others? Anyway, I don't have to play the dancing bear. Let me just be myself. That's what they really want, I think. Even if I can't remember Prabhupada through my pain, I can try. Hare Krishna. Srila Prabhupada, I am your *Sisya*. Canned memories of you are not forbidden. While speaking them, you never know "I may be able to open the can.

November 28, 12:15 a.m.

He told me that drinking warm water and ginger will relieve indigestion. Bring it on. No time to read *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* this morning. Taking extra rest overnight to quell a headache. Now grateful it went down. I am pausing here on the page. It's not completely private writing. I'm here in the suburbs. I tell you, journalji, these days I cannot write much. It'll be like that for another few days, up until my birthday. After that, things will get better. These disciples want to help me. Let me find clearings in which to walk and speak.

I tried to speak of Shrila Prabhupada with honesty, yet I saw how I was also being self-serving. I presented myself as a good son of my spiritual master, and so I was in the beginning. Can't emphasize that enough. I said I was struggling to see him as God's representative, as perfect, as someone who loves me, who doesn't see me only as an instrument to serve his Guru Maharaja's purposes. On the other hand, there is nothing *wrong* with him wanting to recruit me in his guru's service, and then demanding surrender once I had agreed to be recruited. Prabhupada wanted total sacrifice. I feel guilty I can't give it. I ought to believe in the unconditional love of Krishna and guru. I ought to believe that they accept me anyway, not only if I sell their books. It's hard sometimes.

I do not want to project such conditional approval onto those who are my disciples (and Srila Prabhupada's granddisciples). My approval doesn't depend on whether they give money or sell books. I simply want to encourage them in their basic *sadhana* and in their attempts to love Krishna and believe in His love "just as I want for myself.

* * *

4:08 a.m.

I'll put Radha-Govinda and Shrila Prabhupada into their suitcases soon. My mind has already gone into its clerical packing mode. When we arrive at Manu's, it will switch to an unpacking mode. It's an easy duty, because it preoccupies me. I can't read while I do it, but I can sing a Hare Krishna tune.

I spoke yesterday on how everyone could meditate on Krishna twenty-four hours a day. I encouraged the devotees to vary their meditation as they vary their services. Offer everything to Krishna. Some wanted to ask personal questions, and they tried to mask them as general inquiries. I am also a masked man. Why aren't we more open with one another? Are we so afraid of being hurt or do we just see ourselves as too foolish?

* * *

9:05 a.m.

We stopped for a breakfast of fruit between Belfast and Inis rath. An unmarked police car stopped and questioned Manu, who was pacing outside the car, chanting *japa* in the 6:00 a.m. dark. Manu told him he had a visitor from America who had a special diet that required him to take breakfast early. The constable came to my side of the car, opened the door, and shone his flashlight on me and my plastic container of prunes, figs, apple slices, and papaya. I decided not to let it bother me. I felt innocent. "Eating breakfast," I said.

"You're visiting?" he asked. "No problem." He looked around some more, talked some more, then left.

At Inis rath now. We spent an hour moving in. I can't find the *Chaitanya-caritamrta* volume I'll be reading from in tomorrow's class. Don't feel focused or enthusiastic or inward or anything. Asked Caitanya to give me another cup of hot water with ginger. Opened the curtains to a sunshiny sky and sparkling grass "a beautiful light green with a touch of yellow. I'm just tired . . .

* * *

10:46 a.m.

Dull. And thinking it's not good that I write so much about myself. Holzer says writers can let objects talk to them, but I can't seem to quiet myself enough to hear them. Maybe after Vyasa-puja. But I'm certainly not going to do a Hans Christian Andersen trip with a toy soldier talking to a toy ballerina.

Lying on back. Three lectures down. Didn't see an opening for making the *Chaitanya-caritamrta* talk interesting, but since then a couple of ideas have come to me "cross references. I thought of Shрила Prabhupada's ecstasy in 1967 when he described Lord Chaitanya. I'll give some definitions of Vaishnava behavior from my book too, because our behavior shows the truth about our real religious principles.

Also thinking about what to say on Vyasa-puja day. Being a guru is a by-product of being a genuine devotee. Everything else is sham. This is not easily done. I can only try.

* * *

3:35 p.m.

Maha-mantra dasi came and looked at the new clothes I have received for Radha-Govinda. She agreed to sew Velcro onto them. She and Chaitanya-candrodaya asked if my Radha-Govinda and Srila Prabhupada could be present when we meet with devotees. I said I thought my worship was a private thing and doubted whether the devotees could "see" Them. Only the private worshiper knows his (her) own *arca-murti*, in my opinion. But maybe it would be nice, especially to have Srila Prabhupada present on Vyasa-puja day. If he's going to be present, then why not Radha-Govinda? A treat. I am, always remember, a garrulous fool who pretends he loves Deities but is simply a blind, self-loving uncle.

All day a clear, delicate, light blue sky, but I hardly noticed it. Maybe I could sneak in an evening walk. But I have a sore throat, so better not. Fragile indoorsman for now. Growing older. What can I expect but ails and ills and medicine-boosted innards? I do not embrace pain. I seek a peace that can never be found in body and mind.

* * *

9:27 p.m.

Slept a couple of hours, now up with pain in my chest. It feels as if something's stuck in there. I can't swallow, and I have a headache and a sore throat too.

Do I love people, disciples? Do they love *me*? Do I want to entirely renounce the whole world so I can love only Krishna, like Prabhupada told us Uddhava and Vidura do? Or will I be caught in the infectious material modes? Can't I bring the material world with me? "Man is born to suffer as the sparks fly upwards." *Duhkhalayam asasvatam*. We definitely chose the wrong place when we came here, but that's because we had the wrong intentions. The sweet Lord advises us, "Engage in My devotional service. Don't try to be the supreme enjoyer. Enjoy being My devotee. Do whatever it is you are doing for Me."

Some preachers seem too negative to me; I don't feel encouraged by them the way they put down joy, creativity, and spontaneity. I often see that they can't keep such a somber standard themselves.

November 29, 4:12 a.m.

There's time for everything but a lot of writing and reading. The burdensome mail! "Nine hundred pounds of Saratoga mail has just arrived onboard." Will there be something for me? Nowadays there is always something for me! "Dear Guru Maharaja, I went to Europe and heard some lectures by So-and-so Maharaja on *varnashrama*. I firmly believe a person should be rightly situated in his *varna* and *ashrama* if he is to succeed." What can I say in the face of such firm belief that comes with no inquiry? "Thank you for sharing your views with me." This writer thinks I'm well situated as a *sannyasi*. "You appear to be content with your simple lifestyle." Simple? Some would call it too opulent now that I live in a house in Wicklow. After all, I don't sleep under a different tree every night. But yes, I am simple. I simply want a big slice of apple pie for dessert (and don't forget the whipped cream), and if I don't get it, oh, I'm tolerant. I'm simple: I don't have the power to digest such meals. I simply don't budge from stage center in this circus. I'm like an Emmet Kelly in the limelight.

Simply wonderful. Thought of Dadhici as I read that man's letter. See how simple *he* was? He simply gave up his body when Indra needed it to protect his own complicated position.

* * *

5:45 a.m.

Rowboating across the strait. Dawn just arriving. Lord Chaitanya displayed bodily ecstasies. It's one of the ways He distributed *Krishna-prema*, and it's how He revealed to us the *maha-bhava* of Shrimati Radharani's love. His followers adore Him in all His features, including His ecstatic trances. He often convinced people to become devotees just by showing some ecstasy or by allowing them to hear Him chant. For philosophers, He presented philosophy.

Has He offered us ecstasy? Is it accessible? Perhaps.

Shrila Prabhupada spoke of how pleasing and appealing Krishna consciousness is "its music, singing, dancing, and palatable food. He also sometimes entered his own *bhava*, leaving this world far behind.

I'll read about the *sanodiya brahmana* and then get to the main verse: "A devotee's behavior establishes the true purpose of religious principles."

* * *

2:30 p.m.

It's been years since I've written so little three days in a row. I feel myself becoming grouchy because of it. It'll take a while to pull out of this. Tomorrow I'll be busy with the devotees all day, and then I have all this mail to answer. When I can write only a little, the writing becomes more like mere diary. I want it to be more literary. I'm promising myself to live for that and to be patient. In a few days I hope to be back on track.

* * *

4:12 p.m.

A gibbous moon, pale, white, and porous.

November 30, 12:18 a.m.

On this day, I will be honored by a small group of disciples, although the dream director sent me images of myself as a homeless, humiliated, threatened soul, beaten and lost. Which vision of me is true? I don't want to write one of those diaries of a pious ISKCON devotee persona always trying to be and do his best as guru of Shrila Prabhupada's granddisciples. That *is* what I'm trying to be, or do, but . . .

You mean you want a different persona? You can't claim to write without any persona, so you don't want to present yourself as a nondevotee, do you? Look at Kafka or Keats. You're no man with a cigar. Who *is* you, Mr. Bones? A mortal minstrel of your own devising? Yes, something like that.

I claim I'm looking for myself. I don't claim that I am a perfectly Krishna conscious person but an aspirant. I can only write and see where I come out. I live in writing and try not to preconceive my life. I think it's better that way. I want to flee the role of the monk in order to become the monk, as Merton's journal editor said of him. Or I'll stay on the margin (neither an outcast nor a member) so that I can better serve the society's heart as a poet.

A poet writes poems, but he also cries out. He may be the coxswain in the rowboat. Borrowed images from the literary world. Use the literary world to serve Krishna. I'm trying to take that risk.

Popcorn. Jimmy cracked corn, and I don't care, my massa's gone away.

Mice will play.

No,

no,

Swami knows I'm
trying in this way.

Let me see how much I can get away with
before Godbrothers tighten the noose
or death.

I pray to remember Krishna and to help others do the same.

Is life separate from writing? Do I behave well so that I can write well? Can I bring the two together? Do I want to?

I only want to behave well from my authentic self.

So here are a couple of pages around midnight and between headaches. ready to go to *japa*. That's not writing with a pen but yet another form of prayer "or it would be if I could pay attention. Whatever *japa* is, my bottom line is that I chant it out of essential obedience to my spiritual master, who ordered me to chant at least sixteen rounds every day. I try to chant those sixteen rounds early so that I can appear in the worship hall with a clear heart. I don't want to be a hypocrite. If I'm not a hypocrite, I'll be able to write from my life. But writing has its *own* life too, and after today I hope to explore that more.

* * *

12 noon

In the morning I spoke about being genuine. I have to be authentic to myself, and then secondarily I can function as guru. One important way I am genuine is that I remain Shрила Prabhupada's faithful post peon.

In the afternoon I intend to speak about my personal contribution to ISKCON. I do wish to be a person too, and not only an official mailman. The mailman goes home and has other relationships and expressions. I try to show that side of myself by admitting my strivings and struggles in Krishna consciousness to my disciples. This is meant to help them and to keep our relationship realistic, which can only help. I am close to them in many ways. Some devotees think they want a guru to be as old and Indian as possible, but being guru doesn't depend on such designations.

I also have a desire to preach, which may also take me somewhat beyond the mailman image. Shрила Prabhupada did more than his spiritual master asked him to do, and he once said that that "more" was his personal contribution beyond the order. His spiritual master asked him to go to the West. Prabhupada said it was his own contribution to bring Krishna consciousness back to India.

December 1, 12:05 a.m.

Head stuffed with a cold. Electric heater on in the room. It seems to create a strange effect in the air. At least once a day I'll go outside. I'm sure I said many foolish things. For example, I said poems have as much (or more) to do with music and word play than with meaning. That's not what I meant to say. I said it because I was repeating what someone else had said "something silly "but from the *vyasasana*. I felt like the mailman at home, relaxed.

Now to *japa*. The influence I create on others through word play, clown play, or as the critics put it, irresponsible gibberish. They want the straight stuff. I do too. But I give straight stuff along curvy lines. I beg Krishna to protect me while I explore all this. Whatever we do can drive us to prayer.

M. went off for two weeks to America for his second hernia operation. This afternoon Chaitanya will also leave for two weeks. I'll be without a servant, but staying in Manu's house where devotees will serve my meals by placing them on a small table just inside the outer door. I won't even see them. There's potential that I can be alone. Please take advantage of that.

Over and over I repeat the *maha-mantra*. Is that crazy? Some people might think so. Even some sages might disagree that this is the best process. But we follow our Krishna conscious *mahajanas*. Uddhava played with the *arca-murtis* of Radha and Krishna in His childhood. I want to be Their servant, to see Them and enter Their mood of loving exchange. All glories to Radha and Radha-kunda. All glories to Sri Krishna, the lifter of Govardhana Hill. May His glories always be sung. He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Through His Visnu expansions He creates and maintains. Through His energies, the world goes on and is finally annihilated. In His internal energy, He lives forever in bliss and knowledge with His dearest devotees in Goloka.

Vyasa wrote the Vedic literature, especially the *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*, so that we could get higher knowledge even in Kali-yuga. People think material life is of short duration and that it is the all-in-all. They don't ever inquire further. Vyasa teaches something more. I pray never to forget his teachings. "No one is equal to the transcendently powerful Visnu. He is omnipotent, and no one is equal to or greater than Him." (*Bhag.* 2.7.40, purport)

Here's a gift, Gurudeva "a bag full of six sweaters. Should I give them away? But the donors will see that I did that and be hurt. Here's a written homage. Yes, and my quick reply. Now let us all go on with our work. May all our work come out in rhythmic prose according to the *parampara's* guidelines.

* * *

10:30 a.m.

Yesterday I performed all my heavy social obligations without taking medication or getting a headache. As soon as it was over, however, I crashed. My head felt stuffed overnight, and by midnight was beginning to grow more painful. At 4:30 this morning I took an Esgic, then at 8:30 an Imitrex. Still no relief. Pain in the right eye like in the old days.

* * *

Noon

Made a last rescue med attempt with feverfew, but to no avail. It's my karma to be in pain today. This setback is making me think I want to write as much as possible once I am clear again, especially during these sixteen days that I'll be staying at Geaglum-Inis rath. Go on a marathon.

But I don't want to neglect the sattvic routine of reading *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* three times a day. Therefore, I don't like the passionate image that comes to mind when I think of "marathon." relax and write.

* * *

My pain leaves me unable to work, paralyzed, yet I can still sit and look out the window at the misty lake. A devotee is rowing across with a single oar (the other one was lost), paddling on one side, then paddling on the other. At least the water is calm. Another devotee is rowing in the opposite direction with two oars. It's misty right down to the island's trees. The slow, normal, comings and goings of this place. I like to see such sights. There never seem to be any disruptions here "no earthquakes, no tornadoes, no fires or dropping bombs. The boathouse has been here for at least a hundred years, and the trees are old too. The grass is green as always, and the weeds at the edge of the lake strait are golden and tall, as they have probably always been. Everything flows gently in this place. So my pain will flow. Right now it's flowing through me, but eventually it will flow out of me. I just have to wait it out.

* * *

10:30 p.m.

Sharp pain all night. In one dream I met Hridayananda Maharaja on the street in Cambridge, MA. He wanted to show me his new apartment, which was only a block away from Harvard. I had so much pain I couldn't distract myself from it.

December 2, 5:45 a.m.

At 3:29 a.m. after plodding through my bathroom ablutions and doing a shortened *puja* for Radha-Govinda and Prabhupada, I took an Esgic and went back to bed. Now after more than twenty-four hours, the right-eye pain is beginning to ebb.

Yesterday during the Vyasa-puja talk I told devotees that being a spiritual master is an austerity. Nitai dasa then asked about whether my disciples should write me letters, since the letters seem to be such a burden to me. I told him that my correspondence was a "no win" situation for me. If I don't receive letters from my disciples, I become anxious about them. I tend to think they no longer care for me or our spiritual relationship. I wonder what they're doing. I even speculate that they've left Krishna consciousness. So I do care about the mail. At the same time, when the mail does arrive, it has to be attended to and I can't do much else with my days until it's all answered. Therefore, I'm always happy when I manage to whittle down the pile.

Yes, it's an austerity, and yes, we all have to practice austerities. Writing letters to people helps me in my other writing too, although I didn't mention that yesterday. But sometimes I feel that it's a burden. I won't deny that.

Anyway, today I'm trying to trace the cause of this long headache, the worst I've had since last July. Probably I've been overendeavoring "the combination of all the lectures since leaving Wicklow, and answering so much mail. I remember one moment in particular when I had answered most of the letters and then pumped out yet another. I felt it almost squeezing my brain. I felt something inside me crying for help, for mercy, wishing to be spared this extra explanation which the correspondent was demanding from me in his letter: "Please tell me what you mean by internalizing our relationship?" I don't think I would have minded answering that question if it hadn't come at the end of such a strenuous session. I felt pain at the moment of answering that question, and it

seems to have triggered off a longer bout of pain. I guess it was the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back.

Now I am perhaps recovering, but already new letters have gathered under the door. I had better answer them.

* * *

8:45 a.m.

Chanting silent rounds, but it's taking forever. Already the mouse of December is eating its way to January. I'm off schedule.

* * *

9:25 a.m.

Walking out of my torture chamber. I'm exaggerating, I know. I'm fighting the pain. I noticed that the potholes Arjuna and another devotee filled in not that long ago have already caved in. Everything is wet. It's a pleasing place, this Geaglum peninsula. If I meet a devotee like Prahlada, I'm prepared to say I don't feel up to talking because I'm so close to being on the edge of pain. It seems the most guaranteed private walk is the one on the boards around the house in Wicklow. Of course, even there I've run into neighbors and the cows and sheep on the other side of the wall.

* * *

11:25 a.m.

ISKCON devotees can't relate to my "abstract" art; they want to see the purport or at least a recognizable Govardhana Hill. I can draw them the pain behind my eye, the

pain of *anarthas*

that cause us to hurt others

and ourselves

Rooted as we are

in pride.

This is a picture of a man walking naked. See? He's wearing *tilaka*.

What about that guy who harasses his wife? Isn't that within Krishna consciousness? Flow with real life. But if you want blood and heads and teats and beadbags and book bags, I guess I can draw them in too. I'll just have to check with my integrity first.

* * *

Noon

Been discussing with a friend
about pain.

She says she's embracing it
whereas I'm trying to get rid of it
but we're both *experiencing* it
while in this world.

* * *

When I get right-eye pain
my *japa* goes silent moves
slower. Deeper?
I don't know which *japa* is more devoted.
My friend says hers goes inward
depends more on Krishna
the pain a shove from
the unfriendly world.

* * *

I seek pills "Esgic and feverfew,
whatever I can take within limits
because I want to read and write
and paint and be active.

* * *

Whose view of pain is right?
Embrace or resist?
Perhaps it winds up the same
in this world of pain,
Krishna's service the only aim.

* * *

12:28 p.m.

I'm not a storyteller. I have no unbearable suffering such as people experienced by living through war. I have personal pain. They say you need to know suffering to tell worthy stories. I have only memories and a desire to write every day, faithful to my guru's teachings. Just now, the red-eye, right-eye pain that spoils lunch prevents me from doing anything. In another day I'll be free of that pain and trying to write from my scarcity. Looking for spiritual truth and real life combined.

A heart beat. I can live a simple life. When I am in touch with the knowledge of transmigration, I know something *more* than any worldly story or love can teach me, as fine as those stories are. If those stories don't lead to higher knowledge, they fail. If I have no tradition, no old storyteller in my family, no culture but pop trash, it doesn't matter, because through the knowledge I've been given, I can suddenly connect to the eternal moment of Krishna consciousness and transcend all, free from suffering, if I am willing.

* * *

2:44 p.m.

Second straight day incapacitated. Sneaking in here only a page, then I'll stop to sit in the dark. During lunch (which was *upma* "a nice change from rice), I listened to a story about the World War and how the East Europeans were deprived of their necessities and driven out of their countries, if not killed. After lunch, while carrying away the plates, I dropped Krishna's plate onto the floor. I scooped up the now cold *sabji*, bread, *upma*, and *dal* and ate it. Hearing about other people's suffering made me not want to treat the *prasadam* as dirty. Actually, it was *maha-prasadam*.

Gray mist. Does the weather here add to my headaches? I don't think so. Someone just left me a letter confessing that he never vowed in his heart to practice "no illicit sex" when he took initiation. I'll answer that letter at my leisure. I'll gradually have to start thinking about what class I can give here on Sunday from the *Chaitanya-caritamrta*. They're reading about Lord Chaitanya's visit to Vrindavana.

The heavy mist and nothing I can do about it all. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna.

May the Supreme Lord guide us all. Each of us will be reduced eventually. If we seem to possess a lot, we'll be forced to give it up. I got a lot of sweaters this year for my birthday. Here, they call them jumpers or pullovers. I think I got six of them. I'd give them away, but the donors will see their friends wearing them "Ireland is a small country. I'll have to find people in other countries who need warm clothes. Shrila Prabhupada used to give away such gifts. He saved the best for himself "what he actually needed "and distributed the bounty.

* * *

3:25 p.m.

I found these points under Dr. Robin's "Coping With Physical Ailments" newsletter for November:

1. Limit references you make to your pain in conversations with family members, even though you may be worried.

2. Do not bore your friends with excessive descriptions of your problems. They are probably generally concerned about your pain, but do not want to hear blow-by-blow descriptions of your ongoing difficulties.

Okay.

* * *

4:37 p.m.

Someone sent me, unsolicited, a tape of Jungian analyst Clarissa Pinkola Estes talking about death as the entrance to the next world. It's something I can listen to today when I'm too headachy to read or write. It's not hard for me to Krishnaize her points. But I look forward to again reading the orthodox Bhaktivedanta purports "not as official duty but because I love them. Reading the *Bhagavatam* should be a mystical adventure. We should feel our eyes opening as if we were learning something for the first time. When we feel like that, we will know we are making progress in developing faith, realization, and attraction. We are meant to be guided by our gurus. Chant with Lord Chaitanya.

* * *

9:50 p.m.

Up with right-eye pain. Yeah, I know, don't tell your friends the blow-by-blow . . . Scratching my shanks, which are rashy. If I don't tell my friends, who *can* I tell? Besides, I'm only talking to myself here. Looking forward to a pain-free morning in which I can tap the artesian well of chanting. Alone we each read and chant and feel our bodies weep in pain sometimes, but rejoice inwardly "feel the presence of the soul.

December 3, 5:10 a.m.

First writing of the day. Tired after Deity worship. Out of synch. Waiting, apprehensive, for the next twinge. More rest? No time. Behind on rounds and reading.

* * *

5:35 a.m.

Follow the *mahajanas*. For your Sunday class, ask this question: "Do we really follow the *mahajanas* or follow only officially?"

Often we speak about practicing Krishna consciousness in our own way. We're each individuals, and the individuals should be favored even within a preaching mission. But a devotee said, "Shrila Prabhupada wants a lot from his followers." He was exasperated, and he said this to his equally exasperated wife. Then he threw a rock against the door. He considered himself a failure, felt guilty and resentful.

* * *

Had this dream: We were in a small apartment. Prabhupada came out of his room to have breakfast. Pradyumna had cooked. I was nearby. In fact, I was eating in his presence. He didn't seem to see me. The breakfast was a thick, chocolaty kind of syrup. Then Prabhupada went to the bathroom. I understood that because he finished quickly, I should also finish. It wasn't proper for me to continue eating after he had already finished. I couldn't use the same bathroom, but there was another sink, so I washed my hands and mouth. Prabhupada went to his room, and I asked Pradyumna, "Did Prabhupada ask for this preparation for breakfast? What was it? Did he like it?" Pradyumna answered, "Yes, he liked it. He called it quill." He said it was nourishing. That was it.

* * *

8:30 a.m.

Morning walk. No one saw me except the potholes and the mist. I walked over to the patch where I collected chestnuts when I was here last year. They were beautiful. They're already almost gone. I guess the squirrels have eaten them all. I only found five that hadn't be eaten by squirrels or smashed by cars or buried under the wet leaves.

Chanting to reach my quota. Thinking of the word "aerobic" for some reason. I'm sure this ambling walk doesn't qualify.

* * *

On journaling, from B. N. Holzer:

"We need to get lost in the creative process for some time in order to find ourselves. Sometimes we need to lose the memory of previous journal entries in order to find this one. . . . If the path is too straight, we distort ourselves. . . . It is good not to question all the time how it all hangs together.

". . . I love the stories that grow in the journal, as I love the story that grows in life. You never have any idea what will be next. You just keep your eyes and ears open for all the signs from the universe and let it grow. You don't worry about plot, you don't force the next chapter. Most stories stay fragments forever. You only know part of the whole, but you collect each pebble, each installment, for its own beauty, not worrying whether they will all fit together later on.

"What is health?" someone in class asked today, and I couldn't help but think of my writing, and I thought: The flow, the flow, always the flow."

* * *

8:50 a.m.

How to get back on the track of the quiet life from which I wrote so confidently while at Uddhava's house in Wicklow? Was it easier there because it was easier to keep the headaches under control? But this is a good place, too, this Geaglum. A little winter finch just came to the window, its neck scarf of yellow over a white and black back.

On my walk, I fixed my eyes on the potholes full of rainwater. I regretted that I canceled my U.S. meetings this year. I did it out of fear, and that wasn't a good reason.

When will I go there next? Or when will I not need to do it just to please Bhakta Freddie and just-coming Alexis and old-timer Dasa? And myself? And my ego? "What does Krishna want?"

He wants to know what you want, Prabhupada once said.

* * *

Lord Chaitanya visited the many *ghatas* and forests. *Chaitanya-caritamrta* names them all. I'll read them out and say obvious, superficial things: ISKCON devotees visit these places today; you can think of Vrindavana even from Geaglum. Then I'll probably ask them to answer my questions: Why do you want to go to Vrindavana? Do you feel fulfilled when you visit? How do you deal with the coverings over the *dhama*, which only seem to increase? How do you think of Vrindavana while you are here?

I'll have to come up with a better presentation than that, though. Why have I chosen this section about Lord Chaitanya in Vrindavana? Get Him out. Get yourself out. Say something relevant to these devotees, who mostly don't think of or live in Vrindavana, myself included. This topic is potentially spiritually flammable and can't be contained

"Lord Chaitanya in Vrindavana. We can't presume to speak of it. We smile sadly and sometimes pretend. Don't mislead them.

* * *

10:00 a.m.

Dreamt of a Godbrother whom I haven't seen in years. He was joking with another Godbrother. I don't joke with Godbrothers anymore. I'm an old man on a remote road.

"How long you lived in these parts?"

"Not long. Just a few years, rivers, ripples."

The boats go by, I know, in summer, but not much in winter. Wrote a batch of timed books years ago with locales such as the Baldergast Islands or whatever they're called, and those steep tall ones shaped like cathedrals, dangerous to visit because they're so far out to sea "the Skelligs. Wrote something in County Clare once, didn't I? Hermit monks used to write in these places in the past, but they were often slaughtered.

You see, we pass from one life to another. A person should prepare himself for the next life by chanting his minimum quota with devotion. Krishna knows our hearts. He needs nothing from us. He wants only to see devotion, our master says.

What if we don't have much of it? Good question. They say associate with those who do, act as if you wish you did, preach, screech, serve, increase in any way you can. Put yourself in a position that will draw mercy down upon your head. Don't be like the owl who avoids sunlight. Practice the five most favorable acts of *bhakti* and enrich and immerse yourself.

* * *

Noon

List:

Chestnuts, stories, what's
true for me now--orthodox
touchstone, Krishna conscious nerve
brushing death and rebirth,
but they say there are too many books
for people to read
but I guess that's all right
because the main thing is process;
going-to-America plans,
staying-in-Ireland plans,
having lunch in the here and now
walking to the shed while
touching base with *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*
and prayer
and discovering whether it's all true
and your own dedication
to what the Swami taught.
Clouds better here than in Wicklow, better

sound there, though, when rain
falls on the skylight.
Going to Vrindavana and
being alone "is it right?
Your position on others "is it
pride? You a tiny center
to a large world.

* * *

It sure feels good to be active again after a two-day shutdown. We'll see what's in store as the week progresses. I could have a stroke, a strike. I like my life. I'm a man of scones and hot lunches. They know I like my lunch hot and simple, and that I don't ask for Louis XVI feasts. The cloud decorations are made by God. Nature, nature, nature, they say, but behind nature is the cloud mover, rain sender, sun-god, and amazing engineer. Behind all them is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, from whom everything comes. I want to tell them that.

* * *

12:27 p.m.

What do I want from the U.S.? M could bring it back with him. I haven't heard from him yet. I don't know how his operation went. He'll have a scar.

Me. Mine. Selfish. Feed my belly. World full of starving people, bombed out people, homeless people, just like my mother told me it was. I'm lucky like she said too. I'm not one of them. I had better eat all they put on my plate with gratitude. But the part she didn't know was that it should be offered first to Krishna.

December 4, 4:00 a.m.

When I get headaches day after day, I have to expect less of myself. My first priority is to chant those silent rounds.

* * *

5:16 a.m.

Don't tell your aunt and uncle or bros or kids too much about your pain. They don't want to hear it. "It moved from the right eye to the left ear. I took a feverfew, which had no effect." No, but I'll tell myself that there's too much pain around these days for me to write clearly.

I dressed Radha-Govinda despite the pain and I'm glad I did. They reciprocated with me. I can look at Them in Their bright magenta and black with the gold patterns from Vrindavana.

O disciples, please don't quarrel among yourselves. One devotee wrote me that some disciples here have more money than others. Some resent that fact. When temple inmates resent householders for not giving more to the temple (they say the Deities), then the

inner connection between temple and congregation is ruined. I'll say something in reply, but must stay out of it. "Basically," "practically" "those clichés we hear in people's speeches.

No subject. Plenty to read. Plenty to draw, paint, figure out, but no capacity for much of that with this pain. I've reached my limit on the meds, so have to sit this one out. I don't suffer for the sake of suffering, though, only because taking more meds will only cause rebound "which means more pain.

The painting of Shрила Prabhupada here sometimes looks at me grimly (I think) and sometimes compassionately, as if seeing sincerity in my attempt to agonize over a modern form of Krishna consciousness, human and honest and particular to me out of what he gave us. I took his words straight for over twenty years, then had to admit I no longer quite fit the mold. Or perhaps I never fit the mold in the exact form it was presented. Now I have to express myself if I am to feel whole and joyful in spiritual life. I have to let people know what goes on as I try to swallow Krishna conscious maxims and live in this world.

* * *

Dreamt that Madhumangala and I were traveling to places like South America by the cheapest means possible, often hitchhiking or walking. At one point when we were walking, I complained that we were being forced to walk through a dangerous, poor area. Suddenly by an incredible coincidence, two buses appeared. Hridayananda Maharaja was inside one of them, giving *Bhagavatam* class to a small group of devotees. Tamal Krishna Maharaja was in the other. We flagged them down, and I climbed aboard Hridayananda Maharaja's bus. He gave a little look of regret to his audience, because our coming aboard interrupted his class. I thought, "After all, I *have* interrupted a *Bhagavatam* class, although I'm certainly relieved to be free of that dangerous place."

* * *

6:45 a.m.

Shyamananda brought breakfast over from the island. He rows it across in the dark. He reminded me that Sunday is Shрила Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's disappearance day, so I'll speak about him. I don't have much time to refresh my memory, so I'll probably end up telling some of the stories we already know. Still, I'll tell those stories with care, and that's what's most important. People sometimes become bored by speakers who don't bring to a class a load of never-before-heard material, but I am preaching as much for my own purification as their entertainment, so I'll leave it at that.

Shрила Bhaktisiddhanta is our spiritual grandfather. I saw a rendition of his life in the "Abhay" films. I'll tell how Shрила Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati was the son of a great spiritual leader. He learned much from him. He then lectured, wrote, edited, and with his father's encouragement, surrendered himself to Gaura-kisora dasa Babaji. I could question the audience: Why did Gaura-kisora dasa Babaji refuse to accept Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati at first? He chanted a billion names of Krishna in Mayapur before coming out to preach.

He fought the caste system, spoke against *sahajiyas*, impersonalists, and those who used religion as a business. He followed the spirit of *yukta-vairagya* and insisted that his disciples preach.

After Shrila Prabhupada met him for the first time, he accepted him as his guru. They continued to exchange over the years. At the beginning of their association together, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta recognized him. Later, he gave him initiation. They walked together at Radha-kunda. Prabhupada wrote articles that Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta approved. When Prabhupada's Godbrothers wanted Prabhupada to become the temple president of the Bombay branch of the Gaudiya-math, Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati said no, then added, "In time he will do everything." He wrote our Srila Prabhupada a last letter of instruction.

Rather than stopping there, I'd like to tell how Shrila Prabhupada carried out his guru's order after his guru's physical disappearance. He formed his life according to that order, just as Shrila Vishvanath Cakravarti Thakura stated a disciple should: the spiritual master's order should be the life and soul of the disciple. That order told Prabhupada to come to America and deliver us. Now Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati is our grandfather *acharya*. We have access to him through our relationship with our own Shrila Prabhupada.

* * *

8:10 a.m., Morning Walking

Sky full of strong color schemes "faded pink stripes (jet trails), sparse dark gray clouds, and most of space a pale blue. This is the aftermath of a full-moon night. The treetops in winter silhouette. All of this was before me. By chance I turned around and saw low behind me, over a small patch of trees, a completely full, yellow moon. Most wonderful orb on this beautiful fourth of December. What can I say in the face of this beauty? O Krishna.

I always walk down toward the end of the property, then come back along the wooded path. This means making several turns. At two points I met the moon again, and both times it looked different than the first time I saw it this morning. I saw it once over the water. Columns of light were reflecting against the lake. Then I saw it again at the end of the wooded path. It hung like a domestic lantern just over Prahlada's house, and by this time it was quite white.

