

ELECTRIONIC BOOK

By Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami

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Every Day, Just Write

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Also by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

Srila Prabhupada Lilamrita

Handbook for Krishna Consciousness

Readings in Vedic Literature: The Tradition Speaks for Itself

Your Ever Well-Wisher

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Japa Reform Notebook

Qualities of Sri Krishna

Vaisnava Behavior/ The Twenty-Six Qualities of a Devotee

Japa Walks/Japa Talks

Japa Transformations

September 1, 1997

September Songs

1

Invitation

"September Morn" is a painting of
a woman bathing in
a stream. There was once a
cheap porcelain knick-knack "a
deer "called September Morn.
It's September 1st and
in my house
the clock is ticking slowly,
audibly, like the one on Grandma
Doty's porch.

* * *

September 13, my sister's birthday.
"September in the rain." Two years
ago I wrote *September Catchall*.

* * *

O grace O
face don't
hit me with
a mace,
I'm just a cowpoke
sannyasi
about to travel
in a Ford Econoline to
Espana.
Would you like to come along?

* * *

We'll sing huzzahs, play
guitars and a lute by the roadside,
fall nervously asleep behind our tin walls "
you know the game: crossing
borders, entering temples,
playing Krishna ballads, looking seriously
at purports and
who knows? Maybe find a bright
moment. As we mix,

as we die
together.

September 2, Midnight

The Supreme Lord is the well-wisher of all living entities, so why was He partial to Indra and against the Daityas? Maharaja Pariksit raises this question.

Thus we begin the Seventh Canto on a cold-feeling midnight at Inis rath. I'm calculating whether I'll need to bring the Eighth Canto on our six-week journey. Looking for happiness in this flesh-beating heart.

A Godbrother, I heard fourth hand, was diagnosed with a terminal disease. He was given about three years to live. Who believes it? We don't want to feel pity or give quarter to anyone. No one should get a break (except me). Why are we so harsh?

Sometimes we think that because we're battling the *asuras* we need only fit, front-line men. Anyone shot in action has no more value to us. Able-bodied, pro-active men are needed, because we are so few and the demons so many. Schisms pull our men and women away. Autumn is coming. Another autumn.

* * *

He's making it up "we never slaughtered horses never
never quartered at Valley Forge.

Oh yes, they did, that Continental Army, as they called themselves.

The bitter worriers.

Ah, don't think about it. Don't let the mind go to the body's miseries, your body's or
our institutional body's. Our age is improving with the addition of Krishna

Krishna.

O roundhouse cartoon.

Corn flakes "words that come. Go forth to battle

peacefully against your

fears and doubts. No point making fun of our own campaign,

no point

being quixotic

but laugh, yes, at yourself.

After all, it's September and the hay is in bundles. It's all right to be kind.

* * *

Thinking of travel plans. Ours are good. I am preparing to do more radio Shows,
preparing to record *Srimad-Bhagavatam* readings, preparing to draw, preparing to select
notebooks (need more felt markers from Dublin), planning to read the Seventh Canto.
Hoping to understand how the Supreme Lord's impartial. We know that He's both partial
and impartial, although everyone gets their due from the modes of nature. It's nice that
the *acarya* commentators are anxious to present the ways of God to us by making it clear
that Lord Hari is above the modes.

In one tape selection I have ready to play (tomorrow night), Srila Prabhupada says that the devotees in eternal Vrndavana love Krishna not simply because He is God, but because He is a beautiful friend or child or lover. We fear that if we don't love God, something may be wrong, so we had better serve Him. That's material business. The Vrajavasis love Him best.

At other times, Srila Prabhupada teaches us to love God because of His quality of being the Supreme Lord, or at least He'll advise us (Krishna does too) "to remember Me as the oldest, the one who knows everything, the cause of all, greater than the greatest, smaller than the smallest, and always a person." *Brahma-samhita* masterfully lists His qualities: *advaitam acyutam anadi ananta-rupam*. He is also *nava-yauvanam*, a beautiful, fresh youth. My Krishna.

* * *

2

Honor The Voice Within

September, he's got his own
clock
tick tocks
in the already cold.

* * *

It has been several hours since
I read how the Supreme Lord is
impartial. Well, may He be
partial to me. I'm in the right
club. But in my
heart
what does He see?
The kid who connived
even with his mother
to get his own way to
taste the fruit of his current lust?

* * *

Sing a song of prose liberated and
honor the inner voice, dictating,
insistent, saying, "*Write it down!*"
I obey but
not always. At least two people
working here, and the third
is pure spirit soul.

* * *

Rupa Gosvami, you said if we
can't live in Vrndavana "which I
assume is best "then we should live there
in our mind. I
live in *this* house, then
tomorrow at Bhadra's, next to the
all-night street light, but
Vrndavana, my master's purport,
my yearning to write through September.

* * *

On September 2, 1895, the explorer Zebulon Pike observed how when his men fired off their guns to shoot pigeons, they frightened the Indians. He said the Indians considered the explorers "very quarrelsome, and much for war, and also very brave." The Indians gave them excellent plums. A Governor Morris on this day in 1910 attended the divine service of the Shaking Quakers. He was obviously not converted or even inspired, but noted the "useless repetition" of the young preacher in his sermon. He didn't like the sermons glorifying "that pure felicity which attends celibacy . . . How ridiculous the notion, entertained by some, of the perfectibility of human nature."

I think I probably would have gotten more out of the Shakers (or the Quakers) than that. Maybe human nature can't be perfected, but the soul is already pure. Its purity simply has to be uncovered. It's likely that people who attended Srila Prabhupada's lectures also went home to criticize his stance on the point of celibacy. Perhaps they even wrote their impressions in their diaries.

As for Zebulon Pike, I can't gain much from this one rather taciturn, factual diary entry. He must have been passionately involved in walking around. He walked forty miles on September 2, 1905, and he staked a claim for America in what would later be the Louisiana Purchase. He has gone down in history as instrumental in the expansion of a great nation. Bow your head.

Also on this day in 1958 (when I was a freshman at Staten Island Community College), the poet Sylvia Plath wrote in her diary, "Liz Taylor is getting Eddie Fisher away from Debbie Reynolds." She also noted about herself, "I love too much, too wholly, too simply for any cleverness. Use imagination. Write and work to please."

Write and work to please. But please whom? Liz Taylor or Debbie Reynolds?
Krishna.

I too would like to love wholly and simply, beyond cleverness.

Each of these diarists, in his or her own way, seems sincere. Still, we know everyone has more or less of a hidden agenda to justify what they are doing. Or perhaps some are just plain honest. That's the charm for their readers. They don't seem to give a damn what anyone thinks. It's good even to hear Governor Morris say what he thinks of the Shakers because at least we know where he's at. reminds me of how Lord Buddha taught his followers to honestly reject the scriptures rather than to be like Mayavadis, who claim to follow them but who deny the Personality of Godhead.

* * *

10:02 a.m.

Probably my last walk to the shed this season. The way is paved in sharp thorns. There's something like blueberries growing on the trees. I wonder if they're poisonous? And plenty of blackberries, their bushes humped like hives. The berries are now half red and half black, almost ready for plucking. But not by me. Little shack all wet today.

On my way out I met Pahlada dasa, who appeared suddenly from his trailer. He was wearing a cap and said, "It's a wet day."

"But nice. Nice to walk."

We kept going in our opposite directions. Then I saw his new arrivals "cute piglets in a pen.

Pigs? Makes me think of mortality, their snorts. Or insects crawling. Srila Prabhupada calls one bug a "Diwali something" because it lives only for a night during the Diwali season. In that one night it is born, grows, mates, works, flies around, and in the morning dead. If we were to tell such an insect that humans live for thousands of such nights, how could it believe it? The *Vedas* are not stories, but fact, and full of the secrets of Krishnaloka. But how can we conceive of it all from our little vantage point?

* * *

4:12 p.m.

Who said I would never have to leave here "that I could stay and write my thoughts while sitting by this lake?

It was an illusion.

I could be killed by admirers.

I could be hypnotized by dipping oars.

I might forget who I really am.

I used to be a temple president, but that was long ago. Then I was an American *sannyasi* traveling around the U.S. Then I was a zonal guru for awhile, then broke down "my body. That's where I am now, but in my Ireland phase feeling exiled but peaceful; left alone.

Yes, it will be good to move away from here for awhile to see if things have changed and to see if I have changed. If I have, it will be obvious in my lecturing. I'll feel more meaning to it all.

"Whenever there is an opportunity to hear about the transcendental activities of the Lord, we must take it. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu recommends *kirtaniyah sada-harih*: One should always engage in *Krishna-katha* by chanting and talking about Krishna, and hearing about Him. That is the only occupation of a Krishna conscious person." (*Bhag.* 7.5.1, purport)

"Discourses concerning the activities of the Lord, in which the glories of His devotees are also found, are extremely pleasing to devotees. Such wonderful topics always counteract the miseries of the materialistic way of life."

* * *

5:50 p.m.

Linc on the phone with Madhu. Linc wants to know what kind of Bristol board I use so he can get me some more. It makes me sad to think about it. If I receive Bristol board now, when will I find the time to use it? I'd like everything to go smoothly. Friends are nice and disciples even nicer, but we can't make it. Do you know what I mean? If I explain it, you'll accuse me of being sentimental. Life is full of mixtures "happiness and sadness, wanting to stay and yet wanting to go. All we really have is the holy name.

September 3, 12:00 a.m.

God is a person. When He appears in the world, He accepts human characteristics and duties and people become baffled "either His contemporaries or those who hear about it later. On their behalf, Maharaja Pariksit is asking why Lord Visnu sided with Indra against the *asuras*. One who understands the Lord's activities is fit to be transferred to the spiritual world after he leaves the body.

Now, do you always think of Krishna?

Sure. Because He is everything, whatever I think of falls within His energies.

Clever. But I mean do you think of Him with devotion as the Supreme Person. You know, *man manah bhava mad bhakta* and all that.

No, not so perfectly.

That means you're in the modes.

I *could* think of Krishna even while in this material body, but I'd have to be detached from material pleasures and pains.

* * *

Just remembered how Prabhupada said that the two great wars between the Germans and the British ruined both parties. Queen Victoria expanded the British empire, and she kept a diary. I have never read it, but people who have say it's filled with superficial, petty details about the royal events she attended. There is no self-searching honesty. Not even any compassion. It makes her sound selfish. What did she do to help people or even the earth during her sojourn here? How did she hold up under suffering? Did she follow the truth? Did she love? Did she find happiness? Did she make a lasting contribution?

All those questions we can also ask of ourselves. "Therefore, how much a devotee has been favored by the Supreme Personality of Godhead can be tested by the activities the devotee has performed." (*Bhag.* 7.1.9, purport) If we qualify ourselves to receive *bhakti*, Krishna will give us more of it. Envious persons try to minimize an advanced devotee's activities. I'm guilty of this in the way I don't praise others. We have to be so careful. "According to one's attitude, Krishna becomes one's direct advisor, or Krishna becomes unknown."

* * *

3

First Travel Day

Now we're definitely going

not in a gown but at dawn.
I've got my bags and a trifle
to spare, ready for a day in Dublin.

* * *

"The kind of poems I want to write,"
said James Wright "
but let me tell you. My poems
contain the travel heebie-jeebies, the
one-minute-hot-the-next-cold
death and living, God and
Vivaldi, those words I
can't keep
under my control.
I accede to that.

* * *

"Syamananda," I said,
"this is your last chance. Please
write me a letter about how you
are. Otherwise, I'll be back
in six weeks and you can
try again." He wore a stylish
cap, a raincoat because
it rained before the sun
came out.
This is my September song.

* * *

On September 3, 1787, while attending the Constitutional Convention, George Washington dropped over to Ben Franklin's house and saw a new invention. It was something called a "mangle," and it was designed to press clothes. George Washington thought that it would be "very useful in all large houses." He then dined, drank tea, and spent the evening at Mr. Morris's.

In 1939 on this day, Sherwood Anderson had a "happy fine day with guests until evening." Then someone came "full of war news. reports actual war begun. I had to flee the house to be in darkness."

I was born at the end of that year, just as the war was being ushered in with the Nazi's invasion of Poland.

* * *

10:32 a.m.

Arrived at Bhadra and Sile's house in a place called Inchicore (but that's partly a secret). So many secrets. In Phoenix Park I turned to look at a cement statue of the phoenix rising from the flames. As I did so, M. said, "That's the residence of the American ambassador." He also pointed out that the street lamps are gas-burning. I didn't see any deer there. As we left the park, we saw a factory with lots of chemical towers resembling bottle tops. I guessed from previous visits that the factory was the Guinness beer plant.

Ireland is full of ads for beer, especially ads displayed on billboards. I saw one today for a German beer named Beck's: "The Germans never made a campaign for real beer. Didn't need one. Made in Bremen, by law."

By the way, there's another concert starring Christy Moore coming up.

And I was thinking this world was not so interesting. Today I realized I don't love the world. In the city it's difficult to focus or gain the presence of mind to write, even to catch fragments as we drive. Perhaps I've been at Inis rath so long that I feel strongly the difference in environments.

A burglar alarm (two notes only) rang for half an hour. I thought of the boy who cried wolf. No one came to shut it off. I was groggy at the time, half sleeping on a mattress. Now I'm up and it's ringing again. Our van alarm has more of a variety of hoots, whoops, bells, and horns. I rush to shut it off whenever it goes.

* * *

In the van I mentioned a devotee couple who live together but who are not married. This touched M. off to speak about how more and more this is considered normal in material society.

"Yeah, but not in ISKCON. It's also normal to eat meat and smoke dope."

"Some devotees smoke dope," he said. He said in the future, ISKCON may have to accommodate that a person can become some kind of a devotee (or "friend," we might say) of Krishna, yet commit what we define as illicit sex. Such a person cannot become initiated, but he or she may have a relationship with a spiritual master. He called this facing reality. Our congregation is growing.

But in the first excerpt I chose to play for the devotees tonight, Srila Prabhupada says we shouldn't turn Krishna consciousness into a farce. We shouldn't take initiation unless we can vow to follow and then carry through with the determination not to fall down. We shouldn't stress our weakness but our determination. If I say this, will it offend those who don't follow? (Timed writing exercise: Keep writing as long as the burglar alarm goes off.)

* * *

I felt uneasy with the drift of what M. was saying that we should recognize persons who don't follow all four rules. I thought he was going to say they should be given

initiation if they can follow at least three. That wasn't his point, though. Still, I find it hard to condone a lifestyle that includes illicit sex.

He said many people go over to other gurus when they find ISKCON so strict. Even the Gaudiya Math gurus are not so strict. The implication is that if we remain so restrictive, we will lose members. How, then, can we capture fallen souls for Lord Caitanya? Where is our mercy and our intelligence in spreading Krishna consciousness?"

I sat dumbly and didn't feel right. I felt righteous. I write. "Guinness: America on tap," one billboard reads. "Miller's High Life." Beer, and the stylish bleach-blond girl going to work at 8 a.m. through the Dublin streets. What does this have to do with Krishna consciousness? As I said, I felt righteous.

And the sky is grayer now, colder. The young trees in the yard scrawnier than the ones I see in Geaglum.

Row houses. I miss the peace of Geaglum. I didn't bring the Deities here, or my Prabhupada *murti*. I like the feeling of Srila Prabhupada *murti* at Geaglum sitting in trance. It's as if time is suspended for our relationship of worship. Maybe I think I have cast a spell on the room as if I was Prospero: "Until such time as I return, let the Deities on this altar remain peaceful. They do not need to eat or be washed because wherever I am I shall think of Them, pray to Them, and offer Them service."

Don't laugh. It's just something I liked to think about for a moment. I also like the idea of returning to them, to my home base. Knowing they are waiting for me there makes me feel like a person with a home base.

* * *

The Supreme Personality of Godhead creates the time factor within which He allows the material energy to control ""Thus the Supreme Personality of Godhead is never under the time factor nor under the material energy." (*Bhag.* 7.1.11) These statements can touch us deeply and reshape our mental conceptions if we pay attention to them and submit to them. I want to do it. When I allow them to get inside my head with all their implications, I often feel how different such thoughts are than simply sitting and feeling perceptions, looking at how the scrawny trees move in the breeze. But I am meant to *think*, right?

To be honest, it's easier to sit passively and gaze at an Irish lawn glowing green beneath a bright gray sky. I want to learn how to feel Krishna consciousness in an easy way. I want to feel the Supreme Person's presence is in all things, to feel the time factor under His control, to know that Inchicore is His manifestation just as I perceive it "even here, a tiny reflection of His grandeur and beauty. He dwells in the spiritual sky without burglar alarms. I sing the song of aspiration. Never put aside the *Bhagavatam*, even if you can't absorb much of it.

"Time is within His control, for He creates time to act in a certain way." Vedic, Krishna conscious theology is like no other. It goes further in pure theism, is consistent, explains evil, karma and transmigration which Christian (Western) theology cannot do. The God who creates and controls time is a cowherd boy!

Since all these times and situations in the creation are caused by Him, we cannot say they are false. "Mayavadi philosophers say . . . one should not bother about this *mithya* creation." No, I can look at a lawn and feel the breeze in Krishna consciousness.

* * *

2:35 p.m.

So much discussion of the Supreme Lord being impartial, but does He exist, they ask. Why not prove that first? You can't expect . . .

SK is read with irony, he wrote with irony, even in his religious books. Oh, these serious thinkers. Professor Strawser explains it all according to the postmodern way of thinking. No lightweight intellectuality here. Only fragmental writing.

O irony the

latest fashion. We puff ourselves up and think how people in the future might remember us and interpret our lives, we die thinking of irony rather than wholehearted *bhakti*.

O simplicity "take advantage of that nature.

No structure, no thought, the easy way to be a devotee of

Krishna.

Let us see some healthy doubt.

Writing this while waiting for the bathroom to be free. Sudden jolts and bumps in this house where I occupy a room facing the courtyard and use an old-fashioned student's writing desk with a hinged lid.

I hear Bhadra answering the phone. He's got a gruff-loud voice although he's so gentle.

"Five o'clock," he says into the receiver. "Come on by."

Pause.

"Yeah, early. Satsvarupa Maharaja is here."

That explains the "early." This delicate house plant has to get his beauty rest so he can rise at midnight to write at the tilted desk. He writes *improviso*, a jazzy inkling-fledgling. You know, "First thoughts are best thoughts."

Ironic and postmodern what?

Burn what he writes along with his body.

Hmmm.

Anantadeva will burn the entire universe soon enough. He saves the *Vedas*, but Sats can't expect . . .

Go to the bathroom; I think that room is empty now.

* * *

#4

At Bhadra's House, Before an Evening Program

September winds whistle,
kids in the street, not my

home.