Stopped and found three or four chestnuts.

* * *

9:55 a.m

Cold lake. Cracked head. Sky sunshiny now. I am keeping warm in this sanctuary. We all want such safety. But Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati said that speaking about Lord Hari even in physical illness is better than being physically fit but being unwilling to glorify the Lord. I agree. I'm trying to offer praise. Some of the trees on this island are still green, but most are leafless. I see a devotee way out on the lake rowing toward the quay. As he steps out onto the grass, I feel the grass's tolerance. It has been frozen all night and is still covered in frost.

* * *

12:17 p.m.

Chronic but benign, not major, pain. I've had practically no break these past three days. I'm starting to see faces of persons I've known and getting a glimpse into their pain as well as my own. Like that woman who wanted a child but never had one. Often our pain is over things that if we had them would give us more pain. Some of us seek a philosopher's indifference. But philosophers get ulcers and backaches and have to visit the emergency room, just like everyone else. There is no relief in this world. Children cry, old men whimper, tough guys gut it out, and the tolerant grass remains silent. How many jars of ointments and pills and alternative remedies and quacks and healers and prayers and indifference will help us out of this situation?

* * *

When I look up from my desk, I see 1969 *Life* article featuring Shрила Prabhupada in maroon and pictures of the devotees dancing in ecstasy at 26 Second Avenue. Yeah, *in ecstasy*. Our faces, upraised hands, long, uncombed hair, *sankirtana*," and he had it with us.

* * *

2:27 p.m.

In the shed. My precious head won't let me perceive a sound and healthy world. It's always got a "crack" in it. Bit of a rainbow out there. Arjuna shoveling dirt and ashes into the worst potholes. Fresh animal droppings near the shed, but no signs of deer. Last sunlight of the day bright and glancing.

Someone left a small piece of paper inside the door back at the house that said, "Madhumangala had his operation last night." They knew I wanted to know. But I already knew that much. Was it successful? I suppose that's assumed in the terse message, which was also unsigned.

Rain suddenly slashing down from the heavy gray cloud that just filled the sky. It's like that in Ireland. The sun is still visible too, shining bright in the clear patch. Geaglum "full of splashing elements. Swans like it here. I wonder if the devotees have enough heat in their houses? Probably not always. Of course, I'm calling them "houses," but most of the devotees don't live in houses but campers. We all suffer when we don't have enough devotion to make our lives easily bearable. Yet even without deep devotion, we are living much, much better lives than we would be without sight of Radha-Govinda.

Radha-Govinda is not far away. The devotees have hung a picture in this shed of Radha-Damodara on Their Gita-nagari altar and outside on Their Jhulana-yatra swing. How far I am from that, from Them, from that forest.

Tomorrow is Saturday, and then Sunday comes and I will speak about Bimal Prasad. The first pastime I know is his taking an unoffered mango from a bowl. Actually, before that was when his mother took *darshana* of Jagannatha while he was a baby and the cart had stopped outside his house at Puri. One of Jagannatha's garlands fell around the boy's

body. Shrila Prabhupada described these two incidents in charming prose in a 1952 BTG essay.

Then I'll tell the basic story of how he grew up, debated on Bhaktivinoda Thakura's behalf, met Gaura-kiSora dasa Babaji and was encouraged by his father to take initiation from him. I'd also like to speak about his strict practice of *brahmacarya*. I could read from Prabhupada's lectures. I also wrote a poem in *remembering Shrila Prabhupada* telling of events after our Prabhupada met him.

And here we are in separation from our own Srila Prabhupada. Has ISKCON suffered a fate similar to what happened with the Gaudiya Math? No, I can't say that. ISKCON is holding together, while the Gaudiya Math split up. The GBC, the sincerity of the ordinary devotees, the new waves of enthusiasm coming from the new generation "we are rooted and growing, and becoming more respectable in society and among ourselves. We still have our problems and schisms and controversies, though. We're not the cozy little family that Prabhupada began. You can hear Prabhupada describe that family if you listen to his lectures from Hawaii in 1969 or New Vrindavan in 1972.

* * *

Getting ready to go in. It's getting darker. Being here didn't seem to worsen my condition, but by turning on the heat in the shed, I awoke some tiny flying insects.

O Krishna. I didn't come out here as if I were a sage attending the sacrifice at Naimisharanya. I wasn't able to hatch a plan by which everyone could be saved. I focused more on my idea that by taking care of ourselves, we become fit to take care of others. I do want to give myself to others in one way or another.

Who does this body belong to? You know that passage in *Krishna* book? Some say it belongs to a master, others to parents, to the earth, to the creatures that eat it once the soul has left it. The point is, we shouldn't use it to commit sin or sense gratification, because we don't own it. We should simply use it to please Krishna.

But every time a particular preacher tells me not to enjoy, I flinch. I'm seeking balance.

Powerboats in the strait interrupt my thoughts. Are they police? They're both black. A big old fly in here "looks like a leftover from summer. Let me breathe in and out before I walk back to the house, and hear my heart and write to it. The beat is slow, so the writing is too, but it contains the tale I want to tell.

If we want to be free of all jazz and bureaucracy, be with the Lord. That's the only safe place. This will be my heart until the end. I've been afraid to know too much about it. Been holding my breath. But let me go back to Jack's Pond and skate there. I didn't know who I was then. I was simply part of the larger scene. Be who was I, that beginning skater who belonged, he thought, to his mother and father back home with the hot chocolate waiting?

Tiny gnats. Krishna at the crossroads. My God does not appear on a crucifix but in a dance with His devotees. He can never be hurt by the demons.

My head hurts again. Time for bed. But give thanks for this day first.

December 5, 12:26 a.m.

In my dream, a fat, sunburned umpire, foolishly shy yet thrilled to be officiating at a major league game.

Woke late "too late to read *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* or something about Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati. It will be good to return to the *Bhagavatam*. I really need to read it regularly to stay deeply connected to its concepts.

No one can know the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Only the devotees can know Him to some extent. Don't be diverted away from the *Bhagavatam* life. We'll have to account for that at the end. "Who can describe the prowess of Vishnu? . . . Neither I nor all the sages born before you know fully the omnipotent Personality of Godhead . . . Even . . . Sesa has not been able to reach the limit of such knowledge. . . . But anyone who is specifically favored by the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead, due to unalloyed surrender unto the service of the Lord, can overcome the insurmountable ocean of illusion and can understand the Lord. But those who are attached to this body, which is meant to be eaten at the end by dogs and jackals, cannot do so." (*Bhag.* 2.7.40 - 22)

* * *

Dreamt I was Prabhupada's servant. He was giving a lecture. I didn't feel receptive. Then he said, "Whatever little teachings we have at our command . . . , " and that caught my attention. He said he had lectured to an unreceptive man in India. I suddenly felt appreciation that Prabhupada was entirely earnest in his preaching. I then wanted to listen to him more attentively. I wanted to stay with him.

Where was he going after his lecture? I looked at his paraphernalia and wished I knew how to pack for him better. I wanted to be a better servant. I thought he might ask me to leave. What else would I do but serve him?

But when he came into the room, he was affectionate and said, "You're always ready to go on time." Then he blessed me by making a mark on my face. Pradyumna was also there, chanting mantras.

I asked Prabhupada where we were going and where we would stay. Prabhupada mentioned the name of the man who was to host us. It sounded like a safe place.

"Prabhupada, I wish I knew better how to pack your different things." He wasn't worried, though. There were some things he wanted to pack himself anyway.

Aside from his gesture of affection, I felt the power to tell him what's going on within me. That came from becoming more receptive to what he had to say and coming to appreciate the great gift he had given me.

* * *

6:35 a.m.

Told Shyamananda I may not be able to give class tomorrow. He assured me that it wasn't a problem, that Tulasi-priya would do it. Then he added, "He doesn't usually need to prepare." I started to say I didn't need to prepare either, but that isn't true. And anyway, I'm not well. Cracked pate. Pater Noster. O William Pater, if you're in heaven, I don't know about it, but I do know our Father loves us well.

He certainly loves the devotees in Camden Town, England, who are distributing His *prasadam* daily. A local restaurant, the Bengal Lancer, told a newspaper man that it's unfair. He has to survive financially, but the Hare Krishnas are giving out free food to make converts. No one comes to his restaurant. The Hare Krishnas say their free food distribution has nothing to do with religion. Anyway, Krishna loves all and it's up to us to reciprocate with Him. I'll take a free plate, since it's for the down and outs.

Our Father, who art everywhere, You may make me unhappy by crushing me in Your embrace, but I'll still love You and see the good in Your treatment of me. May You always inspire me to be a devotee and not an atheist. It would be nice if I could read Your book without pain in my eye, but if not, so it be for now.

* * *

7:19 a.m.

I'd like to go out for a walk. Maybe I can walk briskly, which is recommended. It's still dark outside, but I can see. I'll chant Hare Krishna as I go.

Birds and puddles and sky and trees "all in their own places and all from God. One should know from whom everything comes and be sure not to take more than his quota.

* * *

7:50 a.m.

Did I scare the ducks and geese? They alarmed me too. They flew up suddenly as I turned to see the moon behind the mist. I had been concentrating on keeping my walk brisk, remembering what the latest migraine book told me about the benefits of aerobic exercise.

Fields covered in frost. First light of day beginning to show.

* * *

8:25 a.m.

Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati emphasized book publication as the best way to distribute Krishna consciousness on a large scale. He called it the *brhad-mrdanga*. I'm in his line. People benefit when they read spiritual books. A drum can only be heard a few blocks, but a book can travel around the world.

Abhay met his spiritual master several times, according to *Shrila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. rosy layer of dawn. Sluggish stomach. Yellow page under lamplight. Ability to write a sentence. The outer door opens "I heard Ishani placing a thermos there, probably with a hot ginger drink. Each moment the sky lightens, but I can't quite notice.

Abhay was close to his spiritual master. "Fools rush in," others criticized. Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati once told him, "Why don't *you* come up here and speak instead of me?" Abhay was mortified, yet also treasured the rebuke. I've honored these stories.

Try to remember that moment in my dream this morning "my insight into Shrila Prabhupada's dearness, his dedication to preaching Krishna consciousness, my fuller reception to him "him winning me over.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati liked boldness and disliked compromise. Would he like *my* boldness? Would he find me . . .

find me

at the feet of his great disciple

Abhaya Caranaravinda Bhaktivedanta Swami.

Prabhupada standing in his *gamcha* projecting his voice, I'm his personal servant.

* * *

9:43 a.m.

How's your head? Not whole, but not stuffed like a pumpkin.

I said it might be the climate or the busy week I just had. O Krishna, Krishna.

Prahlada Maharaja thought himself a demon and said to Lord Nrsimha, "You are kind to me because . . ." I heard Srila Prabhupada speaking and liked what he was saying.

On this gray day where a seagull croaked and a crow flew overhead. Saw a great gray heron lift itself slowly out of its not-so-secret place.

Shrila Prabhupada: "I never asked my spiritual master a question, except one: 'How shall I serve you?'"

* * *

11:00 a.m.

One of the nicest things about coming to Inis rath is that Prabhupada can look out at the lake during his massage. May I commune with him, and may he tell me what I need to do to become a real *Sisya*.

* * *

12:05 p.m.

I don't think I'll go to the shed today. It'll be too hard on my head. I painted four watercolors and wrote a poem. I could probably squeeze out some more. But to put on boots and a coat and walk out there on my aching ankle "and I might even meet someone and have to smile.

From here I can see the brick boathouse, the lake, the ripples as dark as the Tuscarora's. The devotees here leave me alone. They'd never do that in America. They have no concept of it. But this is another reason why I like to reciprocate with the devotees here, because they make my life here possible.

Time for an Esgic.

Lunch may give me a boost.

A small plane overhead, light blinking.

Dark, cloud-covered sky pressing the earth. I feel its pressure because of my head pain.

In and out "breathing. I see a man feeding a dog, and another man playing a drum while yet another watches. Devotees, words. Shrila Prabhupada singing devout.

See anything out there on the lake? Any little black ducks near shore? Any boats? Just ripples. It won't snow here. Bare trees.

I sometimes see devotees' faces in my mind, especially those who have shared their suffering with me. The memories of them are disjointed, tied in with their particular karma and present desires. None of us is perfect. Best to keep Krishna on the mind. really. Then we will be able to be more grateful.

* * *

2:35 p.m.

Nothing seems to improve my headache situation here "not the walks, the meds, the weather, the staying to myself.

Two winter swans ducking their heads underwater. They're not afraid or diminished by anything. They were made to accept their lot and bob their curvy necks under the cold water, then glide and paddle, a synchronized pair.

I came out here for some purpose. Krishna's purpose in coming to earth was not to teach a particular religion, as in a "religious faith," but to teach us about our eternal nature. *Samsiddhir hari-tosanah*. real devotees only want to please Krishna.

Very good. And what about swans and memories of old school chums which contain no explicit God consciousness? Perhaps they are all old or false sentiments that should be released, because if we think the self or soul is the body or mind, we'll act accordingly and wind up in yet another suffering material body next life.

Why did I come out here? To write a few pages, to observe something. A doctor has to observe his patient. I wanted to observe the grass in the marsh in front of the lake. The shed is closer to the outdoors.

Dream self, please send me more dreams of me loving my spiritual master. Feel free to project me in Vrhndavana, where I could become a devotee. If you're going to produce a dream theater, why not make it Krishna conscious?

Thinking about how I wanted to practice "the little way." Even that seems too much for me. I can't add anything to it. At most I can stop from sliding back into a constant state of decrease.

I heard a bird cry, then a truck rumble by. I thought we were far removed from roads, but I was wrong.

Tomorrow is Sunday and my mail will arrive from Dublin. Hare Krishna.

* * *

7:00 p.m.

I'm up after only two hours' sleep. Now that I'm awake, I feel I want deep faith in Krishna "deep, basic faith. I dare to break my persona as already faithful. As if I don't doubt. I do. I ask why a lot. It's not that I prefer another religion. I'm no Christian, for example. I want to face my doubts, however, and then find deep, honest faith in Krishna.

Why *don't* I have more faith? Maybe I should go back to the *Bhagavad-gita* and get it from there. But that too starts with many Vedic assumptions. I will have to go back to Shрила Prabhupada appearing suddenly on the American scene and convincing me.

Who among my disciples has faith in *me*? I can't confide in them. Anyway, I don't see my position as damned "because I do *want* faith. Otherwise, what would be the point of living?

From a disciple's homage, "You have to have the courage to be who you are when that is the most fearful thing in the world to face." Yes, I'm a doubter.

Hey mister, I want Krishna to be my God too. Do I have to join the Hare Krishna movement and shave my head? My heart? Do I have to give up my marbles to Krishna? Can I keep some for myself? Does Krishna know . . . and guru . . . or care? This world is so seductive and big and dangerous. I hide from it. ISKCON scares me (I was about to write "hides me," which is also true) as much as anything else scares me. ISKCON threatens to take away my honesty. Yet the company of the devotees in this movement is also the structure by which we may worship Krishna, and I know that to be true too.

So how to maintain integrity without becoming either independent or proud? Where is simplicity?

December 6, 3:05 a.m.

Had a strange dream last night, then woke up at 10:00 with the ongoing headache moved back into my right eye.

* * *

4:25 a.m.

I feel a little better. A clear head would be nice for sailing through the morning, but that doesn't seem possible this morning. While worshipping Radha-Govinda I listened to *Vidagdha-madhava*. The plot is thickening as Subala, disguised as Madhumangala, makes Jatila the butt of laughter and the *gopis* become angry with her because she has made so many false accusations against Radha. The banter sparkles, even in translation.

Would I like to rest more? Have to keep myself in shape for the championship fight, the hale lecture on Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati. How can we serve him now? By assisting his noble son. That's all Shrila Prabhupada asks us to do. "I thank you because you are all helping me to serve my Guru Maharaja." He was so grateful that he was moved to tears when he said that. Those European and American boys and girls to whom he addressed those words are now grown but still wish to move him to tears by offering sincere service to his mission.

* * *

6:03 a.m.

It looks like He will let me give the lecture. Do it gratefully. I'll ask Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati for the faith that will allow me to become a genuine *bhakta* and preacher. One has to have life to preach, he said. A dead man can't preach. But not ordinary life, divine life. We have to be fixed in *parampara*. Firm faith is called *nistha*. I once thought I had it; I want it for real this time.

* * *

3:37 p.m.

Dear Diary, I've had a clear day. recited the prepared material in my lecture, then came back to my room and spent the rest of the morning answering mail. Only a few letters left.

Now in the shed. The windows are fogged up because of the heater. Spent the morning hearing people's troubles. Maybe tomorrow I'll be able to put my old schedule back in place "three little readings of *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* while writing notes and other writing. I also hope to chant better *japa*.

* * *

It gets dark so early in Ireland. Abhaya dasi says I should eat hot porridge in the morning instead of cold fruit. Yes, but how will I digest it? rowboat talk. Looked into Manu's blue eyes while Arjuna rowed in his neat work clothes, his gray hair trimmed.

An *ex-gurukuli* asked me how to maintain faith in Shрила Prabhupada. I said (among other things) that he shouldn't impose standards of material perfection on him. I wonder if he understood what I meant. I also told him to read Prabhupada's books prayerfully, pray to Krishna, associate with people who love Prabhupada, and try to offer some service. I couldn't tell him everything, such as that if you go to another teacher, you'll find out that Prabhupada is very, very special.

* * *

3:42 p.m.

"Thank you for the feast (although it didn't last forever). Each savory prep was excellent, and the sweets were also good." I put that note on the trunk in the hall for the cook. Suddenly the light bulb burnt out. That's the third one in four days. Cheap Irish products.

I want to say "Krishna." I'm an artist, not an artisan. Say it again. Find your voice and be confident. I must learn to be Krishna conscious under all circumstances.

* * *

4:05 p.m.

Great devotees are aware of the Lord's potencies. They don't discover them, however, by searching the material world with a telescope or a microscope. Usually those who use those methods conclude that there is no God. Srila Prabhupada states that a sane person eventually stops speculating and *tries to learn to surrender* to the Supreme Lord.

I could counter this if I wanted to. Why should we surrender? Why even *try* to know Him?

But I'm too tired of uncertainty to do that. I would prefer to fall asleep knowing that I'm falling in love with God.

"The Lord is knowable only by one who is a surrendered soul." Even sinful persons can know the Lord if they surrender to His pure devotees.

Sleepy now. That's okay. Krishna's loving representative is kinder and easier to approach than Krishna Himself. Even the sinful can approach the devotees, because the devotees are so merciful.

Someone wrote me about the flavor of my writing when I write in India. But I haven't been there recently. Perhaps he was indicating that Ireland produces sameness in the writing. But I feel such relief to not have to travel right now, and especially in not having to meet X, Y, and Z dasas, who seem to appear suddenly around every turn on the *parikrama* path.

* * *

4:15 p.m.

Saw three young deer "the first I've seen since I got here. They were already dark for winter. They ran by, kicking up mud.

Today, Govinda on the island wore His buffalo horn on His hip. I didn't give my Govinda His buffalo horn, though. I thought He'd be happier without that between Him and His Radha.

"O Ma, don't be a *sahajiya* crying tears on the altar." She replied, "I've been going on this altar for years . . ." Still, I was glad that conversation happened "to check her, I guess. We're all getting older.

One woman asked her devotee friends, "Why not Jesus?" They told her she could put his picture on her altar if she wanted, because Prabhupada said he was one of Krishna's sons. She didn't want to put his picture on her altar. All she wanted to know was, "Why Krishna?" I guess I know what it's like to have to ask that question.

A devotee told me she likes to see the light on in my room when she gets up early to chant. Heard a banging sound "a heavy sound.

I chose verses and purports to read. Want to get beyond mere journal. But I can fall back on mere journal when I have to. I left the shed and walked up the long, gentle, but still tiring incline. Didn't meet anyone.

Be kind while you're in this same Ireland, and don't forget to say good-bye to each person you know in your mind. Thank them all. Be yourself, turn to God, and remember that He's your best friend.

* * *

6:26 p.m., Night Notes

Hope it's oats tomorrow morning. She suggested I take the cereal with soymilk rather than cow's milk. Maybe I'll be able to digest it then. Someone is always slamming doors in this house. I tolerate the noise, but feel fragile. Jumping over one life (this one now) to the next unknown. Hare Krishna. Who knows? Who can say for sure? Some of us may truly be saintly. She said she loves to go on the altar and serve radha and Krishna.

December 7, 12:05 a.m.

I'm not planning right now to live at Radha-kunda but to return in about a week and a half to my Radha-kunda, my Govardhana, at Uddhava's house. They are building me

a *bhajana-kutir* while I'm away. I long to return to walk those boards around the house. From there I'll beam out to Vraja by chanting Krishna's holy name. Or I may fail to find Vraja. I'll let you know.

"What is realized as the absolute Brahman is full of unlimited bliss without grief. That is certainly the ultimate phase of the supreme enjoyer, the Personality of Godhead." (*Bhag. 2.7.47*) No *maya* stands within Him or even before Him. Both the Lord and the spirit souls in their liberated state have senses and forms beyond matter. As soon as we speak of persons and senses, however, most conditioned souls, even religious ones, think we must be talking about the material and temporary platform.

Our spiritual senses are meant to be used in Krishna's service. I'm still trying to learn how to do it. I color pictures with a free hand and learn to make them Krishna conscious. Krishna can appear anywhere, even here.

But I feel diminished. Meaning? Should I learn to write from a smaller part of my brain? Less hours a day? In less words? No, I feel less ability to grapple with philosophy and intellect. Not interested in the intricate. I hope that means I'm developing more of a tendency to be simple and honest.

Feeling head pressure, so better I spend my up-time chanting.

* * *

4:10 a.m.

No one at the door right now, so out onto the familiar walkway. O Krishna, I can only know You in part, but You are still as familiar as this walk, and as completely unknown and unknowable.

I dressed Radha-Govinda. They look elegant in these cream dresses with the green patterns. Radha is wearing green earrings and a beautiful emerald *chandrika*. Offered Them water in cups. Did all this while I heard what They were doing in the forest of Vrindavana.

Angry man in him. However, he doesn't want to mislead people with his venting. Who am I talking about? The artist in me. The artist.

Now here's the thing: we can worship Christ, Allah, or any form of God we choose, but I have chosen to worship Krishna. The modes push us, but in the precious little clear time we have, try to see Krishna in the present moment and go to Him. I mean, Krishna in Vrindavana.

My brother asked, "Why don't you come for a writing retreat to Radha-kunda? What will you get out of this Irish damp?" But I'm in a different place, blowing my horn over the continents, hoping to preach. "Go for the West; forget the rest" "don't worry, that's not my motto. But I'm not a Hindu. Just my Swami's *cela*. Who I am "infinitely

unknowing

a forget-me-not

afraid of death and missing out

as my master warned.

* * *

5:45 a.m.

The mantra should be said as prayer, not mechanically. I feel a dream leftover from last night. I can't remember the details, but I feel haunted by the mood it carried. Why can't I pray? Because my mind is so hard to control. That's why Shrila Prabhupada says it's impossible to practice *astanga-yoga* in this age. He told a 1971 New York Henry Street audience (while the Italian toughs threatened outside) that they should avoid illicit sex and practice *bhakti-yoga*.

Prayer seems inaccessible to me. What was that dream? Something about Dr. Alexander and some older ISKCON ladies. It was during lunch. Dr. Alexander wanted me to go out to lunch with her. I thought of three reasons why I couldn't go, but didn't have the courage to tell her. But she was growing too old; I couldn't see her in quite the same way anymore. The second was that I wanted to do something else during this lunch hour. The third was a sad reason: I wanted to be alone to think my little thoughts because I was so dedicated to writing them down. I walked away from her, although she gave me some last advice about buying low-watt yellow light bulbs.

In the dream, I wandered past a cigar shop looking for I'm not sure what, when I heard a song that used Hare Krishna *japa* as the background. That interested me, and I thought it was amazing that someone would have written a song like that.

No, that dream didn't contain any concentrated prayer, but it had a certain feeling to it that reminded me this morning that I want to pray to Krishna. "Please," I heard myself say in the dream, "please, please, please."

* * *

8:10 a.m.

"Please describe the science of Godhead with determination and in a manner by which it will be quite possible for the human being to develop transcendental devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead Hari . . ." (*Bhag. 2.7.52*) I should go on describing *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* as I heard it from Shrila Prabhupada. They like *Poor Man*.

Narada was advised by Brahma to present the *Bhagavatam* principles freely in a missionary spirit, not to earn a livelihood. As I write, the sky is layered with bright pink cloud ripples. The female parrot said that Krishna's love for Radha is like red sunshine: it lasts only briefly. Radha's love for Krishna, however, is undying. Madhumangala didn't like to hear His friend deprecated, so he threw a stick at both parrots and chased them away. But I can see this morning how brief a pink sky actually is.

Hearing *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*: "If this is done regularly with devotion and respect, one is sure to get out of the illusory energy of the Lord." (*Bhag. 2.7.53*) The *rasa-lila* is for liberated souls. Don't be adverse to hearing about the Supreme Lord in relation to the external energy. Hear in disciplic succession.

* * *

11:45 a.m.

I hear you. I hear the breath in my body and the electric heater as it clicks on. I hear the sound of my voice when I talk, and when others speak, I hear them and comprehend. We live with such peaceful people. "You have already reformed," he said. And, "You

are emphasizing chanting and hearing. That's proper." Am I? Click on. Breathe in. And out.

Stopped to look at the three watercolors I painted this morning. Look a little childish "parts of them "like raisins for eyes. A child's version of reality is usually too simple-- too sad or too happy.

"Can art, self-expression, be a path for going back to Godhead?" a man asked after a 1971 lecture in New York. Shrila Prabhupada didn't pick up on that and spoke only about the soul going back to the spiritual world. Okay. At least he didn't blast the questioner. I seem to remember that man "an arty-dressed person, probably a dedicated artist. Not a shaved-up devotee. We were so enthusiastic and fanatical in those days, especially judging by today's standards.

At the end of one of Prabhupada's Gainesville lectures, a woman reporter asked, "Can you be a devotee indirectly "not in the full-time way like these people?" It was an ironic question, because ISKCON Alachua now espouses that stance. But in 1971, we laughed at the egotistical artist and scorned the concept of the "fringy," indirect approach. Shrila Prabhupada seemed to support our opinion, maybe because we were so fired up. But he always said we could be Krishna conscious in our own homes and that we didn't have to change our dress or hairstyle.

* * *

12:17 p.m.

Wisp of a cloud moving across the sky. Krishna, Krishna. So empty I am. I want art to carry me back to Godhead, like that man hoped to hear was possible when he asked Shrila Prabhupada his question. Was he wearing tie-dyed clothing? It doesn't matter. Yes, art offered to Krishna can become pure devotion. So can fighting and cooking and walking and parenthood. But it must be offered in love. Krishna accepts the love.

I grope for love even as I try to avoid making my art propaganda.

He wanted to know how to increase his faith in Shrila Prabhupada. What did I tell him? I'm just a tiny *shisya*.

* * *

2:33 p.m.

"To be fully engaged in hearing the transcendental narration described in the text of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* means to constantly associate with the supreme soul, Sri Krishna." (*Bhag.* 2.8.3, purport) That will liberate us from matter.

I'm writing indoors. Arjuna has my shed key. He's supposed to be fixing the door. It's very dark outside. I may still go out if he returns the key in time. Whole sky moving. A flock of birds speckling the horizon.

Maharaja Pariksit planned to quit his body in full consciousness of Lord Sri Krishna. Shrila Prabhupada advises all of us to continue hearing the *Bhagavatam* until the end of life "and thus be liberated" Maharaja Pariksit was free of all material connections, "but still he was conscious of his material body. He wanted to be free of such bondage also by the constant association of the Lord."

"Persons who hear *Srimad-Bhagavatam* regularly (*srvvatam sraddha-nityam*) and who are always taking the matter very seriously will have the Personality of Godhead manifested in their hearts within a short time." (*Bhag.* 2.8.4)

* * *

4:15 p.m.

Caged man. Hare Krishna poet in sweater. Answered all the mail for now. Tired of walking up and down stretches of this earth. Hare Krishna. No specific direction.

There is no way I worked and reworked a little piece, he said, to become a better poet. Told of his years at Harvard with other poets.

My memories are not like that. Assemble the pieces. Perhaps the door opening was Arjuna with my key. Hare Krishna.

* * *

5:00 p.m.

It doesn't get as cold here as it gets in North America, but it does get dark early. I feel like going to bed soon. Maybe I can sleep for a couple of hours before the hovering pain wakes me up. I aim to rise by midnight.

My doodles here are in earnest but still child's play. I saw Jayananda and his sister with a large collection of toy wagons, men, soldiers "I couldn't quite tell "not necessarily playing "war" but settlers, imaginary people. They had them set out all over the room. They live in a world of imagination.

* * *

Letters get bigger so an old man can read them. No 7-Up for me. No mortification, either. I'm no Carmelite or Himalayan *tapasvi*. Could I gladly accept total poverty? I'm used to writing with good pens.

December 8, 12:08 a.m.

Let's skip the dry feelings, the dissatisfaction, the dream, and look at the *Bhagavatam*. "The sound incarnation of Lord Krishna, the supreme soul [i.e., *Srimad-Bhagavatam*] enters into the heart of a self-realized devotee, sits on the lotus flower of his loving relationship, and thus cleanses the dust of material association, such as lust, anger and hankering. Thus it acts like autumnal rains upon pools of muddy water." (*Bhag.* 2.8.5) A pure devotee who is empowered by his spiritual master can deliver the whole world.

I'm hung up here thinking of my medical condition. One doctor tells me to take preventative medicine for a year and a half, and another says I should only take it for six months. What should I do? Shop around for more opinions? I don't really trust my doctor's expertise. Do I trust my spiritual master? *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*? Lord Krishna? That's the more important consideration. I already know the medical experts can't cure my headaches, so the main thing is to turn to Krishna.

In the meantime, creep along the earth with your tiny effort. Try to contemplate Krishna's mercy in your life. Therese of Lisieux had "audacious confidence" that God would bestow His full love on her (and anyone) if she just asked Him for it. We don't have to do more than that. Just know we are *weak and fallen*, but that He is full of love for us. Don't doubt it.

By sincerely hearing *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*, we can realize our constitutional relationship with the Lord in one of the five mellows. Pure devotees like Narada also preached to others. Oh, but doc, homeopathic doc, remission nurse, self-help team, please know I can't go out or I'll get a headache. If I push myself to preach, I'll have to take those rescue meds, and I'll wind up with rebound headaches "headaches induced by the medication.

While other methods may help temporarily, hearing *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* cures permanently. Do it regularly. That's the real prescription.

* * *

4:09 a.m.

My back is tired from the ups and downs of the Deity worship. It's weary work for me. My back began to ache when I was still quite young "when I was working at Food Farm at age sixteen. Then my back ached when I had to lift gun shells on the Saratoga. But this weariness is bearable, because I am also listening to Lalita and Vishakha joke with Kana.

Kana. *Gopis*. A backache is a trumpeter's riff to a sweet or bitter sound. Is it prayer?

Little flower. I'm taking it easy, I discovered. I'm sorry, but it's true I just don't want to perform the austerity of eating a piece of wood or not complaining when it's cold. I am not convinced that my suffering is meant to be an offering to please God.

Then what is it about me that will please God? Hearing my guru's lectures, overcoming dislikes and doubts "not much, I know. My loyalty. My willingness to fight for Him.

* * *

5:00 a.m.

Push a little, but don't incite pain. Dreamt people came to my door asking for charity. The memoirist wrote of Hare Krishnas coming and teaching, "You are not this body," but he couldn't understand what they were talking about.

Push a little more. Spiritual teachings should benefit humankind. Portray a life to convince someone to serve Krishna. They're serving anyway, I know, but convince them to do it voluntarily. Even one person.

I was the New Yorker across the bridge. Went downtown, then uptown. It was hard to meet Krishna and become convinced, but Swamiji helped me.

* * *

5:40 a.m.

Now I'm just waiting for Syamananda to bring breakfast. We decided that porridge every day is best for the winter. Nothing else to report.

After breakfast I'll dawdle to stay awake, then take a short nap. My next duty will be to read and report on *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*. That could take as long as twenty or twenty-five minutes. I pray to maintain rapt attention. I don't have to range through many subjects. For example, this morning there was only verse and purport about how the pure devotee's mind is compared to a clearing pool after the autumnal rain. If he can clear his own mind, by Krishna's grace and his attentive hearing of the *Bhagavatam*, he can then clear the minds of the whole world. That's what it said. I thought about it. Then I heard Shрила Prabhupada lecture in New York, 1971. He spoke about atonement from the Sixth Canto. I wasn't sure whether the Henry Street neighbors wouldn't break down the door while he spoke. We're all safe now; I heard it on tape, and 1971 was a long time ago.

I admit I am not an artist and could be pretending and taking advantage of disciples' affection to get my paintings printed. That would be an emperor's new clothes scandal. Somebody might blow the whistle on me. But who can say what the objective truth is? The point is, am I pleasing Krishna by my painting? I'm certainly trying. How will I prove it? Did you know that the existence of a migraine cannot be proven except through patient testimonies? Even beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Hare Krishna.

* * *

7:45 a.m.

Time for a walk in the first light of day. raining this morning. At Inis rath, I have to deal differently with the rain than I do in Wicklow. It's less private here, and I don't like to wear my rain suit in public. I'm afraid the devotees will see me and wonder why I'm not attending the morning program.