Hold on. I'll give the class
at 5 p.m. Now hear: A scooterish
engine, a large jet in the sky
flying from America or Europe and
a horn blows like
a conch before *arati* or is it
a train?

* * *

Sunlight bright for a few minutes
penetrates this dry page and I see
the imprints of my handwriting
from the previous page.
Sorry. Sorry.

* * *

Thick blond braid down her back "
was she a Hare Krishna woman?
I didn't have time to look.
I was exercising by the open
window, breathing deep.

* * *

Brilliant white clouds with dark centers,
the kids' futile, energetic shouts and
those billboards, life in the offices, shops,
workers running like tributaries into the pubs.

* * *

8:42 p.m.

Irregular hours begin. Hare Krishna children (from about 3 - 7 years old) screaming and running around riding tricycles, carts, etc., in front of this house. They've been at it for more than an hour while their parents finish their *prasadam* and socializing "all this after the hour and a half talk I gave. I've been lying in bed since 7, but sunlight is still streaming through the white curtain.

Calm about it "at least no headache. At this rate, however, I won't be able to get up at midnight to read and write. At least I'll get up and chant *japa* by 2 a.m.

Then tomorrow will be even more irregular because we will be leaving to catch the evening overnight ferry to France. In the van I may be able to do a radio Show or more writing.

X dasa said that Prabhupada sounded "harsh and impersonal." Or was he saying that it might be taken that way, or that some of Prabhupada's followers present it in that way? His remark was jarring. I wish I had been more blunt in my reply. "Are you saying that Prabhupada is harsh and impersonal? I don't agree." Anyway, as Prabhupada said, the patina of girl's flesh is radiant in her youth, but fades soon enough.

I haven't eat since lunch. I didn't stray from Krishna. X dasa added, "Princess Diana died and people are standing in line to write their condolences in a book. What's the *use*?" He said our gathering to appreciate Srila Prabhupada has a real purpose.

Srila Prabhupada told us to go out and preach. He said that in reference to Lord Nityananda and Haridasa Thakura preaching to Jagai and Madhai. Even if I preach to devotees, however, I have to "go out" by leaving my peaceful Geaglum room. "I envy you," Sivarama Swami said. Preaching means staying up late in a house where I can't sleep while kids screech outside your window. It means doing that so you can give others Srila Prabhupada's mercy.

Prabhupada, please see me trying to reach you and pray to you. I want you to be my spiritual master. I need to be inspired by you every day, and I need to surrender at your feet. You can defeat me, charm me, instruct me "if only I will give you the chance.

Soon it will be too dark outside for the kids to play. May their parents take them away and may I then fall asleep, putting aside everything but Krishna consciousness.

The solitary person
is the author himself
before God.

September 4, 7:56 a.m.

Does it matter what I say? Does it change the universe even one iota? Maybe. It changes *me*. We submit to fine tuning and to increasing our depth. The Lord in the heart directs our wanderings. Due to ignorance we become adversely affected when we are insulted, and we tend to be proud when we are honored. Just more bodily conception.

M. told me that the ferry we are taking tonight usually carries only freight, but is willing to take members of the Irish r.V. club across. Immediately I wondered what kind of trouble this would turn into. Chew on it like a worry bone. No, stop. Turn to Krishna in your heart, on your beads, in His names. I have so much proof that I'm not able to do it; my mind reviews varieties and *not only* the spiritual and positive.

I have the deficiency of possessing a material body. I left the Eighth Canto in Geaglum along with a pen I might have used. I worry that my body might be annihilated. Do I think that everything including myself will be finished when this body is finished?

Oh, let the phone ring. Pain comes and goes along with the cold, the heat, the fatigue.

What do you mean God has a body but it's not material and that it's situated in everyone's heart? No physicist or biologist has ever seen this Lord. I think you made it up.

This is an exercise on which I could write, but I lose interest before I get into it. Instead, I see the sunlight merging with the cool air and entering my room. Summer has ended. How can a ferry sail with tons of freight and so many cursing truck drivers on board? What will they say when they see the skirted legs of two Hare Krishna fellows?

Does it matter? At least there will be less video games and piped-in music, less of an enjoying mood on a freight ship. Will it go okay? Will the tires, the nations, the terrorists, the pills, the custom inspectors, the anti-cultists, the unfriendly French, the fears and dirty things in my brain "will they?

Oh boy, leave a record
of your stay on
queue.

"We just inched up, a rumor says . . . "

"By rapt attention fixed upon Krishna, one is purified, and thus one is delivered from material life." The *gopis* overcame the fear of their relatives by loving Krishna. I ask myself if I can do it "think of Krishna "not in an unfavorable way like SiSupala did, not in a vague way, like one who knows He's there but not what He looks like, but Krishna in His original form.

* * *

On September 4, 1849, a teenager named Sallie Hester recorded her impressions as part of a westward immigrant caravan that walked and rode on ox- and horse-drawn carts to California. "Had a trying time crossing the desert . . . the weary, weary tramp of men and beast will never be erased from my memory." As soon as I read of her "trying time," I thought that it was worse than anything I'll have to endure on the trip by ferry across the channel. We worry about *whatever* we have, I suppose.

On this day in 1932, Will Rogers wrote jokes about fishing into his so-called diary, not worthy of repeating. Sherwood Anderson in 1939 wrote that he had personally become sick thinking of the war in Europe. "The war in everyone's mind." The whole world worries at such times because people are killed for no good reason. religious people turn to God.

* * *

11 a.m.

Bhadra's boys imitating cars, planes, monsters "growling, yowling in their small-world play downstairs. And right next door, I hear Madhu and Arjuna talking, their conversation punctuated with laughter. Gnawing at my thumb nail.

"It's windy. We may have a rough crossing." I hope it will calm down by 9 p.m.

ETD 3 p.m. It's easy, right? You just hang onto your beads and climb into the van.

And so the truth eludes the scholar, and neither do they want a dogmatic religionist to tell them how to understand philosophy and truth. They want co-partners in the honest search, as passed down in the history of true philosophers (Socrates and others). No one should claim the last word. We are meant to keep searching forever because there are no answers. At least those are the rules.

* * *

#5

Sannyasi Crossing

September crossing I know not
in cold steel van awhile.
Forget yourself and tell me
of your Master the
Supreme Person from
whom all comes.
He's not subject to
error as we are, and He
lights the way with dances
and friends, intimate friends
who have passed all the tests.

* * *

If you could just concentrate on
that! Nervous moments can
deflect me, but I grasp my
prayer beads and count
the names.

* * *

September crossing I know not
as morning and noon arrives, and I
sprinkle hot and cold water on my head.
The lady of the lake has a lovely smile
and a bumpy mile.

* * *

Erst! Erk! Shove that
back down your throat "
clamp down, Swami.
We expect the best of you.

* * *

The Power rangers, comic book heroes,
stuck on children's plastic cups.
Muscular bandits or
God's agents? All make-believe anyway.
Just a man and his wife,

and an aspiring old
celibate student pretends "
or plays out guru life.

* * *

3:45 p.m.

On the road to the roselare. Back-to-school girls in long, plaid skirts and dark knee socks, boys with back packs. A few minutes later another school group, girls with long brown skirts and white knee socks. No sign of violence, but if it comes, we'll let Providence do what it will and play the respectable inward role a *sannyasi* is meant to play.

M. driving okay; the van holding up; roads too.

Want to note something down before it's all gone, but can't get at it "some clouds bunch and sit on mountain tops. Black wrapped hay bales remind me of Geaglum. The headaches are already coming, part of the cyclical nature of a life lived from clear day to clear day.

Fassarore. Bray. Wexford. Roselare. Enniskerry. A sharp hill ahead. Glencormick.

* * *

5:08 p.m.

Tell the truth or not? Too bouncy to write. Pill in bag if needed. We're going to Spain to see the devotees. They respect me. I have initiated some of them, yet I can't think myself a guru. I am going to speak and to write under the stress of travel. Looking forward, in one sense, to the jarring sensations. They help me see things from a fresh perspective. A stay-at-home goes out to answer the divine command. roar, Ford, and take us there.

In back of van I see white Vrndavana cows in a blow-up color photo. They're standing by Govardhana. I also have a color photo of the Madana-mohana Temple as seen from the *parikramatrail*. Why didn't I go to India this year?

Because.

I left my shoes at Bhadra's house. Walked into the van wearing my house slippers. M. says I can wear his Birkenstocks. Sandaled monk, just like a Franciscan. Here's Srila Prabhupada's room at Radha-Damodara.

Drink water. Be a person. Think the spirit soul is in the heart; the Supreme Lord is also there.

Passing through another Irish town, but not Cork. Whatever it is, it's behind us now. Two older women, still stylish in long skirts, a rushing river, a stone bridge . . .

M. racing along the guard rail.

Narada said the demons in their enmity are fully absorbed in Krishna. Therefore, they are better off than he is. He spoke from his humility. But he is also making an indirect reference to the Vrajavasis *raga-marga* absorption. Srila Prabhupada mentions the *gopis* and Mother Yashoda in his purport.

Irony. Doubt. Leap of faith. Strawser says the picture of SK as only religious is untrue. He is complicated and always ironic. Thus SK says he is not an authority on

Christ. I like to think of him as Christ's follower, but I know I can't trust him completely. Or Strawser either, for that matter. I can only trust Srila Prabhupada. He's never ironic or dogmatic, and he's utterly surrendered to guru and Krishna. "He thinks with his heart." He accepts *parampara*. I'm trying for that same determination.

But when I attempt to "always think of Krishna," it includes facing doubts.

* * *

5:30 p.m.

Wexford petrol station fill up. Why describe the material world? I'm here; it leads me into Krishna consciousness. M. says fifteen minutes until roselare.

Relax. M. asks if cars are coming on my side. No, no,

"No end in sight. After this red car you can go."

And we're off. I feel like an ace navigator.

We belong to Krishna, M. and I, the same one God of any theist. My spiritual master has convinced me of that. I can't stand without him. I have to *give* to him in order to receive his reassurance. It's like that with any teacher or discipline.

Killnick. Hare Krishna.

No stopping on this page or you will
leave an ink blot.

Killmore Quay.

You angry? You in
love?

You full of fear?

You want pampering or to fight for Krishna?

I am looking for familiar sights, such as Holyhead, Wales. Then I remembered that I would see that on the way home to Ireland, after the tour. I'll feel nice then. roselare is on the challenge side of the trip.

I see the Irish flag flying from the boat.

* * *

On queue. Only two other vehicles like ours. Krishna, Krishna.

"He is a fellow like us to lead us in Krishna consciousness. Like us. Not so different. Just older. He's been through the changes, survived the heresies "survived long enough he has earned the right to die okay."

Does that mean you can trust him utterly to take you back to Godhead?

"Well, he always says it's Prabhupada who will do that. That's the idea. He's fixed on Prabhupada and his mercy, even though he says he's not much of a brave son. He's conscientious."

I think one thing about myself. They may think another.

* * *

7:45 p.m.

Waiting an hour and forty-five minutes on queue. This boat service isn't used to campers; we don't have an assigned cabin. Lights don't work in back of van. I'm calm. Don't expect to sleep regular. Do expect to get onboard and leave at nine.

Murmur Hare Krishna mantra. Murmur. It's all I have. I get tired of chanting in such low tones after awhile. Facing that. Then I continue, not one after another, but by allowing them to well up. Best when I say a spontaneous, "Prabhupada" with no meaning or intention "just a cry when I feel forgetful or embarrassed or hurt or anything "let it out.

Hare Krishna. I have unearthed so many poor memories in recent years. Those "Prabhupada Meditations" were good. O Krishna. No more diversions or bodily concerns, please. Why this inability to be constantly absorbed in Krishna consciousness?

* * *

8:34 p.m.

On boat, waiting to park. Siren bell goes off while elevator lifts trucks one at a time to upper deck. My mental peace is wearing thin. Still hope to be in bed by 9:30 and asleep, or at least at rest, until 3:30. Think of that Sally who walked across the desert in U.S.A. and how the cows were mooing for water and were relieved when they finally reached the river.

But one should turn to God. Head down, I seek Him in the back of the van. Tell me what to do, how to serve You.

* * *

9 p.m.

We finally got onboard. This is not a tourist trip. Since it's mostly truckers, no one was there to guide us to our cabin. By mistake we walked into a crew-only area. I saw on the wall pictures of naked women. I mentioned it later to Madhu, and he said, "After you've been away from that for awhile, it looks so ugly."

"Yeah, like a piece of meat." Don't let it haunt you.

September 5, 7:30 a.m.

The boat seemed to leave late. I had fallen asleep and then wakened to the pitch and roll of the sea. I fell asleep again and slept soundly. Seasick earlier this morning and felt I had to lie down.

* * *

On September 5, 1743, Congregational Minister Ebenezer Parkmen observed in his diary that it was his fortieth birthday. He said that in recent years he had not wanted to observe his birthday in any way because he felt that his soul had become snared by paying attention to formalities. And even if he did pay attention to his birthday, "Indeed

I might well omit it since there was so little done; and what was done, was done so lamely, brokenly and sinfully."

To this I would reply that it may be humble not to observe your own birthday, but the "formality" of observing Vaisnava days and various rituals doesn't have to be a snare for the soul. After all, what is inner life? There has to be *some* form to it.

But yes, no empty formality, lamely and brokenly done. I too in recent years have been more and more uninspired by public liturgy, although I wouldn't want to state that too widely. The essence is the important thing, not the formalities.

Still, the essence has to have shape "chanting the holy name, associating with devotees, preaching. Somehow find a natural way to carry this on without pomp.

* * *

11:04 a.m.

While reading *Bhag.* 7.1, I came to the purport where Prabhupada states that no one ever falls from Vaikuntha. I remember the first time a particular disciple asked me how to think about the controversy raging in ISKCON on the origin of the *jiva*. That was about eight years ago. I replied that according to Prabhupada, the question is not important. I told him it was better not to become partisan in the debate. My disciple said he was relieved to hear of my position. Since then, however, he has become partisan, and has joined the party advocating "no fall." He continually presents evidence "not even evidence, but emotional and *ad hominem* attacks "on those who have established "fall" as the ISKCON doctrine. I tire of it easily.

Madhu figures we may get into port as late as 6 p.m. He'd like to travel a few hours before stopping for the night. I'm not opposed. My head is still clear.

* * *

The surrealists say a writer should go ahead and space out. Let the hand write by itself. To do that "the tingle and play of words wright,

playwright,
wheelwright

to no account until like striking a flint
a spark ignites. I always smell the smoke.

My neck bends forward in a scholar's slouch. They say SK had a bent spine, but he wasn't reader-friendly, the scholar admits. The devotion it would require to read and understand him is better given to the *sastras*.

The moving hand sails on a Pandoro ferry on a smooth sea to France. When I go topside and look out at the expansive sea, I can't help but recall a bit my life on the U.S.S. Saratoga. The sea is one thing and the Navy another. Bhakta Kevin, who was recently honorably discharged from the Navy, called it "prison life."

Hand grip
nip
nipper. Land
mines wherever you
go those

unsavory memories and
images.

In Spain I could speak like this:

- (1) gaining *Sraddha* is important
- (2) not falling down is important.

I know they like it when I speak of prayer, but my practice has shattered to pieces right now. Pray? I'd love to. Sometimes the prayer state is unattainable.

Right now I have to say, "What I do, *that's* prayer" "and I mean reading, writing, chanting in an inward way. I could say my outer life has become inward. I'm establishing that I live mostly alone, and that that's my life of prayer more than this technique or that method. If you're always socializing, it's *very* hard to be prayerful and inward.

* * *

Good
goops he
slipped again and tried to write
in a new language
(James Joycean?).

One of his devices is to join pictures to words "ideograms. Simply jump from one to another and tell the story in a poem.

The *karmis* revel in *tamo-guna*. I am holier, right? An old woman stood at the ship's rail and stared out toward the water last night before the boat left the dock. I looked at her, but she didn't exchange glances with me. She seemed grim and absorbed. Did she dislike seeing me in my devotee dress, or was she simply in her own world? There was also a man, also old, standing some distance from her.

Narada explains to Yudhisthira (and Sukadeva Gosvami to Maharaja Pariksit) that we should develop our relationship with Krishna whether it's friendly, based on lust (such as the *gopis'* *kama*, which is brilliant and nonmaterial), in *aiSvarya*, even based on enmity. Somehow or other, think of Krishna and we will be liberated. We will be qualified to perform eternal devotional service.

* * *

The world of Henry Adams "
pipe-smoking, queer college student
1970s, the whirl of ISKCON's
traveling men "radicals in
a spiritual movement,

trying to pick up serious devotees wherever they go. We got a few good ones in the mid-West and California. Now I try to get those already caught involved in a loving relationship with Prabhupada. Bring them further in. How serious they become is up to them. It doesn't matter whether or not they live in a temple. That's my preaching. I correspond with them.

He's a lover, He's a thief

*and His love, it can't be beat.
He's the Lord of my heart eternally.*

But the grave eye toward death spoils frivolous cares, the joy of walking in a morning quiet.

Poem series "it's the Lord.
Monks.
O captain, get us to France
while I think in sweat pants.
Drive o'er sea.
Please don't sink I'm
thinking of prayer and
preaching and how to be
a true son unto death
burning closer and closer
to my dear Master.

* * *

I read in the intro to the Dover Thrift edition of selections from Thoreau's journal "the guy said that Thoreau used to gut his diary to form other books, such as *A Week In Concord* and *Walden*. Then he turned to leaving the diary intact and made *that* into a work of art. Thoreau had great trouble getting anything published, so how could he have expected his huge journal to be published intact? It wasn't published during his lifetime, but almost immediately after his death that work was begun.

The editor goes on to say that Thoreau was convinced in his project. How wonderful that a person can retain conviction even without hope of reward. Emily Dickinson was the same. She sent a few poems to a prominent editor, but he wrote back with faint praise and said he couldn't understand them. She wrote him a letter saying she would remain a "barefoot" poet.

And then there is SK, who created an incredible, intricate opus exactly in his own way, one which caught very little attention from others. Now he attracts the attention of scholars and religionists from many different viewpoints.

I too should be convinced of what I am doing. A devotee writes to please guru and Krishna. He keeps their pleasure always in the forefront of his mind as the all-in-all. From that dedication he may see, even in his own lifetime, that some people appreciate what he is doing. Or he may meet only criticism. It doesn't matter. He simple continues.

An author can't pretend that he never thinks of what will happen to his writings after he dies. A devotee author hopes that others will continue to benefit from them, and that he will receive credit toward his own eternal devotional service. It would be folly to try to *enjoy* either present admiration or the admiration that might come after death, however. We are not meant to invest our emotions in material praise. My point right now is only to admire the selfless dedication of persons like Thoreau, Dickinson, and SK, and that their selflessness was not a shallow one but a determined, individuality, not dependent on fame and glory.