Shining puddles catch the first light. On the road toward the end of the property, that tall tree is bending over even further now, like an old man awaiting his end. I frighten the water fowl every time I walk at this hour.

I only walk for about twenty minutes a day. By the time it's over, the sky is lighter and I can actually see the details of the landscape. This morning it's distinctly warmer. I don't need my hood up. Birds cheeping "a harsh sound. remember that harsh-as-stone sparrow cheep in Vrindavana? A half moon. When I started out it was covered; now it's sending out a beam of light.

My body has had enough. I'm like an old horse that wants to get back into the barn. Back to reading a little *Bhagavatam*.

I'm also reading a poetry book by Donald Hall. The back cover blurb says that his poems are unsentimental. If my writing is to be unsentimental, then I will have to openly admit I have not attained prayer. Am I seeking only sweetness and consolation? Therese says prayer retains its struggle throughout.

* * *

8:13 a.m.

"A pure devotee of the Lord whose heart has once been cleansed by the process of devotional service never relinquishes the lotus feet of Krishna (*Krishna-pada muvam*),

for they fully satisfy him, as a traveler is satisfied at home after a troubled journey." (*Bhag.* 2.8.6) In his purport, Srila Prabhupada writes that pure devotees sometimes meet severe difficulties while preaching, but they "feel transcendental pleasure because the Lord is satisfied." Whew. Martyrs. Saints. "Prahlada Maharaja suffered greatly, but still he never forgot the lotus feet of the Lord."

A devotee never relinquishes the service he has been given by his spiritual master. Devotees don't mind what happens to them. They always remain affectionate toward the Lord and remember Him while they "travel" in the world.

Not only does a disciple hear submissively from his spiritual master but he inquires into the science of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Here in *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*, Maharaja Pariksit asks how the spirit soul comes to attain a material body, which causes him to transmigrate.

Maharaja Pariksit was not exhausted despite seven days of fasting. Neither was he afraid of his imminent death. This is the result of hearing *acyuta-katha* from an authorized person.

* * *

9:32 a.m.

Feverfew. Can I see Krishna in the pain? I may have to learn how to do that more. My only task now is to face this naked day with its naked pain and to look for the Krishna conscious flow. I've said this before, but what just occurred to me (as I lay propped up in bed) is that it is hard in a writerly sense to continuously face emptiness. It's also hard to present Krishna conscious teachings from that perspective. I read *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* a few times a day and offer my notes. But I'm impoverished. I lack devotion. Still, it's good to be honest, and this writing bears the weight of that honesty. I have nothing else. A poet has to risk that much.

* * *

11:56 a.m.

Ace reporter sees green grass and worries what writing teachers might say. They say to kill adjectives. Don't say "blue sky," "green grass." What if some grass isn't green? Can we use an adjective then? In Ireland, though, grass is *especially* green. It also shines with a bit of winter yellow tint.

O Krishna. Let me hold on for dear life "to dear life" and follow the philosophy of "first thoughts are best thoughts." Kowitz called that nonsense. Natalie called it truth. regardless, I think it requires courage and a kind of faith in the process of expression. I have to keep trusting that I am receiving information from the Supersoul, the source of all knowledge. I also know that my various filters and censors continuously try to block such a transference. I have to therefore stop stuttering and censoring and editing while I write, and let "it" come.

A bit of blessed sunlight, rare for Ireland, showing its face out there. We never have a full day of sun here. What is So-and-so Swami doing? And So-and-so and Such-and-such? ISKCON's elite. I really don't want to know. I have my own life to tend, although I offer them respect. I bless them with my good wishes, as I hope they bless me.

Lunch provides a peak of happiness, but it lasts no more than twenty minutes. It's body happiness, mind happiness, and not a happiness of the soul. The soul takes pleasure if it is pure and understands the nature of *Krishna-prasadam*, because it can taste the loving exchange that has been injected into the food when it was offered to Krishna. I'm not actively conscious of that, but savor the physical tastes themselves. At least we devotees have the great dispensation that we do not have to be opposed to palatable food that has been offered to Krishna. The ascetic Christians deny the tongue's inclination to taste as something weak or evil and opposed to living for God's pleasure. They also focus only on Christ's suffering, it seems. Raghunatha dasa Gosvami also was extreme in his fasting even from *prasadam*, but not because he was trying to avoid something as much as he was absorbed in something else.

* * *

2:23 p.m.

I'm in the shed. I brought everything I need out here in a bag, but I forgot the *Bhagavatam*. None of Shrila Prabhupada's books with me. I'll read when I go back inside if my head allows.

Saw the red "royal Mail" car on my way out here. Also saw an article in *Poetry Ireland review* about Northern and South Ireland, the Catholics and the Protestants, that reminded me that I'm an expatriate. This Irish business feels so distant. The Irish devotees have also remained transcendental to the Catholic-Protestant conflict.

The movement after Shrila Prabhupada's disappearance. I have so many complicated and confusing feelings. What do I make of my experience? I don't want a clever Godbrother or a nondevotee sociologist to explain to me what is happening in our religion during this brief time that constitutes my life. Why not? Why not consult an astrologer? I just don't think such persons could do justice to the topic, and I don't want to live with their certitudes, which are no more than opinions. I want to experience my feelings from the inside. Still, I don't enjoy ISKCON's apparent decline or the rejection I feel, the confusion. I pray Krishna will help me. I know He is.

* * *

The window clearing along with the sky. Swans bobbing their heads under the water. I want to remember this sight later. This is such a beautiful place that I wish to share it with others. I call those grasses on the lakeshore weeds, but that's not exactly the right word.

I don't think humans are unable to reach the spiritual world even when they aspire for it. That's not what the *Vedas* say "or my guru. The *Vedas* tell us we are meant to experience spiritual joy and eternity. That's our constitutional nature. But even when we're aspiring for it, we sometimes tire of hearing about it because it does feel so unattainable. Shrila Prabhupada: "Try to understand." Sometimes when he says that, I feel my patience is being tried. Yet I agree with his point and submit. I *am* meant to experience the world of eternity, bliss, and knowledge. Krishna *is* the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I *should* join the Hare Krishna movement.

* * *

3:00 p.m.

Go inside. Feet cold because I turned off the heater in here. I didn't want to turn it on again, because it makes the windows fog up, and I can't see out. But the cold has made my stay out here brief. Hear that wind? One week left here. I'm writing notes to be sent to M. every day. I asked him about getting me more medication. Trying to learn something. O Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. I feel like I'm climbing to the top of the hill of another day. Hare Rama, Hare Rama.

A baby spider crawls quickly out of a pack of pen cartridges that I opened. He runs to me, climbs onto my coat, my chest.

* * *

3:57 p.m.

The Supreme Lord was pleased with Lord Brahma for "his nondeceptive penance in *bhakti-yoga*" and showed him His eternal form (*Bhag. 2.9.4*). The Lord's form is not material, imagined, or hallucinated. It's transcendental reality. I don't know exactly what that means. He's Adhoksaja. I've heard about Him from *sastra* and concluded that I'm not qualified to know spiritual reality. But I accept what the *sastra* says about it. I am not intimidated by the reductionists' arrogant dismissal of spiritual reality. The science of God teaches about both the Supreme Soul and the individual soul. "Therefore the kingdom of God is not a myth but factually a different and transcendental sphere of planets known as the Vaikunthas." We can only know this properly when we practice *bhakti-yoga*. Even Brahma had to get Krishna's mercy in order to know Him.

December 9, 12:10 a.m.

"By *bhakti-yoga* one can know the Lord, and by knowing the Lord, as the Supreme, one is able to know everything else." (*Bhag. 2.9.5*, purport) Brahma was trying to figure out the cause of his own existence on the lotus seat. He heard twice from nearby the syllables "*ta-pa*" "the wealth of the renounced order of life." Was I performing *tapasya* in my dream last night? I was not in the liberating kingdom of God either in body or mind, so I feel humbled.

The older I get, the harder it's going to become to pay *dandavats*. Better learn to do such things as *tapasya*. Life is meant for this. It will bring me nearer to my spiritual master (*upanayana*). He has given me the Hare Krishna mantra. "Chanting of this holy mantra is the only shelter of the desireless pure devotee of the Lord. Simply by such *tapasya*, or penance, the devotee of the Lord achieves all perfections like Lord Brahma." (*Bhag. 2.9.6*, purport)

The Supreme Lord was Brahma's spiritual master because there was no one else present in the universe. If you meet the current link in the chain of disciplic succession, it's as good as meeting Krishna. "If a person is posted under the guidance of such a bona fide spiritual master, it may be accepted without doubt that the desiring person has achieved the grace of the Lord." (*Bhag. 2.9.7*, purport) We always felt that way about

Shrila Prabhupada when he was present. By "we" I mean all his followers. Very fortunate. Let's keep that alive through the followers of his followers. Be a touchstone, even if in so many ways we are physically corrupt, weak, or whatever. Fight ""rage against the dying of the light" "to keep your affectionate and worshipful relationship with His Divine Grace, whom you have served all these years.

* * *

4:02 a.m.

Navy days "just words now, thank God. Vans across America. Past service record. "Oh, when I die" "a future I haven't yet met. And the present? Eyes big on the jury as they ask, incredulous, "You mean, you sinned in such-and-such a way?"

No, I only sang some melancholy blues. Not so bad. I made Krishna's *chadar* look like a wing somehow. I draped necklaces upon Him and His Radha. Heard Their pastimes in the groves of Vrindavana.

"What did Shrila Prabhupada say?" a man asked.

Krishna, Krishna. Men and women gather in the temples, hear the latest news and what they are expected to do during this year's marathon. Christmas shopping, book selling, singing Hare Krishna on the streets "devotees try to stop the nondevotees in their tracks by the power of their own faith: if the nondevotees simply hear *harinama* or take a piece of *prasadam* even unknowingly they will accrue immense benefit.

Last year I wrote that I was more empty now, finding myself having to beg.

* * *

4:55 a.m.

Roots of a tree well established by its meeting Srila Prabhupada and serving him as his son when ISKCON had just begun. Prabhupada planted it, and it grew well, first a sapling under his protection, then opening its branches. ISKCON itself is a branch of the Chaitanya tree, as it is so elaborately described in *Chaitanya-charitamrta*. I am one living entity wishing to live as an offshoot of that tree. I'm not more than that "not really a tree of my own "but rooted like one, sending my tap roots deeper in order to withstand the icy blasts of this age. O rooted *kalpa-vrksa* of my heart, please take to pure Krishna consciousness.

Think of it (*bhakti*, my life, devotion) as language, making letters. I follow the given idiom, but write something of my own from my personal experience and in hopes to find what I don't yet know. Krishna consciousness has a common language of the heart, and by shaping it into letters from one's own pen, it can set us free.

* * *

5:22 a.m.

Tree of no return. Language of the secret people who attain complete perfection by practicing celibacy and devotion. They never thought a dirty thought, never acted for sense gratification. Only acted for Krishna. Did they exist? Oh, yes. They are members of the Vedic culture. The *ksatriyas* had sex to create powerful progeny,

the *brahmanas* mostly abstained. They were *urdva-rata*, capable of pushing their semen upward toward the brain. It gave them powerful memories.

Tell me more.

I can't remember more. To retain brahminical knowledge you have to teach it to others. Otherwise, it leaks out of you like water from a holey pot. We share knowledge out of kindness. Shyamananda rows over in the dark every morning. Can't I think of something to say to him? I could tell him that next Tuesday is Ekadashi, and ask if someone could shave me up. I have no energy for much more than that these days. No nature for it either. He and I can both be more economical by writing letters to one another. That's the *tapa* in our relationship.

* * *

Gayatri fantasies (instead of "seeing" Krishna and the *gopis*, *Krishnaya govindaya*, the guru as blissful in Krishna consciousness and enthusing us): something about an Indian devotee arguing about an old family feud. I don't even want to tell you the rest. Something about raised swords in the desert.

Cock fights in Puerto rico. A hurricane blew off the temple roof.

Don't get *too* independent. Just because I said I wanted to see whether if we were left off the leash we would still run to Krishna, I should remember that there's a place for the leash too. Don't let me mislead you on that point. I don't know exactly what's best for each person, but never let go of the spiritual master's protection. That's my real advice. You said you wanted to go to Sunday Mass, but Krishna is our savior. He is God the son to Mother Yashoda, God the friend to Sudama and Shridama, and God the lover to the *gopis*. Chanting Hare Krishna in double time.

* * *

7:45 a.m.

Things I notice on my walk:

Today the sky is lighter, the moon beaming in a blue sky.

I don't feel like talking as much.

Scared the geese again.

Noticed the level ground, the birds on the ground, and walked over it as if I could avoid potholes. There are too many. remember to walk *briskly*. Unless the walk is brisk, it's not aerobic. Swing those arms and take little mechanical man steps.

What somebody said "still in my memory. A woman said she hallucinates with her migraines. The doctor asked her whether she saw flashes of light. "No, but I see a foot long cockroach on the wall behind you."

Coming to the end of the level ground. That nurse who wrote the book *Migraines* said, "Don't turn to pills at the first sign of twinge."

But pain may come today.

I've lined up a phone call, and already I am thinking how nice it is to be completely without obligation, but I'm powerless to resist duty.

* * *

9:17 a.m.

Hold on. A young man could dance and shout. I've got a benign swollen prostate gland. Got to pee frequently. "Excuse me . . . is there a men's room?" Grinning, behind eyeglasses, that pane of glass always clear, although the eyes blur. Aware whose teeth these are. No illusions about that anymore. I'm aware of pending headaches. That's who I am, my own man.

Did my time, now
come on rhyme.

He improvised, but didn't take it too far.

Phone call coming in. I'll start out by saying, "We could have written to one another, but I decided to talk to you instead." I only reach out like that to a few.

Bashful smile. Found a few who will take care of me. The ranks of shiny black ink. White jet trail in faraway blue. Next Sunday at least (it's starting to move closer), I'd better take a look at the section in *Chaitanya-caritamrta*.

Let me take the opportunity to say how we might live in Vrindavana mentally. *Vishaya cariya* . . . We must free ourselves from the desire for sense gratification if we are going to be able to live in the *dhama*. Otherwise, how will we be enthusiastic to read the Six Gosvamis' books? Express greed to stick to the dust of Vrindavana (*vraja-ruja*) and hope our qualification comes in time.

With sharp eye pain, three meds a week, and what feels like tons of ISKCONites looking for the nectar or the controversy "we can go and find what we seek. That's why I sits smokin' me pipe by the side of a glen at the edge of a wet peninsula known as Gayglum. Govinda and Radha under these skies douse us with mercy.

I asked Shyamananda, "Is there anyone skilled at shaving heads?" He replied, "Better wait for your Madhu to return."

* * *

The GNP publishers have written a preface to my new art book, *From Matter to Spirit: Paintings, Poems, and Improvisations*. I liked the preface, but suggested a change in one sentence. It turns out to be a crucial change. I like what they said, but it is more confident than what I want to present.

This is what they originally presented: "rather, the artist is alone with guru and Krishna, and the performance is in that intimate association." I thought that sounded presumptuous, as if I'm claiming that I'm always living with Prabhupada and Krishna. I changed it to this: "rather, the artist is alone hoping to please guru and Krishna, and the performance is in that intimate association."

This theme also came up just as I finished reading a book about St. Therese and her novice, St. Marie of the Trinity. The book tells how Marie lived on for many years after Therese passed away. Marie of the Trinity was not an official saint, but she became more and more confident of the grace of Therese and Jesus upon her, even though she was suffering from a painful physical illness. As her confidence in them grew, her confidence that she would enter heaven also grew. She became more and more joyful about it. Joy is the symptom of a person practicing real spiritual life. Shрила Prabhupada said that; if

we're morose, we can be sure it's because something is lacking spiritually. For example, we have become doubtful.

So why can't I leave the preface the way it was originally written and say that the artist is alone *with* guru and Krishna? Why do I have to say that the artist is completely alone, as if he's some existentialist or a person who aspires for devotion but really hasn't found his pathway in yet?

I'm no atheist. When I say I'm alone, I hope I'm speaking from humility and honesty about my struggle, not from a kind of existential isolation. I cannot presume that everything I do in my painting is pleasing to guru and Krishna. I'm *trying* to please them and taking the chance that I will succeed through this medium. And yes, until I'm completely confident, I can't say that I know for sure that I am pleasing them. Prabhupada said he was always certain he was pleasing his Guru Maharaja. I seem to be in a somewhat different mood. But the mood I'm in is supported by Vaishnava teachings too "to consider oneself unworthy. Dear Shрила Prabhupada, dear Lord Krishna, please accept these splashes and sacred text, these improvisations, as service. Yes, I painted them alone, but yes, I was listening to your *bhajan*s and felt you were with me. I can't presume to say, however, that I was with you.

* * *

2:21 p.m.

Today started out sunny, but now it's overcast. Spoke to Madhava in America on the phone. He sounds okay. He has a little car; a promotion. But everyone can't be all right in this world forever. We are set up like bowling pins. Yet when we take shelter of Krishna, we're making the best of this world. Krishna is keeping us close to Him. *Yasya 'ham anughranami*.

Lord Brahma practiced austerities for one thousand celestial years. "Thus he is known as the greatest of all ascetics." Shрила Prabhupada told me that personally once, all alone in his room. As he said it, he was sitting upright, striking a pose to show me the great ascetic. Maybe that was when I asked him about the difference between *brahmana*, Brahman, and Brahma. I don't quite remember.

Accept transcendental sound, as in the Lord's instruction, as nondifferent from Him. It doesn't matter that the vibrator of the sound is absent. receive Krishna through the spiritual master's sound vibration and execute his order.

I can't see Krishna or Swamiji just now. I looked out the shed window and saw only marshland and water and Govinda-dvipa. Where is Krishna? In the sky? Yes, and in this book.

Being pleased with Lord Brahma's penances, the Supreme Lord revealed to him His personal abode, Vaikuntha. The penance of *bhakti* delivers transcendental happiness right from the beginning.

Next in *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*, Sukadeva Gosvami will describe the nature of Vaikuntha. The material modes don't act there. The inhabitants have a sky-blue complexion. They are four-handed, youthful, and beautiful to behold. They're effulgent. The Lord leans toward His devotees and is satisfied. His chest is marked with the lines

made by the goddess of fortune. He is the factual Supreme Lord, enjoying His own abode.

* * *

3:00 p.m.

It's dark now because of the clouds and the time of year. It must be even darker in Sweden. Listen to the wind. I can stay awake in a quiet way and be grateful to God. I accept my tininess and hear about the Vaikuntha world. That's alertness. This world doesn't reveal as much by direct experience. We need to see with the eyes of *sastra* (*caksus-Sastra*). That's why I write words on my paintings. Without them, what is the meaning of a rainbow?

Be awake to God in His personal form. I'll send you back into the house in just a few moments. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. The most important thing is to pay attention to the holy name. Bring your attention back to it constantly. To concentrate and control the intellect causes strain, but if there's an easy way to chant *japa*, I haven't discovered it yet.

Nama-rupa doesn't seem to favor me. Keeps me in the dark. Is it a test? Will I continue to chant anyway? Yes, right through the dark winter. It gives me a quiet joy, a solidity.

* * *

4:00 p.m.

I've changed my correction in the art book preface to read as follows: "The artist performs alone, hoping to please guru and Krishna." Thus I have removed the presumption that I'm actually in intimate association with Krishna and Prabhupada. I do think I work alone, but I very much desire that the result of my work please them. The assertion that Prabhupada is physically present while I work doesn't seem right. Neither do I want to say that I am "alone" as if I could ever be without Krishna in my heart or free from acting under my guru's instructions.

* * *

5:36 p.m., Night Notes

On my way back from the shed, I saw the "glory hole," radhanatha dasa's roaring furnace that he uses for glass-blowing. I stopped in to chat with him for a few moments. As I entered his workplace, he was just on his way out for a breath of fresh (and cool) air. He looked tired, but he brightened when he saw me. He told me about a recent success at a craft show in Belfast. It's good to be kind to people, and with a person like him it doesn't take much to show kindness. He's so receptive. He gave me (on my birthday) a blue lamp that he had made. I use it while I'm chanting *japa* in the morning. Hare Krishna.

Lined up quotes both pro and con regarding whether we need to physically reside in Vrndavana. Srila Prabhupada went to the *dhama* when he saw his life ending. He didn't go to New York. But he could have. I have to decide what would be best for my consciousness.

I don't believe everything I hear about Vrindavana. When I hear devotees say that the tree that Krishna leapt off at Kaliya-ghat is still there today, five thousands years later, or that certain *murtis* are millions of years old, I am skeptical. Anyway, such details are not important to me.

Getting ready to rest. I hope Krishna will protect us all. Writing output diminishing, but life is still good.

* * *

6:15 p.m.

Krishna in green. While dressing Them in Their night clothes, I thought, "You don't really love Them. You'd leave Them in a moment if the worship became too inconvenient." If I began to travel extensively, I'd have to leave Them behind. Or so I think. But They are kind, a solace, even though I'm not a lover or realized worshiper like the Gosvamis.

Yes, lie down, subtle and gross being, pure soul, tiny sample of God, and servant of the servant a thousand times removed.

December 10, Midnight

I woke several times during the night and heard a strong wind out there. It made me feel peaceful.

Lord Brahma saw the Personality of Godhead in His abode in His fullness. Brahma was overwhelmed with joy and bowed before the Lord. "That is the way of the highest perfection for the living beings [*paramahamsa*]." (*Bhag.* 2.9.18) Shрила Prabhupada notes that *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* is for the *paramahamsa*, one free from malice. "In the conditioned life the malicious life begins from the top, mainly bearing malice against the Supreme Personality of Godhead." Even persons trying to advance spiritually disbelieve in the personal form of God, although they aspire sometimes to "become God" or to become one with God themselves.

Lord Brahma was sitting on his lotus seat "and from there, by executing the process of *bhakti-yoga* in great seriousness, he could see the Vaikunthalokas" All we have to do is sit and hear *Bhagavad-gita* and *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* regularly. *Jnane preyasa udapasya namante eva*. The Lord shook hands with Brahma. Brahma has a party, and even today any member of it "is naturally engaged in reclaiming the falling souls." The Supreme Lord is anxious to get us back. Therefore, one who preaches is dear to the Lord. We all want to be recognized as preachers of the *bhakti* cult.

Can I draw a picture of Krishna shaking Lord Brahma's hand and smiling slightly? I could, but it would look childish. Then some other picture to impel Krishna consciousness in myself and others? Some act befitting a follower of the *paramahamsas*, who are reclaiming lost souls? Wind howling.

A Godbrother went to numerous cities and read the *Gita* aloud in commemoration of *Gita-jayanti*. He asked businessmen to subsidize his distribution of *Bhagavad-gita*. Another brother is organizing the book distribution marathon in his zone, and many are

actually going out on the cold streets. At this time of year I walk the wet marsh once a day from here to the shed and write down simple things.

"The beautiful Personality of Godhead addressed Lord Brahma: 'O Brahma, impregnated with the *Vedas*, I'm very much pleased with your long accumulated penance with the desire for creation. Hardly am I pleased with the pseudo mystics.'"

(*Bhag. 2.9.20*)

"I wish you good luck. O Brahma, you may ask from Me, the giver of all benedictions, all that you may desire. You may know that the ultimate benediction, as the result of all penances, is to see Me by realization." (*Bhag. 2.9.21*)

* * *

4:10 a.m.

I dressed the Deities in Their new, soft purple outfit. Lovely. I'll ask Shyamananda to photograph Them one of these days. Shyamananda wants to dance, he says, and go to Dublin to see if there are opportunities for his art there. I understand what he wants; I have to write.

We are both doing all right in this world, but what about the next? We should cry out to Krishna. read something Eric Dolphy wrote about things that couldn't be said well "complaints and pain, some yearning too from those who want more spiritual wealth and justice. I thought, "But we can't ascend to Krishna consciousness. We have to open ourselves to the spirit descending to us and share what we receive with others. Then we will understand it better ourselves."

If we want to convey spirituality to others, we have to learn to use our art in preaching. For myself, I can't worry too much about how what I say sounds to others. I trust that things will get clearer the more I practice writing. And chanting Hare Krishna "that practice especially.

Dolphy dared to cry. I admired him for it. Tough men can't cry. But the sky cries tears all the time. We recover from our grief, and if we are fortunate and have turned to Krishna, a melody might come through us because of it.

"Hare Krishna," I said, and evoked the mantra. The mantra is the solid rhythm section behind the solo. It can't be taken for granted any more than the rhythm of our beating hearts.

I'm telling this on a dark morning. But I have this morning to myself. I have the opportunity to open my heart's door to Radha-Govinda. People may understand that or not. It's what a *pujari* does. He or she then encourages others to bow down at the Lord's feet, Shrimati Radharani and Lalita and Vishakha in attendance. Krishna wants to bring us all pleasure, just as we want to please Him. Each of His pure devotees supplies Krishna a different taste.

Roaming from field to field. It takes generations for words and phrases to become idioms, traditions, to offer their wealth in time. In the meantime, we pay our dues by absorbing the vibrations of the troubled times in our own little epoch.

* * *

Then Hare Krishna sing, sing the tune you know now, Walter on piano in dark corner, running, making me remember college and high school friends and alcohol haze, climbing into a taxi and sighing, "Take me to South Ferry," where I saw in the lights Staten Island ferry and that was my home-going. Don't dream of it much lately. Instead, the curled up leaves of Inis rath, the collie here, the old trees, me a Hare Krishna eating up my scones and walking on the wooded path.

Last I heard each person has a chance to solo. I'll get mine as you'll get yours. Hope were filled with hefty words from hefty books and seeking Krishna's kind glance.

Vedic poets call baby elephants graceful. Jettison everything but the holy name at the time of death, and do all that comes with that kind of jettisoning. That's when we'll be truly alone. Better forgive others now, and beg to be forgiven. Cultivate devotion while you have the chance. Krishna sees us always "records our deeds and thoughts "but He'll look kindly upon those who are helpless for His glance, calling out to Him alone. That's the little way that encourages Him to stoop to fetch us. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare.

* * *

5:03 a.m.

I can't trust that everything that comes out of me is Krishna conscious. No. I have to look at each piece and see whether it's offerable, even if it was created in a mood of offering. Dreamt of drinking whiskey. No, that's not true. I was bluffing in the dream. I didn't actually drink the stuff. Why should I? It tastes horrible and distorts the mind. And that dowdy woman who kept leaning against me "I know any woman can entice a sage, but she wasn't much of an attraction.

* * *

5:54 a.m.

Pencils dropping behind desk. I claim I lack the energy to retrieve them. *Japa* rounds up to nine minutes, twenty seconds. Stand up from the chair and feel dizzy. All this could be from the preventative meds. No r. without D. rain heavy outside. Have to suit up in full rain gear. A delight. Probably should remove my glasses. Now get ready for S.'s porridge. Speak with him briefly afterwards.

* * *

9:00 a.m.

Annoyed. I'm not a saint who tolerates everything that happens. I resent things too. I wish it were otherwise. I ruined my morning walk because I was annoyed how the devotees messed up my phone messages. I wrote them down, but by the time they had gone through second-hand, third-hand, from Irish dialect to American, picking up mental static here and there and a little "over-intelligence," unnecessary interpretation, etc., they were lost. I just wrote a message telling them that if anything looks complicated, better I speak directly to Madhu.

Being annoyed made me think of rereading May Sarton's journals. In a sense she's the opposite of a Therese of Lisieux. She's not deeply religious, not focused on Christ or God in any form, and seems to care little for the eternal world. But then I'm a cross between a believer in the other world and a person who wishes to experience this world. May Sarton will write that it as "an enormous joy" to celebrate her eightieth year with a few flowers blooming in her yard or to plant something after not being able to do it for a year because of pain. Therese would not want *any* joy except the joy of doing something directly for God's pleasure. She'd rather take her joy in the form of intense suffering and offer *that* to Him than engage in sense gratification. Sarton has no conception of that, except perhaps in a last-gasp, desperate way.

* * *

9:28 a.m.

The highest perfection, the Lord says to Brahma, is to personally perceive My abodes, "and this has been possible because of your submissive attitude in the performance of severe penance according to My order." (*Bhag.* 2.9.22) Ouch, severe penance. I don't want to hear about that. I certainly don't want to practice it. I want to hear how penance has been made easy for us in Kali-yuga. We simply have to chant sixteen rounds and follow four rules.

In his purport, Shrila Prabhupada makes penance sound attractive, though. He refers to Lord Krishna's request that we "always be mindful of Him, always be His devotee, always worship Him and bow down before the Lord." By so doing we'll be sure to go back to Godhead. Lord Brahma did this without any "superiority complex." So perhaps the austerity is to not think yourself important, to not forget God, and to hear regularly of His supremacy. Don't resent His dominance.

The Supreme Lord goes on to say that penance is His heart. It was He who ordered Brahma to undergo *tapa*. I'm on the second verse and purport, and it seems like enough. Penance should be performed to please the Personality of Godhead and for no other reason. Fools try to be happy in this world (sense gratification). If we try to please Krishna and also enjoy this world, we are fools. The Lord favors such foolish devotees by snatching away their material happiness. Shrila Prabhupada said this happened to him in his business career. A devotee may have to go through "terrible penance," but when he does, he becomes happy in Krishna consciousness. Do it voluntarily or Krishna will force us to surrender to Him for our own good.

Brahma was sinless (a requirement) and therefore responded to the sound "*tapa, tapa*." "Therefore only love and penance combined can please the Lord, and thus one is able to attain His complete mercy." (*Bhag.* 2.9.23, purport)

* * *

12:11 p.m.

Wrote a letter to Ishani, a fellow headache sufferer. Good. But I fall into phony rhetoric so easily. Spoke of "bonding with people who have the same disease." Keep writing to cut that stuff away.

I am not in Vrindavana, in a field with brothers, or born there next life as a village girl. I am still here in this spot-life. Look away a moment and then look back, and the whole scene will have vanished. Of what good are clever vignettes of a temporary world? I'm describing a Gandharva's world, what appears to be real but is actually crafted by ephemeral beings. This world is no more than that.

* * *

2:18 p.m.

Shed. Fat bee in here buzzing quietly behind the curtain. Sunshine! I looked out the window for deer, but see no sign. An Omega truck (special delivery) has pulled up behind the house. Magpie weary of my walk to the shed. Ground muddy "my feet sinking in. Window left open overnight. Did I think my head would be as clear as the sky this afternoon? Well, it's already signaling. Let me get in a little reading first.

Lord Brahma says the Lord is in each heart and knows everything. "In spite of that, my Lord, I am praying to You to kindly fulfill my desire." He wants information of the Lord's spiritual and material forms. He wants to know so that he can be an instrument as *prajapati* and yet not be conditioned by his own activities. It's much better to be an instrument of Krishna's will as a liberated being than an instrument of Mahamaya. Lord Brahma wanted to be rescued from pride. Any power we get is the Supreme Lord's *vibhuti*s. Therefore, none of the credit belongs to us.

Read what's written. See the Lord's expressions of affection? He lifted Govardhana Hill just to protect His devotees. The faithless say the Lord is almighty, but they don't believe he lifted Govardhana Hill. They are impersonalists.

I say I become tired of reading the *Bhagavatam*, but that's only because I don't see everything that's in it. Instead I look out the window or even outside our *sampradaya*. Do I find relief there? No. Anyway, the window has again fogged over, and there are traces of cobwebs on it. Someone hung up a picture of Radha and Krishna in Brijbasi style. There's also a photo of Shrila Prabhupada and a bowl of last year's chestnuts.

* * *

Okay, checkmate. No one can help me now. Sigh. The bee is louder, but there's no one to help it escape. Its throwing itself against the window. Let me open the window in case it really wants to get out despite the chill out there. Now let me look to myself.

Hey! Maybe I've been praying all along through everything I do. Maybe I already love Krishna. Maybe I've already arrived. Maybe the bee will live through the winter.

But not likely. Everything has already been researched, and we already know the truth of the situation. We have to proceed a little a time.

Narada taught Brahma. Is that right? No. Brahma taught Narada. Okay. And I know who taught me; there's no mistaking that.

Hare Krishna. I thought I let the bee out, but it flew back in. How about answering a few letters? I'm too tired to evoke that voice. Just sit and hear for awhile.

* * *

4:45 p.m., Night Notes

You know, you do the same things every day. Oh well. I like to stop at all the familiar stations every hour of the day. It's the way I want to live.

He says he likes to be surprised. I told him I wasn't bored, just regulated. "Thank you for stopping in and talking with me for five minutes," Radhanatha said. Was he being sarcastic because it was only five minutes. I don't think so. Don't be so oversensitive. Thoreau. Me. Pick a peck. Radha-Govinda in Their orange night outfit. My back aching. read some unclean things in Don Hall's poetry. They now replay in my mind. I am asking Krishna to protect me. I'm trying to write well and to remain clean for Him, but this is a dirty world full of *prajalpa*.

Lunch was nice. Almost like a wolf, I snapped up those Northern Ireland breads (not exactly like the scones of the South). Ate them with a little olive oil. And the hot combination "any veg will do "of yam with rice and steaming *dal*. Not all the cooks are this expert. Heard Bhurijana Prabhu lecturing on the destruction of the Yadu dynasty from both the Third and Eleventh Cantos. It was a fratricidal war, caused by their drinking liquor. Of course, it was arranged by Krishna. Still, it was disturbing to my mind. Then the cook brought in a dark carob cake, rich and delicious, covered in red raspberries and whipped cream. Ate just short of full.

* * *

Another quiet, alone day, just the way I like them. I can't bear more than that, it seems.