Emily wrote:

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you Nobody "Too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Don't tell! they'd advertise "you know!

* * *

How dreary "to be "Somebody!
How public "like a Frog "
to tell one's name "the live long June "
To an admiring Bog!

* * *

#6
At Sea
September at sea, the furrow
broad the boat stacked with
trailer trucks, looking out I
see memories,
the furrow trough . . .
That way, France.

* * *

The poem and I spaced out "
forgot who I am where I
am supposed to be going. Turn
the door handle to the
men's room, relieve my body
in there, then walk as in trance
to room 17, open and
to my companion,

* * *

I start talking some new thought
I had about solitude "
I want a *life* of prayer "
and about preaching "
to the devotees, that's my lot "
and about faithfulness "
I can't leave Prabhupada.
So I am not spaced out
after all,
just at sea

for awhile longer.

* * *

3:35 p.m.

First sign of fog in head. It was bound to come sooner or later. Accept it without depression. It's my life and somehow an intimate part of me. I can't psychologize it away. I may subdue one headache a week with a pill, but when it comes again, I live with it, let it limit me, go on thinking of Krishna.

I say "go on," but that implies that I think of Krishna when I'm well. At least I read. Now humbled by the pain.

Today, perhaps if it develops, I will take the pill because we want to keep driving tonight. That means putting the pain off so we can drive. If I ride in the back, I'll be less demanding on M. to stop for the night.

This crossing was smooth and we're now nearing France. It's sunny, so it's probably warm out. We two Hare Krishnas head for our van and God is good, God is beyond our knowing, God is *acintya*.

Srila Prabhupada repeats what his guru says, and we hear it, accept it, live with it. Maybe it's beyond Srila Prabhupada how he teaches. I mean, maybe the *sastra* is coming through him, so it's great, it's God. Certainly my disciples think the message coming through me is greater than me, but still they want to hear it from me. We might say in that sense that Srila Prabhupada may not be completely aware of how special he is. He says he's not a scholar or a great devotee. He says he's crippled in so many ways, but we don't believe him.

We need to think about these things so that we don't take the spiritual master too literally or externally. People can look at me and see my sagging flesh, my weak vessel, and even my short temper, but there is something more inner about each of us, and how much more true that is of Srila Prabhupada. We can't think we perceive everything there is to see. Therefore, we should simply accept Srila Prabhupada's version of himself "ISKCON's version of him" and then go deeper than that. He is always more than that. This is implied in the second of the two *guru-gayatris*.

(But this doesn't mean that a person can come forward, claim to be our *Siksa-guru*, and say that he knows Prabhupada better than we do unless he himself is Prabhupada's disciple. Only a surrendered disciple can say, "He is totally our guru; we accept his word as law; we will serve his literal words in ISKCON" yet he is beyond all that too."

Writing this while Madhu is sleeping. I don't want to wake him, but I have a little packing to do.

Men going down the hallway knocking on doors, "One hour to go." We're landing in France at Cherbourg. From Cherbourg we will proceed toward the super-highway, but may not reach it tonight. Once we get on the main highway, we will go to Lemans, then further south to Tours, then Bordeaux, and cross the border into Spain.

* * *

4:35 p.m.

In van. We're up front on the ferry, so we'll be one of the first ones off. Then we'll drive with no time to stop. At this point, my only choice is whether to ride up front or to sit in the back. But first, entry through customs into France. The office will inquire on M.'s side for our passports. We don't expect trouble here. Besides, I'm not this body. The spirit soul dwells within. I can't be cut or dried or even interrogated or headached or cancered; I have no unsavory memories from my life in the lower modes. I'm not in illusion. I simply have to uncover myself to find that sterling, simple, happy, eternal servant of God.

* * *

I read snatches from here and there in Bhurijana's *Bhagavad-gita* overview. He said it's best to read it in order "that's the whole point of an overview" but my mind isn't disciplined for it. I just read the eighth chapter about the verse, "Think of Me at the time of death." Think of Me *now* while you're doing your duty for Me. I'd like to do that. *Satatam kirtayanto mam* "there Vishvanath Cakravarti mentions *japa*, a fixed number of rounds. Krishna is a person, yet the source of all energies. He asserts this in *Bhagavad-gita* and we accept it.

My bookshelf contains mundane poetry books and Krishna conscious books side by side, like my mind.

We have entered the harbor, but it's already 5:05 p.m. They told us we would be here by 3, then they changed it to 4, then 5.

* * *

5:35 p.m.

Finally, the dock is only a few yards away. Boat inching in. French flag with frayed red in the tri-color. M. talking to Irish fella, who had a friend, Owen, who joined the Hare Krishna movement in 1983. It's a small world. M. knows him "saw him recently in Glastonbury. He used to be a punk with a Mohawk haircut. "I was one me self," M. says.

Cherbourg. "France without tunnel vision." Haven't got to immigration yet. Flags of three nations. Two guys sitting hitchhiking. No one to stop us at customs, so we cruise on in.

* * *

7:30 p.m.

Normandy invasion, Utah and Omaha Beaches. Were you there? Chanting.

September 6, 3:50 a.m.

M. asked me not to wake him until 4:55 with ETD at 5. We're overnight at a Shell station north of Lemans. We were lucky to find it. Photo at newsstand of beautiful, sad Diana, now dead. Her *vibhuti* influence short-lived. Where is she now? Not with her body lying in state in London. O soul, you have moved on and we will join you, everyone of us. That is, of anything in this world, secure.

Me with my little right eye twinges, and the first week of September still alive.
With water and sponge
Remember Christ who had
no water but was offered
only vinegar on the Cross
in his greatest agonies of
flesh, his mind turned to
God until
"It is finished."

* * *

During the night I woke and chanted fervently for protection at this petrol station. I recalled the *Bhagavatam* stating that *any* relationship with God is good, even such a lesser, *saguna* prayer.

* * *

6:50 a.m.

My ups and down come too easily. I said of one young devotee, "He rides on his emotions too much. He gets high and then depressed." I do too. Woke up after a nap (while traveling at a high speed) feeling fine. Then I went up front where M. was preoccupied with driving. I didn't like it there with the highway lights and speed, so I came to the back. But I lost my high spirits. I realized again how travel is dangerous, and fantasized that we were about to have an accident. The bubble of deep rest, having things my way, popped. We like to live as kings and queens and have everyone serve us, but kings used to have to fight, even if they possessed only tiny kingdoms.

Okay, I exposed my pettiness. Krishna accepts me anyway. He knows I am much worse than what I'm willing to admit and still He loves me "because He is kind and because I am His and so wonderful in essence, *sat-cit-ananda*. In essence, I am worthy to serve Him intimately in love.

* * *

10 a.m., Stop at Elf petrol station.

North of Bordeaux. Spiritually listless, not even interested in writing, and reading seems impossible. Finished my rounds. Dazed, I look at sign boards. "La Halte Faraicheur." People look at me, I look at them "the briefest contact. What the hell . . . several more hours before we stop. I have slept enough, eaten enough, not worshiped or heard about Hari enough, yet I say I can't take more right now. There's a guy with his wife, heavier than him, with a very short haircut. He's drinking from a cardboard cup and smoking at the same time, in their little car. You see? My thoughts go . . . downward, and I don't mean down to the lotus feet of God.

* * *

Noon

At Spanish border (Pyrenees) I thought the official waved us over as he had done to the van two vehicles ahead of us, but M. thought he was waving us through. I half expected (and still do) someone to come chasing after us. Apparently Madhu was right.

I have some head pressure. We're stopping for lunch and I'll take a shower first. They accept Visa in France and Spain.

* * *

While lying down I thought, "I have nothing specific to write about right now, so maybe I should free-write. I started doing it in my head. Then I thought, "Could I do something else, something new, *beyond* what I know as free-writing?" James Joyce experimented and invented language.

Yeah, but . . . what would it be? Would it be sounds-to-music like de-dobble-de, a Coltrane tune (you mean Lambert, Hendrix, and Ross riffing jazz sounds with the human voice?) Maybe not.

* * *

4:45 p.m., Gas station

I can't give you the name of the gas station or the town because I don't know where we are. I haven't even looked outside since we pulled up. Just before lunch I started getting a right-eye headache. I took my mighty pill, but then almost immediately after that Madhu decided we were in a precarious position where we were parked and had to move on for "just ten more minutes until I find another good place." The ten minutes stretched into an hour of speeding over winding, bumpy roads. Not an ideal way to assimilate a headache pill. Finally we stopped. My headache hasn't gotten neither worse nor better. We're going to push on because otherwise tomorrow, Sunday, we may not find any open gas stations. We're only about four hours from the ISKCON temple.

* * *

On September 6, 1807, Methodist minister John Early wrote in his diary, "He spoke of meeting a man who he prayed for, and he was afraid, he said, to go home by himself for fear the Devil would get him alive. He started bellowing like a bull." The editor says that Early's journal records the sins and salvations he met during the early days of the republic. I guess people have always been the same "superstitious, afraid of God, not afraid of God, full of sin, and some of them pious, hoping to get a heavenly reward. A rare few know God in truth as the one to whom all of our devotional acts should be given.

Many ministers and preachers have kept diaries. I can't help but think that too many of them present the preacher only as ideal religionists and don't deal with their own personal humanness. Of course, some are confessional too. We want the honesty. Even in a journal we can't just strategize to make ourselves, or even Krishna, look good.

Krishna and His devotees in the spiritual world are already perfect, but the materialists won't listen to them and won't accept them. Krishna's followers in the

material world are imperfect for the most part, and the world doesn't listen to them either, sometimes for the right reasons. To represent Prabhupada includes being honest about that and then setting a decent example. Both the recognition of our failings and our attempt to set a decent example has to be deep. That depth is not attained without risk.

On this day in 1911, Dorothy Balano, the wife of a Maine sea captain, recorded in her diary that her husband was, "Dousing his flour to celery and salt and I embroidering on deck. A cloudy day, just a good day for soogying [washing with soap powder] the after cabin, which is what the sailors are doing." She tells about the American politics she read in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Typical that even when we go to sea we get the magazine from America and fall to gossiping. And here I am, reading centuries of diarists, looking over their shoulders and Tsk-tsking.

* * *

#7

Into Spain

September Zaragoza, Espana "

I'm a traveler again. Brag
of the miles, headaches like
medals to wear as my
persona wilts.

* * *

The words speed out of me
as the van eats up miles,
passing signs, "Divertissement." "No
Way" you
don't have right of
way. "No Access" "
"Go" ""Here" "
arrows striped like zebras.

* * *

In Kamzoooma the
women wear aprons and long
black stockings and come to the
door of their hovels
bearing shovels.

* * *

I've seen so much from the
back of my van, the interior
of my head and Li Po

and Emily.
You'd think I was a millionaire
and not a humble monk.

* * *

Oh, but let me tell you about the rest stop in Sud France.
They have replicas of eleventh-century
monastic architecture. Swell.
No time to stop
and I wasn't interested anyway
except to say, "Maybe we can do
that in ISKCON."

* * *

Tonight in Spain.
Our Ford is mighty
but Spain holds a jinx "
powerful, barren Spain,
Rocky, elemental Spain.
Me and Madhu driving to
New Vraja-mandala,
like a straw through
the eye of a needle.

Repsol gas station. Cardo mineral water on sale. I'm feeling peppy after writing a
poem and feeling my eye pain subsiding. radio playing somewhere out there "Spanish
jabbering "*real*Spanish, not what you hear in Puerto rica.

S.O.S. Tinda Denda. Super Plus 98.

It's been warm, now cloudy.

I stepped onto *terra firma* to do my vigorous but jerky exercises, swinging my arms,
bending my spine back and forth, pseudo karate kicks "all while a woman in a stylish
suit watches from the steps of the snack store.

Gracias por elegir repsol. Feliz biaje.

She just pulled out in a car with her hubby and kids. Good-bye to my life and hers.

* * *

6:35 p.m.

Area De Sobre Diel. This is where we'll plan to spend the night. Spain has only small
gas stations, with little parking space and too close to the highway whoosh. We'll take
what we can get.*Productous Artesanos Y regionales.*

I was chanting last hour awake and thought that all of the Spanish land existed just to
create a background so I could chant the holy name. I also thought I could chant for
others' benefit. For example, M. said his rounds were terrible today. Maybe my extras
could be for him. *Japa* is solitary, but I could pray for the well-being of the Spanish

devotees. remember Srila Prabhupada writing to Yamuna dasi circa 1968, "You are a little more advanced than your sister (Janaki), and those who are more fortunate should be kind to others."

September 7, 2:04 a.m.

A relatively peaceful night. I dreamt of working with disciples such as Caitanya-daya and Radhanatha dasa. We were laying asphalt, but none of us had heat-resistant soles on our shoes. After the work I entered my name on the time sheet: Satsvarupa, six hours.

O deep and gentle Lord, so near to me, I say Your names. O energy of the Lord, O Lord.

* * *

4:20 a.m.

I see the words "Srila Prabhupada" in Bhurijana Prabhu's books. He has written that name in faith. It's his guru. He is referring to A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Do I believe in him? Of course, but the heavy implications behind our faith sometimes almost knock me over. I mean . . . I don't like everything it means. I'm a bowling pin and he is the bowling ball. I don't like living at Krishna-Balarama Mandir when I have headaches and cannot go out. I don't like *everything*. I'm tired of the meetings, the need to be evasive when I feel people don't understand me. I want to be alone with a few disciples, that's all. But not without Krishna consciousness and not without Srila Prabhupada. I beg for protection. I like to be near the ISKCON activities, to hear of them, and even to cheer them on. I just want some space. My head fogs over and the vise closes. It's a sign that I've had enough. Writing makes it clear, what I mean. Time to wake M. and get going.

* * *

I Make My Home in Mountain
by Li Po
You ask why I live
alone in the mountain forest,

* * *

and I smile and I'm silent
until even my soul grows quiet:

* * *

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

* * *

The peach trees blossoms.
The water continues to flow.

* * *

8:35 a.m.

Parked at the edge of the farm at Brihuega (Guadalajara), not far from ISKCON. Getting ready for my public appearance. Put on the nice sweater, the nice demeanor, (my *kurta* pocket is ripped), the ready smile, and the ready talk. A little hypocrisy is inevitable in human dealings. We all have something we need to hide. My writing offers me hope that we can share a hidden nature, at least in part.

"How are you doing?"

"Why do you ask? Do you care?"

"Yes. And do *you* care about what you're doing with *your* life in Krishna consciousness? Can we help each other by admitting that we're all somewhat phony?"

"That's quite an opening remark. Have you been thinking these things over en route from Ireland? Why are you springing them on us on the first day of your visit?"

"Yes, yes. Where is the blunderbuss? I'm a Yankee doodle dandy."

And we're Espaneros. And we are all Hare Krishna sankirtaneros.

And the sun is too bright. We're not used to it in Ireland.

* * *

3:30 p.m.

The GBC assigns me a section in a book on *guru-tattva*. They want me to write why (1) one doesn't perform a loving service to Srila Prabhupada by supporting proxy/ *rtvik*; (2) one who loves Srila Prabhupada follows his order; and (3) only by following his order does one become guru.

Geez.

Received pro-Gaudiya-Math-guru propaganda: "Guru is one."

Already wishing I could return to my quiet life. At least I have my tower here.

Kr sent an *Esquire* article on J. D. Salinger. It was a sympathetic account written by another man who made a pilgrimage to "the Wall" with which Salinger surrounds himself.

What else? Machado didn't die in 1922, as I said in *September Catchall*, but in 1936. This correction sent to me in a letter by a Spanish devotee, who suggests I correct it "in a next edition?" and hopes she's not offensive to point it out. Also received a letter from a person who wants to honor the memory of someone about whom I made a critical remark in the *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. The letter said that I'm a permanent offender ("*satam-ninda*") until I remove that remark.

Haven't answered either of those letters yet. I'm on no marathons. Just sitting here after lunch, pausing before the 5:30 p.m. lecture I'll give on "*japa* as meditation."

* * *

Thought of the great Silence after you're dead. Where did you go?

O Prabhupada, you gave us
the holy names
to save us from confusion
yes, (rhyme it) with illusion
mass
mass
confusion, diffusion,
life as a worm or a genius atheist
human being and *then*
hell.

A devotee told me that there's a new program for the computer that lets you make all kinds of colors of finger paints and you don't have to be computer literate to run it. "It's real easy," he says, and smiles.

Joy stick

Ride the mouse/ send out the Fax.

Oh, and another letter says that the big dangers for ISKCON gurus are (1) messing with women; (2) too much money; (3) poor *sadhana*. Someone else mentioned long periods of "seclusion," which is obviously forbidden for anybody.

I also heard that the Murphy case is starting up again in Boston on December 1st, and that the temple may have to close due to financial loss. Joe Camel nixed "well, that's good news, depending upon what side you're on.

You expect peace in this world? The man who wrote the Salinger piece recalled how Zooey told Frannie that Christ-like-compassion (he actually said Christ himself) is to love the fat lady whom no one loves. She is Love, she is Christ. He said JDS is not loving the misguided fans of his books, not loving the fat lady.

Maybe a Sunday lecture on *japa* as meditation isn't a good idea because I already did it once before. Besides, I myself don't practice paying attention with that single-pointed, meditative focus. It's just too rigorous for me right now. Then what to say?

How about speaking without a theme? Something about Krishna in our lives.

September 8, 1:30 a.m.

Creaking sounds in the tower "is it mice? I hope not. Maybe the building is creaking. A flock of birds rose on our path yesterday morning as we were driving. M. braked, but one or two birds smashed against the front of the van. He said he saw them flew off, not killed.

Children playing between 7 - 9 p.m. Gradually they began to pretend to shoot each other, just as I used to do with my friends when I was that age. Also heard M. clearing his throat again and again. The essay on JDS kept repeating the koan, "The sound of one hand clapping" and claimed it knew the mysteries of that koan as it was revealed in JDS's story.

Woke with a dream that we were mixing colors on pages the way we swirl them in preparation for a fire *yajna*. We were doing it on behalf of a new generation of devotees. After awhile, it turned into an assignment and I thought we had lost the spontaneity.

I awoke with an ache. Maybe that creaking sound is the moths banging against the walls. I have many things to do and now can't do any of them because of the pain.

* * *

9:50 a.m.

I just gave class on the verse in which Narada compares how we are forced to follow Vedic injunctions just as a bull is forced to move by a rope attached to its nose. I enjoyed the privilege of the pause while the translator does his job. Then I gave the example that *vaidhi-bhakti* also exerts a force upon us, but it's a force we accept willingly. As I spoke, I could feel the force of material nature closing in around my head. By the end of the lecture I was speaking from experience when I said that we have to make the best use of a bad bargain.

* * *

4:50 p.m.