December 11, 12:00 a.m.

"The science of God (*isha-katha*) describes the incarnations of the Personality of Godhead and His different activities together with the activities of His great devotees." (*Bhag* 2.10.5) The material creation is created for the salvation of conditioned souls. Conditioned souls floating around. I know it's repetitious of me to keep saying I want to surrender to Prabhupada, and perhaps I don't need to say it quite so much. But this life is so brief and I have recurring chances in this life to find my heart's surrender. Then this life will be over, and a more painful form of repetition will take place. I have been entering mothers' wombs, living through babyhood and childhood, facing humiliation and physical and psychic pain for many births. I've lived with the risk of *that* repetition, so why not with the risk of repeating that I want to surrender to Prabhupada? Will it bore the reader? I can't help that. I'm already living at the edge of the peninsula known as old age.

Srimad-Bhagavatam tells the history of God in His incarnations and relationships with great devotees, but my writing focuses on this one particular spider and its attempt to know where he is. It wants to love and serve the Supreme Lord. It's hardly full of the *Bhagavatam*, this *jiva* on a journey.

Radhanatha read in my book that nondevotee writers can't touch such-and-such, but "I am an authorized messenger." He thought it was proud of me to say that. But

I am authorized, and so is anyone else connected to this *parampara*. We're authorized in a way that even Shakespeare is not.

The tenth of ten subject matters in the *Bhagavatam* is the supreme shelter for all. "He is the supreme fountainhead, the Absolute Truth." That is Krishna, conclusively proved throughout.

The Supreme Lord reserves the right to not be seen by us. He places a curtain between Himself and us. "Because they have no eyes or transcendental vision, and because they cannot see the Personality of Godhead, they therefore deny the existence of the Lord and the transcendental form of the Lord." Instead, they accept the universal covering as the all-in-all. Beyond the material form is His impersonal form. But neither of these are "accepted by the pure devotees of the Lord, who know Him well." (*Bhag.* 2.10.35) The Lord's eternal forms are in His spiritual abodes, although sometimes they appear here. The worship of the pure devotees never stops.

I'm being honest in saying I'm concerned with my bodily pains, moods, and my failure to become a real devotee, but my shortcomings really keep me distant from constant meditation on Krishna, the activity of a pure devotee. Only in a certain distant sense am I constantly Krishna conscious. Some could say it is Krishna conscious to be awake to everything that is happening and to behold the wonder of it all, but that seems tinged with pantheism or impersonalism. At the least, it's a very minor form of God consciousness compared to thinking of Krishna the person. Still, I shouldn't deny the truth of it.

* * *

4:07 a.m.

Wounded head. It thinks "bad" thoughts, sometimes. Even wonders what would have happened if I had left ISKCON when I was younger. What would I be doing with my life? It doesn't matter now. I'm too deep in it now. I have too many obligations, not the least of which is that I owe my master. The *sisya* agrees to be governed by the guru for life.

Violin concerto "Baroque exultation. Will it uplift me more than thinking the blues? Or are the blues more truthful? Who can say? I can't change the world, or even transform myself.

Radha and Govinda in yellow with gold appearing gradually before me.

On the airplane, they piped in . . .

Stop these fragments and say something. Why don't I speak to Madhu on the phone? I have nothing to say except to ask how he's doing. I've heard he's okay. Something has come between us. But he has offered me so much service, and I care for him deeply. At least I could call him and ask how his gut is.

And I could open my own gut in this book, but I'm afraid,
afraid that when Krishna comes

He'll want to know why I stockpiled for the change of millennium.

He'll want to know what I've done with my life. Was I kind to people?

I tried to be "I wrote them books. There are so many ways to be kind.

I was also kind to myself, or tried to be "I tried to repair, heal wounds, and to turn to the next life with the realization that I don't belong in the material world. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is not an allegory but direct truth. I am grateful for it and hope that my expression of kindness includes sharing that gratitude.

* * *

It was 'round midnight that I woke and read *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*. It told of the science of God. He comes to this world and relates to His pure devotees.

Oh? I didn't see Him.

No? Where *were* you? Surrounded by a cloud of *maya*. That's why you only saw matter's glare. You were blinded by your own greed.

May Krishna protect us.

* * *

8:10 a.m.

All it takes is one disciple's letter to turn my morning walk into a problem-solving session. It means I miss the puddles. Can I put his problem aside for now? Let me bring my attention back to the wet leaves and the light sky.

* * *

8:45 a.m.

The Supreme Lord appears in the world in His transcendental forms. Don't think they are material. I often look askance at Vedic statements and wonder how come only the people in India know about Visnu and accept Them as the actual forms of God. Is it true they consider all other references to God consciousness deviant offshoots? BTG recently published a question like this. The editor replied that God is a person and has preferences, so one way He shows His preferences is to favor India. That's why all His *avatars* appeared there. He added that Vedic civilization ruled (5,000 years ago and earlier) all over the world. That's quite hard to prove archeologically. It's one of those things you either accept or you don't.

But it's embarrassing and shameful to consider sliding all the way back to the same doubt voiced by a newcomer to Krishna consciousness, especially when you're a veteran devotee and ISKCON guru.

Oh, but I don't *really* doubt. I'm just writing what the mind dictates so I can see it for what it is. The Bhaktivedanta purports are like a steamroller flattening the opposition. Still, the opposition wants to rise up and say, "Wait a minute! There's another side to this!" Nevertheless, I spend my time reading submissively, seeking nourishment, and writing my paraphrases.

The Supreme Lord is unaffected by any of His activities. One who accepts this "is also not bound by the reactions of activities." "The great transcendentalists thus describe the activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but the pure devotees deserve to see more glorious things in transcendence, beyond these features." (*Bhag.* 2.10.44) The Lord is more than a simple creator and destroyer. He has His *ananda* feature. Only the

pure devotees know this pleasure feature of God. They take direct part by exchanging loving service with Krishna. I should get past the mental wrangling of whether God exists or why only the Hindus have heard of Him, and become qualified by pure devotion to enter His kingdom. That would be a better use of my time.

Shaunaka Rsi wanted to know what Vidura and Maitreya had discussed. He also wanted to know some personal information about Vidura. Suta Gosvami said he would reply with what he had heard from Sukadeva Gosvami. Shrila Prabhupada: "Quoting the authority . . . satisfies the saner section. . . . This is called the *parampara* system and learned authorities follow it without manufacturing rubbish interpretations. *Ishvara parama Krishna . . . sarva karana karanam*. Let us all obey the Supreme Lord, whose hand is in everything without exception." (*Bhag* 2.10.51, purport)

* * *

11:55 a.m.

I wrote "Pole Penance" in Wicklow while looking out my window. I have to tell you that I don't always like to write, but I find if I go ahead, I discover valuable things.

This morning I was listening to Shrila Prabhupada lecture just after his *Nectar of Devotion* had come out. He told us to read it again and again. He seemed satisfied to have published it. "Take advantage of it," he said.

Maybe I should be as daring as other *sannyasis* who travel and take on burdens. I've told myself this before. I never follow up on it. I really can't. I'm someone else. I stay in one place and try to write as nakedly as possible. I'm always wondering whether there's some better writing in me.

Would I like to go more alone and *further* into writing? Can I push myself to write more? If I think of my writing as a perfunctory duty and settle for six or ten pages, I may never realize my potential.

That's one response "to write more. There are other responses too.

Heavy rain. If it's like this at shed time, I'll gear up to go out there.

* * *

2:23 p.m.

So I made a declaration that I want to go further, but it never stops raining. *Nothing* stops. I don't want to pour out banal stuff. Then? rhyming mania? Memories? Jazziness? Should a Krishna conscious person, especially a *sannyasi*, throw away all "outside" or "external" things and read only *Gita* and chant only on beads?

Whatever he does, he should act as if he has little time left. Would he run to Vrindavana? Start another journal?

* * *

2:25 p.m.

Got a full view of deer on my way to the shed. Two little ones about the size of wolves, dark brown, were the first I spotted on the path. They tensed, afraid, but waited for a signal from the adult deer grazing in the field. Then I saw the adults glance up.

Some had antlers. There were about five adults all together. I wasn't sure where they would run to "became afraid that they'd run toward me on the path to escape "so I stood and began to chant loudly. Finally, they bolted down a narrow path I hadn't see and were almost instantly out of sight. Later I saw them again by the shed. The whole time they were completely silent.

* * *

Took a nap after lunch and now I have pain. So what can I be thinking? Where will the energy come from to write more? Of course, all energy comes from Krishna, but my "instrument" may not be fit enough to receive much. I have such limited strength, it seems. Would it be wise to write wilder and with more abandon? What other choices do I have? Wait for wisdom to descend in my mature years?

But I had a faint intuition earlier this morning, when I was reading the book written by "A Monk of the Eastern Church," that maybe I'm supposed to do something *other* than write. That was only a faint intuition, and the writing drive was certainly stronger, but what am I actually capable of doing?

This. I do have this. I can tell you about the deer, the rain, the literary persona, and the letter waiting for me, unopened, on the trunk outside my door. I have the Third Canto ready to read, the *Chaitanya-caritamrta* to look at.

After Bhurijana Prabhu's lecture, someone asked what makes a sage an impersonalist and not a devotee. He replied, simply, "Association." He said it with such feeling. We need the association of a pure Vaishnava. We can find it in his *vani* if the *vapuh* is no longer available.

* * *

That letter on my trunk was from two disciples asking if they should get married. They said they really want *me* to decide. Of course, that means they can blame me later if it doesn't work out. I've been through that a few too many times. I'll remain neutral.

It's very dark now because the sky is overcast. If this were summer, even under the cloud cover it would be much lighter. Almost not enough light right now to read by.

Let me not spoil my vision this morning of the deer or the feeling of Irish mud underfoot. I realize the talk I have been planning on whether we need to live in Vrindavana (or even visit it) would have come off defensive. I sometimes *feel* defensive about it. Let me take the edge off. Temple managers often encourage devotees to stay in their *prabhu-datta-desa*. Devotees living in India often quote Shрила Prabhupada's statement that service rendered in India is a hundred times more potent than service rendered in the West. I tend to want to justify my own position. Don't. Just speak about the sublime *lilas* of Lord Chaitanya in Vrindavana.

* * *

4:25 p.m.

This lonely man waits for a winter night to fall in wet Ireland. This is a melancholy land, but I don't let that get me down. Think of the deer! I stepped in their hoof prints after they ran away from me.

* * *

4:45 p.m.

What do you mean by wild, private, naked, alone? Confession? Yes, partly. Simple, quiet confession, such as that I like my new slippers and that I'd like to slip into eternity.

A devotee told me she was shocked at the garbage, poverty, and cheating she met in India. Instead of going out, she spent her time reading for hours in her room. Later, in America, she wondered why she had to travel ten thousand miles to read Prabhupada's books. My point exactly.

But there's a truth to be found in Vrindavana under all that garbage. We only wonder whether if we don't understand it or have faith in what we don't understand "will it still work?"

Reality: whenever I'm in Vrindavana, there will always be someone who wants to see me (talk with me) and I am never able to refuse. Ireland is remote. I'll be kicked out of here soon enough, but let me make this my Vrindavana for now. I want to seek the simple truth of that other Vrindavana and come to understand it here. Therefore, the question is not whether or not it is better to reside in Vrindavana. We all know what the scripture says. The real question is whether or not we can practice Vrindavana *bhajana* in the West. Or should we not even bother with that but only preach and depend on Prabhupada to bring us to Goloka Vrindavana in the end?

* * *

6:05 p.m., Night Notes

Shrila Prabhupada singing and accompanying himself with his one-headed drum. 1966. Boys singing with him in responsive *kirtana*. My outer door is locked. I'll rest soon. I hope to sleep most of the night. I don't need vivid dreams. I just discount them anyway.

Thinking of my planned phone call with M. tomorrow. Is he lonely? I'm bearing up here without him.

Got my *trifalla* tablets and filtered drinking water. Examined my teeth under a harsh light and they seemed okay for now. Shrila Prabhupada singing. I can get through this night.

Why did Vidura leave the palace? O Krishna, why did You leave the earth bereft? Uddhava came upon You as You sat self-satisfied under a small *pippal* tree. Later, Maitreya happened along. What does all this mean to me? How can I take it in? I have no regrets about the path I have chosen in this life. Now let me bless all those I've met and who look to me for shelter.

Hare Krishna.

Hare Krishna singing until the end of another *kirtana* in that neighborhood. Swamiji was brave to be there, and we became brave in his association "his little congregation. We risked ridicule as we chanted and learned to practice celibacy, almost without

realizing it. We gave up LSD. How did we survive? Krishna sent money. Morning porridge and off to work for some of us. Krishna, Krishna, in the hip Puerto Rican neighborhood, the people so poor, we sankirtanas.

December 12, 12:00 a.m.

The Lord's house is the same as the Lord. Thus His land, Vrndavana, and also the Pandavas' house are nondifferent from Krishna. I also think of Bhaktivinoda Thakura's line in "*Suddha-bhakata*": "One day while worshiping the Deity, I saw my home become transformed into Goloka Vrndavana." remember that while chanting *japa*: Krishna, Krishna, Krishna.

Maharaja Parikshit wants to know what Maitreya and Vidura discussed. He also wants to know why Vidura left the Pandavas' house, which led to his meeting with Maitreya while on pilgrimage. (Sometimes an apparently inauspicious thing has a good result in one's destiny.)

Vidura had advised Dhrtarastra not to oppose the Pandavas, whom Krishna had befriended. He also told him that he was maintaining "offense personified" in the form of Duryodhana. Duryodhana was envious of Krishna. Duryodhana then insulted Vidura and demanded that he be thrown out of the palace. "Thus pierced by arrows through his ears and afflicted to the core of his heart, Vidura placed his bow on the door and quit his brother's palace. He was not sorry, for he considered the acts of the external energy to be supreme." (*Bhag.* 3.1.16)

Another day to try and control the "acts of the external energy." Can I for once see their inner purpose instead? I'm looking for that ability in my writing. I try to capture the waves and vagaries as they appear. Sometimes I have to ride larger waves, if providence sends them, but I always want to perceive and respond and find Krishna there.

The purport to this verse has always been important, and I recall it when preaching to others. I also try to recall it in my own life. It's not as famous as the *tat te 'nukampam* verse, but it has a similar meaning. The special twist here is that a devotee can see the internal energy acting through the movements of the external energy. Therefore, when something awkward or apparently negative happens, he's not perturbed.

The conditioned *jivas* are in Mahamaya's grip, and she is under the Supreme Lord's control. In illusion we think we are the controllers. In Vidura's case, he saw that through Duryodhana's rage he was being released from palace intrigue and left free to renounce Kuru politics at a time when they were so obviously bent on self-destruction. Now Vidura could devote himself to offering the Lord transcendental loving service.

Another twist here is that Krishna regularly visited the Pandavas' palace, but still Vidura left it. Before leaving, Vidura "thanked [Duryodhana] from within because it gave him a chance to live alone in a holy place and fully engage in the devotional service of the Lord. . . . *Maya*, the supreme energy of the Lord, acted here both internally and externally."

* * *

4:03 a.m.

This morning I'll call Madhu. Have my agenda lined up. Then I'll take a nap. Just a happy Krishna conscious monk.

"Goofy" music Kerouac said of Dizzy. Dizzy said he didn't care whether Kerouac liked his music or not. We devotees only care whether Krishna is pleased. I'm not sure Dizzy or Kerouac thought of that. Radha-Govinda in gold and purple. Used a pin to hold up Krishna's *cadar*. Listened to the delightful ending of *Vidagdha-madhava*. May we get the benediction offered at the end. But we'll have to want it. May we remain under Prabhupada's wing.

Hare Krishna. I saw him worship Lord Hari. He bowed down alone and pleased Krishna.

I believe Krishna. The sacred arena. I wanted to stay alive and true and be smitten by service to the Lord and Radha.

Mister, don't split a gut or even the smallest nerve in your head. I know you as a delicate fellow flower. Yes, but I think this much for a little while longer can be endured. We are watching the parade of vets in honor of Krishna. The parade of all whoever served Shrila Prabhupada. Get your own once true and present sincerity. Get it on the line. 'Fore your death. That's all, man. Don't worry so much about the others; you can forgive them. You must be a devotee first and foremost.

* * *

5:25 a.m.

Thanks for the dream about being Shrila Prabhupada's servant, although it was my childhood friend who ended up with the nectar. But I got to watch, and Shrila Prabhupada spoke to me too. He joked that whatever Phil brought was too small (as happened when Satyavrata Muni tried to worship Lord Matsya).

Hare Krishna people, get your mantras straight. Chant with devotion. I'm warning you "you don't know when you'll suddenly be called. Stay awake. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare

Anyway, I know we all chant the best we can, trusting God's kindness. Actually, we know almost nothing about Krishna, but we trust guru.

Drew pictures to draw the devotees' eyes and please them. Note: everyone is wearing *tilaka* and would become devotees if it were easier.

* * *

7:45 a.m.

I turn the light out when I go out for a morning walk, but I leave the curtains open, and there's usually enough light coming in, so I think Radha-Govinda and Srila Prabhupada can see what it's like out. This morning, however, was so dark that I could see the numbers of my red digital clock from outside. rain sprinkling on my face. I can barely see the difference between puddles and dry land.

* * *

8:28 a.m.

Vidura traveled to many *tirthas* where the Lord's *murtis* were located. The Supreme Lord was present on earth at the time, but Vidura considered himself unfit to associate with Him immediately because he had been mingling with the diplomatic Dhrtarastra and son. "No one, therefore, should foolishly think the *arca* in the temple to be an idol." (*Bhag.* 3.1.17) The Deity is where Vidura saw Krishna.

I just jumped to the Seventh Canto to read Narada's statement that an auspicious place in which to perform spiritual acts is wherever a Vaishnava resides and a Deity of the Supreme Lord has been established. That means that places like Naimisharanya, Kuruksetra, Dvaraka, Mathura, and all the ISKCON centers outside India are holy.

What am I trying to prove?

That I don't have to go to India every year, but that I ought to go sometimes. I want to encourage others to turn their homes into temples by conducting Deity worship there.

Trying to think of ways to write more and better. Shouldn't I instead think of how to become a better devotee? Or are they are one and the same? Fr. Lev, the "Monk of the Eastern Church," says that chanting the Jesus prayer cannot be isolated from leading a devotional Christian life. Similarly, writing cannot be separated from my Krishna conscious *sadhana*. I feel that writing is necessary to my life. It would be artificial for me to drop it. Most devotees already understand the necessity of *japa* and reading, because they are listed among the five most important items of *bhakti*. Writing, however, is not mentioned. But for me, writing is a way in which I can perform those five acts. In it I can chant the holy name, associate with great devotees, read and contemplate the *Bhagavatam*, bring my mind to a holy place, and offer worship to my Radha-Govinda.

Therefore, I want to improve it. I thought about inviting devotees to write in a group, but immediately dismissed that idea. Then I thought of the *bhajana-kutir* they have built for me in the yard in Wicklow. At least this year, let me use it. I think Krishna will allow me to stay there for at least a year. I thought I could chant extra rounds there, then write from that consciousness. I would force myself to enter the name and to admit my spiritual poverty.

* * *

11:58 a.m.

The Krishna conscious man is looking for a hook into his unconscious, but Shrila Prabhupada encouraged me to depend only on Krishna. Only Krishna can protect me. If destiny wants to kill me, the best doctor won't be able to save me. *Saranagati* means to depend only on Krishna as our protector. Shrila Prabhupada exemplified that.

Taking shelter of Krishna begins with the tongue. I mean, we have to serve Krishna by chanting His name and honoring His *prasadam*. From there, the simple, sometimes narrow devotional interests can be broadened to include more of ourselves and our environment. Eventually, we can claim everything we are and have for Krishna.

With that in mind, this Krishna conscious man climbs into the mineshaft. He looks around allegorically, smiles, and draws a pic. He let whatever wanted to come out emerge. He wasn't afraid of the dazzling eyes of serpents glowing in the dark around him. He knew he would find the hidden treasure for Krishna.

Heard Shrila Prabhupada speak about Dhruva's austerities and how they increased each month. At first he was doing simple things; by the end, he was "eating" only air and standing on one leg with his mind concentrated in trance. The result: he saw Visnu "eye to eye."

We don't perform such austerities. Shrila Prabhupada called them impossible. Better we do the possible: chant Hare Krishna. The Krishna conscious boys and girls at least theoretically know that they're not their bodies, that there's a next life, and that there really is a God who is a person. This God has many names, and each name serves to call Him. His best name is Krishna, the all-attractive one.

Tomorrow I have to give the *Chaitanya-caritamrta* lecture and receive my mail from Dublin. I should be able to make it through if I have an Esgic in my pocket.

* * *

12:13 p.m

I saw two guys in dark brown coats and black caps in a motorboat. Dogs onboard with them. This is Saturday "cruise hour." Probably hunters trying to kill ducks. Foul play.

I'm wrestling with my opposition again, but feeling better that I *will* overcome. I will find mercy and love and attraction. From me to Him. Assume it's already coming from guru and Krishna, but it has somehow been stopped up on my side. When it doesn't come, I'll try to grin and bear it.

Dark night. Grit it out. The front lines dull today, but we're keeping dry with our *japa*.

* * *

2:28 p.m

I asked for an accordion file, but I can get by without one. Demanding old man. A few extra preps at lunch today. Weather mild. Heater in shed slow to start. read a little before it gets too cold or dark or something happens to my head.

"He began to travel alone, thinking only of Krishna . . . He traveled where the air, hills, orchards, rivers and lakes are all pure and sinless and where the forms of the Unlimited decorate the temples. Thus he performed the pilgrims progress." (*Bhag.* 3.1.18) Shrila Prabhupada's translations are full of poetry. I used to like the flavor of his expressions so much when I was his editor that I didn't want to edit any of it out. I told the devotees that Joyce and Faulkner invented prose forms in defiance of the norms and set their own standards. Why couldn't our Swami do that? I was naive, they said.

"*Ananya*" he translates as "alone, or seeing Krishna alone." The *arca-vigraha* has all the potency of the Lord's spiritual form. Vidura traveled like a mendicant. None of his relatives knew his whereabouts. He sanctified himself regularly by bathing in holy places. He used no bed. "His occupation was pure and independent." This is how to go on pilgrimage to holy places: concerned only with pleasing Krishna and thinking of Him, not in how one looks to society.

Temple worship in Bharata-varsa is very old. After traveling through many provinces, "at last he reached the bank of the Yamuna, where he happened to meet Uddhava, the great devotee of Lord Krishna." (*Bhag.* 3.1.24) regarding the Mathura area Shrila Prabhupada writes, "There are still many devotees of the Lord lingering there in ecstasy

in search of Krishna and His childhood associates, the *gopis*." (*Bhag.* 3.1.24, purport) These devotees experience separation from Krishna. Yes, even today.

I'm so ignorant of this unfathomable culture. I speak of ISKCON's controversies and my headaches and excuse myself from residing or even visiting Vrindavana. ". . . the very idea of searching for Him in Vrindavana in pure God consciousness gives more pleasure to the devotee than seeing Him face to face." *Premanjana cchurita bhakti-vilocanena*. Maybe some day.

* * *

They moved the collie back to Geaglum, maybe to chase the deer here. Or the swans. I want to be a *bhakta*. Why not go on pilgrimage? Too hard. remember Krishna here. Think of Him in various ways. Hare Krishna.

* * *

3:05 p.m.

Either turn on the heat again or go back to the house. I count nine swans out there. A motorboat came puttering along the strait, but the swans ignored it. They know the scene and what happens on a Saturday afternoon in December. It's a mild enough day. Zip up anyway. Oh, we're all hoping Hitler will stay dead and that our karmic reactions won't come sooner than necessary. But there are plenty of warnings. Do you think it's wrong to stock food, candles, and cash?

What use will my books be in difficult times? Surely the production will stop. Then my books will be just like anyone else's books. Whatever I have already published will have to suffice. *I have* written plenty. But what if the production stops just when I'm learning to become more cutting? O Krishna. I have nothing to prove. Anyway, I'm not *capable* of proving anything.

* * *

4:54 p.m.

Reading Donald Hall's memoir written in poem form. Writing my own *Given Time*, which is not autobiography but journal. Coloring with crayons (the extra-bright, Japanese oil-based ones), then doing watercolors of three men and a self-portrait. Two *sadhus* on *parikrama* in Vrindavana, one singing "Jaya Vrindavana!" The fatigue I have after all this feels good. No one to talk to as I wash my brushes and palate and come here to sit for thoughtless but awake *gayatri-mantras*.

Dark by five. Close the curtains. I've been counting and recounting each day how many days are left here, like a man eager to get going. He told me to load up the cartons and push them into the hall so we'll be ready to leave on Thursday. I still have time "four days here" for reading, writing, and intimations. Today felt more bubbling about how to write better, then thought of a system to keep papers on file. But I know that often, my ideas for multiseries projects comes down to facing my available energy and whatever I can write at odd times during the day as the sun moves across the sky.

* * *

6:02 p.m., Night Notes

Door locked. *Trifalla* tablets remind me of India and my *Siksa-guru* days. Earlier, I remembered my ISKCON wife and visiting her when she was an artist at the Brooklyn temple so many years ago. I was the temple president of a diminished Boston temple. She always seemed more intelligent than I was, but maybe she was just more assertive. I wanted to be big, like Bhavananda and others, who were doing something wonderful. When I saw her in Brooklyn, we went as husband and wife to talk in a park. She said something to encourage me "she preached to me. But I left her still wanting to be a big devotee. I've since learned that it's better to be small. I always competed behind the scenes. Now mostly alone in the ISKCON boat with a few friends to encourage me. Turned off and unavailable to all critics except my own.

December 13, 12 a.m.

The wind was howling all night. It may be difficult to cross the lake to give my lecture "or perhaps it will be calmer by then.

While on pilgrimage, Vidura realized how dependent we all are on Krishna. Unless we can appreciate this fact and give up our fear, we are not ready for the renounced order. In *Bhagavad-gita*(sixteenth chapter) the words *abhayam sattva-samsuddhi* are used. A renunciate is aware that the Lord is protecting him in all circumstances. "With this conviction, Vidura traveled alone and was not seen or recognized by any friend or foe. Thus he enjoyed freedom of life without obligation to the many duties of the world." (*Bhag.* 3.1.42)

In his purport to *Bhag.* 3.1.43, Srila Prabhupada asks why the Supreme Lord appears to tolerate the abuses of demons, especially kings. Prabhupada states that He didn't tolerate those abuses. rather, He gathered them all together on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra, "just to make a shortcut to His killing mission."

The Supreme Lord's acts are not under material nature, nor are they meant to improve His own situation "as if He were a conditioned soul. If we can understand the Lord's position, we can become free of our own karma.

The Lord acts in favor of His devotees. He does this partly to attract everyone to devotional service. Srila Prabhupada brought us a life of almost total God consciousness. At least that's what he's offering us. When devotees back away from that and leave his service, they usually become more worldly. But on behalf of the Vaishnava *parampara*, Srila Prabhupada taught that everything in the world is temporary and therefore illusory. We cannot find shelter there. rather, we should want to discover our original identity in eternal life. We should try to do this before we die.

It's hard to keep up the feeling of wonder and appreciation for these transcendental activities and teachings. Such conviction is important if we are to move into the stages of *nistha*, *ruci*, and *ashakti*. "O my friend, therefore, chant the glories of the Lord, who is meant to be glorified in the places of pilgrimage. He is unborn, and yet He appears by His causeless mercy unto the surrendered rulers of all parts of the universe. Only for

their interest did He appear in the family of His unalloyed devotees, the Yadus." (Bhag. 3.1.45)

If I'm able to lecture I'll say there is no controversy over whether it's best to live in the *dhama* or in the West. Living in the *dhama* is favorable for *bhakti*, but for various reasons, many of us cannot even visit. Perhaps we can't get visas or citizenship, perhaps we lack money, health, or even spiritual desire. Or, we may have a service that takes us away from the *dhama*. So while we live outside Vrindavana, we should live in a way that resembles *ideal* life in the *dhama*. That means that from early in morning until we go to sleep at night we should engage in activities that enable us to remember, glorify, and serve Krishna. And the nasty Western cities can be good places to tell others about Vrindavanacandra.

Again, I think of the gift of Krishna conscious conviction, faith, and taste which builds up to the point where we desire to tell others about the folly of material life and the perfect wisdom of Krishna consciousness. We have to seek out the gem of faith. Krishna alone or Krishna's pure devotees can award it.

* * *

4:08 a.m.

Dog barking in the cold air. Are the deer around? Radha-Govinda listened with me to our taped reading of *Navadvipa-bhava-taranga* and *ISodhyana*, the Lord's garden "a sacred place seen only by Bhaktivinoda Thakura (or one of his followers, whose eyes are also anointed with the salve of love). Most people go to Navadvipa and see only thorn bushes and the flooding river. When I go, I also see snakes, large institutions, and hear loud *bhajan*s that seem to compete with my blaring mind. Now Krishna has given *me* a garden in Wicklow. Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura excavated his father's visionary garden and built a Radha-kunda there bordered by flowers. I may do the same. Be happy in New-Holy *Dhama* and perform your *bhajana*.

* * *

Going from one thing to another in present time. Hare Krishna man. One could always be thinking of his Krishna wherever he went. One could love God and pray to know Him.

Oh boy, I knew him when. Now he walks on Vraja *parikrama* and focuses on every inch of it. But he used to be such a blues hound. He keeps talking now of Indian *tirthas*, but he used to live under a rock in Eire.

No, drop that.

Just be happy and bring us to the temple.

Hare Krishna.

Lord Chaitanya went among the rocks at Govardhana and embraced them. He is Krishna too, and feels a happiness I can never know. Krishna can only be seen by pure devotees. He's beyond the ordinary senses. So is the Hare Krishna mantra.

I kept chanting all right as usual, but crashed on round thirteen, like an exhausted long-distance runner.

We each have a chance to speak about something we love about Lord Krishna, so let me not waste mine talking about myself. But I know that if I really want to praise Him, I have to be free of duplicity. What do we do in the meantime? We should speak anyway "whatever we can "because that's what our master has asked us to do. I'll keep it brief. "I like *hari-nama* and feel satisfied when I chant."

Is that what he wanted us to say? I am a well-governed *Sishya*. But O Krishna, O Krishna,

my mind is full of peanuts and bad influences. I feel like I'm becoming less and less qualified in this life, and so I lament. Will the Lord's garden ever be revealed to *me*? My master says I will see it one day "automatically," and that I shouldn't chant or serve with the sensuous fervor, "I have to feel/ see something divine!" Just be what he called "chemically pure"; do something actually intended for Krishna's pleasure, out of my free will. May He be pleased as I work in the garden He gave me "pleased with each of us as we do the same. And may the world take to Krishna consciousness in a pure form.

* * *

5:25 a.m., Words on a Bristol Board Drawing

It's Sunday, so maybe Manu will be bringing in my breakfast. Some matchmaking going on out there. I'm staying out of it. I have no objection to the match, but certainly don't want to rubberstamp something I know nothing about. I only care that they follow Shрила Prabhupada's standard. Of course, this instructor doesn't always live up to his own preaching. That's called duplicity, isn't it? And admitting it is called confession.

Today I should get the summary of world news for November. Oh, wry and little turkey, I had to choose the word for you. Turds and turnkey weren't good enough. I must select. We live mostly for the next life and prepare for it. *They* would too, if they believed in it. Do I?

Believe or prepare?

Come on, I have my "I Love Vrindavana" book bag, don't I? And it's full of books "*Chaitanya-caritamrta*, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, some of my own poems that say I think of Krishna. I even have a tape recorder. I'm the image of the good soul, and now let me stop and offer breakfast to God.

* * *

11:53 a.m.

Hare Krishna. I gave a spirited lecture about going to the *tirthas*, reading from various places in Prabhupada's books. Was it okay? I got the devotees to contribute too. They like to go to Vrindavana because it develops their faith and juices them up, they said. They get under the material covering by knowing that Krishna put the covering there to keep out the insincere. Prabhupada guides them when they're in the *dhama* so they can discriminate the real from the false.

I mentioned that we can think of Vrindavana while away by . . . And I kept reading from different sources. When I played Shрила Prabhupada's tape saying we should hear from a learned person in Vrindavana, Tulasi-priya Prabhu added a word of caution that we should not go outside ISKCON to do that. What about not going to Vrindavana? I

admitted on the walk down to the quay that I am at a point in my life where I'm not inclined to go. I said I am different from them because I am well known in ISKCON and people will come after me to discuss controversies. ISKCON people flock to Vrindavana, and if I go there, I will meet them; if I stay in Ireland, I won't. Vrindavana is actually a sacred, solitary place, meant for *bhajana*, but I can't engage in that there. I do better by living in a room in Manu's house. *Bhajana* is the essence of Vrindavana, and I can find the essence more easily here. As Arjuna began to pull on the oars to take me away from the quay, I added, "I hope I didn't say anything offensive to Vrindavana that will *delay* my going there."

Four swans in view. *A certain something*, she said, that is present only in Vrindavana. Even the rickshaw *wallas* know it. Yes, yes, she's right. Even at its quietest I don't feel that same spirituality in Geaglum. There are also no *rasika sadhus* or happenings here, as there are in Vrindavana. But I'm keeping simple. I have my way here for now. And my pills. So I'll be heading down to Wicklow for that kind of "Vrindavana" life.

My point was to admit that living in Vrindavana is best and we have to accept second or tenth best, but how can we make it as good as possible?