He says we got a herbal doc in Guyana who can cure you. It's a backward country, but we may have fax machines and the Internet by next year. "Then you can come here and write in peace."

Not likely, because I know my disciples will want to see me and I'll want to see them.

Healthy climate, he offers. Blacks with machetes. Haribols and a white man. I'd feel strange taking a morning walk there, such an obvious foreigner, whereas in Ireland, I'm incognito in my sweat pants.

X. dasa writes to me that he's *still* angry with God for the death of his brother. Says he wants to climb a mountain and shout, "Why did You let it happen? 'Krishna's plan' is not a good enough answer. I want details."

I'm a snail. Thousands of them I counted in weeds adjacent to the petrol station near Zaragoza. No one would know they were there unless they went up close. Therefore, we call their lives insignificant. Traveling in the van and ferry I got what seemed like new ideas and perspectives. Please, more.

* * *

#8

No "September Song"

"Sept. Song" never arrived,

just as well. Pick out the song of the children
below this tower.

Babble.

The fly stuck in the glass "

I heard him rustle and
stood nearby.

* * *

Come on, you fraud you've
got no song just longing for
what never was "
the peaceful routine of
June and July in Wicklow
when I sacrificed to
Bhagavatam and wrote 80
private tomes and remember
all those paintings from
your hand?

* * *

A leaky pen.
Spanish. English.
Spanish. Tomorrow lecture
that the Lord sets up and
disperses like a Player. Say
He's not bound by karma.

* * *

Don't harm an ant. No
September song but this cris-
cross dashed off in between
commas and my secretary
opening the door. Quoth
the raven "

* * *

On September 8, 1993, when she was eighty-two years old, May Sarton wrote, "It is the end of summer, a fraying end, without the autumn yet to lead us into its wide spaces and brilliant color. It feels like limbo." While she was cooking her supper, the phone rang and she had to leave aside the swordfish that was in the broiler. On the phone was a talk show host from Wisconsin wanting to interview her by telephone and take questions for an hour. After the phone call, Sarton discovered that her swordfish was ruined and inedible, "although I swallowed it, some of it, somehow." This made her feel vexed.

Did I do so much better today? I'm proud that I didn't eat swordfish, but what about my pride? I'm also proud that I'm superior to May Sarton in that I'm explicitly God conscious. She doesn't even seem to be aware that it's necessary. But what is that feeling of superiority? Does it make me worse?

On September 8, 1960, Thomas Merton wrote in his diary how he felt it was important to try to "rethink thoughts that were fundamental to men of other ages, or *are* fundamental to men of other countries." He wondered whether this was even possible or whether it's sane. "For me it is an expression of love for man and for God. An

expression without which my contemplative life would be senseless. And to share this with my own contemporaries."

Maybe that's what I'm trying to do when I get these poetry books and diaries, and so on. As Merton says, it's some kind of desire to communicate with these pasts and distances, out of obligation, "Combine them in myself, to absorb, to digest, 'to remember.'" But I never heard Prabhupada say we should do this. What's especially important for a devotee to associate with nondevotees either in the present or the past? My excuse usually is that they are artists and can teach me how to write. Or ordinary people can teach me how to write. Or because I'm mostly alone and can't face up to actual confrontations with contemporaries, I do it at a distance through books. To break out of loneliness. Out of sense gratification. Too much curiosity.

All of the above.

The fat cones on the pine tree. The leaves moving silently and languidly as I see them through the glass window. Old flies crawling up the window pane. Everything is shut up in this tower room. Only VIP guests use it. When no one is here, it simply gathers dust and stale air.

I don't want to write ordinary things in an ordinary diary, but I just wanted to tell you that I don't think the children will be as noisy tonight as they were yesterday, Sunday afternoon, when their parents were preoccupied with the Sunday feast and *kirtana*. At least I hope not.

* * *

6:10 p.m.

Still thinking of that GBC assignment, which I haven't managed to write yet. They want me to say why ISKCON is better than the other options and why it's an insult to Prabhupada to say that he initiates after his disappearance.

Yes, you see, Prabhupada is the best, but you don't serve him by saying that he can initiate after his disappearance. Why would I bring that up anyway? Talk with M. about it. Now streak, streak across the lawn. See the pale pink roses as you look down from the tower room. This is not the Holiday Inn. There is no bar here, or meat-serving restaurants, just the faint sound of a *mrdanga* three floors down. They will let me stand in the temple room, listless, but the young kids want action and go for it in any way they can. They can see that I am not joyful (externally), so I stand in the back and don't dance. If a *gurukula* teacher tries to prod them, they could say, "Look at old Satsvarupa Maharaja, he's not dancing either." The teacher could respond, "Yes, but he's old. He doesn't feel well. He used to dance when he was younger."

If the children ask me, "Is it true that you used to dance?" I'd say, "Yes, I used to run up and down the temple room."

* * *

We want the babble, the brook, the flowers of the dark red rose. We went over the border. Italy, we're coming there too. The Russian circus is coming to town.

Listen, they are talking in the hallway, M. and Linc, about who knows what. The torrent, tyrant made a list. I'm sick of it. I want to go to Puerto Rico and write a funny

book about a light-hearted Nimai drawing cartoon figures. I'm making this up; I'm writing to drown out the talk in the hallway. How can you expect me to be thoughtful? The door is even open. He's shimmering, snickering.

Poe became an orphan at three years old. Some say his father was cruel and some say he was kind. It doesn't matter because he had died by the time Poe was three. Poe wrote poems, but Dave Smith says that he has many, many faults. He's not an Emily without faults. Where is the Vaisnava poet? O rupa Gosvami, you wrote of *kadamba* flowers and *rasa-mandalas*, Radha and Krishna.

September 9, 1:50 a.m.

Krishna is in control. Make Him your friend. I told that to X. dasa, who is angry at Krishna. His anger is a little hollow though, because beneath it I detect a strong desire to know Him and to make peace. X. dasa feels that he knows the Lord only as a God of wrath, as one who dispenses inscrutable justice. X. dasa wants to return to loving Krishna in a friendly way, as he did at the beginning of his Krishna conscious practices. We all want to find the reality of God for ourselves, even if that means searching through our anger. We ask ourselves how God is real to us. For me, I tend to find the answers in solitude. By reading and speaking *sastra* we can come to know Him. First become pure, then know the Supreme Pure. That's what Prabhupada means when he says it's a gradual process.

In the meantime, our search is regulated by our initiation vows and sometimes we regulate ourselves so much in mind that we become dry. Some go so far as to say we can't know God unless we drink water in the mode of goodness and use a tongue scraper. Srila Prabhupada said that even a drunkard could know God if he understood that Krishna was the taste of wine.

* * *

In today's *Srimad-Bhagavatam* verse, Narada Muni describes the Supreme Lord as a player who sets up and disperses His playthings at His sweet will. As soon as we hear this, we want to know how to apply it. We want to understand the ways of God so that we can have peace of mind and can find reasons to worship Him. We look for the God's justification in making *us* His playthings. So many questions arise from these verses if we really consider their implications.

In the purport Srila Prabhupada states that Krishna awards people reactions to their karma. In that sense, the Lord is an agent.

But He's more than a mere dispenser of karma. If He likes He can bestow mercy, something higher than justice. He can change our karma.

When I speak I want to say that we should appreciate that this verse gives us more information about Krishna, and more knowledge can lead us to a greater appreciation of His qualities. *Janma karma ca me divyam*. Always our self-interest pops in. We want to know about God so we can get a better deal. Why not just hear about Him, enjoy knowing a little more about His glories, and then allowing ourselves to act on the inspiration to fall at His inconceivable feet? Why not love Him for who He is?

It reminds me of how when people write me letters, they usually want something from me "some knowledge, some help, some compassion, some permission. That's the nature of our relationship. I do the best I can to reciprocate, but I must admit that I'm not so personally touched. Nobody wants to know about me as I am as much as they want to get something from me. When someone does show an interest in me for myself, then I am moved to reveal myself. I think it must be like this with God too. He prefers people to actually love Him for Himself, not just to understand how they can get a better deal from Him. We hear that Krishna can give us something other than karma, so we want that. Why not just hear that and say to ourselves, "God is so wonderful! Nothing is greater than Him. He's not under the law of karma and he's more than a dispenser of karma. May I serve Him eternally."

* * *

7:50 a.m.

I received a greeting card in the mail, a Christmas card made over into a Janmastami card. It was signed by a *Bhakta* and *Bhaktin* whom I didn't know. Or I knew the *bhakta*, because he had written me a few letters. I knew he was a seriously aspiring devotee. But I wrote a note to one of the devotees who knows him to inquire about the *bhaktin* whose name was on the card. The envelope was addressed as if they were husband and wife.

The devotee wrote back, simply, "The *bhakta* and *bhaktin* are not married, as far as I know, but they are associating."

"Associating"? That's ISKCON jargon for a couple having a relationship without the sanctity of marriage. I mentioned it to Madhu, who told me that we have to get used to the times in which we are living and learn to expect this sort of thing.

"Yeah, but I don't want to endorse illicit sex."

He said there are aspiring devotees who drink liquor and smoke dope. To this I replied that I wouldn't reject such a person, but I wouldn't endorse his bad habits. I wouldn't say, "Thanks for your letter, Bhakta Joe, and I hope you're happy drinking your Guinness." If I write back to the couple who are living together, however, it seems like I'm endorsing what they are doing.

Madhu was sympathetic, but left me to think that it's a rather old-fashioned idea. I guess I've been left behind, and my refusal to give such endorsements is similar to my refusal to become computer literate. In the request I got from the GBC to write that essay, the GBC man wrote that after he had received my essay, he would get back to me "by Pony Express or whatever method of communication you are using." I've become an eccentric old-timer. I thought, "Oh well, I won't be here that much longer. Then I'll pass away without having to accommodate myself to all this stuff." But in Krishna consciousness we can't enjoy that privilege either, because we're aware that we may very well be back and have to learn to swing with the new scene in one way or another.

* * *

10 a.m.

Giving the *Bhagavatam* class is a sacred function. When you speak, you begin to feel you can answer any theological question with spice. You speak with a little humor or in whatever way seems most effective to captivate your audience. Submissive devotees smile. You challenge them, inspire them to embrace difficulties for the sake of spiritual advancement. You point out that although ISKCON has its deficiencies, we should remain loyal to Prabhupada's movement. You say one wonderful thing after another. It's almost like levitating above your ordinary self.

Then you get off the *vyasasana* and come back to earth. Even while on the *vyasasana*, you give yourself as an example of a foolish person. Yet you have a firm grasp on the philosophy. As question after question is asked, all containing a challenge or doubt, you become more and more a representative of the Absolute Truth. You stand firm and don't flinch. You are Krishna's representative. You glance over at Srila Prabhupada *murti* on his *vyasasana* for encouragement and confirmation. He seems to endorse what you are doing, and your brain fills with references, funny stories, appropriate quotes "all used in the right context.

How different this is from meandering with a pen in a free-write.

As I looked out to the audience this morning, I saw one woman, not dressed in a *sari*, who appeared to be a young congregational member, paying close attention. Perhaps she was extra pleased when I made a reference to Milton's *Paradise Lost* and to physics and what Sadaputa Prabhu says. Who knows what she was thinking?

* * *

On September 9, 1849, Judge Niles Searls wrote in his diary of the desperate condition of the pioneer party he was heading on their way to California. A hundred animals were dead around them, and they had no more food or water. On this day in 1919, military officer Howard O'Brian, serving in World War I in Europe, wrote in his irreverent diary, "Warnings from home against Demon rum. Unnecessary. Beer out, also Colored liquid of indifferent taste and no potency." Another man tells about some behind the scenes dealings of a governor of a U.S. state.

Diaries tend to give us insider views that we would never otherwise hear. Often they are filled with bitterness, and we can be scandalized to read what *really* happened, apart from the picture painted by historians and politicians. In that sense a candid diary is better than an official pronouncement. It's sad to know that most of these diarists recorded only the seamy side of material life, either lived in public or in private. Is it honesty?

We lie to ourselves so easily. It is one thing to mock artificial God consciousness and to show the shortcomings of the clergy, the inability of scripture to answer the question of why we are suffering, and so on, but to actually, privately, live without God or without the desire to seek God is the real scandal "something people don't even think about in these diaries. These people are so brainwashed by their current intellectual fads

that they have no clue about the meaning of life. It's very sad. And here I go, a Hare Krishna diarist, ranting against the nondevotees.

* * *

11:45 a.m.

Merton complained about life in the monastery. He said it was superficial and as compromised as worldly politics. He writes for himself, to help himself.

The streamers and beamers . . . I don't write for myself but for the purple world of effervescence. I mean, the communication gap between the slow words and

Saunaka Rsi dasa,
the standup comedian, the
allusions no one can catch or
everyone can. But I keep thinking . . .

I read this in Merton:

"What business have I to be sitting around in JW's house in Hankeridge, listening to records, trying to talk about something? I don't believe in that anymore, still less the place where I went with F. r. John Loftus and his friend the other night to hear some Jazz. At least I have found out by experience that this just does not go. I am dead to it; it is finished long ago. You don't drag a corpse down to 4th Street and set it up in a chair, at a table, and in polite society." (*The Journals of Thomas Merton*, Vol. 4, p. 18)

I like how he said that.

Kierkegaard says that we can't go back and try to enjoy something we have already tasted. The only way to repeat a happiness is if it comes of its own accord. To try again can only bring a feeling worse than disappointment.

We have superficialities in ISKCON too. We are all capable of analyzing them. Still, I defended ISKCON in my lecture. We shouldn't reject the essence just because we are working through our impurities. The essence still exists. I believe that.

How we find that essence: make a list. The list will contain endless entries. Merton spoke about the way of the monk
of the rope, the
hope held out.

I've got it together for tomorrow's meeting. I'll read from *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*. People speak of love of God, but the highest love is *madhurya-rasa*. I'll read from the end of TLC where Prabhupada says we should follow the path of the *gopis* as the way to understand radha and Krishna. I will assert that this is done by following the guru in his *sannyasi* form, not by pretending we know his intimate *manjari* form.

Interrupted "Yadunandana just knocked on the door looking for Madhu. He's not yet thirty, but wants to take *sannyasa*. He wants to talk with me about it. He wonders if it would be more humble to remain *brahmacari*, but I also see his strong desire. How can we older *sannyasis* keep telling him that he's too young, or even that it's pride that drives him forward since we ourselves wanted to take *sannyasa* with our proud and impure motives? I wanted to preach, but I also wanted to do something exciting. *Sannyasa* was an adventure. After all, I came to Krishna consciousness to make advancement, and I was still young enough to think that I could cross the miles to *Krishna-prema* quickly.

Actually, it's good to take *sannyasa* when you're young because you have enough energy to be a bold preacher. Later in life, you may not be as enthusiastic. Prabhupada said that, and therefore he gave *sannyasa* to Rsi-kumara dasa at nineteen and others who were in their twenties.

I don't want to discourage this young man. He'll be the first among my disciples, probably. He's a real ISKCON man and preacher. Give it more time.

Tomorrow is the thirty-first anniversary of my initiation. I am somehow never about to observe this day with close friends who would like to hear me talk about it. I don't celebrate it myself. What shall I say here? I was initiated. I made some promises that I continue to keep. I still have my red beads and I honor them. I worry over those beads breaking as much as I worry over my bones breaking. I will lose them only at death, I hope.

* * *

Go ahead, name names and tell the truth.

I don't know any truth.

I heard a dog yelping as if he were tied tight on a leash outside the temple. It reminded me of the Irish Setter, Donna, kept by Uncle Irv next door to us on Katan Avenue. How cruel he was to that dog. Our family hated him for it. The dog would whine and cry for hours, especially at night. Once the dog got loose and ran like crazy from its tormentor, but Uncle Irv caught it again. Out in the rain, that miserable, neurotic Irish Setter, the visible sign of his owners despicable nature.

* * *

12:58 p.m.

There are so many references to Radharani in *The Nectar of Devotion*, I can't prepare myself by reading them all. They're mostly brief examples. Better to speak simply from memory what I have heard my spiritual master speak. Present Her the way Prabhupada taught us. No pretense: "I love Her! Her service is my all!" She is the most sacred and confidential aspect of Krishna consciousness. No wonder I cannot feel much about it. She resides in all devotees' lives and protects their devotion. They pray to Her, the representative of Krishna's compassionate nature. She is the best of all pure devotees because "she loves Krishna the most."

* * *

#9

The Day before Radhastami

Pause on a hot day before meeting
with disciples, what to say?

* * *

That you and I come together by
his grace, obedient, the same
truths, I repeat, you hear
on this hot afternoon
in Castilla in the hills.

* * *

This is Krishna's land, ISKCON.
Here we believe in Prabhupada
as exclusive founder-*acarya*,
here we worship Radha-Govindacandra
and there's electricity only in the early morn.
O home-made Nrsimhadeva I

* * *

pause and hope I'll be able to
deliver some slivers of pure
and strong truth "myself the
servant, now thirty-one years initiated
still holding my original *japa* beads.

* * *

11:30 p.m.

My day was curtailed by the rising of the pain behind the right eye. I had to cancel the five o'clock meeting and take rest by 6. The pain persisted and I took an Esgic. Now it's going down, but I can't sleep. I took the pill because I wanted to be up for my Radhastami lecture.

September 10, 3:52 a.m., Radhastami, and my 31st Anniversary

Up chanting. Pain down perhaps fifty-five percent. I hear a hoot owl in the great outdoor night. I go on chanting *japa* in my room.

* * *

I had a dream last night which I thought interesting. I was watching a Buddhist story being enacted on stage. The narrator laying like a statue on his back and telling the story of a person "the person was lying next to him also posed like a statue "who was born, died, felt remorse for his sins, and had to be reborn. Suddenly, someone in the audience called out, "That's the same old crap." The narrator became angry and said, "Do you want different crap? I curse you." The dream ended there, but I realized that the narrator had cursed the man to pass stones instead of stool. The moral was, if you deride the sameness of life, you'll be cursed to experience an extraordinary deviation.

When I awoke I remembered an earlier segment to the dream. Again, it was a story with a narrator, and it involved someone experiencing a full life, then preparing to wander off again on his travels. This man also met the actors who were playing the Buddhist story, and they also cursed him in some way that led to his downfall. The narrator ended the story, "And I hope this doesn't happen to you, dear reader. But if it does, because something bad happens to everyone in this world, simply remember Krishna."

What I liked about this dream was that I could see a large book from which these stories were being drawn. They were stories within stories, and they had earthly parables containing wisdom, similar to scriptural wisdom. All of them had a Krishna conscious moral.

I wish the dream source could send me such stories again, and that I could fill up my own book with them, filling out their Krishna conscious purports. I loved how a reader of such a book could enter the emotions of the story and how the narrator's voice came in at the end in such a friendly, conversational tone, reminding us to always remember Krishna.

* * *

5:32 a.m.

"Who is Krishna? Who is the girl with Krishna?" The immediate answer is ""He's the Supreme Personality of Godhead." But in that introduction by Srila Prabhupada, we don't hear who the girl is. Radharani is not introductory subject matter. Hidden.

The index on Radha in *The Nectar of Devotion* contains such entries as, "Attacked by Krishna in the street, attacked at the Yamuna, chaste and unchaste, Krishna's compassionate side . . . " Her ecstatic symptoms are listed. Rupa Gosvami gives Her as the prime example of shyness, boldness, and many other qualities and ecstasies.

We cannot imitate her *sakhis* or pretend we know more about Her than we do. She is a mystery and we should recognize the truth of that. She is not so accessible that we can attain Her shelter by imitating Her friends. We attain Her mercy by hearing about Her from the proper source, and by serving faithfully guru and Krishna. She is *hladini-Sakti*, the real meaning of love of God.

She and Krishna are approached only by one who is in the *gopis'* mood (*gopi-bhava*, *gopi-anugatya*). But how do we follow? By following Srila Prabhupada, an eternal resident of Vrndavana. The spiritual master is Her representative. Also, by serving in Lord Caitanya's *sankirtana* movement. The *dasya* mood offered to Lord Caitanya leads us to *madhurya-rasa*. Pray to Lord Nrsimhadeva to remove our *anarthas*. Pray for purity and then practice it. Srila Prabhupada leads us forward by expert instructions.

I plan to play three excerpts from Prabhupada's tapes about Radharani. Then I'll talk of Her pastimes "when She left the *rasa* dance, when She spoke in madness to the bumblebee, and if there is still time, others.

Oh, and we should pray, "Dear Jagannata, please recommend me to Your Krishna."

* * *

9:58 a.m.

The soprano singer here reminds me of that woman in Vrndavana who sings in a similar voice. "Radhe, Radhe, Jaya Radhe," or, "Radharani *ki jaya*, Maharani *ki jaya*."

Srimati Radharani was beautiful this morning. I gave the class with correct conclusions and I'm proud of that. It's on tape if you want to hear what I sankirtana will lead us to Radha-kunda. I said we speak more openly about Radha-dasya (*gopi-manjari-bhava*) as the highest goal on Radhastami, but shouldn't indulge ourselves in the details of it so much at other times.

Someone asked, "But isn't it all absolute in the spiritual world?" Yes, it is. Krishna wants to play with the cowherd boys. Krishna wants to be with His mother and father. Krishna wants to be with the *gopis*. Still, the *acaryas* have analyzed that *madhurya-rasa* is the most concentrated sweetness among all the varieties, and that means that Krishna is sweetest in the *kaiSora* form in which He is loved by the *gopis*. And Radharani is the best devotee because She loves Krishna the most.

When the lecture was over I offered *guru-puja* to Srila Prabhupada, then stood before Their Lordships. Radha was dressed in a soft green dress. A jeweled butterfly had alighted on Her left hand, and another on Krishna's leg. He looked Lordly and She radiant.

I said no other religious system teaches about the love between Radha and Krishna. A *brahmachari* asked me to tell of Radharani's mother, father, sisters, and brothers. I said there wasn't time. Later today we will read about Her twenty-five qualities.

M. said, "Happy thirty-first birthday!" Sounds young.

But thirty-one years as an adult devotee, as a would-be devotee.

Sesa Prabhu wrote in his Vyasa-puja offering that his youth is over and that it was well-spent in idealism and the adventure of overcoming obstacles to his spiritual life. He looks forward to more years of vigorous service. I'm old, although not *very* old age yet.

The Nectar of Devotion says Krishna will accept anything that is offered through Radha. I don't really know what that means. I know it doesn't refer to something official: "Dear radha, please accept this flower and see that it gets to Krishna." It has to be heartfelt. Following Radharani can mean following the vows we made at initiation. Some say such following has to be more "*rasika*," more directly in tune with the pastimes in the *kunjās*. They're singing songs of love, but not for me.

Then do you not grieve your lack of qualification, your lack of ache, your emptiness?

Too empty. There's nothing inside. Prabhupada once said to his servant, "Your brain is empty." Glad he didn't say that to me. I would have cried. I cry now.

* * *

#10

Radha's Day

Hurry, he'll interrupt you before

your September Song,

this Radha's Day turns into

noon.

We break our fast and realize

we're secular hosts "fools "
to ideas we don't want.

* * *

Well, what *do* we want?
We can't "won't "say
"Radha's service direct,
under Rupa-manjari!"
That would be a farce,
a mockery to say or "pray."

* * *

Then? Prabhupada, we say.
But there too we fail
to make sense. So we eat
the *prasadam* they sincerely
offered and comment on the
nice soprano voice singing in the
kirtana while we stood
at the rear of the temple
viewing Radha and Krishna dressed
in soft green.
The children played
and the men danced and
the women I know not.

* * *

4:01 p.m.

The inevitable cannot be changed. Better just to accept it. That's the philosophical thing to do, and it's also in the mode of goodness. The devotee "takes shelter at Krishna's lotus feet."

The devotees here still haven't honored *prasadam*. I broke my fast at noon "gobbled the feast glad, glad.

Do I face the inevitable and not try to resist it? Salinger is seventy-eight, someone's mom eighty-six. The world is still going around, but today is eternal "Radhastami.

I don't know what I'll say to the disciples who'll gather at 5 p.m. I don't want to focus all their attention on me. Yet this is the occasion to do exactly that since it is the first time I have been here in two years. I may never come back. I may die.

No, no.

Yes, yes.

We just read that it happens to everyone.

Why should we be more inclined to accept it just because it can't be changed?

"rage, rage against the dying of the light."

Did you know I have some pencils here marked "Three Happinesses" from Shanghai, China. 62038 HB. Three Happinesses? What's that "material, Brahman, and devotional service?"

Tell me, what will you speak? You often talk of improvisation. When we sing the opening song, your interests become apparent. "Soldiers, ladies, the circumference of the earth is four billion miles. I once attended a fire-fighters school when the Sara was in port. They made me enter a flaming metal building. Another time they sent me out on a facsimile of a sinking ship.

Don't want to remember.

Father Louis said, "The death of Christ within us is a terrible thing." He sometimes saw his own lack of faith, lack of love. Empty to God within.

We both aspire to speak simply, but they don't speak English. It's not like in Ireland where I could read my poetry.

Chagrin. Chagall.

Miro. Machado.

Hemingway. Minor. Adolf.

Mencher. Pinscher.

Bhagavad-gita "three chickens in a row 'the neighbors', I heard. Say, maybe they have some questions for me.

I will tell them that I hope they are all happy, or at least surviving, in Krishna consciousness.

Men with blank faces, me the blankest, oldest saffron wizard
wizen, sunken
mizzen-masted.

September 11, 4 a.m.

I'm excusing myself from giving the *Bhagavatam* class today. We'll go to *mangala-arati* instead, then have breakfast, then drive for five minutes to a devotee's house. Yes, we have a driveway and a car or two in it, and a sled for the winter. We have a family inside, a wife and three boys or a girl and we worship Deities on our altar and go sometimes to the Sunday feast at the ISKCON temple. But then I get sick and somebody dies and kids grow up and go bad or go somewhere else I don't want them to go, and everything is finished, the illusion is over, just as Jada Bharata promised it would be.

And what are the illusions of a *sannyasi*? That he had an empire filled with admirers who called him guru. Wherever he went he was well received, and received well-cooked meals. He received a comfortable bed (empty), and he remained celibate, gave lectures, accepted money, and, of course, had to listen to the many problems which he then attempted to solve by giving absolute answers and being himself absolute.

Then what happened?

You can fill in the rest yourself, you storytellers.

You mean the bubble was popped? Those are the words one Godbrother used. He said that in ISKCON, we live inside a bubble that *ought* to be popped.

The devotees held a parade around the temple building last night carrying the small Deities on a palanquin and holding a *kirtana*. It was a nice demonstration of community solidarity. Many children attended.

I don't know what to say. What is the purpose of living together? We are always asking such questions. The first need that seems to arise is how to meet the economic needs of so many community members. I don't know how they do it here, whether they sell books or paintings or something altogether different. It's not my business to know. But I do like it that they feel the purposefulness of their living together, their coming together to chant and hear the Lord's glories.

One devotee wrote me, "When you correspond with so-and-so devotee from our country, please tell him to become more active in ISKCON service. We want him to work in Communications. He will listen to you."

How can I *do* that? If the man is burned out after seeing two of his initiating gurus fall down and he has given up active service, how can I tell him to do otherwise? What can he communicate to the nondevotees about the glories of this movement?

Now you sound like one of those . . .

No, I'm not. We already have enough ISKCON bashers. Such bashers drive me to defend ISKCON. I couldn't bear to see the smirks on their faces if I were to join in ISKCON bashing with them. I'm just saying that in this case, there's a human element.

* * *

"The jingle man" Emerson called Poe for his rhymes. Dave Smith called Emerson an ebullient hoaxster. Smith said Poe was old-fashioned because he believed in God and in a mechanical universe. Everyone's got something to say, and whatever they say sells books in the market.

Last night I told the disciples it would be nice if my writings were translated into Spanish. Then we spoke about how a disciple may come forward and offer to do something to please the spiritual master, when actually they mean, "I would like to help out if it is convenient for me." We ought to be honest and admit that we are not fully surrendered. We cannot even follow the rules sometimes.

One devotee said, "I brace myself for the periodic falldowns of ISKCON gurus." And another sang the ditty, "Ten little, nine little, eight little Indians . . . "They hope there will only be one *maha-bhagavata* left at the end.

* * *

Madhu has a mild flu. His voice is hoarse and he needs extra rest. But I have so many things I want him to do "copy tapes, communicate with America, and to interview me for an essay I'm supposed to do for the GBC on "Why we Should Be Gurus in the ISKCON Way and Be True to Prabhupada Too." I want to find a way to glorify Prabhupada and yet make the requisite points. O ISKCON, I love thee.

O Trot,

Betsy Trotwood,

you don't care for David Copperfield enough. Why was Poe left an orphan at three years old? Did He who made the lamb make thee?

The class I was going to give today stated that we should face the inevitable and accept it. I was going to say we have to be sattvic to accept such wisdom. To live wisdom, we have to be wise, and wisdom is born of submission to greater wisdom than what we currently possess. Otherwise we will always rail against it. No, accept the unalterable. Why? Because death is coming and there's so little time.

I will not give that class. But I would have said, "You should be tolerant and have a duty to perform so that when grief comes, you can continue with it. Use your brain to know that there is an eternal reality and that all misery is temporary and caused by bodily attachment. Don't cultivate any attachment that will leave you grieving later. Don't act in the mode of passion. Hare Krishna." These are the words of advice (going beyond stoicism) that will bring us happiness.

Chant Hare Krishna and you'll be . . .

if you can pay
attention.

We are going to see the Deity and
move. I know I already
told you that.

I am going to chase the trail all day to see if I can write more and find the path to the essence. She said the culmination of this *bhajana* is to get people to read it. That's true. The world is full of people who compromise at every step, including ISKCON devotees, yet they also do nice things, such as chant together, and some of them caretake the sick and the crippled.

Here is your essay, sir.

What does it say?

It says we've got to stick together, we ISKCONites. We have to believe that Srila Prabhupada and the GBC are right to have gurus in disciplic succession.

But what if they fall down with a woman and take holy money and are guilty of poor *sadhana*?

That's a scandal.

I read that the court awarded 120,000,000 dollars to a person who sued the Catholic Church because they did not take sufficient action against one of their priests who was sexually abusing boys. The institutions and the individuals and the courts and the various ways that a nice life (and game) can come crashing down. Here's a fellow happy to be writing books and who only wants to make them better. He also wants to educate the public on how to read them. But that too could come crashing down. Srila Prabhupada said if you don't take care and be enthusiastic, then the temple will become a *godown* where crows and dogs come to pass stool.

That fellow said, "I want to write Vaisnava books following in your footsteps." It's not so easy.

7:55 a.m.

Bags loaded to move down the road. Three full days on our own. Hare Krishna. Write and read, hear His Divine Grace, read scripture. What else is there to do? I gave four lectures so far and cancelled two.

O Lord, O energy of the Lord.

* * *

12:30 noon

Now we're in a little house on ISKCON land, but isolated from the temple. A loud fly is buzzing in the room. I took a walk, but was tormented by flies and had to return. The GBC writing assignment is a burden I'll have to face up to and finally break through. I wish . . .

A big framed plaque here: "Prabhupada Marathon 1992." I can see why some think ISKCON is fanatical. Oh well, it's my home. We pressure, hype, and so on. Lift all that stuff to one side and we will see the good heart. In the Vyasa-Puja book, one Godbrother wrote that ISKCON faces many crises. Another said ISKCON is Srila Prabhupada's body. I'd like to be a little finger on that body.

One Godbrother wrote that he once desired to fulfill his propensities in Srila Prabhupada's service, but Srila Prabhupada trained him so that now he does only what Srila Prabhupada wants, just like a dog answering his master's commands. I didn't like that so much. I also wondered whether it was completely true whether devotees do not or should not fulfill their propensities in Prabhupada's service.

* * *

#11

Return to my own
September 11 make mine.
I'm alone in a room with an
open window and a fly
circulating in the
fresh-feeling air.
Here's a cup of water, sir.

* * *

I'm in Spain at
the end of a country road.
The men were singing and playing
guitar in the van, I heard the strains faintly
even from here.
I just want to get this
assignment done
and return to my own . . .

* * *

at least visit my own
briefly, a few words,
hello to self,
pause to remember . . .
Let Krishna enter
the natural way
demanding my love
and attention.

* * *

10:30 p.m.

Irregular hours. M. staying overnight in the van so I can be noisy in this house without disturbing him in the morning. Set up art on floor for tomorrow. Here say

Hello no mousies,
this house used to be
a pigeon coop "still divided into compartments (pigeon holes) don't
put me in one
as if I'm an ace writer with
an ace bandage on my left ankle
(actual autobiography).

Let me write fast as possible because
the house is creaking and
crackling and the raven might come in the window and say,
"Never more!"

I live in no pigeon hole but thought a ghost of one could appear
in my mind as
the insects hit the walls the
bulbs.

Why does this house creak so much and why
the black smudge of
crickets?

Outdoors in the great Spanish forest night, we
could be anywhere in ISKCON.

September 12, 10:26 a.m.

Two hours *japa*, two hours letter writing: exhausted. Took a spritely walk, now returned to this converted pigeon coop with its yellow ceiling, to relax. There is nothing I must do right now.

But what about my daily newspaper? Journalist Third Class, USN, writes of his day. I ploughed the carrots, hewed the grain, forgot the plover, remembered the girls, retained the letters I read, threw away the garbage, aproned the porch, scratch-scratched the pen.

Daily news: the Catholic Church was mightily sued.

Pause to reload.

Recalled the time I went to Avalon and offered parents money for my stay there. They refused to take it, so it went back into my wallet.

Embarrassing moments, five dollars each in *New York Daily News*. Don't tell ribald ones.

A pen that skips. The time I left the house to catch the 6:30 a.m. train, but ran back to get my wallet and surprised my Dad in the act.

The time he surprised me. The time Madeline opened my door without knocking and I shouted, "Get out!" until the poor creature cried with fright.

Apologize, apologize,

Stephen will apologize/ take out his eyes,

"Did Bilvamangala, for the same reason?" asked K. Don't imitate," said Swamiji.

No, I won't. Avant-garde music, he said, would be a good background for your art.

"Jazz but not with traditional jazz instruments."

What's going on in the world of music? Who knows? Painting of Swamiji bare-chested with twelve *tilaka* markings, face from the passport photo "remember that one, hanging on the flimsy partition of the Glenville Avenue temple in Boston?

Yes, I remember. And Henry Miller

telling it as it is,

we kids fly kites to forget.

Nowadays, children engage in the same nefarious activities as their elders. Nothing gets repressed any longer. Still, some of them come to God.

The Victorian Age. He said

his country is bad for ISKCON,

too many young fanatics.

I was sorry to hear it. No peace, nowhere to

go for an honest

person,

he said.

No hope for me, said another. He can't control his sex desire, can't follow the four rules.

Then why does he keep an office? How often does he fall down, anyway? Don't make a mockery. Nobody can cheat.

The lawyer said the roman Catholic diocese was arrogant, thinking itself above the law. They made no comment, said it was an innocent mistake by good people who didn't know their man was abusing altar boys. The jury said the Church was lying and slammed them. The money goes to those who were abused. What will they do with it?

The Church and the nation. Sell holy articles and send the priests out to collect. How can they ever pay it off? Get a loan from the Pope? An embarrassment, a great shame.

He was raging, out of control, a pedophile.

Acts like that cannot be sanctioned. We told him. He made his confession, now don't cover it up. We have to do something about it.

Talk these things over with the secretary. Pray to be spared from similar calamities.

Melvin Weeks writes to me, calls me Sats "a sixty-three-year-old in prison, remembering

Prabhupada. Another calls Prabhupada, "The old guy" with affection. I want that too, but more reverent, as befits a disciple.

Don't get caught with pants (or *dhoti*) down. Don't do acts so bad that you have to hide. Better to sit against the bolsters.

They cleaned out all evidence of pigeons from this place "even the smell. It's now clean enough in here for an altar. Husband and wife will return today to water their garden. Get their electricity from a twelve-volt battery recharged during day by solar power.

That's the 10:30 news, folks. Signing off.

* * *

12

The Secular Diary of Stephen Goswami

Before you know it September

will be gone. We hardly knew

ya "no chestnuts yet, no

song, no . . .

hermitage, party time, back to school "

what did you expect?

An arrest? A conviction?

A release? I want a simple

peace.

* * *

In September we hope to drive

down from these hills with

no jinx to break down our van.

It'll be our third week away

as we head into France for

Italy. I want to stop an

extra afternoon to

pause and recollect, say

something at a P-stop.

* * *

*Oh, it's a long, long way
from May to September.*

The calendar goes bare

while chanting Hare Krishna

alone in this house with the

frescoes, the lies I have read, the

bonnet and a visit

from Tu Fu.

* * *

12:25 noon

I did it, or He did it. He allowed me to re-enter the door of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Sukadeva is explaining Jaya and Vijaya's three births as demons. I read it aloud in a whisper.

Acyutatma "the devotees who follow the Infallible (Acyuta). Prahlada Maharaja is one. He's mentioned briefly, and Maharaja Pariksit intelligently asks, "Why was there enmity between father and son and, "how did Prahlada Maharaja become such a great devotee of Lord Krishna?" This sets the stage.