* * *

No headache yet. Week's mail wasn't much. A gold-colored wristwatch from a person in jail. I can't wear "gold." A letter from a disciple telling me that allopathic criticism of homeopathy (which he wants me to follow) is "nonsense." A letter encouraging me to paint on canvas. And the month's news. The Democrats did well in the November elections. The republicans made much propaganda about Clinton's sex scandal, but it didn't turn the voters away from Democratic candidates. Congress is continuing, however, with its impeachment proceedings, although it seems the people aren't much into it. The U.S. almost bombed Iraq but stopped at the last moment when Saddam said he would allow the U.N. to inspect his country for arms. Then when they went to inspect, he blocked them and the U.S. got ready to bomb him again. Back and forth it goes. I've answered all the incoming mail. Hope to make it out to the shed on this dark day. I noticed today that I talk so much about things that don't really concern me, such as going to *tirthas* and the Clinton scandal. Find something deeper.

* * *

2:14 p.m.

Henry Grimes did not go to the shed today for three main reasons: (1) it was raining; (2) there were people about (he heard voices and it was time for the Sunday feast). These people would see him wearing rain pants, which would look strange on a *sannyasi*; and (3) he felt head pressure. Instead, Henry sat in his room and consoled himself that it was almost as good a view as from the shed. He also watched crows cruise and land, cruise and land. "They are graceful gliders," he thought. "One doesn't usually notice them." He thought of the book review he'd read of Carver's poems. It was less than glowing. The critic damned Carver by faint praise. Henry thought, "Yes, the bastards have a way of doing that. They would do it to me too, except they don't even notice me under this cult rock."

Crows and swans. He remembered his spiritual master's description of these two birds and suddenly thought of the matchmaking going on out there "the man and woman in the devotee community who want to marry and who are already "associating." He felt entangled as their advisor. "Will they follow the rule and not have illicit sex?" A *sannyasi* should not have to think about such things, even if the couple involved are his disciples.

* * *

4:45 p.m.

Spoke with Manu, who said that he and the temple president will handle the matchmaking and I don't have to worry about it. Case closed.

* * *

3:50 p.m.

Sitting here as the sky turns a darker and darker blue. Nothing to do. Someone asked me if I was becoming dependent on my medications "feverfew with caffeine was mentioned "a relatively harmless lift out of the pain that sucks the joy from my life. Who can tell me how to lead my life? Could you, sir, just open the *Bhagavatam* and read a verse in the Third Canto? The chapter, "remembrance of Krishna," is nectarean "like a mini-Tenth Canto.

When Vidura asked Uddhava "to speak on the messages of the dearest [Lord Krishna], Uddhava was unable to answer immediately due to excessive anxiety at the remembrance of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 3.2.1)

I had to stop and think about that, so looked out at the dark blue silver ribbon that is Lough Erne. I wish I could sit here and easily think of Krishna. I'm free from pain right now, but too tired to focus "and too empty. For one who is so self-centered, how can I expect to think of Krishna? I poured out my energy in the lecture and the mail. Later, I expended some more worrying about someone's broken heart and discussing it with Manu. Then even later I felt the beginning of a headache. Now I'm sitting in the darkening blue, worn out.

Manu says that on Thursday morning we'll have to leave by 6:45 a.m. at the latest or we'll get caught in the huge traffic jam going into Dublin.

* * *

4:24 p.m.

The rowboaters can see me clearly. Looked at a photo collection, *The Century*, with text to tell what happened. The reviewer said the book was all right, but it could have been a lot better if the century had been better. Did they mention the Hare Krishna movement? Probably not. What really happened was that people were born and reborn, living out their karma.

Too dark to see any more boats. Time to close the velvet curtain. Starting tomorrow I'll pack boxes and place them in the hall. Credit yourself with a good amount of work done in this place.

* * *

5:00 p.m., Words on a Bristol Board Drawing

Let's see you chant your *gayatri*s with attention. I know you start out pretty good, but then you go off the deep end. When I looked at that book on the century, I realized that it's not only my life that is little "the whole *century* is full of petty, repetitive events. That must be true of the whole universal creation. Material nature is a limited story. We have to go to Krishna is we want to hear something unlimited.

But it's interesting that Krishna appears to do the same activities every day in Vrndavana, but every day these activities feel ecstatic and new. It's as if the Vrajavasis are seeing Him and their lives for the first time.

Anyway, I won't be ashamed of my little life. I *do* see it as precious, every drop of it. It may bore others, but as *I* live it, I realize that I want to stay alive.

We Hare Krishnas are earnest souls. It's good we have sanctuary in the community of devotees.

December 14, 12:00 a.m.

Uddhava was absorbed in Lord Krishna even in childhood. But since that's not my case, I don't want to read that just now. I began at age twenty-six. The next verse states, ". . . and in his old age that attitude of service never slackened. As soon as he was asked about the message of the Lord, he at once remembered all about Him." (*Bhag.* 3.2.3) Nice. Wonderful. He was no bogus preacher or hit-'em-on-the-head evangelist. It was his *remembrance* of Lord Krishna that absorbed him.

Forgive me, Swamiji. You and your spiritual master did preach with the chopping technique, and that is (was) perfect and needed. You also taught us to remember Lord Krishna.

There is no retirement in devotional service. The devotional attitude simply increases as old age progresses. I complain about bodily pains and diminishing and the diminishment feels like a fact. I am afraid exertion will bring me pain. But I don't mean that my inner flame to serve Lord Krishna has totally dissipated. It can still be strong despite old age. I simply have to find ways to express it through my limited health. "Service on the bodily plane dwindles as the body grows older, but the spirit is never old, and therefore on the spiritual plane the service is never tiresome." (*Bhag.* 3.2.3, purport) This would include, as seen in Shrila Prabhupada's life, no withering of the preaching spirit. He was always eager to see the Krishna consciousness movement expand. He didn't lose his fighting spirit. Not a bit. rather, it seemed to increase.

Being asked to speak about Krishna, Uddhava entered deep ecstasy. "He appeared to regret that he had forgotten the lotus feet of the Lord." He plunged into remembrance. I don't have such ecstasy. It is beyond me. Don't judge others. Go ahead with what you know. Try to increase your devotional capital. I'm talking to you, brother. Giving good advice. One day you too may mature a little.

You've heard of "beginners mind" in Zen? Well, in *bhakti* it means you keep going back to *Shravanam kirtanam*. You humbly admit you don't know Krishna and need instruction. You benefit from contact with pure devotees, service, and *sastra*. On

whatever stage you find yourself, chanting and hearing is good for you and will awaken your Krishna consciousness further. Even Uddhava could "awaken" to Krishna consciousness. Then what to speak of you and me?

From *Shraddha* to *prema* "we've all talked about that, using Vishvanath Cakravarti Thakura's texts. Can we finally begin to act on what we've heard?"

Krishna, Krishna. Push on. A little heart. A little band of disciples walking through the wet woods, on a path, on a small island, accompanying their Western guru down to his rowboat. "Will you be here next Sunday?" No, I'm leaving Thursday. Anyway, I already told you all I knew and admitted I want to be alone in a Vrindavanalike life in Wicklow. These devotees will all go to Vrindavana one by one.

Ha! Krish! Nine methods of *bhakti*. Start from scratch every twenty-four hours. No rounds done, no *bhava*, no *sneha*, no this, no that, no wet eyes, no hairs standing on end. Conclusion: I must have a steel-framed heart. I'm physically old now, but I express my fighting spirit in my willingness to continue chanting *japa* despite everything. Chant and rant.

* * *

Dream: Two different children. One resembled Yudhisthira dasa at six. He was running and liked the wintry cold. The other was a newborn child, yet already intellectually developed. He radiated wisdom. I looked at the child "we all did "and wondered what we could learn. It was clear that the child was also learning from us. He was happy, almost expecting something wonderful to happen.

When I awoke, I searched my mind to see how I could learn from my dream to improve my Krishna conscious writing. I got the idea that maybe I can learn from children "children within me. I could become more childlike.

* * *

5:13 a.m.

Took a feverfew, then lay back for a delicious, relief-seeking rest from four until five. No r. without B.? Take your relief in Krishna and don't seek it for the body? What did you do with your human life? That will be assessed at the end.

"New" tape ministry. Shrila Prabhupada lecturing in 1969 in Boston to the boys and girls who were quick to laugh and be amazed when he imitated for a second the features or hands of Lord Nrsimhadeva. He said the atheist sees God only at death and *as* death. The devotee sees Krishna all the time, not only when he's in the temple. *Premanjana-cchurita*. Follow, but don't imitate Prahlada Maharaja.

How?

I'm not sure.

Do you even *want* to see Krishna all the time?

Yeah, that would be nice.

But you don't crave it. *How* would you like to see Krishna all the time?

In a reassuring way. Helping me through my last years and into the spiritual world. Helping me to face austerities, changes. Helping me to become a better devotee "to see

His love and appreciate the love and teachings of my spiritual master. To accept more what He wants me to do. Letting me play at my art, and inspiring me to do it well.

In that lecture Shrila Prabhupada said the duration of life (the most valuable thing we have) is taken from us bit by bit as soon as we are born. He said he was seventy-four years old, so seventy-four years of his total duration was gone. When the last bit is taken, he said, that's death. At that time everything we possess is withdrawn. His words rang true.

* * *

5:40 a.m., Word written on a Bristol board drawing of a man playing a stringed instrument

Push a little for the Krishna conscious cause. That's what life is for. "I am not meant for sleeping all day," said Swamiji when he arrived in Boston in May 1968. Ah, yes. What an example. Don't retire. Give yourself good advice. I used to be admired for performing incredible, widespread duties. Not anymore. Then I was criticized for those same duties and called presumptuous, a monopolizer. Now I am criticized for staying in one place. Anyway, I have my letter of explanation ready for the *Sannyasa* Ministry.

I conduct the fight within myself in a gentle way, even as Shrila Prabhupada and Lord Chaitanya keep warring with the Mayavadis. But do I have to keep hating Maharishi and his gray beard and many rich followers, most of whom teach Ayurveda? *They* are Mayavadis and profiteers. Ah, but I'm tired of speaking out in a way that's too thumping or strident for me. I say I conduct the struggle within myself only *against sloth and inactivity*.

* * *

7:50 a.m.

Darker on the walk, but not so cold out. rain sprinkling. The puddles growing bigger. If anyone saw me they'd wonder why I'm out in the dark. Struggling with petty body management, indigestion, between headaches, but planning a writing life until the end of this year and the beginning of the next. Hare Krishna mantras form the background rhythm section.

* * *

10:40 a.m.

Couldn't do anything (couldn't concentrate except on head pressure and indigestion), so I did some packing for our Thursday departure. Packing is always easy on the mind; it's busy work. It lets me forget everything for a while except wrapping markers in plastic bags, filling storage boxes, and all the little decisions about what should go where. I always assume whatever I have will have a future use. Now see if you can scrub the blue and red off your index finger so it will be clean when you massage Prabhupada.

* * *

11:45 a.m.

Rain coming down straight. You can't write, can you? I mean, you have to choose a subject. You can't get away with this. rain coming down straight; hair coming down straight. Monk's morning. Devotee alone. Wrote two letters. One man said he was trying to manage his time. At the end of his list "and he said it may take him a year to reach the end "he placed his urge to write plays and poems. I'm free to write them now, but today I have indigestion and head fog. Is that a poem? No, just a minor ailment.

I massaged Shрила Prabhupada and heard him telling them in the Hamburg storefront (1969) as the traffic built up outside that we have to suffer birth, death, disease, and old age. He hammered it home. He said when you're fifty, old age begins along with all the body's sufferings. Young people can't understand those sufferings. When you're seventy, then it's all misery. Somehow you may pull on, he said of himself, with massage and medicine, but you suffer.

I imagine that if I make it to seventy, I'll be full of complaints, meds, and med-inflicted pain. I probably still won't have learned how to accept pain as natural. Will I still be preaching? Hard to say.

A voice within says I could have gone my own way and not surrendered to the Swami, but it's too late for that consideration. Glower, look out, and don't tell anyone about your feelings. Play the *sadhu* role until the end.

Old man suffering. They'll be able to see it in what I write, if I become more dissatisfied and gradually confess more my not attaining the state of bliss and knowledge.

Or Krishna will give me nectar like Indra gave when he stuck his finger in that baby's mouth. Make me whole; let me survive. As if writing could do that whole thing, and this kind of writing . . .

Hare Krishna. Boot camp is over. retirement is on. I do what I want, but in old age my body isn't fit anymore. See? Learn how to die, knowing the soul and its Lord.

* * *

12:00 noon

I think I can't write, that I'm dead, but when I begin I come to life, so stay in process.

Oh boy, he has tattoos all over the back of his hand. Who will marry him? He's a sweet guy. Maybe he can find a girl who also has tattoos. I'd have to find a girl with false teeth.

I said jar. Got to be ready for the jolts if you tithe me. Listen, Charlie rouse squeaks. I don't know anything about music "it's all intuition anyway "but it's like that because they just move their hands without thinking.

"He's from Austria," but the Swami said Australia.

"I don't give a f___ that man went to the moon," Donald Hall wrote in 1969. His own life was going glug-glug like liquor pouring out of a bottle.

I'm staying clear and
persimmon. We have our literary mag
our hag and
hackles

and we can tell Krishna consciousness from a
bump on a log. We know
how to move from topic to topic
and have an accordion file ready for 1999
Ready
for the literary goods.

The next world, next life, evolutionary theory "all going through my gut. I'm paying for offenses, I know. I accept the whole dislikes. I'm admitting I don't like certain things in this movement, *yet* I'm staying true blue and that produces a secret ache. Not so secret, I guess, since I'm writing it here. I admit it and stick to my story. I know I have to pay out, and then I may get a break when that's over. I have to love my master for who he is. He has a right to be who he is. He has a right to form his mission the way he wants. I'm just a crazy man alone.

* * *

12:21 p.m.

Listening for Ishani to open the door and place the offering plates out there. Then I can start to salivate like a dog. I look at the preps and wonder if I'll like them. That's natural, right? I try to control it. Low level *bhakti*. Make my prayers before the Lord. Voices in me may shout, but I stick to the path by His grace. I announced that I would try to find the Vraja quality in my solitude in Ireland, so I should do it.

* * *

2:35 p.m.

Hurriedly woke Shrila Prabhupada, put on his *chadar*, and decided he didn't need a scarf or hat. Then I adjusted Govinda's turban, glanced quickly at radha and saw She was okay, deftly placed Lord Jagannatha on His altar, then suddenly remembered that Mother Teresa's replacement is named Nirmala and is doing well.

"The great devotee Uddhava soon came back from the abode of the Lord to the human plane, and wiping his eyes, he awakened his reminiscence of the past and spoke to Vidura in a pleasing mood." (*Bhag.* 3.2.6) The pure devotee may be in this world, but only to serve the Lord. Lord Chaitanya explained it to Rupa Gosvami like this: there is a creeper that grows from this world to the spiritual world. It's called the *bhakti-lata*, and by guru's grace it blossoms once touching the spiritual atmosphere. Where is my plant? Is it stunted due to offenses? Do I dare look at it and rectify myself according to my guru's orders? I give spiritual advice to others, assuming the position of spiritual master, but it could be that I'm less advanced than those I instruct. That's not so astonishing. The important thing is to help myself grow.

In Vrindavana there are "pure unconventional devotees of the Lord" who think of Krishna "only as their object of love." Window hazed by the heat of the gas burner. Let me turn it off.

Now my feet are cold.

I just wanted to spend a little time here, holding the *Bhagavatam* and some of its passages close to me for a while. Just imagine a devotee like Uddhava who is on the

human plane, yet simultaneously absorbed in Goloka as he meditates in ecstasy on Lord Krishna. Uddhava feels the sorrow of separation, because the Krishna sun has set. But through his intense feelings of separation, he was able to go to the spiritual world even while he remained in his body.

Sometimes devotees ask me if I feel the pain of Prabhupada's separation. They know I love him dearly and imagine that I miss his presence and direct guidance. But lately my pain has taken a different form. I perceive in myself my lack of love. He is my boss, mentor, spiritual guide, but I struggle sometimes to be attracted to him in the same way I was in the early years. I had such a spontaneous attraction then. Now I seem to surrender because I'm more intellectually convinced that he's the best and that I *must* remain at his lotus feet. To do otherwise would be suicide. I have always had a submissive, loving attitude toward him, but I feel the lack of depth in my love. It's painful to feel that. No one really understands what anyone else really feels in his or her heart, especially because most of us carry on with our duties and simply wait for mercy. Anyway, whatever I feel doesn't matter ultimately, because I'll always remain faithful even if mercy never arrives.

If someone other than me were to say what I just said, I would probably argue against his struggle. We do that for one another. We all know what to say. I wouldn't even consider it hypocritical to do so. I *know* why we should be faithful and grateful to him. This feeling I have is more on the emotional level, and I guess you can't really rationalize emotion. So I don't resent what I have to suffer right now, because I'm sure it will have a deepening effect on me when Krishna desires to let me penetrate it. I do love Shрила Prabhupada, but it has become harder to say it with the same fervor I had as a youth. I mean, I *can't say it cheaply anymore*. I must pay for the realization of Prabhupada's place in my life now "pay with real heart sentiment and not just passion.

The Yadus were unfortunate because they only knew Krishna as the Supersoul, not as the Supreme Person. Now a moment of sunlight hits the shed and the photo of radha-Damodara at Gita-nagari. Yadus, Uddhava, my confession about Shрила Prabhupada. It's December 14. I love you, Prabhupada, and always have. I served you, but resented the competition among brothers who always seemed to surround you. And like many of your other disciples, I don't understand ISKCON's history. I wonder how you could have let certain things happen. Why did you conduct the movement in the exact way that you did? I'm not challenging, just seeking understanding.

"Under no circumstances can the words of persons bewildered by the illusory energy of the Lord deviate the intelligence of those who are completely surrendered souls." (*Bhag.* 3.2.10) I don't want an easy or sentimental victory to my spiritual problems. I want to actually root out unloving weeds and sow loving plants. Loving plants are rooted in truth, not hype. They are nurtured on true affection. If I can't surrender fully right now, I should admit that and seek the understanding by which I can help myself to improve. If I can't love as I think I used to, I can admit that too. But a *Sishya* never disagrees with his guru. A disciple can be a different type of person than the guru yet still follow him. Coming to terms with that in an intensely personal way. The guru-disciple relationship is not meant to be tyranny. I don't want to be tyrannized by Prabhupada but to willingly submit to him, become inspired, and learn from him.

Do I think I'm not learning from Shrila Prabhupada? No, I don't think that. I have not yet mastered the ABCs of *Bhagavad-gita*, what to speak of understood the *Bhagavatam*. I have not yet attained real attraction to Lord Krishna, even though Shrila Prabhupada taught us that Krishna should become our life and soul. If I want to be Krishna conscious, Krishna has sent me a competent guide.

Then I have to ask myself whether I want to become Krishna conscious. If I do, then that will require overcoming the differences, the material, idiosyncratic differences between me and my guru and finding the basis of faith. We now live in a different ISKCON and I'm now thirty years older than I was when I met Prabhupada and served him in those early days. I need to find the *essence* of what he is teaching and move out of the 1970s when we were just starting a hopeful, save-the-world, mission.

In his purport, Srila Prabhupada says that when Krishna was present, although the *acaryas* accepted him as the supreme person, others accepted him according to their own estimation. The faithful could hardly tolerate Krishna's departure. The demons and other puffed-up speculators are atheists. I don't want to be one of them. I want to believe what Prabhupada says about Krishna, not that He's an ordinary man or a mythological person. "All these blasphemies do not touch the heart of the devotees of the Lord because they know perfectly well what is what. Their intelligence regarding the Lord is never disturbed. But those who are disturbed by the statements of *asuras* are also condemned. That is what Uddhava meant in this verse." (*Bhag.* 3.2.10, purport)

* * *

5:56 p.m., Night Notes

Someone left a note inside my door from a devotee I thought was in India saying that the throne for Radha-Govinda is being carved. But I don't want it to be costly or too ornate. I don't want to be tied down to one place, either "that house in Wicklow, even "because of the Deity worship. Just leave me alone. Don't leave notes about sculptors and designs and go-between people I've never heard of, and promises of more communication.

But then, it might be nice . . . I've been thinking about how to "be" in Vrindavana since I can't go there physically. Thrones made in India for Shrila Prabhupada and Radha-Govinda are not *abad* thing. It's just a little strange how the note suddenly appeared, and I don't know who put it there.

Two more days at Geaglum. Boxes filling the hall. I didn't feel like coloring with crayons or watercolors, but I did anyway. Did one with a serpent tongue labeled "Confession," and put a few phrases from the *bhajana* Prabhupada was singing while I worked. Not much came, but it's my practice to keep the hand moving.

Sitting back and looking at my faded red beads. I don't *have* to chant on them right now, because I already chanted my sixteen rounds. But just looking at them makes me start chanting in my mind, then whispering a few Hare Krishna mantras. We pick up our beads and the connection is made. Amazing how that works.

December 15, 12:56 a.m.

Woke at 8 p.m. with pain in my esophagus and chest. Was it the three *trifalla* pills I took? Maybe they didn't dissolve. The pain kept me awake most of the night. Now I'm finally coming to *japa*, groggy and with pressure on top of my head.

* * *

4:05 a.m.

I'm not going to give up, although I've thought of it. Thinking of going back to PMrB, but I know that the long preaching section is just too long. Bird songs. We are all alive for a while. I seek more art. This tired *pujari* trying to add to the perfection of Radha-Govinda, even though They increase the beauty of Their own ornaments rather than the other way around. Behind on writing. Same old struggle before the sun even rises.

Someone banging on the outside door. Persistent. Cars during the night. I want to be alone, but that won't bring me closer to Krishna. Chanting will. Heard Srila Prabhupada say in a Hamburg lecture that fifty years of chanting would be sufficient to bring one perfection. I heard that Bhisma chanted nonstop on his beads on a holy hill in Navadvipa. Bhaktivinoda Thakura saw him in a vision. That made me think I should chant more, even if it means less writing.

The devotees in Wicklow are expecting me to live there. I'm obliged to them. I like the idea of chanting there, but I have so little stamina or taste. Other people are expecting me to spend time painting canvases. I'm falling into traps of obligation. I am not doing the concentrated activity most beneficial for my spiritual advancement. Should I simplify? Only chant?

And preach, he said.

Yes, so writing.

It's ten days before Christmas. Can I drop the self-criticism for a while?

Mortality, dislike,
the institution itself a trap
of "Do this" and "Do that."

Something sweet and tender "he needed to know that he could love and that someone could love him.

* * *

5:50 a.m.

"All glories to Shrila Prabhupada," we say on the phone and at other times, we followers. He is our authority when we want to give evidence in an argument: "Prabhupada said." Once we step out of the ring of his followers, everything changes. I heard someone in that condition recently. But I won't find fault with him. He's still a Vaishnava, and to offend a Vaishnava is the mad elephant offense.

A person should not run here and there trying to improve his lot. Better he calmly ask himself, "Why am I suffering? Is there a way to get knowledge to free myself from suffering?" Come to the Krishna consciousness movement. Join us. ISKCON is something you join, you live in, serve in.

Like Mother Russia?

Like the U.S. Navy?

No, more transcendental than that. Like Vaikuntha.

This is a sensitive topic, and requires that we use discretion in thought and word when we discuss it. No letting go of words and a-slippin' and a-slidin' just to relieve yourself of fear or false gravity or a too-stiff approach. I know being a member of ISKCON requires sincerity, and I want that sincerity, but that takes more than just signing an oath of allegiance. It also takes more than breaking away from ISKCON or being too quick to defend or bash it.

* * *

7:50 a.m.

Questions so heavy and so to the heart of my life, yet I think I shouldn't write them into EJW. Why? Questions so pertinent that they make me stop midstep and midmantra just to consider them. One is whether I actually want Srila Prabhupada to be my spiritual master. Do I believe in him? The other is whether Krishna is my worshipable Deity. Yet another is related to my work. Am I satisfied that *Every Day, Just Write* should be my vocation?

It seems like I'm quicker to answer in the affirmative the first two doubts, the ones about Prabhupada and Krishna. But there are various combinations of affirmatives and negatives. I could say yes, despite doubts, I have to accept Srila Prabhupada and Krishna and wish to walk the path to reach them. Yesterday, I read a statement of St. Therese of Lisieux's in which she said that she's just a tiny bird who cannot possibly fly toward God, because He is like the sun. Maybe great eagle-saints can reach Him, but all she can do is gaze upon Him from the ground. Even that she sometimes can't do, because a cloud of doubt covers her vision. But even when she cannot see Him, she feels joy, because her confidence increases that He is certainly there above the clouds. I like that kind of "confidence in darkness." It attracts me.

But do I have the same confidence in my work? Yes, writing is a good service, and I have confidence in writing itself. But not necessarily in *my* writing "this writing about myself. Why can't I write in some other way?"

And so goes the debate, sometimes becoming maddening. That's probably why I didn't want to write it here "I didn't want to increase it, knowing how maddening this probably is for my readers to hear. Still, what's important should be written.

These thoughts, while far above "not just physically but *seeming* far away "is the pale sliver of a moon in the light blue sky. Going onto the woods path, the trees form dark thickets. Nature seems to reflect my mood.

* * *

8:28 a.m.

People can't be satisfied outside the Lord's association, but they keep trying, like fish trying to be satisfied on land. The Supreme Lord comes to attract us, but due to "insufficient piety" we *jivas* fail to become attracted to His service. Alas, if we are stuck in the material world and have to suffer the same stuff over and over! We should be intelligent enough to go back to Godhead as soon as possible "in one lifetime if possible.

Lord Krishna appears in this world in a humanlike form (*nara-lila*), but He excels all humans with His six opulences as Bhagavan. He is more merciful when He comes here, because in Vaikuntha, only the *nitya-mukta* souls can see Him, and here, He shows mercy to the fallen souls (*nitya-baddha*).

Uddhava engages in *lila-smaranam*, remembering his pastimes with the Lord. In one verse he tells how the *gopis* loved Krishna and how Krishna admitted that He could never repay their excellent love. Krishna never leaves Vrindavana.

Uddhava remembers some of Krishna's actions that appeared contradictory: that He was born, although unborn; that He went to live in Vraja incognito out of fear of His enemy, although He was unlimitedly powerful. Uddhava states, "All these bewildering incidents give me distress." (*Bhag.* 3.2.16) Uddhava was lamenting his own separation from Krishna, who played in such *lilas* for the sake of everyone. Uddhava also lamented Krishna's separation on behalf of the nondevotees, who don't know the Lord's glories and who stumble on the so-called contradictions and conclude that Krishna is imaginary.

* * *

10:10 a.m.

Don't have to hunt for something new "a new person other than myself, a different lifestyle, a fictive or expository style that would seem more effective preaching, or just any old change. rather, I'll accept what I have and open myself to the desert, the wound, the doubt as each occurs.

This may be a journal, but some days I may go beyond that. readers' interest may lag, but even Homer nods. I may write about writing "too much." The blue sky is streaked with white. Look well, because you are leaving it soon.

* * *

10:23 a.m.

Did a last Bristol board drawing here. I hope to do more when I get back to Wicklow. Funny faces, graffiti. "You say I am a devotee. Then chant Hare Krishna."

Am I writing so I can be discovered in a tomb two thousand years old? Intricate thoughts, but too much work to trace them backwards or forwards.

Shrila Prabhupada says that Vrajavasis don't much care whether or not Krishna is God or human; they love Him and know only Him. That's all.

He's bowing to Lord Hari, looking over his shoulder to guru and brothers to ask, "Am I doing this right?"

* * *

2:23 p.m.

Fresh deer prints in the mud as I walk to the shed, Tilaka at my heels. This may be the last time I visit this shed. Just as I reach the door, it begins to rain.

Dark in here "such a small cubical. If I turn on the gas heater, it will get even darker, because it will fog up the window. I pray it doesn't fog up my head.

Listen to that rain and enjoy.

We are not to "enjoy," but to please Krishna.

But this morning I looked out from my desk at Manu's house and drank in the vista of lake and island. It was a quiet pleasure, not harming anyone. I'm aware such moments of peace are rare. I tend to think the peace I feel is connected to Krishna. Surely Krishna consciousness is a deep and thorough thing, available even to would-be devotees whose *bhajana* is not explicit.

Uddhava says that his most beautiful and powerful friend, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, has now disappeared from the earth. Krishna and Balarama begged Their parents (Vasudeva and Devaki) for forgiveness. "All this behavior of the Lord gives me pain in heart." (*Bhag.* 3.2.17)

The purport explains that Krishna allowed Vasudeva to express his mood of fatherly protection in bringing Krishna to Gokula (dropping Him in the Yamuna and rescuing Him on the way). It's not that Krishna was ever afraid of Kamsa.

Uddhava was sorry that he was not able to go with Krishna. Uddhava tells how Krishna killed Sisupala and granted him liberation (the same achieved by yoga practice) just because Sisupala was absorbed in thoughts of Krishna.

I wish I had more *acyuta-bhava*. When I move to Wicklow I should keep that in mind. Don't move mindlessly. Try to find Krishna in the place where you live. Make it an occasion to increase your absorption in remembering Krishna and serving His mission.

I'm repeatedly wiping the window as if it's a fiercely perspiring face.

* * *

2:49 p.m.

Rain stopped and a bit of sunlight has appeared. The grass sparkles. Might give rise to a rainbow, which sometimes arcs over Govinda-dvipa. Celebrate life, living. The infusion of topics about the Personality of Godhead. The hope that we can increase our hearing. Each day's beauty and struggle. I'll go inside now and pack some more boxes. I have a full day here tomorrow, but I like to be as carefully packed as possible so that I don't leave things till the last moment.

Someone asked me in a letter how long I've had my Prabhupada *murti* and how long I've had Radha-Govinda. Since 1978 for Shрила Prabhupada. I wanted the *murti* as soon as possible after his disappearance to ease the pain of separation. An ideal kind of reply to a disciple, but it's also true. Radha-Govinda I've had only a little more than a year. I don't deserve such mercy (another cliché), and neither do I realize the auspicious potential of living to serve the *arca-murtis* in my own room. I eat in front of Them, we chant together. O Hare Krishna.

* * *

5:50 p.m.

Boxes, boxes "and inside each are smaller boxes, pouches, Ziplock bags. It's easy to get lost in organizing things. I like to get the packing done in advance so that on the day of travel, I can chant *japa* as usual and not be in such a hurry. All the boxes will be in the

hall waiting for M. to arrive and the devotees to load up. I'd like to spend a few moments with Manu and Isani to thank them.

Do you remember the feast we had here? Yes, it was on Mokshada-Ekadasi. But they baked a delicious cake and I ate a substantial piece.

Donald Hall's poems contain lots about eating. Until death. Then what happens? In every species of life we are given the chance to eat. If we chose to eat animals, they'll get their chance to retaliate. We humans are so ignorant of nature's laws.

December 16, 12:15 a.m.

On the battlefield of Kurukshetra (never mind my dreams or doubts for now) the warriors on both sides who saw Lord Krishna, "so pleasing to the eyes," achieved the eternal abode of the Lord. (*Bhag.* 3.2.20) Love of Godhead is dormant in every living entity. When we first heard Shrila Prabhupada say such things, we believed him. We came to believe in Krishna. We would never have read such things without his guidance. Or if we had, we wouldn't have understood them as absolute truth. Prabhupada was and is our bridge to the spiritual world. Also, it was he who gave us the holy name.

Devotional service means awakening dormant love of God. If we can awaken it to its fullest extent, we can go back to Goloka Vrndavana. The warriors were sent back to Godhead not only by appreciating Krishna as they died but by being killed by Arjuna's arrows. These are the wonderful transcendental facts given in the purport. It makes me wonder how I'll get the view of that pleasing face *and* appreciate it (unlike Sisupala, who saw Krishna but thought Him an enemy). Will I be shot by a pure devotee's arrows?

Again Srila Prabhupada mentions how Krishna's *nara-lila* bewilders agnostics and atheists. As stated in Bg. 9.11, *avajananti mam mudha*. "Pure devotees like Uddhava, however, are never misled by such atheistic opportunists." (*Bhag.* 3.2.22, purport) The atheists sometimes interpret *Bhagavad-gita* or use it for their own purposes.

"Alas, how shall I take shelter of one more merciful than He who granted the position of mother to a she-demon (Putana), although she was unfaithful and she prepared deadly poison to be sucked from her breast?" (*Bhag.* 3.2.23)

Keep weeding, so you don't get overrun by *anarthas*. I have a feeling I'll be weeding out *anarthas* until the end. Could be worse.

But could I develop Therese's mentality of extreme confidence in Krishna's love, knowing that He loves to stoop down to me in my smallness? Perhaps not exactly as she says it. I seem to know only what Shrila Prabhupada tells me. I slowly assimilate that. (It just occurred to me as a metaphor that I am more troubled by indigestion as I grow older and can't expect it to improve. Perhaps I have spiritual indigestion too "it's more difficult for me to assimilate the same spiritual truths of which I ate so heartily at twenty-six. But still, I have to eat.)

Go on doing a *bhakta's* work. Don't lose identity. regarding the Theresian concept of God's love, we have it fully in this description of Krishna's mercy toward Putana. "Lord Krishna accepted the motherhood of Putana because she pretended to be an affectionate mother, allowing Krishna to suck her breast. The Lord accepts the least qualification of a living entity and awards him the highest reward. That is the standard of His character. Therefore, who but the Lord can be the ultimate shelter?" (*Bhag.* 3.2.23, purport)

Will He see some good in my chanting? Although I may fail to control my mind and do not feel His presence when I chant, He will see (*bhava-grahi-janardana*) the good: that I am still trying faithfully after all these years. May He grant me more faith in His boundless love and enable me to please Him by more active reciprocation. Because it's also true, as he states in *Bhagavad-gita*, "As one approaches Me, I reciprocate." And, "I am impartial, but to those who approach me in friendship, they become my special friends."