Srila Prabhupada in '66 tells them of Krishna's marrying 16,108 wives and giving each of them fabulous palaces. We speak of God's omnipotence. 16,108 is a small token. He never grows old; He has all six opulences to an infinite degree. "If we have to believe the scriptures," Srila Prabhupada says, "then we must accept that Lord Krishna enacted the *lilas* described in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. It is not amazing for Him."

* * *

I'm showing Miro's pictures to Triv and Linc, who are musicians. I'll also show them the drawings I did this September. A guru surreal. Disciple on guitar. Come together for a blue composition in honor of Lord Hari?

"But I thought ISKCON art had to be representational."

Not necessarily. You have seen abstract designs on album covers in ISKCON depicting puddles reflecting trees in the holy *dhama*, have you not?

* * *

3:01 p.m.

The demons think Lord Visnu is restless and cannot fix His mind. They think they can kill Him. The demons think Krishna can be purchased the way you can induce a child to do something by offering him *laddus* or cakes. Indirectly, this does indicate Krishna's true position. He will eat a few morsels offered to Him by His devotees.

But He isn't childish. "The highest quality of the Supreme Lord is that He is *bhakta-vatsala*." (*Bhag.* 2.7.8, purport)

I'm reading, but thinking of a disciple. (Whose disciple? Do you own one? No, but I'm responsible to help.) Here's the predicament: suppose someone is in charge of a project but can't follow the four rules? Shouldn't he step down? How often does he break them? I can't understand his position and I need to find out more. I can't ignore it.

* * *

HiranyakaSipu wanted to stop all *yajna*, kill *brahmanas* "he was a demon. I am too in some ways. That's why I say that the airing of doubts is important. We need to face that demon part of ourselves and find our natural simplicity hidden within. I don't think we should express doubts simply to titillate the intelligence. We are restless cats and sometimes get carried away for the wrong reasons.

We begin to wander over whether such a giant demon could possibly have existed. Is he, as Kierkegaard would term him, an offense to reason?

No. We are the offense.

Express doubts to clear them, then find entrance into simple prayer and dependence on His mercy.

* * *

4:55 p.m.

Some thoughts after skimming through Strawser's book on Kierkegaard:

The concept that the "solitary individual" to whom SK dedicated his work was actually himself. That is, he wrote for himself.

His complicated notions of using pseudonyms and signing other books with his own name, the indirectness of his communication "all these things are too intellectual and philosophical for me, untrained as I am, to understand. Nevertheless, they resonate within my writing-self. I too wish to write something that cannot be communicated. I too have an inkling that it will be the reader who will take the truth from what I am writing. Strawser says SK never tried to browbeat, but he filled his works with irony and jest and allusion. This was true even of his books on God consciousness. He could only lay before a reader his different thoughts, and especially the urgency he felt to become Krishna conscious. SK didn't claim that he was a Christian. Neither was *he* not a Christian.

On the other hand, we might think that all this is word jugglery and that we Krishna conscious people are in favor of direct communication, that we should always take a stance of authority, and that we should preach to people instead of making ironic statements, etc.

Well, I think there is more than meets the eye in Prabhupada's writings, and I don't think any of us should think we have plumbed their depths. Then what does it mean to "go deeper"? Does it mean reading the same thing over and over with the same understanding over and over until it becomes maddening?

Is there room for a more prayerful or mystical approach, ruminating on a text and waiting for the irony, the implications, the heaviness to sink in and turn us toward prayer? We have to look for the progression, not just in a systematic way from verse to verse, but within a verse and how it acts upon ourselves.

Therefore, some of these points regarding Kierkegaard's authorship and what he expected of the reader mean something to me both as a reader of my spiritual master's books and a writer who hopes to convey what he reads in an artful and honest way. I want to live an honest life, and part of that honesty is to admit that it is true, some things can't be communicated. And yes, some things have to be viewed ironically even though they are sacred.

Ironies such as not being in the realized position and yet preaching, ironies of contradiction, ironies of wanting to be taken seriously and yet not being able to take yourself completely seriously "all of that leads to jest and then back to seriousness. As a writer, I have to face the irony of using my writing in spiritual life and yet knowing that spiritual life cannot be encompassed by my writing.

We take the scriptures literally "that's our official position "yet sometimes we're unable to do it. Another irony. I joke to the reader how I may find it difficult to accept the *Bhagavatam's* fantastic account of HiranyakaSipu although I do accept it. I really do. Yes, although I can't express it well, I have an affinity for irony, jest, and indirect communication. Even when edifying, irony is interwoven.

* * *

5:45 p.m.

Another irony is contained right within the words themselves. Hey, I actually doubt the existence of the demigods because I have never seen them.

Voila, with a sleight of hand I can edit that sentence to say that I do not doubt the demigods and it is as if I never did.

The irony lies between what we read and our personal conviction. Ultimately, we rest in *brahma Sabda*, in

the knowledge coming down

to us for thirty years "

although that in itself

does not make it true "

those things that I have been saying and the people before me

but we have faith. We make that leap.

When they heard his death rattle they cried out,

"Sudama, go back to Prabhupada!"

And perhaps he did.

I wrote no sepulchral poem

although Emily did because she saw so many deaths in town.

She wrote, "A fly buzzed when I died "

He came between me and my last breath ""

Something that can't be said she almost said.

In words the spirit expressed

its shape and root and face and

inclination.

* * *

6:22 p.m.

When I get up, when I read, when she reads, when I correct myself, the book will be open and I'll enter, a corn. I will refrain from and renounce bad words and rhymes. *HiranyakaSipu* is the demon. He's the one doing the bad things. I was not even alive then. I have not even been to war. I have been free to drink water (is it clean?) and to take an airplane wherever I want to go.

He killed innocent people and the demigods planned to battle with him. They couldn't defeat him.

I read it all from a safe distance: "Demons all over the world are manufacturing nuclear weapons." Are they? Frightening to contemplate, but I don't have to contemplate

it too seriously because I am living here safely in Spain. Demons are against the feeble. Prabhupada says they are envious of them. See sixteenth chapter of *Bhagavad-gita*.

I'm safe.

Or so I think. A devotee just came by and told us not to park our van so close to the road because people will steal it during the night.

Demons burn down government capitols, forests, farms (just like the demons who burnt ISKCON's New Talavana to the ground).

The demons.

Runes.

Eye

dull and

tired and if he

comes up the stairs I'll stop

but I wanted to write in process. Doubts won't kill me. I can will myself back to my service of reading that thick book on my desk.

Tomorrow the majority of devotees from here will drive the seven hours to Barcelona for their Ratha-yatra. Probably only a small group with a big cart, mostly ignored, will pull the cart down a main street.

September 13, 12:50 a.m.

My sister's birthday today.

It seems I do everything only a little at a time. A Godbrother wrote that he feels he's not making much spiritual progress and that he's not doing his work efficiently. I replied that I am even older than him and that I certainly realize how little time I have left. I have so far to go to surrender (love) to Krishna. My capacity to cover the required distance seems to have diminished. My Godbrother said that he seems to need a radical change, but can't seem to understand what it should be. It will have to come from Krishna.

Radical change sounds like a willingness to welcome disasters that bring us advancement. That's another irony: I want to advance, but I want a peaceful, uneventful (if possible) life. I'm getting too old for disasters. O Lord, O energy of the Lord, You are in control.

We read and must look into ourselves. We have to take it personally, what Prabhupada and Krishna are saying. We have to find our actual love, where the story touches our heart, if at all, and if not, we have to see that too. This is a very important occupation, and that's why I say I need peace. I don't have time to do it when my life is full of crises.

Demons also know Vedic philosophy. They could just as effectively preach on the futility of family life, on transmigration, on our temporality. Therefore, knowledge is not enough. When we read, the point is not only to gather knowledge; we have to strengthen our devotion. A demon doesn't act to please the Supreme Lord. "To become a demigod or to become godly, whatever one's occupation, one must satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead." (*Bhag.* 7.2.21, purport)

4:03 a.m.

HiranyakaSipu is preaching to his relatives not to lament the passing away of his brother, Hiranyaksa. The soul goes on, so he has not died. Only those who are ignorant don't understand the nature of death. Srila Prabhupada comments that nowadays, even exalted scientists and philosophers think according to the bodily designation of self. These designations are no more than declarations over a dead body. The *sastras* hit hard against ignorance and assert transcendental truth. Down with those who disagree. "The conditioned soul has no information of the spirit and its exalted existence beyond the effects of the material condition." (*Bhag.* 7.2.24, purport)

Then I slid into easy
gear saying
my head can't
take extended
concentrated
thought. No
force, no
meta-narratives.
I need to slide easily
along.

* * *

Irony and edification. The love of edification.
Teach Krishna consciousness, you mean?
What's this that you don't want to directly preach?
Yeah, the point is:

- (1) I'm not perfectly realized in what I tell them.
- (2) You can't make a horse drink.
- (3) The truths are inexplicable.

I can, however, bring things to a reader's attention so that he or she can consider and choose a life-view to put into action.

Yes, I do feel some reluctance to proselytize, some uneasiness within myself that I'm just playing the lecturer's role. I'm aware I'm going on big assumptions, making a religious sermon on the strength of the *sastras*. It's not *logically* proven to *everyone's* satisfaction. We go on with it anyway.

Mercury, Venus, Mars "the millennium ends by arbitrary calculations. What counts?
Moth under twelve-volt light. Keep it clean, your life and your page.

* * *

4:33 a.m.

Anchorman's free-write hand is mighty chicken web of thin bones and flesh. God made it. Strawser writes, "I'll use God with a small 'g,' but not all the time because it may

shock people." They just don't know who He is. Argue over the pronouns. Saints know. God Himself knows.

O Strawser O
tenor sax man
tell the truth "
what can't be said
may be put into music.

Is that all? Pain a tune and riff and rhythm and love Krishna in color. religion in indelible ink marks. The handwriting looms bigger and bigger as we grow old.

* * *

6:25 a.m.

Yes, in the old days I used a manual typewriter. I learned to use it at the McBurnie YMCA in Manhattan. Now I want to say that the truth is ironical. I want to say the truth is in the scripture and that we simply have to imbibe it. We should associate with devotees and learn how not to smoke cigars "learn how to give up *all* bad habits. "Here," ISKCON says, "you may practice Krishna consciousness in your home. This is how you do it." The Polish poet who . . .

This is how you do it.

Each sentence is a new venture. I bat them out like balls, but it is not easy to hit the target or to go the distance. The keys get jammed. A moth smashes itself on my page.

Drinking hot lemon water is not breaking the fast I've been told. I tend to believe what people tell me. We are fortunate to be able to come back to Krishna. The Polish poet who won the Nobel Prize this year wrote a poem in which she says someone asks her what poetry is. She decided to cling to the unknowing. She compared defining it to putting your hand on the safety rail as you ride the escalator. She hopes she can stay in the "sacred not-knowing," because if you know what poetry is, then it's not poetry anymore.

I am writing this in front of the big sign for the 1992 Prabhupada Marathon. It shows photos of devotees distributing books in various places around the world. One photo is of denim boys in Denver receiving from a cute young woman in a gold and purple *sari*, a big book, and another is of an Oriental *brahmacari* selling a book to a smiling secretary in a Hong Kong office. There's also a proud receiver of a book in Copenhagen and a beautiful woman, smiling, with a *Bhagavad-gita* in her hand, in Timisoara.

Where's that?

It doesn't matter. It's somewhere. The point is people get these books and we shouldn't think that's a joke. Heigh ho the way to go.

My master wipes the smile off my face. I will be serious because I have to die, and the regular pain I feel even now is no joke. All the sides of the issues I see are also no joke, although I maintain my own point of view. When we wrote in the Navy, it was all right if we made a mistake, because we could correct it with White-out. I was a typist, not particularly fast, but concentrated on getting the job done. I was unhappy.

My writing here is nondifferent from my life. It's done in time weighted with reading and being myself.

Guy on street in Tokyo buys a book from a woman in a red *sari*. Some of them look the book over and say, "What *is* this?" The distributor says something to attract them if possible, but he or she is not always successful. Book distributors are the heroes and athletes of ISKCON. We honor them.

* * *

The Barcelona ratha-yatra was cancelled because the tires on the rath cart kept breaking. They will go instead on a *maha-harinama* to Guadalajara.

When it's light I will take a walk. No pigs to be seen here, only insects and trout leaping and a whistling bird and a herd of Spanish bison moving across the horizon. Only the high pitch of truth and a poem. I'll be serious by the time I die.

* * *

10:30 a.m.

Reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* about the Lion God and that demon. I am feeling strong even though I've been fasting, strong enough to draw three pictures. I'm a mighty fellow. I can write and the story will come out. I hate to tell the secret, but the inexplicable is getting said here.

Is it being monitored by other eyes, like demigods?

Yes, as I told you I learned to do it at the McBurney's YMCA.

Oh, and the concept of irony, with constant reference to Socrates, was Danish-written, whereas dissertations were usually written in Latin.

Those were learned days. What about the teachings of HiranyakaSipu?

Actually he spoke learned even though he was a *daitya*. He knew that the soul was eternal, and accepted that as an item of knowledge. He didn't think *that* was ironic, and there was no necessity to debate the subjectivity/ objectivity of it either. Some things are just facts.

Don't be overbearing, man. You're just saying with different flourishes what the *sastra* says, and you want to shove it down our throats.

Hmmm. I

digress.

The actress sold a book on Geneva Boulevard in town to a seven-foot athlete from Africa. He was wearing a dark suit and pants, and walking down the corridor of the Philadelphia airport.

The ace book distributor stopped him cold. It took courage. She said, "Excuse me, sir" "that line. She was almost half his size (an exaggeration, but a subjective truth), and had to look up at him towering above her.

The tall fellow was impressed. Most people looked at him as an awesome freak. This bookseller saw him as spirit soul.

That's a pretty good story. But you seem to have skipped over some details, although I forget what they are. Maybe I mean the issue of doubt and how I wish you could be more stalwart in recording what you read in scripture. And other stuff.

Don't worry. Let's just go on. This is not a trial by jury but September play. We are singing the song of the lost cause ironic. Even when we wish to be earnest, there is something else coming across. We are simple Pogoes or good ol' Charlie Browns.

I see.

The ratha-yatra was cancelled, so they asked if I could give an extra class on Bhaktivinoda Thakura's appearance. I was liking my solitude in this pigeon coop. I was even able to think of the holy name a little while chanting. O holy name, You have the power to allow me to serve You. Some say we should simply listen to the sound coming out and not think of other things. For me, I need to find a way to do that that doesn't stress my headachy head. I can't take heavy physical or mental pressure when I try to control the mind, but hope to discover and enter an "Australian Crawl" sort of method.

In Hong Kong the Chinese distribute the books. In Oslo, a man was just getting into his car with an ice cream cone when a devotee with a golf cap over his shaved head stopped him. The next thing the bearded fellow knew, he had a book in his hands and the ice cream had melted. He said, "Swoon goon, I'll take one of these just for laughs." The book distributor turned his head slyly and asked for the money, but he was mostly interested in giving the man a book so his guru would be pleased. Get it?

Yeah, it's a riot sale. All items must be sold.

* * *

11:40 a.m.

I just read HiranyakaSipu's story of a king who died while his wives conversed with Yamaraja. My mind clicked into focus. I was standing wearing only a *gamcha*, reading aloud while I waited for Madhu to bring me some water. There's only half a bucket for a shower after I shave-up. The water in this pigeon coop ran out, and it's a cloudy day, so the batteries for the lights may not properly recharge.

The recessed pen point causes black ink stains on top of my forefinger, but I ought to be willing to live with that trademark. Not a bad price to pay if you can get a pen that writes well. He said, "Mildred, I think we should both join the Hare Krishna movement."

"All right, but don't expect me to perform *saha-marana* if you die first."

A pact. They joined. Sold all her one hundred pairs of shoes, and he his Lionel train set. Gave money to the temple president, who squandered it on a word processor for his temple newsletters.

Krishna, Krishna.

This 11:30 news roundup features horrors and jokes to end it, then

"That's the way of the Lord."

* * *

2:20 p.m.

Yamaraja in the form of a boy spoke to lamenting widows and said the body has to perish, so why lament over the inevitable? You have to already be wise enough to accept this wisdom. Otherwise you won't be able to accept the truth of it.

Everything is done by the Supreme Lord's order. We are given a certain body to enjoy and we must face the reactions. After some time, we have to leave that body behind, under the Supreme Lord's order. Why not stop trying to wrest control of it all from God and just surrender at His lotus feet? That is our only duty.

The Supreme Lord creates and destroys. We cannot question His activities. We can *talk* and challenge Him, but we cannot even affect His actions. He is not answerable to us.

* * *

I hear M. exclaiming, "Ah, Krishna!" Almost like an oath taken in vain. Something must have gone wrong while he was copying tapes. I assume he hasn't lost anything I dictated. If so, *comme si comme sa*, whatever will be will be (*que sera sera*). The future's not ours, you see. Some of that same philosophy.

That warrior died biting his lips. He was brave and wanted to conquer, but nature conquered him. Such is the power beyond us. They don't want to call that power God. They prefer to speculate.

* * *

#13

If I had a gold pen
in September
could I write on a walk
in the woods?

* * *

Tell my legs' songs,
breast and
heart and ironic glance "
the factory abandoned,
thoughts of robbers awake,
are there any bears here?

* * *

If I could cease doubting
and the ditch, I'd
say it happened in September,
a likely time before
fall and winter.
No rhyme or reason
for that.

* * *

I'll be happy one day at
a time, purchasing my peace.
Today, shaved my head,
broke fast ate
a sumptuous
EkadaSi lunch.

* * *

The afternoon ebbs. I read
Sastra. No urgent news.
September 13 sounds unlucky
but it's past now and was gentle.
God in all things. Even I
faintly perceive.

* * *

Trying out once again ornery pen:

This pen wants to . . . does it? Goes brilliant, see it run. We've got blues on the run.
Heavens open No answer? You had no question, so what did you expect?
Picture of Prabhupada, image of print. Open your hatch, dispatch the evil.
A day of haze. I'm staked out here with a pen that skips like a heartbeat. rollin' rolland
I abstain
hear no jive. I
only want the elements under
my control. I mean, I am a *sannyasi*. I'll live this way and preach too.
One way or another.
Give me a chance to speak something, Lord, from
the text and
from my life with You
as You may dictate the combination to me "
to teach me
by writing how to serve.
The elements sing and I trust that words will lead me to a conclusion "
the stream that has been dammed still trickles, corroding the iron bridge when no one
is in sight, preparing to flood the dry path, the short walk and the return.

* * *

3:30 p.m.