* * *

4:13 a.m.

I have worshiped Radha and Govinda as best I could. Day before departure.

We wanted first-class devotion. It's sad (or just reflective) to think over what we each wanted to be but failed to achieve, I guess. But there are signs that Krishna consciousness is going on and people are dedicated to it. Don't get left out of the forward thrust, thinking that the preaching is over. Some devotees are getting in on the mercy, and I should too.

Yes, I'll fight *maya* in my own home. Then I'll be able to pray and tell others how to fight their own *maya*. I can't be on the front lines, but I do want to offer encouragement to the troops.

Merciful answers to prayers.

Now "lost" to outside distractions because I'm applying myself to the service at hand: placing Krishna's turbans inside their boxes. Prepare for Hare Krishna. I hope Madhu lands all right, runs around enough, then comes up ready to go.

* * *

7:45 a.m.

My last morning walk here. I'm aware my life could change. It's arbitrary to think in terms of the end of the year or the new year "or the new millennium "because life could change in a moment. I have no idea what could take place. I could stop writing. I could chant constantly. Anything is possible. I look for Krishna to direct me gently from within. Let me think it's my idea. Or make it clear that it's the force of His idea. Or the force of those three miseries, the natural forces, the enemies, attacking my body. Or the divine voice within. I feel daring these days, and ready for change. Such daring comes from detachment.

* * *

10:00 a.m.

How strange: one day I was thinking how to write more nakedly with less fear of censorship, and the next I was thinking of not writing at all "that I could become a different kind of person. Maybe this is not a pendulum swing but a natural cycle. When I started thinking of writing freer of my public persona, I had been thinking that EJW had too much of a pose. So I began two private projects, one called "Items to Help in Writing Life," and the other a straight diary that competes for time and topics with EJW.

Lying on my back for the last half hour after headache pain beginning and taking a feverfew, I seem to have resolved this dilemma. The key for me is the concept *writing in process*. This makes me want to take heart and go on with EJW. I shouldn't worry that it's not "literary enough" or that it's stealing something from my private life. I also shouldn't worry that it's too repetitive or that I should be having a more interesting literary career. It would be unfair to say that EJW is not good for my *bhajana*. On this point, EJW forces me to read *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* at least three times a day. EJW is the "short blanket." It can't contain everything. But it's still the best bargain I've found. So as the month and year end, I don't want this writing to end with them.

* * *

10:09 a.m.

Uddhava says, "I consider the demons . . . to be more than the devotees," because they faced Krishna in battle and got a better view of Him. (*Bhag.* 3.2.24) Also, He killed them personally. Actually, this isn't really so, but Uddhava is thinking like this because of his feelings of separation. He worried that maybe at the end of his life he wouldn't be so fortunate "to see the Lord face to face as did the demons." But Shrila Prabhupada says the devotees who are always engaged in devotional love will be rewarded thousands of times more than the demons. This verse spoken by Uddhava is one of subjective humility rather than scientific theistic fact. I take solace in that. I feel unworthy, unqualified, and it's unlikely that I will be able to *see* Krishna at the time of death. At least feelings of disqualification are within the realm of devotional service.

Uddhava starts from Krishna's appearance and presents a series of mini portraits of His life. As I write, I see an orange-clothed man rowing from Govinda-dvipa to Geaglum. Now his boat touches shore. The sky is overcast. Shall I say look for Krishna in that moment? Feeling my farewells. Ah, but *if* I were about to die, I would be thinking of Krishna. Are those who live in Vrindavana safer in that regard? I suppose so. If they die suddenly in an accident, they are in the *dhama*. Death in the holy land guarantees transference to Krishna's abode.

I sometimes feel skeptical about that, but I think it rather than doubt it. I want to feel I have an equally good chance of going back to Godhead if I happen to die in Ireland. I know for ordinary day-to-day *living*, I do better here than in busy Vrindavana. So what is my strategy, to live here until a sure sign of death appears, and then rush to lie down on a cot in Uttar Pradesh? Sounds kind of artificial. O devotee, go deep and pray to Krishna to know what is best.

"Therefore, his father, being afraid of Kamsa, brought Him to the cow pastures of Maharaja Nanda, and there he lived for eleven years like a covered flame with His elder brother, Baladeva." (*Bhag.* 3.2.26) This is *lila*. Krishna has no reason to fear Kamsa, but Vasudeva was concerned and "Nanda Maharaja [and Yashoda-devi] was due to receive Him as his child . . ." The Lord likes it more when a devotee wants to protect Him.

* * *

11:45 a.m.

Wet *gamcha* drying on hot radiator. Feeling better and better on this last day. I'm looking forward to Wicklow, especially now that I feel resolved to keep writing as I have been doing. If I agree to be *satisfied*, to accept that I have not been rejected by Srila Prabhupada, that I want to serve him, I think I will be all right. Some brothers tell me that when my name comes up in ISKCON these days, devotees just say I've retired to Ireland. And so I have. But I'm not inactive. I'm giving out books.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

I'm in the shed. Met Abhidheya dressed in red on my way out here. She's about six, I guess. She had *gopi* dots on her forehead. She hesitated when she saw me approach, then continued and we met head-on. "Hare Krishna," I said aloud, then more quietly, "Abhidheya." I said her name softly because I wasn't a hundred and one percent sure I had it right. "Hare Krishna," she replied from her little girl land. Then on to the shed went the fearless trekker, over deer tracks and collie prints and fresh man tracks.

Here's the cover of the old Third Canto, Part One, with Krishna dancing on Kaliya's hoods. *Krishna-katha*, give me *Krishna-katha*, Vidura begged Maitreya. Whatever you say, connect it to Krishna. What other reason is there to speak?

The almighty Lord displayed His childhood *lilas* on the banks of the Yamuna with the *gopas* and calves, in the gardens covered with trees "and filled with the vibration of chirping birds." (*Bhag.* 3.2.27) Some of the *gopas* were *rsis* in their past lives and had earned the right to play with Krishna as His intimate friend.

I'm reading this on "borrowed" time "before my head fog tightens and the windows steam up. Get a little nectar into your system and onto this page.

"They were so fond of the Lord that at night they would only think of the next morning when they would be able to meet the Lord and go together to the forest for cowherding." The pious birds and fruit trees were all born in Vraja just for Krishna's pleasure. Although Krishna appeared as a young boy, He killed many demons. Here again Srila Prabhupada recommends visiting Vrindavana. He means that sacred place in India. Lord Chaitanya said it was worshipable. Devotees go and contact the Lord there, visible or invisible, as did Vidura and Uddhava. "Thousands of devotees of the Lord are still wandering in these sacred places of Vrindavana, and all of them are preparing themselves to go back home, back to Godhead." (*Bhag.* 3.2.27, purport) O Lord, help me prepare, help me trod Vrindavana at least in my mind "by hearing.

I did not trod the sacred land of Vrindavana today, only slogged through the Geaglum mud. Even walking twenty minutes exhausts me. This is my Vrindavana. But *that* Vrindavana in India, in the spiritual world, is the *param-gati* and *prayojana* of all pure Gaudiya Vaishnavas.

In His childhood He was visible only to the residents of Vrindavana. He would cry and sometimes laugh, appearing like a lion cub. When Krishna met a demon in the forest, He might momentarily appear struck with wonder, but then He'd kill him. On returning home, the *gopas* would narrate the story to their parents, "and everyone would appreciate the qualities of Krishna." Krishna was the child of all the elderly inhabitants

of Vrindavana. "Everyone loved Krishna. He was the life and soul of everyone, including the animals, the cows and the calves." (*Bhag.* 3.2.28, purport)

Just heard thunder or an explosion. Here in Northern Ireland you wonder what it could be. Something serious?

* * *

3:05 p.m.

Coming out of the shed with a loud clack and sniffing the sweet lakeside air. Turn off the flame lever on the propane bottle. Looking down at the earth "covered in wet leaves. But my vision is drawn to the small, yellowish patch of light that stands for a winter sunset in this land. I can just see it through the branches of the small trees. Let me lean forward in the wind. It's not a cutting wind but wet marshland wind. Thank you, Lord, for everything.

* * *

4:15 p.m.

Herd of five deer led by an antlered buck passed by suddenly as I sat at the desk looking toward the lake. The buck had something in its mouth. It looked like a small animal dangling, but deer are vegetarian. They were moving fast. In the faint distance I heard Tilaka bark, and five minutes later he appeared. Now there's a motorboat on the lake strait, maybe hunting birds.

* * *

5:12 p.m.

Dizzy. It's that preventative medicine. A couple of hours at the end of day with nothing to do. Just accept it. The Bible (a word comes to me). The door not shut tight; it knocks in the wind. This must be close to the longest night of the year.

Haribol is a short cut. "You can also practice this," he said. "*Haribol!*" Lord Chaitanya used to say that to the crowds, "*Haribol!*" or "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare." Chant those mantras now.

December 17, Midnight

"While herding the very beautiful bulls, the Lord, who was the reservoir of all opulence and fortune, used to blow His flute, and thus He enlivened His faithful followers, the cowherd boys." (*Bhag.* 3.2.29) Srila Prabhupada chooses to write of Vedic economics and how we should follow these instructions today: the cow, bull, and farming of grains solve all our problems. Lord Krishna set the example even in that. He didn't kill cows.

"Over and above all, the Lord used to play His celebrated flute. The sound vibrated by His flute would give His friends such transcendental pleasure that they would forget all the talks of the Brahmananda, which is so praised by the impersonalists."

I can't understand Sanskrit. A whole huge area of appreciation closed to me. Otherwise I could savor *venum kvanantam*. But Lord Krishna and Shrila Prabhupada say it doesn't matter, little one. They have allowed me to read in my mother tongue. That makes it easier for me to create pictures in my mind. I appreciate Lord Krishna protecting the cows and blowing His flute. After all, everyone knows I like music. Imagine a music so enchanting that everyone forgets all other sounds and duties and attends only to that vibration.

Lord Krishna killed great wizards engaged by Kamsa to kill Him. The Lord killed them "as easily as a child breaks dolls." (*Bhag.* 3.2.30) Don't worry about those who disbelieve there could be such giants or a small God-child who killed them all so easily. I take it all for granted by now, myself a child and no speculator. The *Sruti* isn't lying. The demons may symbolize *anarthas*, but that's their secondary meaning. Actual wizards who could assume any shape came as gigantic ducks, horses, bulls, snakes, and whirlwinds to kill a small child.

Time is short, shortening. I sense more and more the importance of using it well. Now return to the Wicklow scene with its various difficulties in terms of personal dealings, knowing that imperfection is present everywhere in this world. I'm impure myself, so I should have nothing to say about others. Aside from that, even while on the lap of His mother, Krishna was God. No one can equal or surpass Him.

Lord Krishna stopped the worship of Indra and converted it to worship of cows, pasturing land, and *brahmanas*. He thus showed that it's not necessary to worship demigods. Indra had become proud of his so-called supremacy. Thinking of the children's play on this theme at Wicklow. A young girl played Krishna and said, in Irish dialect, that Indra was "poofed up." Indra, played by Praghosa's older son, Sanki, was in modern dress, black sunglasses, and black street clothes.

Indra thought his honor was insulted, and he poured water incessantly on Vrindavana. The inhabitants were all greatly distressed. "But the compassionate Lord Krishna saved them from danger with His pastime umbrella, the Govardhana Hill." (*Bhag.* 3.2.33)

"In the third season of the year, the Lord enjoyed as the central beauty of the assembly of women (*mandala-mandana*) by attracting them with His pleasing songs in an autumn night brightened by moonshine (*sarat-sasi*)." (*Bhag.* 3.2.34) This refers to the *rasa-lila*. It ends the chapter, and Prabhupada writes no purport. That's because he'll tell us about it when we grow up, free of desire to imitate Krishna.

* * *

4:13 a.m.

Methodically packed and prepared. Now waiting for them to come. Sleep now while you can. Already worshiped the Deity. Now the sheep in Wicklow await me. At any moment I might hear them approach, and that will be the end of my solitary reverie.

It was nice hearing Shrila Prabhupada lecture point by point on a *Shrimad-Bhagavatam Sloka* in Vrindavana. Some things are outdated, like the *kshatriyas* with their hundreds of maidservants, the custom of *sadhus* traveling and then staying in one place for four months during the rainy season. Prabhupada has given us an updated way

to live in ISKCON. We should make the most of it for preaching, and can even go further with that mood.

Let's act to glorify the spiritual master. Lord Nityananda glorified Lord Caitanya. We each glorify our own spiritual master. That's how we please Krishna. When Prabhupada spoke about this, I thought that if my writing could help people by going forward on new frontiers, that would be a credit to Prabhupada. readers will come to know him because I will stay at his lotus feet.

* * *

5:15 a.m.

Stupid dreams of being back in the Navy, treated like a raw recruit. On waking I pray, "Prabhupada, I don't want to go back to the Navy. I want to serve you." Do these dreams mean I should be traveling more like a regular *sannyasi*? Not necessarily. I do have to contribute and not fall down. I glanced over at the *Bhagavad-gita* on my desk and realized that I have to take this book with me through life. Somehow or other go back to Krishna and Srila Prabhupada "and as soon as possible.

* * *

12:35 p.m.

I had to take a feverfew in the van, and then as I lay down in the back, the pain appeared to go down. But as soon as we arrived in Wicklow, I plunged into a flurry of moving in. Caitanya-candrodaya was helping me. Soon I had a headache again. I took an Esgic at 10:30 and went to bed. I was eager to get up and continue getting myself set up. The twinge seemed to go down, so I got up, and I feel all right. There is what seems like an enormous amount of mail for me. Madhu brought it both from America and the post office box in Tallaght. It *looks* like at least a hundred pieces.

December 18, 12:10 a.m.

Still alive. Still moving in. So many letters. I won't complain. Seem to be on a twenty-four-hour headache cycle, but seeking relief. Defying the "laws" that say this writing can't work. Defying the imaginary critics and judges. Looked at a booklet about Kerouac, but it didn't help. Why not try *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*?

Just because Krishna left Vrindavana for Mathura doesn't mean we're not interested in Him anymore. In Mathura He killed Kamsa. That event will be described in detail in the Tenth Canto. Here in one verse, the point is made that Krishna's parents, Vasudeva and Devaki, never thought that Krishna would be able to kill a giant like Kamsa. They feared for Krishna's life when they saw Him attack the demon. Just to convince His parents that He had actually killed him, Krishna (and Baladeva) pulled Kamsa's body along the ground.

Then Krishna was sent to school at Sandipani Muni's *ashrama*. There He learned all the branches of the *Vedas* by hearing them just once from His teacher. He also rewarded His teacher by "bringing back his dead son from the region of Yamaloka." No mortal can

do such things. Therefore, we say that although Krishna's activities are *nara-lila*, they are supreme.

Lord Krishna rewards service. I have served, and perhaps this house and this rest are my reward. I paid for this house with my youth and health, and I want to continue paying with my old age. I don't want to serve in exchange for something. rather, it's my eternal duty (as Prahlada Maharaja said) to render service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Prahlada Maharaja also said that his spiritual master saved him from demoniac ways, so "how could I ever leave him?" Such foolish and envious thoughts I have toward other devotees and their accomplishments. I wish to be spared from that. Maybe when I chant I can become purified, rescued from my offenses. In the meantime, I can learn to release people from the grip of my envy. I can bless them instead.

Lord Krishna married Rukmini-devi.

* * *

Noon

I cleared away the mail, but I'm procrastinating when it comes to writing. Do anything else instead "fix the electric blanket, read about Kerouac or William Stafford, hear the tape by Thomas More on writing, but don't move your own pen. Anyway, once I'm relaxed here, I'm sure I'll enter the flow.

I've chosen this life, after all. I drive on to create. Peace and quiet bliss, massaging Shрила Prabhupada and listening to him sing with his one-headed drum in 1966. Just to be with him now, timelessly, as his servant. Hare Krishna.

* * *

2:47 p.m.

Claim I'm too tired to write. All those letters I answered, all that passed through me. Went to sit in the new "*bhajana-kutir*." It has a heater, but it's not yet connected. I sat a few moments, but couldn't chant or write. Too cold out there.

The gardener planted for spring, but what about now? Could I pass a stiff test? When it comes, I can't ask for a special arrangement or more time. Then open the book now and study.

Lord Krishna killed Narakasura, then accepted the imprisoned princesses as His own wives. The Lord expanded into 16,108 forms just to accommodate each princess so she could be with Him as her own husband.

The Lord likes to give His devotees credit for glorious deeds. "What He wants to do Himself by His transcendental plans, He executes through His confidential devotees." (*Bhag.* 3.3.10, purport)

"Devotees of the Lord never assert independent individuality; on the contrary, they utilize their individuality in pursuit of the desires of the Lord, and this cooperation of the devotees with the Lord makes a perfect scene of the Lord's pastimes." (*Bhag.* 3.3.15, purport)

The Supreme Lord has no material tinges. rather, He has His *sat cit-ananda* form and residence "all *para-sakti*. That is how we should understand the Supreme Lord's

attachment to the Yadus and His wives. Only a devotee can have faith in the transcendental sense activities of the Supreme Lord.

* * *

3:30 p.m.

I Have Nothing

My way. Inherited something. Want to be myself.
But individual is for Him. "Do you ever disagree with your Swami?" he asked.
I said no. Never, I said. Quote the Vedabase, I said . . . he said "
"him in context"

* * *

I was accused of saying the master didn't like austerity.
defended what I said.
Stay off the airwaves, e-mail stay home, secluded. Get heat in your shack.

* * *

But where is your devotion for master?
It's in my residence your eyes. I can select words too.
Got to get rid of these bugs all of us, these *anarthas*.

* * *

So I said I'll begin again.
Learn to do it your own way is His way.
Learn to not eat unless He eats. To not attempt to pamper your body. To love the Supreme Lord whom you've only heard of.
No I saw Him too on an altar, in a devotee, lake, moment.
People talk about it "He is here and there.

* * *

Slough off all excess. He asked me,
"What about *Saranagati's* item four to depend on
the Lord?" I said I don't know. I just
want to get relieved from answering all
these questions. I have nothing. I have
nothing and can't trust anyone fully
with my soul. Where is my soul?
Oh yeah, here in my chest.
I forgot. My chest.

* * *

3:55 p.m.

Wants to be alone. Keeps asking for a sweatshirt, but no one will give it to him. "Are you going to paint today?" Don't ask absurd questions. "Are you going to paint a man with a funny head?" Yes, yes. Here goes. He looks like "Kilroy was here." Where is vast Krishna consciousness? All people should have meals and a warm shelter on a cold night.

A *swami* says yeah, but check their karma.

All these bugs were dancing and it was a kind of *kirtana*. Boy, you were silly, she said.

Mister, can you spare. Can you write without expecting? I wanted to be alone and not ruffled. Why couldn't he read my mind and give me what I wanted? It was better living alone. But that hermit kept condemning people.

* * *

5:30 p.m.

Read with devotees, but they quickly fell asleep. Dasharatha-suta Prabhu asked me to write a foreword to his translation of Shrila Prabhupada's poetry. I perk up. But what should I say? My spiritual master and Krishna will inspire me with something to say.

Rain on the skylight is a familiar feature here. This person feels a petty rage at slight "wrongs." What is this nonsense? People are trying to please you. Why should you be angry? I don't know. Maybe it's all the letters and the way I compromise to reply "play the role. Then a "shadow" part of me leaps out and rebels.

Sweetie sweet, you sure look good. I encourage you in your devotional home, complete with all your rock 'n' roll nonsense. You pat my back and I'll pat yours. "Krishna" is their password forever more.

Where is my pie and where is my soy milk? Where is the exact shade color I want in a sweater or shoe? Where is the heater, the book? Leave me alone, supply what I ask, make my way smooth, yet give me credit as if I went through something hard and achieved something and am worthy for a *jayanti* plane to Goloka.

* * *

6:35 p.m., Night Notes

Madhu invited us into his little house to watch a video they did on him on Irish TV. Before he turned it on, we saw a preview of tonight's news. In rapid succession I saw something about peace talks between North and South Ireland, rockets and sparks and the newscaster speaking of air raids on Baghdad, and a big open hall with hundreds of people and the word *impeachment* on the screen. The air raids struck me most. I worry about things like that the way an old lady worries, selfishly, that she will be bombed. It stands to reason that countries like Iraq will become more and more resentful toward the Americans, whom they see as Satan, and one of these days they'll fling their weapons at them. During my life I've been sheltered from war, always having lived in a safe house in a safe city. But even if I get through this life without personally facing war, the world becomes more and more dangerous. Not a good idea to return to it.

This reminds me of the meditation I read tonight in *The Little Way of St. Therese of Lisieux*. It was under the heading, "Be Poor, with Nowhere to Lay your Head." Therese wrote that if we're to become a dwelling place for Jesus, we must become poor. "You realize that I am talking of the interior dwelling. . . . Jesus wants us to receive him in our hearts; by now, doubtless, they are empty of creatures, but alas! I feel that mine is not wholly empty of me, which is why Jesus tells me to come down." [this remains unchecked]

December 19, 12:10 a.m.

It happened long ago and seems remote, but it's what I need. They say it's what we *all* need. The Hare Krishna chanters spread it, and it's seen as peace and enjoyment. It's in *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*. Please write and tell us how you think your hiding the bombs and noise is connected to your headaches and how you think you'll please your boss, the Lord in the clouds.

Uddhava tells how he saw Lord Krishna just as He was about to depart from the world. Uddhava found Lord Krishna "sitting alone and deeply thinking, taking shelter on the bank of the river Sarasvati . . ." (*Bhag.* 3.4.6) Shrila Prabhupada mentions that those in the renounced order often take shelter under a tree. That's what worries me, I realize "that I'll be driven out of this house by hard times." "The Lord was found by Uddhava in that condition of taking shelter as do persons who have no shelter." I *should* feel I have no shelter "not this house, not the heating system, not the money from donors banked in the Guru-ashraya fund. Feeling shelterless takes practice. We even have to understand that even the body is not our shelter, because it's fallible.

Krishna was sitting against a banyan tree.

Someone wrote to me describing that people think I know Shrila Prabhupada, but that's only because I happened to have been physically close to him in the early years. Other devotees are not recognized as being close to Prabhupada, because they saw him only a few times in later years and were working too hard to build a Ratha-yatra cart to even have had the opportunity to hear from Srila Prabhupada when he visited their city. What people don't understand is that by 1976, I too felt separated from Shrila Prabhupada. The fact is, we each have our story of how we wanted to find love in our relationship with Shrila Prabhupada and have had difficulty finding it, or finding intimacy, or we have realized that our desire for love was mixed with our desire to have

him honor us. We all have our regrets, and many of us are still here living with them. We're left with hearing the *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* with those things in our hearts.

"The Lord was sitting, taking rest against a young banyan tree, with his right lotus foot on His left thigh, and although He had left all his householder comforts, He looked quite cheerful in that posture." (*Bhag.* 3.4.8)

"O Vasu, I know from within your mind what you desired in the days of yore when the Vasus and other demigods . . . performed sacrifices. *You particularly desired to achieved My association.* This is very difficult to obtain for others, but I awarded it unto you." (*Bhag.* 3.4.11) The Lord in the heart gives each living entity memory. He is the super-conscious, and we are each the partial-conscious. He fulfills our desires. Most *jnanis* have little or no information about how to attain the Lord's association. When Maitreya heard Lord Krishna speaking like this to Uddhava, he "finally became aware of the importance of entering into the association of the Lord."

We should take the association from wherever we can get it. We should value it. I don't want to insist here that things have to go my own way "a tailor-made, pampered solitude tended by servants. If Krishna were to thrust me into a crowded, cold, noisy room, with nothing to eat and no hope of peace, I would have to seek Him there. No food, no peace. Just remember what Ety Hillesum and millions of others went through. Pray and prepare for hard times, they say. Someone like Maitreya Muni seemed to suddenly get lucky, awakening in consciousness in the Lord's association.

Someone (M. or C.) entered the house and is downstairs in the bathroom. My mind could be inspired by Krishna to remember Him. I could suddenly become aware of His company in my heart and then always desire Him as Uddhava did. I could realize His presence in *hari-nama*. But even if that doesn't happen, I won't give up the chanting.

* * *

4:25 a.m.

I did the worship all right. I don't care 'bout some things. To stay free of *maya* is hard, he said. Even if you don't do some spectacular thing, it's enough to stay clear. Yeah, well thanks for the electrical blanket. I looked at the Lord and Radha, me frustrated and knotty. They came out all right, I guess, but it had nothing to do with any great skill on my part. Wearing the purple with silver trim.

The Swami told his '66 audience that they had to accept a spiritual master and that all the *Vedas* say so. Even Krishna and Lord Chaitanya accepted spiritual masters. If we say we don't need one, we're wrong. He added, "Don't stay in this association for just an hour and then leave and don't follow." Swamiji! Thanks for being heavy.

Anyway, let me go out and walk without worry that a bomb may drop from the sky. Those things are happening elsewhere. If a bomb does drop, however, I know that will just be another form of Krishna.

Hare Krishna. He was forced to spend whatever came, but didn't have a big world to draw from, just whatever was in his cup, which happened to be empty. Then said that. He is riding a train that is take him somewhere "to Krishna preparing to embrace the lost soul.

* * *

Long ago they thought it was going to be okay if they just went to war and defeated the Nazis and the Japs. Now they've found a new war to fight. As Shrila Prabhupada said when he saw the United Nations, "The flags are increasing, but there is still no peace."

* * *

4:50 a.m.

Be careful you don't get ink on your hands, because you want to be a clean parson universally recognized as expert on Prabhupada because you are one of first disciples. Bosh. I forgot. But *it's* true. I won't deny it.

Therefore. Hare Krishna. I'm out of touch. He said he wants nothing to do with internet yammering and counter-yammering on controversies, and he listed them in a way that you could see his opinion.

* * *

5:45 a.m.

Thomas More "*homoscriptorium*, a man who writes. I dig it. Make a "temple" with paper and words. Decorate. Make sacred.

She asked me for a progress report on my painting of the Lord's forms. I admitted the problem. Can't seem to take it seriously. Afraid because He's holy and spiritual.

Oh, that's okay. Your Krishna is okay.

But all I know is that *tribhanga*.

That's all you *need* to know. And a friendly Vaishnava, teacher devoted to the Lord "you can draw his face. Even that doesn't have to be "special," as long as he has *tilaka*.

Words to express the heart. Words on their own. In *parampara*.

* * *

9:30 a.m.

Yes, when I write I enter a kind of temple and seek enlightenment. But the fact is I'm sometimes reluctant to enter the temple, to sit with paper and pen. What do I want instead? Almost anything. I strike an exaggerated pose and sit back in the easy chair. Prolonged my morning meeting with M. Thought. But to enter the temple and open the *Bhagavatam*, that's asking a lot of a fellow like me right now.

"O honest one, your present life is the last and the supermost because in this term of life you have been awarded My ultimate favor. Now you can go to My transcendental abode, Vaikuntha, by leaving the universe of conditioned living entities. Your visit to Me in this lonely place because of your pure and unflinching devotional service is a great boon for you." (*Bhag.* 3.4.12)

That's a nice *shloka*. I like the sound of each part of it. He's speaking to Uddhava, not me, of course, but I'm not envious of Uddhava. I'm *glad* Uddhava is going back to Godhead and that Krishna loves him. I like to hear such personal words. We need knowledge of the Lord, Shrila Prabhupada says, if we are going to be allowed to enter

the spiritual world. He can give any soul permission, any soul who wants it, that is. We need to prove our greed.

On hearing these words, Uddhava experienced ecstasy. "After smearing my tears, I, with folded hands, spoke like this: O my Lord . . . [he says a devotee can get any kind of perfection in return for devotional service] O great one, as far as I'm concerned, I have preferred only to engage in the loving service of Your lotus feet." I liked that too. I would like to serve as long as it's not some base drill sergeant "devotee" (highly posted in ISKCON) who will be ordering me about.

"A pure devotee wants simply to engage in the service of the Lord and does not consider his personal benefit." (*Bhag.* 3.4.15, purport) I admit this standard makes me dizzy. I can't come up to it. I don't even feel bad about that. Can I say that I know that guru and Krishna love me anyway? Maybe. Also, I am desiring to serve them in slower, smaller ways.

The crash of the super-gurus makes me want to say it's enough if I combat *maya* and follow the four rules.

Another excuse to remain complacent.

Will someone please pay our electrical bill?

There, I have stayed in the writing temple for some time and savored a few nectarean verses and purports. Admitted, churned. Now let me go back to the easy chair. I'd like to write more and I'll find a way. Love will find a way.

* * *

10:00 a.m.

Y2K

I'm going to write a neat poem
iambic about piles and hemorrhoids gurus get
them too but they don't take shark liver
oil to cure them except in a pinch.

* * *

I think it's wonderful the way India's children
Hindus grew up in London look like Indians
but speaking like British and we
Americans thought we
were the only ones in Hare Krishna. It's just
a little, little world a sociologist became
our friend and as I said
Indian immigrants.
I'm pretty much ready to die although
I didn't reach a higher stage.

* * *

That's okay you saw us through

the "autobiography of Prabhupada" well written or was it blasphemous? Depends who you ask. What about Y2K he asked and I gave the stock answer "depend on Krishna as Uddhava did. I really don't know but like a big yellow politician got my own dug-out bomb shelter a hundred feet under and ten years' supply of canned beans. Guns? If I told you it would be no secret.

* * *

Isn't this all imitation? Isn't the universe all Nothing? We die all and the stars go out one by one. No "it's temporary but real. The snake false indicates there must be a snake Real. Believe in *Bhagavad-gita* and distribute the holy Hare Krishna offer the best Christmas present to the world.

* * *

11:50 a.m.

Face the pole. Why is it so difficult? Because I don't want to face myself. I don't like what I see. Or I accept it and think that's not good either. Should I scold myself? Should I castigate myself for feeling dislike toward brothers and sisters? It's not right that I feel those things. Whatever the problem, I feel sad, I feel as if I'm sinking slowly into the quicksand of time. No one I can tell about all this.

Hare Krishna. Look up at that pole "it's not so bad. Why don't I think of letting some of this out, even if some of it is anger and envy of persons including your self? Let it out in the art room, for example. Let the forms come while you play Prabhupada's *bhajana*. Find protection in Krishna.

Face the pole. Is it so difficult even here? More says writing is an active meditation. Thoughts and memories are dug up, even though the person is apparently quiet. It is good to have an active inner life. He says in our present day we tend to remain external. Writing is a good way to turn inward. I agree. If I don't write, I space out in an attempt to become inward. I can't contemplate staring into space. I have a hard enough time with *japa*, although I'm committed to that form of meditation. Writing at least forces me to come up with words. But the verbal is not the last "word" in expression, so I paint. Beyond that, I move my body. Painting is a bit of a dance too.

Hare Krishna. Are we doing something to help the people of the world? Am I? I am seen as a spiritual master. I have written books, and some of my disciples are engaged in preparing and selling them to ISKCON's congregation. We can't reach beyond that

because no one cares to hear from us. They see us as sectarian. All right, then they are for devotees and for people just coming to Krishna consciousness.

I like what I offer to people. I don't like rigidity.

* * *

2:55 p.m.

Woke late from my nap. Head pressure. Maybe I can't read *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* or go out for a walk "something less than what I'd planned. One doctor sells two appliances to keep in your mouth, one at night and one in the day when you're not eating. He guarantees it will stop headaches. Foolish collection of testimonies from patients makes me immediately distrust him. He puts down all other attempts and wonders why everyone is so foolish as to overlook his panacea? Do *we* sound like that sometimes? But our claims are heavier, the world is more wrong, the Vedic tradition more correct. At least people should hear about it.

Again Uddhava states how even sages become "disturbed in their intelligence" when they see the apparent contradictions in the Supreme Lord. Pure devotees are satisfied to go on chanting and hearing about Him. The answer to the contradictions is that the Lord has no material acts. "All His activities are transcendental." As an example of a bewildering act, Uddhava tells his own experience that the Supreme Lord is all-knowing, yet He consults with Uddhava for advice.

"My dear Vidura, now I am mad for want of the presence of seeing Him and just to mitigate this I am now proceeding to Badarikashrama in the Himalayas for association, as I have been instructed by Him." If you engage in the Lord's service, you can be with Him in separation by following His order, "because the order of the Lord and the Lord Himself are identical." (*Bhag.3.4.21*, purport)

* * *

4:00 p.m.

Ani putting light and heat in the *kutir*. How will I use it?

* * *

5:00 p.m.

Good art room workout. Six big ones today. I wasn't so angry or angst-stricken as I thought I would be, but felt happy and confident in Krishna consciousness, in life, by His grace.

* * *

5:30 p.m.

My Begging Bowl

Yeah well . . . those words. I look again
at my medicine stock and the expiry dates.
It will last, and my patrons will write new
prescriptions. Unless
Y2K or a Baghdad
air raid
comes first.

* * *

Holocaust. More words in my throat my
poems don't count
anymore they thrust out
and fear dreams my
seniority doesn't count either
but at least brings me
a bowl of soup.
In the little world, I am
universally acclaimed because I am one
of the first disciples. My begging bowl
full of soup I feel bolder and
ask for apple pie
too.

* * *

I did a self-portrait, but the mirror was too small. Made the lower part of my face
looked ravished. Called Chaitanya-candrodaya and painted him too "not as a powerful or
harrowing soul, because he might not like that. I did it to please him.

* * *

My mom and dad. Rukmini Beltram of
Puerto rico sent Tahitian juice in the mail and a note
not to criticize the parents
who gave me birth
which I read as dark night
set in.

December 20, 12 a.m.

When Vidura heard of the annihilation of almost all his friends and relatives, he was
overwhelmed with grief. He then pacified himself with transcendental knowledge.
Uddhava was about to leave, but Vidura questioned him further. He wanted to know
what the Lord had taught Uddhava before He left the world. Shрила Prabhupada writes,
"Vidura was anxious to know from Uddhava that confidential knowledge known

as *param satam*, in which the Lord is known by his transcendental pastimes." (*Bhag.* 3.4.25, purport) Thus Vidura honored Uddhava as a guru, even though Uddhava was so much junior in age. Uddhava, however, deflected that honor and asked Vidura to hear Krishna's instructions from his elder, Maitreya, who had also been present. "One should never pass over the honor due to an elderly spiritual master in the interest of one's own personal gain and fame."

Inevitable politics and intrigues, disciple-collecting, and so on among devotees in this world. Avoid it as much as possible. Yet we are loyal to Shrila Prabhupada's line.

Vidura and Uddhava spent all night discussing Krishna, and the more they spoke, "the more the picture of the Lord became visible to them everywhere."

Lord Krishna left the world, and that itself is a mysterious topic, misinterpreted by the nondevotees. The Vaishnava *acaryas* have discussed it elaborately. Krishna erects a curtain between Himself and the nondevotees so they can't know Him.

As the Lord left, he imparted knowledge about Himself to Uddhava. The Lord said that Uddhava "is not inferior to Me in any way because he is never affected by the onslaughts of nature." (This is *Suddha-sattva*; Uddhava was a *jivan-mukta*.)

"Such a devotee of the Lord can withstand all onslaughts of material nature, and therefore he is known as *gosvami*." (*Bhag.* 3.4.31, purport) I don't know how Srila Prabhupada gave me this supertitle or how I can possibly live up to it, but I will not renounce it. *Dasa Goswami*. Control your senses by using them in the Lord's service. Still, the onslaughts of material nature are greater than me. Stay out of their path whenever possible.

The Lord gave Uddhava information not spoken in *Bhagavad-gita*. We can get advanced knowledge about the Supreme Lord from the pure devotee. Uddhava was going to tell Lord Krishna's confidential pastimes to Nara-Narayana Rsi and the sages at Badarikashrama. Shrila Prabhupada states that we may all become confidential messengers, "like Uddhava." Vishvanath Cakravarti Thakura wrote that Uddhava's message also included information about the mystery of Lord Krishna's departure.

If you want to know of Lord Krishna's appearance and disappearance, you have to know the nature of His supreme abode. Envious persons, who are like beasts, can never understand the *dhama*.

That's the end of the Third Canto's fourth chapter. The somewhat brief meeting between Uddhava and Vidura was nectarean. Uddhava is a touchstone. I was able to see and touch the moon with my finger by reading his words. Thank you.

When we disbelieve the *Bhagavatam's* words, the spiritual world retreats and becomes unreal. Then we become absorbed in the daily struggle of coping with this world "which, of course, is a losing battle. Better to keep life simple so we can touch the moon. Even better, we should keep the television of the heart tuned to the Krishna channel. Then we will gradually be able to see, through the mental static, the Lord's name, fame, qualities, and pastimes, just as Vidura and Uddhava stayed up all night discussing Krishna until they actually saw Him everywhere.

* * *

4:27 a.m.

"We want Krishna!" cried the Teenie-weenies, the wee ones who live under mushrooms. But their cry was muffled by the Yoga-maya curtain they had brought down upon themselves. O Lord, we want You. Please help us attain You.

I was in that group of '69 devotees in London going "Oooh" and "Aaah" and crying out, "*Haribol*" and "*Jaya*" when Srila Prabhupada said he was not like the scientists who went to the moon and came back. "Go and live there," he said, "just as I came to the West and I am living here. I didn't come here to collect money and then go back to India. No, I am staying. I say to all religionists, come on and I'll convince you of the beauty of Krishna consciousness." I liked that. We were so young then.

* * *

5:18 a.m.

Why are you so reluctant to talk on the morning walk? Because I think you guys won't like it. And it's too cold on my nose and forehead. Ani said polar bears have scratchy paws, and that's how they can walk on ice floes. A sprinkling of stars "I have to stand still and look at them. Gradually my eyes get accustomed and I see more and more of them coming through. They're the embroidery on the rug of the sky. Chant *gayatri* and go in. It's too cold out here.

* * *

5:42 a.m.

I'll ask M. how we should observe Christmas. We won't eat meat or drink liquor or even exchange presents. We won't even watch the news on TV. I'll ask him whether the devotees have any plans. Will their celebration be Christ-centered? I could read a section from the Gospel. Maybe not. Do your usual *sadhana*. Prahlada blesses all to become peaceful in *bhakti*.

I often don't know what I am doing, but depend on Krishna to accept my offering anyway. Some basic stuff I don't understand or realize: (1) I'm not this body; (2) I'm not the center of existence nor the most important person; (3) Krishna is God, all-powerful and real, my dearest friend; (4) I'm a disciple of Srila Prabhupada and my life should be dedicated to his service "no independence. Haven't learned how to mix with devotees. Hare Krishna.

* * *

8:58 a.m.

Nudging Myself Back to the *Bhagavatam*

This is EJW too. He said he'd put

you on a payroll and in eight years you'd

get a pension. I'm going back to inquire

from Mother Navy whether

I can get health care 'cause I'm

a vet. Laughed. What if they say, "You

have six more months of service if you want

that kind of stuff "you can serve as
chaplain on a battleship"?

* * *

I said I live in Ireland now that's
the truth, you can come and carry some of
my paintings back to the U.S.A. This is the
slow restarting part of the morning, so gray
(like a battleship) so bearing down
the sky this week of Christmas.

* * *

So I took my medicine and kept writing,
waiting for the *kutir* to be completed not
yet and slowly forcing nudging
myself back to the *Bhagavatam*.
Go ahead you can do it, start
in the middle in *any* context, with
any doubts or misgivings make notes
even if not everything is heartfelt
but by virtue of your connection to
Swamiji who loves me and
is real ask
any member
of this movement.

* * *

9:20 a.m.

Vidura reached Haridwar and found Maitreya. Vidura was *acyuta-bhava*, absorbed in
devotional service to Lord Hari. That makes me happy.

Wish to a devotee: "Hope you have a happy Krishna conscious Christmas."

Even if I get a headache?

Underneath the ice the stream flows.

I'm happy because life bubbles and joy comes from Krishna.

What about that sheer joy they speak about of not seeing His face but knowing for
sure He's on the other side of the cloud? Yes.

The name Vidura reaches me and I know this person is teaching what
the *acaryas* want me to know. He lives the perfection of *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*. Srila
Prabhupada has presented it to us perfectly. We are free to savor.

Maitreya was seated in a solitary place on the bank of the Ganges at Haridwar. Here
comes Vidura, with all good transcendental qualities, to inquire.

Vidura begins with a question for the benefit of the common people: "How can we
live for real happiness?" He didn't immediately ask about the Lord. Vidura says in

essence, "Maitreya, if you instruct me about devotional service, then He who is in my heart will impart from within the Absolute Truth. This is confirmed in Bg. 10.10."

* * *

10:30 a.m.

More says the writer aspect of the self tends to be melancholic and heavy. That's not bad. When we write, we contact difficult or sad issues. When we contact those issues successfully, such writing becomes poignant.

Saturn was the patron of intellectuals and artists.

Interesting talk.

Took my feverfew and went to bed. But the pillow was too high or something. Anyway I got *some* relief, but I'm shaky.

I like being back in Wicklow. There's good facility for the daily flow of writing and reading, even though I seem capable of only small amounts at a time.

Hare Krishna. Harikesha Prabhu got married. It's too late for me. "And without the botheration of a wife" "Shrila Prabhupada speaking about how he got his spiritual children.

* * *

11:46 a.m.

Hare Krishna. The truth is in *shastra* and in the search each person makes. Blah, blah. The typewriter is pressing the keys down, surreal man. Wasting time. Pour hot water on your head and stimulate thought.

The question the man asked was strange and interesting, but Prabhupada didn't answer it. Instead he answered a very important but basic question about transmigration "something we all need to understand.

But that man's little question remained unanswered. When we say that Shrila Prabhupada's followers have Western mindsets, one meaning of this is that we should tackle those strange little questions on Prabhupada's behalf. We can't find fault with him for not answering them. Perhaps it was because English was not his native language. He might not have understood what was being asked. Or perhaps he had such a heavy task to do that he didn't feel obliged to respond to everyone's quirky inquiries. We Western-raised followers, however, can't get off the hook in the same way. We speak a common language with those questioners, and we are not elderly authority figures who can command a certain respect. Even if we *are* elderly, we have to answer.

After lunch, I want to talk with M. about crises scenarios. I don't have my mind made up. Should a *sannyasi*, in the name of depending on Krsna, not keep candles, flashlights, or a gas burner in case the electricity goes out? Should he defy signs of danger? Obviously he should use common sense. But should he stock food in cans, thinking that in the future, food might not be available in the market? Should he stash cash?

As More said, the writer tends to dig up troublesome material. I also find that writers face problems in the best way "gently "and try to do so before a crisis hits. He readies himself. He removes illusion again and again, at least in words. He reminds himself that

he is not immortal. Therefore, it's not just that a writer is melancholic. rather, he is kind to himself and others by his explorations.

* * *

2:32 p.m.

Vidura asked Maitreya to speak about the auspicious characteristics of the Supreme Lord in His incarnations. "Our minds are never satisfied completely, although we continuously hear His transcendental activities." (*Bhag.* 3.5.7) People are inclined to hear good stories, but mundane literature becomes stale. "But the beauty of transcendental literatures like the *Bhagavad-gita* and *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* is that they never become old." Even by "daily repetition . . . there is no satiation for devotees like Vidura."

Although Vidura asked about the creation of the material nature, he said that he had heard about it repeatedly from Vyasa, and "I am quite satiated with all these lesser subject matters and their happiness." It appears that even within religious lessons there are higher and lower degrees. Talks about the external energy are not as exciting as talks about the internal energy. Vidura wants to hear "the nectar of topics about Krishna." (*Bhag.* 3.5.10)

Shrila Prabhupada invites all sensible people to join the great movement started by Lord Chaitanya and preach *Krishna-katha* all over the world. Did I used to thrill to those words? Is my head too tired to respond in the same way? Am I disillusioned by how things have turned out? I am trying to find my connection. Life is for more than stocking grains and worrying about Y2K.

* * *

4:46 p.m.

I read Shrila Prabhupada's poem called "Vrindavana *Bhajana*." He sankirtana. He said we shouldn't stay with our pens. It made me feel I should go out.

But I have so many reasons why I can't.

What does ISKCON need? More strident preachers? But he's saying his disciples shouldn't stay alone. It hits my vulnerable heart.

Well, let me go down to the art room and paint something with loud *kirtana* playing in the background. I'll let the feelings come through me and attempt some bold color combinations. I depend on my love for Prabhupada whenever I draw him.

In "Vrindavana *Bhajana*," he sankirtana wasn't the real point. He meant radio and press *kirtana*. Ah, yes, he wanted the kind of *kirtana* that would outlast the hype; an artless art, a rhythm and blues *kirtana* of honest people trying to praise God.

I *am* alone. I'm not happy with this movement. Otherwise I'd act more within it. Feel I can't tell anyone my wounds. Yes, I want to keep them. They're genuine. Anyone I told "I might depress that person or plunge him or her into doubt. But my own doubts squirt out in art.

* * *

5:20 p.m.

Don't do solitary *bhajana* but
go out and preach "he wrote that
in *all* his poems as he cried out
to his spiritual master.

What happened to the preaching?
I'm one of those condemned, mistaken,
but no, not as long as I
pump out these lines.

* * *

Hokey and Joe and I were going door
to door and a guy in a house came
out with a gun in a Dallas suburb.

It was the Swami, Prabhupada, who served
us *prasadam* and told me, "If you love me . . . "
Told them that in Poland.

My Krishna, my Krishna I can't find Him in the
beads if I sit alone. I have to be a preacher.
So many times I've packed my meds and
off I've gone where I felt loved but within
two days I'm sick of it so strong is the desire to
live alone and plumb my shallows. It seems to be
all I have.

* * *

Lord, as long as I beat this drum because
any little thing helps. I'm no super-guru or
super-anything, no giant Committee Head
Reforming our movement. But I'm a vulnerable
soul, worried now that Prabhupada said
we should preach.

December 21, 12:00 a.m.

"For one who is engaged constantly in hearing such topics, *Krishna-katha* gradually increases his indifference towards all other things. Such constant remembrance of the lotus feet of the Lord by the devotee who has achieved transcendental bliss vanquishes all his miseries without delay." (*Bhag.* 3.5.13) *Krishna-katha* is the same as Krishna Himself, but you have to speak it faithfully. He is called a *sraddhana-pumsa*, "one engaged anxiously in bona fide hearing of *Krishna-katha*."

Dreamt of a person who had no bones but who was willing to live so medical science could learn more about his obscure condition. No one got to see her, but we heard she was cheerful. Who among us should complain in the face of such suffering?

Car door slamming outside. I guess Praghosa and Goloka have returned from Govinda's. I fantasize sometimes that *gundas* are coming to the house, especially during a time of economic distress, and that they order me to leave. Then they move in and take over. The rest of my life would involve suffering. I hope they let me take my brown winter coat.

"Only the devotee, by his factual experience, can understand the import of this verse spoken by Vidura." He enjoys life by constantly remembering Krishna in *Krishna-katha*, and for him there is no such thing as material existence. Vidura is begging him for the essence. This alone can do good for the people of the world.

Snide about Lord Chaitanya's mission? Please overlook its faults. Or correct them. Don't lose heart. Do the welfare work. Don't become a sit-back seeking material comforts during your last years. I won't be a superstar, and that's okay, but I have more to contribute. If I'm going to give it, though, I'm going to have to remain hopeful that I can improve myself. As for the institution, how to clean it, reshape it (*varnaSrama* or whatever), and get the locomotive's fifty thousand cars back on track, etc., that's not for me to figure out. But I shouldn't disparage the efforts the devotees are making to purify themselves and to preach to others. These people are my family members. Materialists are averse to topics about God, but these are the devotees who are reminding them.

"O Vidura, all glory unto you. You have inquired from me of the greatest of all goodness, and thus you have shown your mercy both to the world and to me because your mind is always absorbed in thoughts of the transcendence." (*Bhag.* 3.5.19)

It's hard to be *adhoksaja*. We can't attain that quality on our own. Maitreya speaks "and thus we can receive Adhoksaja "by telling us how the Supreme Lord was alone before the creation. The Lord brought about the creation to facilitate the false egos of the conditioned souls and to give us a chance to return to Him. He entrusted the demigods with various functions, but because they were unable to perform them, "they offered fascinating prayers to the Lord."

The demigods pray to remember the lotus feet of the Lord as they render their services. I . . . uh . . . tick-tock hope to be able to chant fourteen rounds and not have to give up. I am planning a schedule of activities aimed to preach here in this house. This is no *nirjana-bhajana asrama*. I'm part of ISKCON's cultural revolution.

* * *

8:03 a.m., Hari-nama Kutir

Here I am in the new *bhajana-kutir* to chant and write as if for the first time. But nothing extraordinary has appeared in either my *japa* or my writing. Usually when I try to chant at this time, I get tired. I drone on anyway. I brought out some *tulasi* beads, not my big red ones. Also brought a picture of Haridasa Thakura to hang on the wall. It's frosty out, but the electric heater keeps me cozy.

As I chanted part of a round, I thought of a devotee here who wrote me the following: "I've been cooking twice a week and doing your laundry every day. From now on, I'll only be able to cook once a week and won't be able to do the laundry at all. It's hard enough doing laundry for a family of five."

What if she asks me what I think of that? I might say, "We'll adjust." Or, "As a *sannyasi*, I should not ask people to serve me, but accept whatever you offer, I'll accept without complaint."

Looking out the window at the light on outside the main building. Go on chanting.

* * *

The holy name is nondifferent from Krishna. It will be hard to read these ideal, absolute statements later, since I am so unrealized. "The mango fruit is different from the name of the mango. One cannot taste the mango fruit simply by chanting, 'Mango, mango, mango.' But the devotee who knows . . . chants Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna . . . and realizes that he is always in Krishna's company." (*Bhag.* 10.2.36 , purport)

There, I wrote it down, even though I don't feel it. Mango, water, bone, Esgic, uncontrolled mind. Thank you, Lord, for life and the Hare Krishna mantra.

The name Krishna is eternally liberated from matter and is identical with Krishna Himself. "Having such faith, one must continue to chant the holy name."
(Cc. *Madhya* 15.106, purport)

One idea about how to use this *kutir* was to increase the number of rounds I chant.

* * *

I hereby award you the First Day in the Hut award for mediocre Drone Chanters. At least you stayed awake.

Moss on rocks.

Head.

Name.

Words.

Sit here every day and chant two rounds. Then fill out a page.

* * *

9:28 a.m.

We're not going to have a Christmas celebration here. That's all right. Of course, everyone has Christmas, because we can't just skip over December 25, but our Christmas will be free of turkey and trimmings and be filled with *japa* and usual routines. If we hear, however, that the *gurukula* children are holding a celebration, we'll probably go.

From my *kutir* I looked at an icon picture of Jesus from Holy Russia, but decided not to chant the Jesus prayer. I have an affinity for that prayer, mainly because it's in the *nama* chanters' tradition.

So let our Christmas be *hari-nama*. That will please Jesus. What he said to do we do, or we *would* do if we were really totally on the *bhakti-marga*. Is Jesus in the *Vedas*?

Regardless, the sound vibration of love of God is everywhere. Peace on earth and goodwill to all.

* * *

10:25 a.m.

Refuse to write because my toes are cold. I talk while I live, then go silent. All the big batch of imperfect words will remain. Do I expect someone to read them all? I'm sure they have better things to do "their own lives to live, for example.

Maybe my stumbling on the path is of some value to them, though, like the signs the highway department puts up: "Blind Spot Ahead," "Dangerous Curve."

But what if I only wrote about my own subjective experiences and that was different than the experiences of others?

So what?

O Krishna. Hare Krishna. We should be better persons. I just read that sesame may be another hidden source of MSG, which is a trigger for migraine. This is trivial beyond belief. I should be thinking about how to benefit humankind, not how to avoid migraine triggers by better reading of food labels. How can I preach Krishna consciousness? How can I become a better devotee? But if I can control headaches, that will be a beginning.

I had a rough start this morning, and that's why I'm not pushing myself through the entire morning. I did some stuff. Now sit back.

Radha and Krishna are wearing red and gold. I fear the recurrence of a headache (caught it at 2 a.m. and took a feverfew, then forty-five minutes later, an Esgic). Still, I dressed the Deities. It's important to my day, that service. Shrila Prabhupada was singing "Jaya Radhe, Jaya Krishna," naming all the persons and places in Vrindavana, while I bathed and dried Them.

* * *

11:58 a.m.

Pole penance, pole joy. Misty fog, but so cold it might snow. Snow in Ireland is rare. It snowed a lot in New York, where I was born. Caitanya said he was raised in Ukraine on the seashore. It wasn't terribly cold "something like Ireland. I was surprised.

Write your potluck, Tim Crachet, your erstwhile heaven-bound goal. Plan out the day "what you'll do next. It won't be long before lunch.

No resentment. Pour olive oil over your bread while it lasts; it's manna from heaven. I know I don't eat in a devotional mood, thanking Krishna with each mouthful, but at least I say the prayers three times and offer Their Lordships Their little plates.

So misty I can hardly see. People will have to drive with their headlights on. Duryodhana wanted the armies, and Arjuna chose Krishna. That's the choice all devotees would make. Please, Prabhupada, don't kick us away despite our polluted minds. Our minds may shout all kinds of things, but that's just our insanity. Please overlook it, and let me trust that your association is purifying us.

* * *

12:25 p.m.

I'm battling devils, but I'm going to win, because the Lord is giving me strength. Still, I have to help myself. I have to try to control my mind. That may require beating it, but it always means facing the devils for what they are.

If I had left the Swami, I could have been independent. Some went for that, throwing off the yoke of discipleship. Go for it in the next life? The unlived life I'll never know. I allow myself to let out sorrow and anger, but then insist that I pull myself together. I beg for shelter.

* * *

2:27 p.m

The demigods declare they are taking shelter of the Supreme Lord's lotus feet "because they award remembrance and courage to Your devotees." (*Bhag.* 3.5.43) Even if we have material desires and are suffering their concomitant miseries, we can get relief by hearing *Krishna-katha*. "O great Supreme Lord, offensive persons whose internal vision has been too affected by external materialistic activities cannot see Your lotus feet, but they are seen by Your pure devotees, whose one and only aim is to transcendently enjoy Your activities." (*Bhag.* 3.5.45) The Lord's devotees roam all over the place to enlighten people about God consciousness. They don't mind it when the materialists are offensive, but continue to bestow the blessing of devotion upon them.

The devotees have it relatively easy and experience bliss even at the beginning of the *bhakti* path. Impersonalists experience much difficulty.

The demigods lament that although they are the Lord's devotees and servants, they were born under the material modes. "Therefore, after the creation we could not act concertedly for Your transcendental pleasure." (*Bhag.* 3.5.48)

* * *

4:50 p.m.

In the art room. Couldn't get into it for quite a while. Did two conservative, amateurish portraits of Prabhupada. Only toward the end, when I felt a bit "mad," did I gleefully realize I was free to choose any color I wanted. Then stuff started to happen. I like to make chunky, Jagannatha shapes. Drew two in one picture, which I titled, "Swami and the One-headed Drum," because he was playing it and I was listening. I liked it better than the crude portraits, yet it was in itself a portrait of the spirit of being with him in 1966, hearing him now. Some were cartoony. I couldn't let go. But I was in process. Another day painting and learning that you can dip into any paint jar you want and do whatever you want.

In the beginning I was thinking of Aniruddha, who wrote me a letter saying he's pouring out memories in his own writing nowadays. He wants to know if I have any word of warning or a nod of approval for him. I thought of telling him that it's all right to go through phases such as one in which you pour out pre-Krishna conscious memories in a nonjudgmental way. Sooner or later, though, you have to figure out where you're going with it. We want to connect to Krishna. Thinking of my reply to him hampered my flow. If I am advising him to direct himself, then shouldn't I be doing the same? I drew a recognizable cartoon fellow, something like me. In fact, I even drew his smile by looking in a mirror. What was he doing? Just standing there in his hooded jacket. I wrote "Radha and Krishna" to his right in Sanskrit, and circled that with orange and yellow rays.

Much of what I'm exploring right now is how to use color. This is a colorful world, and I can dip into any tub I want and mix whatever I want together. I painted two garlands onto Prabhupada, then gave him simple eyes.

* * *

5:10 p.m.
Bone and Flesh
Cold rooms. Did I earn the right
to reach nighttime? No, but He allowed
me anyway, My Krishna.

* * *

Krishna lets me bend my neck He
allows me to suffer, although I
bring that on myself. I can write by His grace
and be a teacher of bone and flesh
with a "Dr. Grip" pen.

* * *

Hoist your sails and turn the electric blanket
up to 9. Clean the art room
and consider whether to put a *trifalla*
on your tongue. Chalk up scores
on various counts because
He's heading your way "that Lord of Time and Death I
can feel him in my ribs
almost like a stitch of
pain.

December 22, 12:05 a.m.

"In spite of my inability, whatever I have been able to hear [from the spiritual master] and whatever I could assimilate I am now describing in glorification of the Lord by pure speech, for otherwise my power of speaking would remain unchaste." (*Bhag.* 3.6.36)

We can't become pure by stopping consciousness. That's impossible. We are forever active. "One should not become unchaste by stopping the activities of pure consciousness." This is one of my favorite *shlokas* in my writing life. I *have* to speak, so I had better do it.

Of course, the verse doesn't say I can speak or write any damned thing. I should speak *parampara* as best I can, and as I have assimilated it. After all, a *tridandi sannyasi* vows to use his body, mind, and words in the Lord's service. That is, he vows to stay active.

I *love* to remain active. That's why I chose medicine over pain. Of course, my consciousness would be active in any case, but I prefer to keep my body moving too. "One must attempt to engage one's bodily, mental and verbal activities in the transcendental glorification of the Lord. Otherwise his activities will remain unchaste and impure."

Be happy by hearing of the Supreme Lord's activities. That's much better than hearing of the actions of those who live in this world. The impersonalists have no activities to hear about. "O my son, the original poet, Brahma, after mature meditation for one thousand celestial years, could know only that the glories of the Supreme Soul are inconceivable." (*Bhag.* 3.6.38)

God *is* a person who can't be measured. Therefore, it's natural that we sometimes say He cannot be explained. He has inconceivable potencies. He can do anything. He can lift Govardhana Hill, expand Himself in order to dance with unlimited *gopis*, manage unlimited cows, and play with unlimited boys.

Don't demand any more explanation than that. Just pray to serve *hari-nama*.

* * *

4:15 a.m.

Cold a.m. Words of the scantiest selection hiding a deeper truth. Other times they are naked, blue.

Oh boy. I was worshiping the Deity and thinking that later I'd come and celebrate here. Thought again of memories Ani's getting out. That just tumbled out onto this page. If I let my own memories tumble out after that, out come Mom and Dad in skeleton form.

But I dressed the Lord in white and yellow, Radha in blue.

More and more attracted to singing the blues through improvisation. I hope that doesn't detain me in this world. But I can't avoid swinging with it in my own dark club. Looking for the Krishna connection through that.

We agreed to walk and chant. Ani put chicken wire on the boards so I wouldn't slip on the ice. My mind needs some too. I slip and slide but keep on chanting. I will die one day, and leave this place behind. Krishna has already arranged the time and place.

* * *

If you want to write as much as possible, you need some tricks. Here's one "a list:

- (1) Wiggins employed.
- (2) Thomas More on writing (wrap your letters in ribbon).
- (3) Steve Lacey. Me in the Navy never heard his horn.
- (4) Krishna the blue God I didn't know.

This is turning into a list of things I didn't know. I didn't know Harikesha, Adi Keshava, Bhaktipada, Bhakta Me, Gurupada, wing-tipped shoes, Faust, Parsifal, or much else.

I didn't know the house on the hill where I could write fiction and the typist had to climb over the high fence. *You* don't know what I'm saying and suspect me of the wurst.

He is Krishna and I didn't know (but nor did Brahma) that this one cowerd boy could be the source of all. But He is. I simply didn't know it.

I didn't know how to tie a knot or make my bed or recover from grief. Didn't know you would love me. Thought God was dead with Bertrand Russell. Hare Krishna chanting was completely unknown to me. I had no idea. Such things could come to me in the night, and suddenly I knew, by Swamiji's grace, that chanting Hare Krishna is the best thing I know.

I knew porridge, but not *dal*. Had no chance to transcend or go back to Godhead, because I understood nothing about it. I'm not sure how much more I understand now. At least I wish it were true.

We could *all* go if we could just get rid of these *anarthas*. That means relieving demons of their power and putting devotees in their places by using our Hare Krishna password.

* * *

5:30 a.m.

As I walk around the boards and rain drips from the eaves, I can see a few faded stars in the cold. Thinking of various disciples, some in Northwest Canada, who never write to me. If I went to their part of the world, they might turn up for a formal meeting, but it appears that our relationship has dwindled to nothing "at least very little. All right, then that's the way it is. Accept it. Something happened "an initiation "and it has no more meaning.

Then I think of others who still invite me to their parts of the world and who want an active relationship with me. Invitations are nice, but it's hard for me to take them up on it, because I just can't travel from Mauritius to South Africa to Tennessee anymore. I was once such a little rubber ball, always bouncing, bouncing, but times have changed.

* * *

Hari-nama Kutir

Ink stain on beadbag. Dull sound of my chanting. I was thinking of *bhakti-vrksa* meetings and how I've never been to one. Maybe I should go. Then it wouldn't be me delivering a lecture but I would be able to participate with others. I think at those meetings each person speaks their realizations on topics chosen from scripture. Then I thought of a visit some *brahmacharis* and I made to a devotee's house in Santa Cruz about fifteen years ago. I asked him if I could do a program at his house, but he said he wasn't a single person preaching to many others. I said I just wanted to talk, so he told us to come. Trying to remember the details of that visit now as I look out the *kutir* window. Piecing together this memory instead of hearing. Anyway, better I read.

But first, more thoughts. Praghosa and family are taking a week off at Christmas to visit England and their friend Haridasa, who plays football. Praghosa's boys will play football with him. Shanki's excited because he'll get a new pair of football boots for the occasion.

* * *

A pure devotee can be satisfied in any condition simply by chanting Hare Krishna. The holy name protects devotees from falldown. Don't forget to chant for a moment. "There are so many dangers in this material world that one may fall down from an exalted position at any time. Yet if one keeps himself always pure and steady by chanting the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*, he will be safe without a doubt." (*Bhag.* 6.1.63, purport)

Chant, even if it's poor. Do I have faith I'm doing something potent? Maybe not. I don't feel it, but I do it anyway. "There is no other way" "that's a dictum I accept. For me there is no other way. I am committed to this form meditation, this religion. No scope now to begin another one.

"Continuous thinking of the Supreme Lord makes him pure . . . Therefore the chanting Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare should be continued without stoppage. This will protect a devotee from all accidental falldowns." (*Bg.* 9.31, purport)

Maybe this is already happening. I mean, that I'm being protected.

Cynical, tired, beaten down, aware of low performance, my lack of spirituality, my unawareness of God the person, God the name, God the form "but some of today's "down" mood caused by head pain.

* * *

Drew a picture of a man seated, with hand in beadbag, saying, "I could do better if I had a better head and a heart that wasn't steel-framed."

May he rest in peace.

O Krishna, I need more oxygen, less mental chatter, and more *time* with Your Nama rupa.

* * *

9:35 a.m.

Street With No Name

"I'm a cancer survivor."

No time for controversies

avoid them all. I am in

pain. Krishna I wrote in *kutir* my crummy

japa jazz although

the chant is actually magnificent.

The choir sings for this

old-man guru even as he

fails to hear.

* * *

O Krishna, You can see

below the covering
of myself "and love me
even as I wish I could love myself.
Krishna, You love all from
Brahma to lesser *devas* and on
to humans, animals, plants "souls
all.

* * *

Do I have a right to speak
without realization when I mouth the *sastra*?
It's a moot point. Does a phonograph speak?

* * *

This street on which I live has
no name it's so remote
and no one ever comes here
to break the peace
of life with pain and
japa.

* * *

10:23 a.m.

I have a small twinge. I'm waiting for it to develop, but it hasn't so far. Still, can't read. Write a poem? Dark gray day out there. I can see it out through the skylight.

Chaitanya has gook on his hands from his construction work. He says it's a kind of glue that won't come off. "It's like a second skin." But he's supposed to cook my lunch today. Little life.

I can read of big things, like joy and humility, boldness and confidence in God's mercy in the *Bhagavatam* "hear how the *demigods* pray. But when I turn my face away I see the same rathdangan hill and feel the same precious time running by and out. So tiny we are, so low on the scale of living beings.

We have so little time to turn to God. In this age it is recommended that we chant Krishna's holy names, because other methods take too long. Shrila Prabhupada emphasized that we shouldn't chant for ourselves but spread it to as many others as possible. If we do that, Krishna will be pleased with us. Such preaching is the whole purpose behind the creation, and it is even the purpose of Krishna's personal descent into this world.

Shrila Prabhupada tried to preach in India before coming to the West, but people there wouldn't help him. At age seventy and in ill health, he came to America and tried there. At first he didn't get much response, but then he began to reach out to the youth. The Hare Krishna movement appeared as part of the counterculture of the 1960s. It's still

here thirty years later, now a worldwide institution. We're trying to free ourselves from the cult image. Actually, we're not a cult; we're a family with troubles.

* * *

11:56 a.m.

Krishna conscious quiet life is going on. If I try to emphasize something, it may become hype. Moving into winter at the end of this year.

Noon. Here's the picture of Madhavendra Puri receiving the pot of sweet rice from Ksira-cora-gopinatha's *pujari*. Madhavendra Puri is sitting in the marketplace. Both devotees are crying in ecstasy. Tick-tock goes my American Tourista clock.

Washer and dryer electric in this house. Cold and wet climate. Choose your words. You'd like to write and be more Krishna conscious, but this is what I have for now. Notes on cards to help me--things to stimulate, such as pictures or free-writing. In the end, I have to accept what actually is. After a bath, I still scratch the inside of my ears and feel a chill in my breast.

I fantasized that I was a hip newcomer at a Krishna conscious lecture. I asked this question: "You said that Shrila Prabhupada liked to read his own books, but he never thought, 'I have written this book.' He thought that Krishna wrote it and that he had been the instrument. I find his humility nice. But I want to ask, then, who Shrila Prabhupada *was*? If he didn't write the book, does he exist? Is he a nonentity, a nonperson? If you say he's a person, then is he only generic, as in 'an eternal servant of the servant of God?' If he is a specific person, please tell me about him. What I really want to know is can we too be persons "specific ones, I mean? Can it be all right, even important, to own our own personhood in Krishna consciousness? Or is all personhood in this world forever false ego?"