A letter from my editor in response to a letter I wrote about bravery in publishing.
Some of the main thoughts I had I put in a note to M. for further discussion. I'm not a
reformer the way SK was (or the way some persons in ISKCON are). It's enough for me
to forge ahead with my quiet life. I know our institution may not completely approve of
my living such a little life; they think I should be doing more. But I'm not convinced of

that. I feel deeply satisfied spiritually, and I think the type of preaching that I'm doing is possible for me. When I contrast it to what more active Godbrothers are doing, I don't think I'm on the wrong path.

So to preserve this life is important to me, although I'm also ready for Providence (Krishna) to take it away. It's natural that I will record my anxieties as I step down my path, but I don't need to publish all of that. One could say if I don't publish the whole thing, or at least the essence of it, then I'll feel incomplete and I'll be fostering timidity "not telling the whole truth.

But to be quiet is part of my statement. I want to persist in it. Staying in Ireland this year has helped establish the outer form of my inner life.

* * *

After staying away from other people's diaries for a few days, I looked again at Merton's and Sartre's. I found something valuable in both of them. It's interesting to see in Sartre's journal, written at eighty-two years old, how she copes with frailty and exhaustion. Her life as something of a celebrity is busy and not concentrated on any kind of God conscious *bhavana*. Quoted with "good things," she says. Merton's is closer to mine with his thoughts about what God and the Church wants him to do, how he wants more solitude, his chiding himself for having too many outside interests, yet he continues reading books he feels are important or close to his spirit in form. Admitting his lack of deep God consciousness.

* * *

4:20 P.m.

M. is chanting EkadaSi rounds downstairs. I'm up here and hope that writing is also prayer. Just read Hong's intro to *Fear and Trembling*. He said Kierkegaard was strict in transforming his personal life into something ideal as an author. He didn't write memoir or autobiography. Of course, that doesn't mean we can't. Many writers have done so. Some consider autobiography and memoir a lower order of writing, however. Kierkegaard thought an author had to rise above it. He didn't think the personal, factual details of a life belonged as they were in a book, but should be transformed into the universal.

Oh well.

Head fog. The bog

is a silly boy grown into an old man. He

couldn't stop to plan or figure something out. He could play a few standard tunes, but prefers to improvise. He wants to write as much as possible.

Because he has such a wealth of ideas?

No, because he admits to poverty.

Prayer. Prayer is interior mishmash. He makes EkadaSi cake, even EkadaSi *capatis* "they're able to make such things. Leave me alone for a day and I will make you a literary pancake and present a bouquet of wildflowers that I found in the Spanish countryside. Or I will leave them where they grow and point out their yellow blush.

The yellow flowers here resemble dandelions, but they grow on a bushy sort of plant. Lots of green stalks and leaves and numerous flowers. They are some species of the larger family from which dandelions come. How did they get to Spain? And what about the wag-tailed birds? Some of them belong to the EEC and travel without passports from one country to another. Some come from over the ocean.

Krishna consciousness is absorbed into the person and he sees Krishna everywhere. Now we will tell how it came about that HiranyakaSipu was preaching such high philosophy. I find it interesting that he spoke on the eternality of the soul. He did not introduce Visnu worship, but at least he tried to pacify his relatives. We should not mourn over the soul because it moves on to another body. I will tell you that I will keep myself absorbed in it so that I can qualify as an aspirant devotee who spends his time in *Krishna-katha*. If I'm going to tell others to do this, I had better do it myself. Otherwise it's hypocrisy.

I even wrote to a fellow hinting that if he could not follow the four rules, how could he keep his position?

Yes, well my back hurts too, Mac. I want to get free of the riffraff.

Let's stand here and blow a tune. He is the epitome of the scared countrified clown who goes on stage and tells the audience, "There is a fire in the theater!" They think it's part of the act and they laugh.

I heard that one. Give us an original.

There was once a mouse who started to get a headache. Someone suggested Sumatriptim . He said, "No, I don't take it," and he ran into a cave where someone had written on the wall, "Emerson, Seals, Bettie, and me had hotdogs here." The letters of their names were chunky initials, like those you see on the subway cars in New York City. In that small cave was an old magazine with photos of flying saucers. The edges were burnt from the fire the lovers had made as they drank wine and beer so long ago.

Is this Lascaux?

No, silly, it's a chalk-white cave on the Hare Krishna land in Brihuega. In this place, they say, they told the story of how Krishna and His friends played and the demons came and Krishna and Balarama spotted them.

I'm still sitting before the picture of the 1992 marathon.

One of the pictures shows a Mexican in a sombrero selling a book to a cripple and an athlete, one with his left hand and one with his right. Another picture shows a writer cringing and a *sannyasi* walking down a road alone, hopping and dancing quietly. He is employed in broadcasting the news, but can't speak about it here. Indirect communication forbids that. Anyway, what can he say except that he tried and only partially succeeded?

Here is a picture of a toad aching to be born, of a dream afraid to predict a sad future, of a picture and a special international conference on a ladder. Here is that same silly, friendly old man in the parking lot in Copenhagen receiving a book from the youth in a bright orange sweatshirt.

"Let's go back to the temple," says one book distributor.

"Not unless our guru says we can," says the other. They don't hit each other, but one goes back to the van and writes a long letter to himself, quoting Albert Schweitzer.

September 14, 12:35 a.m.

Say a prayer that you may read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* with faith in its reality, with love for its authors and commentators, and with freedom from fear.

I may have to go to India to choose my own Radha-Krishna Deities, but that's a long haul and I can't consider it now.

The mere diarist, mere memoirist "I have mixed feelings about him. I'm ready to defend him and his genre, yet I don't like the mere. I am looking for the art of diary beyond the particular.

"We should have firm faith that the Lord is supreme and if we surrender to Him, He will take charge of us and indicate how we can get out of material life and return home, back to Godhead." (*Bhag.* 7.2.41, purport)

"... the living being appears separate from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but actually he is very intimately related with the Lord. Consequently, even though we now seem neglected by the Lord, He is actually always alert to our activities. Under all circumstances, therefore, we should simply depend on the supremacy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and thus revive our intimate relationship with Him. We must depend on the authority and control of the Supreme Personality of Godhead." (*Bhag.* 7.2.43, purport)

Similarly, we must depend on the spiritual master's authority and control. He is not an ordinary person in our lives. My spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada, happens to be the spiritual master of thousands of disciples. That doesn't make him less intimate for me. I had a personal relationship with him over the years, starting in 1966, and although I have failed to be fully surrendered, he has always protected me, given me service, and made me feel like I was doing something important to his mission. His mission was to spread and maintain the Krishna consciousness movement. He urged us to preach. I will receive him personally and act under the authority of his organization, the GBC. The GBC are not always right, but neither are they always wrong. I'm not a Luther railing against my Church.

Yamaraja tells those lamenting over the king's body that the body was not the real person. The real person was always the soul within. Even the soul cannot act without the Supersoul's direction. The soul can become happy only when he surrenders to Supersoul. "Thus he can become immortal and be transferred to the spiritual kingdom, where he will achieve the highest success, of an eternal, blissful life of knowledge." (*Bhag.* 7.2.45, purport)

Examining my own psychology of surrender and lack of surrender, of sincerity, conditioning, dovetailing, desiring my way, seeking how to *realistically* surrender to my spiritual master and to live in ISKCON, etc., is valuable work, but there must also be a time to simply receive the *sastra* in faith and to follow the spiritual master's orders no questions asked. Who am I? I am the eternal servant of Krishna. What do I want? To return to my constitutional position of performing loving devotional service.

* * *

Dreamt I was back in the Navy, but this dream was different in that many other devotees were there too, all enlisted. I knew a little more than they did because I had been there before. We had a long wait ahead of us, those who were re-entries. We had to receive our uniforms, check-ups, and all the other stuff you have to do to enlist. Life is also like that, full of waiting. I suppose it builds stamina and endurance until finally you can die in peace (or not). I felt my usual misery at finding myself in that situation alleviated in the dream because I was focused on helping the others. We were all making the best of it together.

* * *

4 a.m.

Some people are irreverent. I shouldn't be. I should be submissive toward the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and my guru. But it's a natural conditioned tendency to be irreverent. We're cynical toward those who have more power than we do because we have seen so much phoniness even in a religious institution. But there's a place where it has to stop.

We can write the worst junk, Natalie said. Yeah, but don't pass it off as *Paradise Lost*.
Don't,
don't. You are
nothing but a
hound dog
just crying all the time.

You and your character, HarsaSoka can't make up your mind whether you're demons or Vaisnavas. I saw him in a dramatic performance the devotees put on in Ireland and noticed he was a whiner. Tridandi was better, braver, more humorous, and he knew that he was a Vaisnava, not just a demon caught with "Vaisnava sympathies."

Hey, okay, this is a fine day. I chanted not so good, but what the heck, I have a wooden leg and can't expect much more of myself. Me and Captain Ahab have a grievance against God. We can't chant the holy name like Haridasa Thakura, who was pure. I'll be talking about him tomorrow. Haridasa behaved well, chanted well, and preached as *nama-acarya*. He taught us to avoid the ten offenses through Bhaktivinoda Thakura's *Hari-nama Cintamani*.

In my lecture I'll focus on the *Caitanya-caritamrta* purport where Haridasa said (in answer to Lord Caitanya's inquiry, "What is your disease?") that his disease was that he couldn't complete his rounds. That's a good one for us to hear. Going beyond that, we have to not only "complete" sixteen rounds, but chant them with attention. I will read passages from *Hari-nama Cintamani* where he recommends we chant alone or in the company of enthusiastic chanters, that we should avoid distractions, that we should shut our door and pray to the Lord for mercy. Chanting is not easy, and especially for one such as me who has not conquered inattention. The *attempt* is the first step.

After that I will play a tape of Srila Prabhupada speaking on Haridasa Thakura's disappearance. Haridasa is special to us because he was low-born as we are. He shows that we can rise above the handicap of our birth. He received special mercy and was incredibly humble.

* * *

What, you dreamt you were back in the Navy? Why don't you dream you were out distributing books, going forward cold to try to stop passersby? Using worldly techniques to get them to stop:

"Excuse me, sir, you dropped something."

"Hold on there, fella, here's a citation. You're under arrest."

"Excuse me, we are taking a poll."

"We are giving these out to all the good-looking girls and guys today."

"Please take the holy scriptures of the Hindus and Gandhi and take a look. You believe in God, don't you? Are you happy?"

Prabhupada said if you have a complaint about how books are distributed, then you do it better, purer, but don't stop the distribution.

ISKCON and its life and foibles, schisms and issues. The young temple president who wields authority over those who live in the temple "is he tolerant? Older devotees shy away from all that. Who can bear it?

They carry a heavy stack of books out with them. How can they keep it up year after year? After awhile they usually cannot. The distributor points to his book and tells them what it is about. He holds the book open for them to see the pictures, or lets them take it in their hands, then emphatically, sweetly, asks them to buy it. Nowadays they have seminars to train the preachers. I don't know what they teach.

What department of ISKCON are you in, sir? Are you an accountant, an older scholar teaching seminars, a *japa* counselor?

Yes, and a writer. I am helping to start a literary periodical called *Discovering Our Voices*.

We cannot escape the issues of our time. We can't stick our heads in the sand and pretend to somersault over them through each provincial town. We have to wear those nice *dhotis* of ivory color and the black silk top hats to walk among the natives of Amherst U. They may boo us, and even throw stones, but you have to live through it to preach. That's the point.

* * *

When the body is dead the soul has left, they say, "I didn't see any soul." They refuse to take the lesson. They say, "He just conked out." They say the body is also the self "body and soul together. They say, "I'm lamenting that my friend has died and all you can tell me is that the soul has moved on, has not died, is living still? What good is that to *me*?"

I tell them to be good students and to learn through their grief. Accept me as Narada and you play the part of Citraketu. Be peaceful and dry your tears when I speak, okay? Let's try it again. Here I come in from above with my tamboura. Imagine that I don't quite touch the ground. Now hear me speak absolute truths and you feel good about it.

This is the end of the 4 a.m. news broadcast called "Howitzer's Troublesome Gums, happiness and happenings broadcast live from the pigeon house of Stee-Stee, Japan."

* * *

5:21 a.m.

Just looked at four books in a row and none of them gave me the satisfaction I was seeking: (1) *Parables of Soren Kierkegaard*; (2) the introduction to *Fear and Trembling*; May Sarton's *At Eighty-Two*; and (4) volume four of Merton's journal. Then M. came in and told me why he didn't want to fax one of my notes; it could wait until it got there by mail, he said.

Accumulation of things not going the way I want them to go. I can't enjoy something just because I want it to go that way. Then M. brought me my hot lemon drink. I have told him I prefer to drink it a full two hours before breakfast, whereas it is now only an hour and a half before breakfast. "My little ways," I said, apologizing, explaining. So that I could exert my will over *something*, I refused to drink more than a third of the cup. Freedom to refuse to drink "is that freedom? If there was an outside light on this house, I could go out and get some fresh air and chant an extra round or two, which I'm usually reluctant to do.

Old May Sarton, you old raccoon.

Tom Merton, you diary-monk.

Old Satsvarupa, your face tires me "thin, that
unappealing mug with its Italian
nose. You look like . . . Jerry Callona
or Earle Warren.

Now slip into the unconscious "will that bring

Relief? Mert said he wished to become a holy man of God. Sure, we all do. The blue ink moves and the pleasing loops of penmanship, scratch on legal pad.

If I had enough light,

if the sun was up

you could sup

with little Miss Muffit.

If Charles Dickens wrote

swift and short, no, no,

there is no one. You better

thank your stars you are

able to rise at midnight and

get that good lick in with

Srimad-Bhagavatam and what

your master says "

Soul is self,

body illusion,

turn to God.

* * *

The gold pen skips. I'm giving it another chance. Chancre. The Navy. Grip. Gonorrhea. Scab. Whores of France. The ship urinals. Down the drain.

The pen continues to skip. I don't know whether to throw it away. What about trying the method of filling it with the tube? Geez, I can't talk and the pen can't write, and between us we make an interesting but incompetent pair.

Unless the pen points perpendicular to the page it won't flow. It writes like that turtle in yard in Vrndavana. remember?

Dreamt that devotees were being loving toward one another. I noticed it gradually. I saw two men embrace as friends. All this was followed by a lecture in which the lecturer said to a devotee who was smiling, "Be grave." That devotee became extremely grave, but as soon as the lecturer was gone, the devotee again smiled. Seeing all these loving dealings I began to cry out of my appreciation for the devotees. I thought that if we simply maintained this loving attitude toward one another, then no matter what crises were abounding, we would always remain peaceful, knowing the secret of love.

* * *

11:10 a.m.

Happiness and distress are both temporary and illusory. O wives of Suyajna, don't lament for your dead husband. The *kulinga* bird was dazed by grief over his wife's death and the hunter shot him. While you lament, you don't see your own deaths approaching. *Use your precious time to practice Krishna consciousness.*

Scientists are interrupted by Yamaraja while engaged in their research. Singers are like frogs inviting death. Muscle men building their bodies are unaware that they will soon have to die. Scholars think they'll have time to master Kierkegaard's works before the end, if they think about the end at all. In these ways we get snared by *maya* "while we're waltzing, while we're reminiscing, while we're walking in nature, mulling. Now if you're chanting Hare Krishna when you croak, that's very good, but if it's indulgent, distracted chanting, you can't expect *Krishna-prema*. Pray for help!

* * *

12:05 noon

He's running a motor to fill up the water tank. It is September 14, which is significant. A mid-September day is always nice. It can provide a bridge by which to cross over.

* * *

#14

My head feels pressure but I'm
the soul. I don't like poems
that don't tell of God
but how can mine rhyme
with devotion if I don't
feel it in my chest in my
life? Jest awhile longer,
play ironic, seek the
quiet

hour with Thee.

* * *

I mean to be with Krishna who allows
me to play with words and
colors and who gives
me the pressure to teach
me something.

* * *

Krishna never neglects us although
it may seem He does. He
cares and waits until
we pay attention to the soul,
obey the guru and give up
chasing the world's prizes
while listening
to misleaders.

* * *

Why do they still enchant us?
Talking to myself now
mid-September and
early eve.

* * *

6:20 p.m.

The most dangerous thing is to take a relative or critical view of the spiritual master. I do that sometimes when I imagine how outsiders might criticize Prabhupada. It pains me to fall into their point of view. Some of Prabhupada's statements, it seems, are better protected by us keeping them among ourselves. Here on the 1992 marathon poster they quote him as saying, "The world is feeling the weight of this Hare Krishna movement." I think of a brash person who sees us only as a cult and who sees Prabhupada as some person with grandiose ideas, someone who would cause havoc if he had power. They cannot possibly sympathize with his statement that we are affecting the world in some way. I don't want him to be exposed to attack. My "relative view" is not really relative in my own heart, but fear of what others may think, a sense of wanting to protect Prabhupada from the cynical West.

That said, it is still we who have to consider that what he says is true: the world is feeling the weight of the Hare Krishna movement. "The more the books are distributed the more the ignorance of the age of Kali will be smashed." That's true too. We have to have faith. Even if we can't see how it is coming about, how the world is feeling the

weight, we need to accept it, not relativize it. The nondevotee will never agree. We are on the list of dangerous cults in many countries, and we have no constituency. But we have weight because we have Krishna. Krishna is hidden in this world. We are also obscured by the misbehavior of our own leaders and members. Even those who don't fall down sometimes do foolish things, such as preaching in strident ways. Many people who might be inclined to listen cannot take such preaching seriously. Most people don't see us at all, but see only the cliché of a Hare Krishna devotee, the way some people see all blacks or all Orientals as the same.

It's not that I agree with that point of view, obviously, but when I hear Prabhupada speak, I can't help but remember that that point of view exists and I want to protect Prabhupada from being exposed to it.

Perhaps my assessment isn't even accurate anymore. People don't really hate us. Maybe more like us than I realize. Anyway, I made my point.

* * *

9:50 p.m.

I can't sleep. Moonlight. I can't see the moon itself, but this room is bathed in its light. I'm leaving this world. I'm not a young man just entering into it.

"The purport is that as long as we are in this human form of body, our duty is to understand the soul within the body." (*Bhag.* 7.2.60, purport) Our duty is not to be over-anxious about changing from youth to old age, "and then to apparent annihilation." We simply have to read *sastra*. This knowledge doesn't come from direct sense perception or from dreams or from listening to the stream of consciousness (unless all that is intimately connected to *brahma Sabda*).

Right now I can't study. I should be sleeping. I'll just write to end of this page and then try to sleep again.

September 15, 4 a.m.