Ask that and then wait for a reply. The *sannyasi* would whittle it (and me) down to size, I'm sure. The devotees would laugh at my strange question. Then I would go away.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

The Supreme Lord's devotees are set free from material life just by their appreciating the Supreme Lord's "wonderful potency in the practical field." They see God in all things. Nondevotees merely speculate and thus remain entangled in matter birth after birth.

"Words, mind and ego, with their respective controlling demigods, have failed to achieve success in knowing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore, we simply have to offer our respectful obeisances unto Him as a matter of sanity." (*Bhag.* 3.6.40, purport) The devotees admit that God's potencies are unlimited, but at least they know that the Absolute Truth is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

In the seventh chapter of the Third Canto, Vidura inquires further. He asks how the pure soul becomes entangled in nescience. Well, he is placed under the *avidya* potency.

Is that like me getting a headache?

It's like a Hare Krishna devotee falling away from the teachings and practices. He falls into *maya*.

Do we still stay that? Maybe we don't say much when people leave.

Vidura asks, "If Krishna is in everyone's heart, then why do the living entities suffer? Why doesn't the supreme father protect them from falldown?" Maitreya answers all these questions.

I'm thinking up an excuse not to paint this afternoon. It's so dark and cold. It might add something cheerful to the atmosphere if I painted. But I have to start out "and even end up "not knowing for sure. I also risk a headache. But if I don't paint, I also take a risk. Sometimes it's better to just go ahead and work.

I decided to end this volume of EJW on Christmas Day. I'll have been back here for a week. I have the whole winter ahead of me to burrow through the cold.

We quiver because of material wounds. Krishna consciousness frees us from pain. By devotion and detachment, we lose our misconception (I am this body, etc.). Only devotional service pleases Lord Vasudeva, and only devotees can realize that. "Such association can, by degrees, release one from the quivering elements."

* * *

4:45 p.m.

Hey, I'm a good artist. Did you see that one I did of Lord Chaitanya standing beside the Jagannatha Mandira? And the self-portrait? I sankirtana. Wasn't that clever?

I dared to draw a silhouette of Shrila Prabhupada, his hands folded in prayer, but this time I overlaid it with purple, yellow, and white.

Hare Krishna. Nighttime. No heater (it's broken) in the front hall, so they're not bothering to close the door tightly. It's like a refrigerator down there. They also tramp in quite a bit of dirt on their shoes. Night, as I mentioned. My fragile well-being is so dependent on electricity. As soon as it goes off, I'm plunged into the cold and dark.

As will happen inevitably.

Better be thinking of Krishna.

* * *

5:05 p.m.

Phases

Did I get any mail? That's what I want to know.

Maybe a coat, a Maine Game Warden Parka for Christmas in a box. Maybe an e-mail from a loved one. Maybe nothing but at least I had to ask. My own letters "did they go out? Oh, those paintings I did are still soaking wet and my head aches.

* * *

The electric heater hums then goes out.

Shades from the light. Push through another

hour. That cake I had for dessert was quite dry today.

I went to his house later and told him, "From now on, add something "slices of apple or cream or a soy drink "nothing dry should be served." "Of course," he said. I was unabashed, thinking of dessert during *japa*.

* * *

Choose what They shall wear tomorrow.
This can't last forever either. Will someone serve Them after I'm gone? Keep the same *arca-vighraha* in their family for generations or will They be placed in the Ganges and when it overflows, lost to sight?

* * *

When was the last time I thought of the Yamuna?
"Those topics are over our heads (like the Yamuna herself), but we go through phases, don't we?" What phase am I in tonight? The cold-moon winter just before Christmas "makes me lonely in this rainy quiet. But this poem is stiff-necked grateful and dependent on love with is the only phase I know of that is permanent.

December 23, 12 a.m.

Monks used to copy books out by hand, even in the cold of their monasteries. Thomas More says they used to draw obscene pictures in the books' gutters. I don't do that.

I dreamt that Bhaktivinoda Thakura was living in an apartment complex. A Hindu and a Western Hare Krishna took shelter in his apartment. The story went on from there. I awoke thinking that I can't work with such dreams. Whatever they're teaching is just too strange and indirect. I have no way to unlock them.

"Simply by chanting and hearing of the transcendental name, form, etc. of the Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, one can achieve the cessation of unlimited miserable conditions. Therefore what to speak of those who have attained attraction for serving the flavor of the dust of the Lord's lotus feet?" (*Bhag.* 3.7.14)

Devotional service is most direct. It's better than *jnana*. Devotional service is divided into *vaidhi* and *raga*. Shrila Prabhupada certainly doesn't rush us to *raga* "doesn't even dwell on its details in his books. This is now an old story, how some have gone to gurus outside ISKCON to fill this gap. I went, but now? The whole thing has become so political, although it shouldn't be. Shrila Prabhupada: "By practicing *sadhana-bhakti* one may gradually rise to the point of *raga-bhakti*, and by performing *raga-bhakti* in loving transcendental service one can even control the Supreme Powerful Lord."

The spiritual attraction to serve is something more than a mere passion to be active. It requires being patient enough to chant and hear, to actually think about Krishna enough

to develop attraction for Him. I wish I had that kind of "active" service spirit, the kind that feels spontaneous. Then my mind would run to stay at the "particles of the dust of the lotus feet of the Lord."

"Vidura said: O powerful sage, my Lord, all my doubts about the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the living entities have now been removed by your convincing words. My mind is now perfectly entering into them." (*Bhag.* 3.7.15) He did raise doubts as to who the Lord was and how come the soul falls into *maya*, but upon hearing Maitreya's explanations, he was satisfied. He obviously didn't feel a need to return to the doubts again and again.

I harbor basic doubts. I bring them out and expose them. I am not always satisfied with the responses I get. I ask again. It's a regular thing.

A true devotee has his doubts removed once and for all. regardless, all devotees remain attached to serving guru. That's the basis of their faith.

Shrila Prabhupada says doubts about the eternal relationship with the Lord are created by mental speculators. Hearing from authorities and serving them can clear them up. The Lord helps from within, "and the disturbed mind can thus be fixed on the progressive path." Pray to your guides for mercy.

* * *

4:20 a.m.

New outfits for Radha-Govinda have arrived from Vrindavana. They were sewn by Tulasi dasi. I appreciate her service. Heard *Manah-siksa* with Bhaktivinoda Thakura's commentary while I served Them.

It's important to remember that we are subordinate to the Supreme Lord. Krishna is my Lord, and Radha's glories were being described even as I bathed Her. "Over our heads" "will I drown?"

The *gosvamis* tell us to live on the banks of Radha-kunda or at Govardhana. I don't think I can do that yet, not in my present consciousness. I would be driven out by what appears to be the harsh conditions affecting mind and body. Instead I'm at this desk where there's heat and plenty of light.

Krishna is my guide and I live in His grace. The people who rebel against Him don't understand what they have given up. The devotees are kind to approach them with reminders.

In the tub I let myself grunt and groan with my old-man bodily complaints. The body is meant for that and more, unfortunately. Then almost felt like crying "the blues hit and opened a flood gate of emotion. I wanted to serve Krishna, but realized how weak I am and how little time I have left.

* * *

Life isn't just the good times
rolling. It has sorrow, jagged
pain. It moves fast sometimes,
then slow, as we march with nervous
energy to a funeral of classical beauty.

* * *

5:20 a.m.

I crave privacy at certain times of the day. It's a real invasion when someone walks in just when I want to write or I'm thinking of something important. reminds me of that very first memory of this lifetime: I was trying to dress myself and surprise my mother. She shouldn't have come in on me, but she did and I burst into tears. I still can't control the world.

Wandering around outdoors in the cold and dark. A few stars punctuating the vast sky. Oh, vast! Vast vat of Guinness Stout they're making up in that there town for all the hearties to celebrate Christmas and New Years. Hare Krishna. Sober mantras night and day.

Poor Chaitanya misread his clock and came to the house an hour early. I heard him at 4 a.m. At 5 instead of 6 he suddenly burst in with the Deities' plates. I told him he was an hour early. He almost cried.

* * *

5:35 a.m.

Pictures God lets me draw. Getting better at it through prayer and practice. I refuse some words and accept others to write on my drawings. Prabhupada said Krishna has no veins. Lester Young had too many veins. Charlie Parker put a needle in his vein. All vain, says the Bible. Don't take His name in vain.

Cobalt blue. Krishna is blue. Anything that reminds us of Him is okay.

They let Krishna kids crayon during lectures. Probably pay attention better than the adults.

Romantic soul "discovery. Getting drunk on beer and expression in those days. Gene Shepherd and other freshman-year discoveries. Lots of self-pity. Navy still ahead. Young and helpless, just a kid really. Now thirty years later I'm supported by friends who trust my process.

* * *

8:25 a.m., Hari-nama Kutir

I don't need to write to justify *japa*, but it keeps me awake. In the dark, the nodding dark, I hover over errant thoughts. Imagined doing some kind of story on the U.S.S. Saratoga. I would need permission before I photographed her. Hovering over the dream of my post-breakfast nap where I met a girl "she spoke to me first, but I was equally aggressive. Later walked alone in my rain gear past men and women. They would see me alone and wonder at the life of a monk.

Lord Krishna is easy to attain if we chant, so why try something harder? "We have only to chant Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. There is no fast rule and regulation. We can chant on the street or on the subway, in our home or in our office. There is neither expenditure

nor tax." (*Path of Perfection*, pp. 128 - 29) Those sentences seem edited, probably by Hayagriva. No hard and fast rule. Just chant, you silly bastard.

Oh, but my head hurts. And when I chant I think of a girl I met in a dream. But I mainly feel head pressure.

Narada Muni to Shrila Vyasadeva: The Supreme Lord Sri Krishna, whose glories and activities are pleasing to hear, at once appears on the seat of my heart, as if called for, as soon as I began to chant His holy activities." (*Bhag.* 1.6.33)

My chanting is like an animal's hurt cry. May He hear it, although it's not imbued with love or even exuberant praise.

Krishna is personally present in offenseless chanting. He's on your tongue, as I wrote in that 1966 poem. I meant it. I was happy. The Swami liked my reference. Chanting on Huston Street, on earth. We chant and need nothing else. We're unbustable. When we chant we become attracted to Krishna. O Lord, O energy of the Lord, please let me serve You beyond even my own spiritual sense gratification.

* * *

I hereby award you the Limping Head and Spirit Award because you have persisted despite the little obstacles in your path. This award will be presented in the form of an A3 sheet of paper, but the real reward is the service itself. There is nothing higher you could receive.

Thanks, I said, and prayed to understand. Chanting produces more chanting.

* * *

10:33 a.m.

Spent 9 to 10:30 dealing with headache and indigestion. Feeling too old to surrender today.

* * *

2:35 p.m.

"By serving the feet of the spiritual master, one is enabled to develop transcendental ecstasy in the service of the Personality of Godhead, who is the unchangeable enemy of the Madhu demon and whose service vanquishes one's material distresses." (*Bhag.* 3.7.19) The Lord is the enemy of His devotees' suffering. When we know our relationship with the Lord in one of the five mellows and engage in it, then attachment to the material world is finished.

Another verse states that we need to practice austerity if we want to serve pure devotees who are going back to Godhead. But Shrila Prabhupada qualifies, "Even if one has no assets of favorable austerity, if he nevertheless takes shelter of the *mahatmas*, who are engaged in chanting and hearing" "then we too can make progress toward going back to Godhead (*Bhag.* 3.7.20, purport). Disciples have to learn about their eternal relationship with God from self-realized souls.

* * *

3:48 p.m.

Take a day off from the art room. Catch up on writing. I want to read with Chaitanya at 5, so let me be quiet for a while now. Chant within yourself and God will be pleased. I tell myself I'm no good, not compassionate, always trying to stay out of harm's way, but I keep forgetting why I'm doing that. Then I lose more time dealing with pain and I remember.

M. will bring the mail. I'll meet it tomorrow. Something to do. Find that preaching voice. I admitted that the last batch was so big that I felt I lost my integrity in attempting to answer so many letters. I felt I had to answer in ways that weren't completely true to myself, and that made me feel disgust by evening. But I don't see any way around that problem because there's just so much mail and some of the people who write don't really want to know what I have to say.

* * *

4:10 p.m.

Come to a Clearing
I'm not painting tonight but I like
the smell in that art room and that picture of me
looking sad and sulky. Time is short.

* * *

We'll read Ramananda Raya talking to
Lord Chaitanya "an advantage for us.
Sixty I am "and entitled
to do as I like. I can pick up chestnuts in the yard
or walk around the house
but I don't like lying to myself
so I'm chipping away at that.

* * *

No notice of Christmas eve but some devotees
will drive to their parents' homes
and we'll stay here having breakfast and lunch
and time in between. Praying for a few moments
of understanding and to come to a clearing where
one of those *Bhagavatam* verses will suddenly appear
for a while and I will be able to feel it
in my heart.

* * *

5:28 p.m.

Dasya-sakhya-vatsalya-madhurya. reading. *Santa* is "peaceful." Ramananda Raya had just begun to explain *madhurya* when we stopped for the evening. I mentioned that the Christians worship Christ as a child (*vatsalya*) on Christmas. Most honor his mother and father. They also have a story of protecting him from a Kamsa figure, Herod, and having to flee to Egypt (as Krishna left Mathura). Christ as the tender infant.

Then Chaitanya told me how he grew up in Communist Russia. No one dared to observe Christmas. He laughed to tell it.

Chose brown and gold outfits for Their Lordships to wear tomorrow. Radha and Krishna are infinitely playful rising in a sky of transcendental emotion studded with starlike tears of ecstasy.

December 24, 12:00 a.m.

Write for therapy, for joy, and to fill up the lonely hole. Blotter on my desk wrinkled. I thought the mail would be waiting for me downstairs, and like a boy eager to unwrap his Christmas presents, I went downstairs to look. There was nothing there "only some garbage. I guess I'll have to turn to the *Bhagavatam* instead.

"If one comes in contact with the book *Bhagavatam* as well as with the devotee *bhagavata*, who knows what the *Bhagavatam* is, then such a fortunate man gets out of the material entanglement." (*Bhag.* 3.8.2, purport)

The Lord is sometimes addressed as UttamaSloka, "One who is worshiped with selected words by devotees." "A profusion of such selected words comes from a devotee who is absorbed in affection and love for the devotional service of the Lord." We can't make prayers without such fine sentiments and love.

The boy sages came down from higher planets by riding the celestial Ganges. They asked Lord Sankarsana questions similar to those Vidura had just asked Maitreya. If we want to preach, best we hear these answers carefully.

Yeah, well, I sure want to preach, but with shakes and wiggles, pics and ticks. To make an audience smile? I thought you reprobated or renounced yr audience? Well, sometimes I ride the air currents.

So here's what happened at the time of creation. The first being, intelligent Lord Brahma, was born from the lotus emanating from Lord Vishnu's abdomen, but Lord Brahma didn't understand the creation, the lotus, or himself. Then the water became turbulent, and Lord Brahma became perturbed. He began to speculate on his origin. He climbed down the inside of the lotus stem, but couldn't find the root. We can't find our roots by personal endeavor. Same with the endeavor to uncover falsity or dust or being or whatever. We'll never arrive at the truth or become inflamed with love for Krishna unless He helps us. If we want His help, we have to want nothing else? "One has to wait for the mercy of the Lord before one can either render service unto Him or know Him as He is."

The Supreme Lord was revealed to Lord Brahma. *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* describes the Personality of Godhead whom he saw. I read this description while we were camping in Olympia in Washington State, within view of Mt. Rainier. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* says natural beauty is defeated by the glory of the Lord's personal form.

Brahma heard *ta-pa* "two syllables that instructed him what to do. I hear, "Med-bed," as the pain sets in.

* * *

5:25 a.m.

So cold! Frost on the bench outdoors. Can't see any stars. A letter from Bhurijana Prabhu tells how he stayed in a tent for a week. On the last day, he concluded that he wanted to chant and pray all the time. *Japa* called "the weak sister." How to revive it? Seems hopeless.

Cold heart, cold weather. Just depend on Krishna. He knows what we want.

* * *

8:15 a.m., Hari-nama Kutir

Chant on beads and hear. Should be simple. Veer off? remember to come back. Your voice is for that, to vibrate in your chest. B.'s advice, L.'s advice, J.'s practices, Maharaja's guidance *sastra's* directions "how to balance in my own case? "As you grow older, you have to slow down. Can't do all the things you want to. At least do some of them."

How much (how badly) do I want to increase my rounds? Not enough to exclude other activities. If I could learn to chant all the time, on my breath, in gratitude, begging permission and mercy, that would be better.

Such a simple act, chanting the mantra. We tend to prefer something more difficult. Perhaps it makes us feel as if we're striving with more purpose.

Rain on roof. Another day going by. If I were chosen to say something about chanting Hare Krishna, I couldn't tell any success stories. I'd have to tell of the struggle instead "and probably the failure to control the mind. Most people don't think that's appropriate from a teacher in Krishna consciousness. They want to hear something more. So we explain, again, the philosophy behind chanting.

* * *

"You have invested all Your potencies in Your name . . ." What's the use of trying to do better? I slip and fall. I want to sleep. My mind goes where it wants and refuses to listen to the higher self.

Prabhupada said, "Our students can chant the Hare Krishna mantra twenty-four hours a day and they will never get tired. . . . if one chants this mantra, he will never get tired. The more one chants, the more his heart will be cleansed of material dirt and the more the problems of his life with in this material world will be solved." (SSr, p. 143)

I don't get tired of chanting exactly, but I get tired of trying. Afraid of dying. Nothing else to do but chant.

"The word Hara is the form of addressing the energy of the Lord, and the words Krishna and Rama are forms of addressing the Lord Himself."

A newcomer wrote me that he works his job from eight in the morning until eight at night, then chants sixteen rounds. But he's exhausted, so his chanting is mechanical, full of struggle to control the mind, and fatigued. When he's done, he said he falls into bed. "Order your life," I gently suggested. We have to chant during the best hours of the day.

* * *

9:30 a.m.

In the *Kutir*

You missed the point, so get it now:
Krishna conscious times rain on roof. Having
a better morning than usual in the temple
of the mind. He told truth in the
shack slash *kutir* "no cache
of devotion and no bold confidence
to trust God's love.

* * *

Gave a gift to a friend, and made it sound like it was something I didn't want, so needed to give it away. Happy Christmas.

* * *

9:50 a.m.

Got most of the mail answered. Is there a Beat generation? Got a CD of Kerouac reading a speech at Hunter College. Lo and behold, I was present for that one with my sister. At the time I thought it was ridiculous, incomprehensible, disorganized chaos. I expected a speech to be orderly. It went over my head. I was distracted by the externals, such as his notoriety and possible drunkenness. Couldn't hear, as we say in Krishna consciousness.

So what? That Staten Island Community College student then went home and wrote an article for his school's little newspaper. Dr. Alexander thought it was good. I missed the point, of course, but the Beat generation missed it too. The point isn't found much in the Christian God, because Christ didn't reveal much to them back then, those shepherds and swineherds. He told it as Krishna to Arjuna, told it again to Uddhava, spoke it through Vyasa and Shukadeva. Prabhupada carried it to America. JK was alive at the time, but not interested. Those Beat poets were too absorbed in themselves as prophets and poets, eclectics and agnostics.

The rain is washing the window. Inside I feel happy that Christ appeared in the world, although I won't go and attend midnight Mass where his devotees are gathered, grateful. I remember feeling the Christmas eve Mass vibes, how people profess love for one another and have higher aspirations for a few days even as bombs drop around the world and other people mug and steal their way through what for them is a cold and unfriendly world.

* * *

11:50 a.m.

Chaitanya brought me three art books and apologized beforehand in case I didn't find them useful. One was called *How To Paint With Acrylics*. It contained female and male nudes "the usual for an art book. On one page was a color photograph of a young woman nude. That shocked me. I returned the book without looking at more of it, but retained that unwanted image in my brain. Thought of it while massaging Prabhupada's chest. Realized I wanted this chest instead of the chest I saw in the book.

Another book was called *Art And Fear*. It looks demanding and intellectual, talking about how one shouldn't romanticize what it means to be an artist. And the third book was on Celtic art.

M. making *kicchari* today to serve with bread he brought back from the restaurant. I plan to go to the art room this afternoon. Wind and rain. Hare Krishna. This is it, there is no other thing right now. For me art is not some big, difficult thing. They quote one writer as saying, "Writing is not hard. You just have to stare at a blank page until blood comes out of your forehead." Another romantic notion. I'm of the easy school, writing the Australian crawl.

In *Art And Fear* the author says most of what we paint won't interest people because it's not actually good. It may interest a *few* people "the ones who love you "but no one with taste will take it seriously. We should be grateful, however, for those loved ones.

All right, but how to be God conscious in what we do? Consider chanting Hare Krishna while you paint, each mantra an arrow aimed at pleasing God. He is especially pleased when we shoot our arrows into the public forum so that others can share His mercy. But private *japa* is, of course, also recommended. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati took a vow to chant a billion names. We ISKCONites chant sixteen rounds a day. Why chant more? Does chanting more give us a better chance at hitting the target?

O Krishna, what do you think? Can You see I get so little joy from chanting? Why should I think that *more* chanting will please either of us? Proof of my poverty. But perhaps in the end, it's beneficial. The more I chant, the more chance there will be that I will make progress.

* * *

12:08 p.m.

Words ought to express something important and merry and of help to devotees. Be gentle in criticism, not harsh or destructive. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. The alone spirit, poet, art, God. Shelter ordinary people, the sick, hungry doubtful, lusty, angry, and victimized. We are all receiving karmic rewards, but devotees want to help anyone in need by giving them Krishna.

* * *

2:15 p.m.

Well-known fact: when we read a lot outside Krishna consciousness and then return to *sastra*, it's hard to reenter. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* doesn't seem a part of the real world, if we train ourselves to think that the real world is the world of illusion.

Pure devotional service is performed without selfish motives. It awards direct association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna. After seeing the Supreme Lord, Brahma, who desired create, began to offer his prayers.

The greatest ignorance is to be unaware of the supreme cause. "One can know the supreme cause, the Personality of Godhead, by the causeless mercy of the Lord, which is bestowed upon the Lord's pure devotees like Brahma and those in disciplic succession." (*Bhag.* 3.9.1, purport) When we are acquainted with the beauty and opulence of the Supreme Lord, we are no longer attracted by any other beauty.

Lord Brahma expressed his surrender to the Supreme Lord: "The relationship of the pure devotees with the Lord develops because of devotional service to the Lord on the authentic basis of Vedic authority. Such pure devotees are not mundane sentimentalists, but are factually realists because their activities are supported by Vedic authorities who have given aural reception to the facts mentioned in the Vedic literatures." (*Bhag.* 3.9.5, purport)

December 25, 12:05 a.m.

Merry Christmas. "Will you have any special observance today?" No. But I saw that M. bought an electric toaster for our stale bread. "I mean about the Savior coming into the world. Do you people . . . ?" We observe by chanting God's names. Christ is our Lord too. Any saintly person is a son (or servant) of God, but Jesus is no ordinary devotee. We looked up what Prabhupada said about him. There are innumerable references. "The favorite example is Jesus Christ. He gave his life." He came into the world to take people's sins and to teach the path of love of God.

May he be pleased with "unknown" Christians who read *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. People who don't want to hear about God or chant His names are unfortunate. "The Lord's pure devotees, however, take compassion upon such unfortunate persons and, in a missionary spirit, try to persuade them into the line of devotional service." (*Bhag.* 3.9.7, purport) Unless devotees take pity on them, their lives are hopeless.

"O my Lord, Your devotees can see You through the ears by the process of a bona fide hearing, and thus their hearts become cleansed, and you take Your seat there. You are so merciful to Your devotees that You manifest Yourself in the particular eternal form of transcendence in which they always think of You." (*Bhag.* 3.9.11)

Some people hear Handel's "Messiah" around this time. Some are at midnight Mass. Of course, their minds and thoughts roam. We are such body-bound creatures. Children absorbed in childish greed, hoping for the presents they want and quickly dissatisfied. Fighting. Drunkards in the streets. Police roaming. "And next year is Y2K. What are you going to do about it?"

God has eternal forms. He will reciprocate with us as we approach Him. Stay safe in His shelter in an authorized way. Be humble and admit your smallness. When you attain *prema*, then God agrees to become subordinate to you. By authorized hearing we

become attached to one of the many transcendental forms of the Lord as described in the *Vedas*. I'm a worshiper of Radha-Govinda. Is that all right? But I'm just practicing.

Due to natural inclination we have an original and eternal attachment to a particular form of God. regulated devotional service evokes it. This occurs at the *svarupa-siddhi* stage, after which the Lord never leaves the devotee. But He "does not disclose Himself to a casual or inauthentic worshiper to be exploited."

Okay, this is good, valuable information. I'm alert and it's passing through me. Imagine what it would be like to reach that stage in this lifetime. No pretense. Then there would be no reason to be afraid of anything in this world "nothing could distract you from Krishna. No attachment. No pain. You might tell people about God in a general way, but you would cultivate intense *bhakti* within. God would then not be a vague presence in your life "not a generic "God the Father."

* * *

4:15 a.m.

No nondevotional songs, says Narottama dasa Thakura. Want *Krishna-prema*? Follow his advice.

On the street, a young book distributor met a follower of a *rasika* guru. Drop it.

Oh boy, I remember those great jazz players and they pleased me. But will they help me remember Krishna at death? When you're stuck alone (is death similar to birth, where you're pushed out a narrow passage?) through the passage-strait to death, you'll have no one to help you but the gurulike midwife reminding you to remember Krishna. What if you reply, "I can't. It hurts too much"? Then while leaving it all, you suddenly hear the beat of a snare drum and it snares you back into the world?

* * *

Krishna, why are we so intent on living our lives quickly? It seems we'll burn out that much sooner that way. I want to slow down. Anyway, the medicine slows me down. But I see some people rushing through their mantras like "moths rushing to a flame." Others rush through their mantras so they can save conditioned souls. Aspiring devotees want to free themselves of *maya*. The Krishna conscious warrior is fast at killing demons. This is a fight. I'm just a little tired.

* * *

List

- (1) Whist a game.
- (2) Migraine novel.
- (3) No logical memories allowed.
- (4) You ought to tell yourself first.
- (5) Dreamt of a gay club guy saying, "Oh, you Krishnas will try anything, but where is the preaching?"
- (6) Pencil (sharpener).

(7) My mother bought a toaster and a roaster. It's Christmas morn. The presents opened under the tree by now in this country, but what about the Muslims bombed and the children harmed?

* * *

5:25 a.m.

More lights on than usual at Praghosa's house. He closed the restaurant yesterday (Christmas Eve) at 6 p.m. More sounds than usual coming from Madhu's hovel as he's smashing peat or wood to load into his stove. Christmas morning among the Hare Krishnas. One devotee wrote to ask if we would be having a special observance. I wrote back, "No, every day is quiet, sublime, and productive." Hare Krishna.

* * *

5:50 a.m.

Funny little man writes. O Krishna conscious Christmas, O house you never leave. The night before Christmas is over. People watching football on TV today, I hear. Gorgeous women in the ads, but horrific news. Big meals and drinks and money and wandering the streets where the same problems continue. You and Phil each received basketballs one year went to PS #8 to shoot some hoops. No one else was around. We examined each other's total stash of Christmas gifts. Who got more? Gift wrappings tossed. It's how we showed off our petty wealth. Father was in charge of doling out gifts "a real man. Self-advertised macho, actually strong, could be easy-going too" are Italian-Americans all like that? relate this to now. Yoga. I gave up what I was. Better now, I hope, although still unloving.

* * *

8:15 a.m., Hari-nama Kutir

People used to go to see the "Messiah" at Carnegie Hall. Thine own *japa*. Open a window. I'm no *yogi*. Controlling my mind is as difficult as controlling the wind. I just chant. What else can I do?

Slippery mind, strong and obstinate. Used to having its way. I try to tell it to stay on the name, but it's not interested. Would rather breathe and live and skip around the universe. I follow helplessly.

But the mind does not really have its own will, and that's the really sad part. The mind actually just accepts and rejects as it serves the soul in its vain search for material happiness.

A crow just landed outside. Now more of them. Sounds like they are chiding me, the guy in this *kutir* with his Holy Joe beads.

On Christmas I'll offer a round to God. M. says he'll watch the first part of "Jesus of Nazareth." I could join him, but I don't want to see the scene where they spear all the babies.

* * *

The Hare Krishna *maha-mantra* is a prayer for deliverance, protection, and engagement in the Lord's service. It's a form of prayer. Why not simply make the same prayer in English? Because our spiritual master gave it to us in this way. It doesn't need further translation, he said. It's a word formula, given by Krishna. Don't change it. Hare is an address to radha. It's perfect the way it is.

We have forgotten to serve God. "This chanting is exactly like the genuine cry of a child for its mother's presence. Mother Hara helps the devotee achieve . . . and the Lord reveals Himself to the devotee . . ." (SSr, p.148) Chant sincerely.

If I had known how to chant when I was in the Navy, I could have saved myself, but I would also have been ostracized. "We have no other prayer than 'Please accept me.' Simply pray and cry that the Lord accept us." (POP, p. 144)

Beg for service life after life. Prabhupada is offering that. Whether we know it or not, we are addressing God and His energy when we chant.

Chanting is the essence of Vedic hymns. The chanter has performed all sacrifices in previous lives. "By all the *Vedas* I am to be known." Our chanting goes directly to Krishna; we call Him by name "again and again.

* * *

Christmas Film

Dripping perspiration. "Thank you, Jack Kerouac." Shall I Read the poem? (Before he gets thrown off stage.)

* * *

I'm here. Praghosa's car is here. The Zefferelli film is here, the russian immigrant and his e-mail if only we could learn from what's here "and depend on God's name.

* * *

ISKCON was right but could other groups possibly be right too? I said, "God controls everything, so who am I to interfere?" Playing wise man, knower of Krishna science and how to communicate it for the welfare of all.

* * *

A bit milder today. Thought it was a good idea to watch the well-made film of the events leading to the birth

of great servant of God.

Mary: "What do you want of me?"

Joseph: "This is too much for any man to believe." Me: "I'll have to take a feverfew if it gets too bad."

Swami, my brother will help me to appreciate you, but I already know you are my savior. I am your shoe I mean your foot dust and carry your order on my head.

* * *

10:00 a.m.

Jesus, on your day, please allow me entrance to your holy place. I'm a devotee of Hare Krishna, a disciple of Shrila Prabhupada so you may know me in the divine realm beyond sects.

* * *

11:03 a.m.

Watching the Zefferelli film (up to the birth of Jesus in the manger) opened me to emotion. God came to Mary and gave a divine son. In the same way, God can reveal to me *how to love Shrila Prabhupada*. The problem can be overcome, so I cry tears and feel hope beyond intellect or doubt.

I need to submit specifically to the strict rules and to hear my master, but I also need to be myself. Have faith in the Lord and in the guru principle. Be faithful and loving.

* * *

12:40 p.m.

Mary, the handmaiden of the Lord, suffered, both during the birth of her child and at his death. Jesus suffered too as soon as he started his ministry. How can we expect to escape suffering? We tend to look for anesthesia, because we don't like to meet the real rawness of life.

* * *

2:32 p.m.

Christmas lunch offered to the Lords with a bowed head.

Walking on the gravel this morning I thought I *would* live forever because I feel like I always have been walking on gravel. ridiculous: But I walked on gravel in front of the Gita-nagari cabin in 1980, in many others places, and now here in our yard in Ireland. *Therefore* I will not die?

* * *

2:20 p.m.

"One who invokes His transcendental names, even unconsciously, at the time he quits his life, is certainly washed immediately of the sins of many, many births and attains Him without fail." (*Bhag.* 3.9.15) For the materialists, Krishna acts as eternal time and cuts their plans in the struggle for existence to pieces. Thus praising the Supreme Lord, Lord Brahma asked about his own situation now that cosmic creation was about to begin. He wanted to be empowered to create, "For I am also one of the surrendered souls who are dear to the Lord."

But, "I pray that I not be materially affected by my works, for thus I may be able to give up the false prestige of being the creator." (*Bhag.* 3.9.23) Any "creator" (artist, worker) should at best see himself as an instrument of the Supreme Lord. No pride necessary. None of us are independent. Lord Brahma prays that he "not be deviated from the vibration of the Vedic hymns." He is referring to the fact that he has to associate with vicious living entities. He doesn't want them to drag him down from *brahma-tejas*. This is a warning to all of us: unless we pray constantly to the Supreme Lord we will fall down.

Lord Brahma finishes his prayers for creative energy and falls silent, as if tired. The Supreme Lord sees that Brahmaji is anxious about the creation, and maybe even a little depressed as he looked over the endless waters, so He speaks deeply to him to remove all his illusions.

* * *

3:25 p.m.

Quiet Christmas

My head hurts and that means I
can take medication "but only thrice
in a week. I just want to be quiet
on this Christmas afternoon
no pain to speak of
time to think and perhaps to pray.

* * *

I don't want to be a creator "maybe
Lord Brahma's prayers shaped my mood
especially him begging to be spared
from passion.
I know the feeling as words pass through

out of control and time passes too.

* * *

I was ready to meet anyone today but
no one looked over the wall. I was ready to
be interrupted, but no one came. Daydreamed
instead that tomorrow I will use my new toy
and toast my bread.

* * *

Prayed "another passion "to enter faith
and a part of Mahaprabhu's movement
more anchored
sheltered by His feet.

* * *

3:52 p.m.

I went out and came back. Out three weeks and back for a week. Settled into a routine
I hope to maintain throughout winter and spring. Happy New Year.