The underdog appeared in two dreams last night. Didn't get much sleep in between. He says all these years I have denied him while I pursued my celibate claim. I am under vow to my spiritual master to remain a *sannyasi*. I have it all down pat, my arguments against sex life, and how my attraction to women has faded over time, how women grow old anyway, and how the older I get, the more desperately I would have to pursue sex life until I became a degraded, drained louse. My arguments are fine-tuned by *sastra*. But the underdog is still alive "that part of me that has been forced down by the choices I have made in my life. In the dream scenario, the underdog forced his way up. The pressure and anger he was feeling at being denied caused him to commit a crime. He was caught, and the truth came out: all these years they thought this guy was celibate. Now they see what's roiling underneath. What a strange dream.

Repressed or not, as the dream source may indicate, the underdog must remain an underdog. I am a "eunuch of God," as Christ said, and perhaps a fool in the eyes of most people. I have chosen celibacy only to have the power to want only God, the supreme pure.

Now hear your master speak. Today I will speak in class and that will count as *Krishna-katha*. I will also read *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. When I couldn't sleep last night "it's almost the full moon, and although it was cloudy, the moon was still shining bright "I looked out and saw a single pine tree with tight, upswept branches standing like a sentinel. Above it the sky. That tree reminded me of a Van Gogh. Anyway, when I couldn't sleep, I opened the *Bhagavatam* and read just one sentence. It was worth thinking about. Prabhupada wrote, "The purport is that in the human form of life we should work to know the soul within the body." Just that one line contained so much for contemplation. In my ordinary consciousness of day-to-day reading, I probably would have viewed that line as painfully repetitious. Because it hit me differently last night, I got a glimpse of its importance. Human life is to be dedicated to the self within the body. The body itself is misconceived as the self.

As I look up from the typewriter I see the book distributors. One young man has a huge armload of books. Will he be able to carry that many throughout his life? At least in youth he is giving to the cause. Book distribution appears outwardly menial "sales, collecting money, etc. "but it is a great *yajna*, pleasing to Prabhupada. It directly helps others. The money transaction is incidental but also important, not just for ISKCON, but because people should give a little of their hard-earned money to Krishna. They take a book, and everyone receives mercy. It is a beautiful act.

* * *

M. sleeps in the van and he just came in. Tulasi-devi is here. Everything is okay. We are going to live another day, but not forever. I'm happy about the development of my writing. It seems to be not entirely under my power, but there is a process and it is progressing.

* * *

Emily wrote elliptical and coy. "She was an adolescent writer," says Oates. I am a hoax tripod dreamer of fat armfuls. Leave it behind and go to church. Look out through the stained glass window that depicts heaven. How come you draw the inner expression of your own self? What's going on in this one?

Here is the dwarf *brahmana*, here the boar, the turtle incarnation, Jagannatha and Buddha and Kalki, Krishna, the source of all. Some day I could sculpt them in clay with my hands "my own versions, but I draw them now with as much irony as I can muster to let the self come out.

When I couldn't sleep I wrote how the inner self isn't good and perfect, but *sastra* is. Then I turn to painting and pour out another kind of expression. The answer for me is to read *sastra* regularly so that will come out in all I do. Steer to Krishna.

Hello folks, this is a mini radio show. We are watching the book distributors in action. We are watching an *arati*. A lady is leading, a *mataji*, the singing. The incense smoke rises. The Deities of Radha and Krishna are your own. You are sinking with age and expressing yourself. I'll end this now and go temper a rock. I have chanted sixteen rounds.

Literary man gave up his life in favor of words and lost simple love of God. Chanted in no light room (only moonlit) and prayed, "Dear God, give me strength to read You. Let me surrender to You." Then he let the prayer go and floated along with his mind, counting the minutes per round, his head clear and him grateful. Looks forward to going to the temple and resting and traveling and living in the holy *dhama* of the spirit wherever he is.

* * *

4:51 a.m.

"People do not know, however, that any time they themselves may be kicked out of the scene and forced to accept bodies that have nothing to do with these enormous houses, palaces, roads and automobiles." (*Bhag.* 7.2.60, purport)

"His friends cannot help him and his enemies cannot do him any harm."

Next we'll begin reading of HiranyakaSipu's plan to become immortal. The demon performed austerities.

* * *

#15

Once there was a September
'97 tour I took to
Spain and one day wanted to
say, "Krishna, Krishna, I don't know
a damn thing."

* * *

I just want freedom from pain
or if You like, to feel it
and to be sincere in wanting
to write.

* * *

The rest is blanked out,
unable to say it on Haridasa Thakura's
disappearance day.

* * *

12:55 noon

Relax, pardner, the milk fast is on tomorrow. Look for soy milk or just fruits for breakfast.

Jodhpurs jeepers. He hit the jackpot, spoke of *japa* to the devotees, so rare among the Spanish citizens. The debts are paid. The land is arable, or what? Cows, goats. In this

man's house are books like *El Karma* (looks like a sensational novel), *Mi Viaje Al Sur De Asia*, with ghastly pictures on the cover, and another book I shied away from with a cover photo of skeletons in a cave.

I'm sitting here waiting, hoping to have a clear afternoon.

Questions after the lecture: How can we persevere in *japa*? How can we know if we are sincere in prayer? How come I don't like to pray? I don't know how to pray myself, but at least we can avoid the disease of not chanting our minimum sixteen rounds. At least make the effort "even if we don't succeed "of trying to pay attention. Attention and prayer is the same thing. I'm saying what I heard and read: the holy name contains all power. Just concentrate on hearing.

Driving back here they asked more questions, but my head was fogged. I rested and felt that I was wasting time due to head pressure. I am trying to stop thinking like that. It's normal; I'll get more of it. Days when I can't read or write much. Nothing to say but to mention the struggle.

* * *

2:40 p.m.

Reading along casually but soberly, awake at least (like a passenger in the back seat of a car) through verses and purports where HiranyakaSipu's austerities are described along with his plans to rule the universe and to snatch the post of Lord Brahma. Nowadays we see only small, Hitler-sized demons. (May Sarton described the fiftieth anniversary of the Normandy invasion and said she was proud to be an American.) "This age is very dangerous because society is being managed by demons and *raksasas*." (*Bhag.* 7.3.13, purport)

Lord Brahma awarded HiranyakaSipu his desired benediction. A slight amount of devotional service is worth more than great austerities performed to achieve more sense gratification.

A devotee acts for the good of others. Srila Prabhupada gave himself as an example of someone able to live without flesh. He came close to that in his last months. He said it proved that the soul is the real life, not the body. We are surprised to read that Lord Brahma awarded HiranyakaSipu his desires.

* * *

3:30 p.m.

This morning on our way to the temple I noticed leaves falling "just one or two. Quite a few leaves already on the ground. It's nice to notice a first sign of any season, the first flowers of spring, first snowflakes, first falling leaves.

Still plenty of flies and mosquitoes to torment me on the wooded path. I can never forget where I live in this world.

Browsed through Sarton's *At Eighty-Three*, the last journal she kept. She died a few months after finishing it. The last pages are taken up with her attempts to ease pain with Prozac. She says she's completely absorbed in the body and perhaps shouldn't write about it, but why not? No prayer of any kind in her journal. Although I think she professes to believe in God, He doesn't appear in her writing. Her fans have thanked her

for teaching them how to be real persons, how to get through depression and old age with a strong will, how to see beauty in life, how to share love with friends. That's "spiritual" for them.

* * *

3:58 p.m.

What will I speak on the day he took *sannyasa*? Don't imitate, but learn from him. He lived ideally in each of the four *aSramas*. His spiritual master beckoned to him in dreams to take *sannyasa*. We too may receive intimations of what Srila Prabhupada or Krishna wants us to do, even if we can't do it immediately or even yet know what it is. Tell some of it "the history leading to his acceptance of *sannyasa* in Mathura. And some of the events after that "his decision to translate and write commentary on the *Bhagavatam* in English, the offer to live at Radha-Damodara and the office room in New Delhi.

O Swamiji, we saw you do
what no one else could do.

I'm hoping to find the tape of Srila Prabhupada speaking in 1968 in Seattle when he says of his spiritual master, "He *pulled* me from material life!" What can we say after that except that we owe him our lives.

* * *

Can't repay it. All we can do is keep living for him. Imperfect wanderers. Thunder in the Spanish valleys and hills near Guadalajara this cloudy September day. Break the sultry atmosphere, fill the dry lanes with rain. If He wants. It comes pouring down. First drops on the skylight.

September 16, 4:05 a.m.

I never thought I would have to take *sannyasa*, Srila Prabhupada said. Sometimes my Guru Maharaja was coming to me in a dream and I was following him, but when I awoke from the dream I thought, "How horrible." The dreams came several times. Then our Prabhupada retired from family life. He was sitting alone in Vrndavana writing books. He said his Godbrother came to him and said, "Bhaktivedanta Prabhu, you must take *sannyasa*." Srila Prabhupada said it was actually the voice of his eternal spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, who was speaking through this Godbrother, His Holiness KeSava Maharaja. You must take *sannyasa*. So he did and he lost nothing. Instead of three sons, he now had three hundred. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

Spiritual life is brilliant and nectarean, but the materialists don't know it. We will part company with them and their doldrums and take to the spiritual path. But in the attempt to remind them of their duty, we sometimes incur their wrath. Therefore, preaching is risky. Just to be in the same world, the same town, the same building with them . . . it upsets our vibes. They are so different. A compassionate Vaisnava stays with them anyway to give them the medicine of Krishna consciousness. We can't force it upon them, yet sometimes we try to persuade them. Hare Krishna.

* * *

Today and tomorrow full days in Spain, then the next morning we leave. It's a happy life to travel like this and to see such nice people in each place. The Spanish devotees are few in number, but when I look out at them while lecturing, I find it rewarding. I know they're listening seriously and practicing seriously. They want to improve, they recognize their own shortcomings, they know the teachings, and they are faithful to Prabhupada. This community is called New Vraja-mandala, and the Deities are called Radha-Govindacandra. Prabhupada is no doubt pleased with their attempts.

* * *

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna M.
brings the music scene
with him wherever
we go.

* * *

Feeling fragile. Pain is fated, sent by Krishna, and I can do nothing about it but live with it. Within my fragility let me chant and pray.

Yesterday I told them that we should chant in a peaceful atmosphere. One devotee replied that as a *grhastha*, he doesn't live in a peaceful atmosphere. Then that's even more reason why he needs to find peace within chanting. In this "not peaceful world," chanting is the only shelter. If we cannot concentrate on the holy name while fighting (as Arjuna was advised to fight while thinking of Krishna), then how will we be able to do it at the time of death? We have to seriously practice.

I will tell them they are all potential *sannyasis*. A *sannyasi* is one who works for Krishna and who maintains no separate interest.

* * *

Chanted *japa* in the room with the lights out, and pools of moonlight made patches on the floor. Very nice. In *Hari-nama Cintamani*, Bhaktivinoda Thakura presents wonderful gems of useful advice. Yesterday I read that when we chant, we should pray fervently to be rid of the illusion known as distraction. We should also pray to the Lord for more taste for the nectar that is *hari-nama*. He said we cannot achieve these things on our own; we must pray for them. Such prayer is not selfish. How valuable these points are! Although I have read them before, they seemed new again.

I told one devotee she could chant even without explicit words. For example, when she sees her son, she may feel the welling of worry for his welfare, a wish that he be protected from harm or that he grows to become a devotee. These strong feelings don't always come in explicit words; they are feelings. We can chant with such feelings. We can chant and feel the need to be free of distraction, feel our dependence on Krishna, feel our desire to taste the nectar of Krishna's service.

Bhaktivinoda Thakura defined distraction in another way: if we chant simply to get the quota done, the whole quota was done in distraction. I do that, unfortunately. When I chant I think of the other services to which I have to tend, and I can hardly wait to finish my rounds so I can get to them.

How many days do I have left? I don't know. I think that I have a long time. That's my disease. Better to be like Maharaja Pariksit who heard the *Bhagavatam* knowing he had so little time. His only desire was to enter the *samadhi* of the Lord's pastimes.

* * *

Here is this morning's free-write:

I caught this morning's minion . . . I may read again the insouciant Emily. Here is that bemused guy in Geneva in his living room with chintzy white curtains, looking up like he's half asleep as the flash bulb pops, catching him holding a BBT book in his hand. Beside him, his five-year-old son holds two more. Next to him, with one hand raised a la Lord Caitanya, wearing a gray and white Scandinavian sweater, is the young, happy book distributor who made the whole scene possible. He's just closed the sale. I think of Kerouac's use of the word "sad," how he would say the couch in the Geneva apartment is sad. It is. The guy's open shirt and partly exposed chest is pretty pitiful too "the manliness, the temporary nature of life, the styles of ready-made clothes. O Christ, O mother of God, O Krishna of Vrndavana, Tempest of Shakespeare, and Twelfth Night.

And very recent readings, and
long ago
Nat King Cole
singing
"Somewhere Along the Way."
But not in Helsinki where
the book distributors roam.
Missed chance.

We plan for months ahead, but don't know what will happen. Will Clinton be able to protect us? And the American bombers and the U.S. dollar? O Krishna, we depend upon You.

A big moth knocking against the ceiling in this moonlit room. I opened the window and he exited into the cold outdoors. Suddenly I glimpsed the outline of the mountain and recalled the times we spent in the Pyrennes when I walked in the pre-dawn moonlight and could see right into the mountain recesses the sky was so bright.

* * *

11 a.m., Moments and Awareness

During the lecture about Prabhupada's taking *sannyasa*, I looked over to him "I think while I was telling how he moved into radha-Damodara, began writing *Srimad-Bhagavatam* "I looked over to him sitting on the *vyasasana* and it was nice. He seemed to hear me in my praises.

I feel confident that I can go anywhere in ISKCON and take the assignment of a morning *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class and give a good one. It is the one thing for which I

am qualified "scholarship in Prabhupada's books and in the experience of trying to be a devotee. I can speak as an ISKCON *sannyasi*.

As usual, when I returned from the temple and entered my room, it was like coming into another world. returning to the quiet self who writes *Every Day, Just Write*. I don't write much about the public life from the viewpoint of the person who sits on the *vyasasana*. One devotee here wrote me, expressing herself in limited English, that my lectures were "magisterial." I feel like that; the lectures are prepared with solid structure, and the structure rises up like a building filled with right purports. I outdo myself, go beyond my actual struggles, and keep building skyward. My own failures don't seem to disqualify me. Neither do I speak of an ideal in a hypocritical way. rather, I point to what we all can hope for. In one sense my little self gets left behind, consumed in the act of describing the Absolute Truth.

But there's always a thread. It is, after all, just a limited human being, myself, who is speaking. I remember to smile and laugh at our common follies, myself the first to admit them. The art of lecturing, the privilege Srila Prabhupada gives us, the reward of a life spent in ISKCON "photographed, garlanded, bowed down to. That's the program. Glad to get back to my room.

* * *

12:07 noon

Once there was a marble outcrop on a hill which discoursed with an abandoned factory. The rock said, "I grow better with age whereas you . . . " View the thing differently. Unpack the intellectual construction and explain it to your flock. It's easy to sit and plan a vigorous preaching tour from Baltimore to Philly to New York to Boston, and why not stop in Connecticut and then go on to Maine? Newfoundland could be added on for fun. But to actually do it is a different thing. I cannot. I told them the story of Prabhupada saying Syamasundara dasa's utopianism was okay because Krishna is not a poor man. "Shoot for the rhinoceros." I didn't tell the parable of the lean old horse who looked into the raging flood waters, saw stout young horses being swept away, and said, "Let me try."

Krishna is Boss, Prez, Count, Duke "an infinite number of things. He is the sweetest, most hidden person. The translator didn't know some of the words I wanted. I laughed, I uttered, I told the truth, then looked out to see how it was being received. Saw an earnest *mataji* taking notes and a lad in front of me falling asleep. rode the pauses during translation to deeper reflection. How enjoyable to pause and reach within and then to have words and concepts rise up to meet me. The depleted well rises again just when I need it most. Not by my power; it comes from God.

* * *

#16

Mid-September is past
I gave the class,
and now I'm free a day
to do nothing or whatever

I want
in a room.

* * *

I walked and talked alone,
worried I am limited
to eating and sleeping
(not mating, no hating).

* * *

Some leaves are fallen,
pale, scorched green,
curled on the path.
I'm doing nothing much,
while you, sir, are the bravest burdened
manager.

* * *

5:34 p.m.

Met with Sucandra who is translating my writing into Spanish. I quickly developed a vise sensation in the head and pain in the back of my neck. Now limping toward the end of day.

September 17, 12:46 a.m.

If a guest at a Krishna conscious lecture says, "Sorry, but these teachings of Krishna as the original Supreme Personality of Godhead, and Brahma as universal engineer, don't ring a bell for me," that refusal to accept *parampara* isn't the same as truth. It's just his tiny view, influenced and prejudiced by the time and teachings he has known. We want a person with faith who reverberates with Vedic authorities. We want a pure devotee of Krishna. But we have to accept ourselves as we are now and render service to ourselves as well as others by remaining faithful to our desire to enter the magic circle. We want to be among the elect, the devotees who believe cent percent in the words of their spiritual master, and who become empowered to preach them without fear. I spoke yesterday about shooting for the rhinoceros. One devotee since then wrote me of his plan to preach throughout the country. Yes. And a little prayer too not to become puffed-up or corrupt. May we be genuine persons in this Krishna consciousness movement. There are others, no doubt, who are genuine or not, but we have to be concerned with ourselves. Hare Krishna.

* * *

Trivikrama and Linc have been visiting from America. They are musicians. I spoke to them several times about a creative project we're undertaking together for a multi-media presentation. Then I thought I shouldn't leave them with the impression that our main endeavors are artistic. I received a letter from Jaya Sacinandana dasa expressing his own concern about this. He is an artist. Many young devotees who come to Krishna consciousness recently seem to be interested almost primarily in aesthetic or creative ways to express themselves as devotees. But one has to be cautious about this. Here's what Jaya Sacinandana wrote:

It's really a change moving from Washington, D.C. to Boston, but it's nice because I am being exposed more to the other side of Krishna consciousness, the *brahmacari*, book distributor, temple devotee side of things. Being around this has really made me analyze my own Krishna conscious situation. I look back and read journal entries I made in Washington and also when I first moved here, about being an artist and a devotee. Those entries seem a bit pretentious, almost puffed-up with a concept of being a devotee-artist. For someone like me, at the level of my Krishna consciousness, who am I to feel so confident about going so deep into personal self-expression? I mean, it's not that I would, or could, stop making art, or working toward Krishna conscious self-expression, but I want to be careful not to lose myself in the pursuance of this before I'm mature enough to handle it.

So being with devotees in the temple life mood has served so far as a reminder of the importance of a strong foundation in the basics of Krishna consciousness, that self-expression or Krishna conscious art is only worth something if it is accompanied by strong regulated everyday Krishna conscious devotion. Anyway, I'm far from having a tight grip on that side of my spiritual life yet, so I feel confident in working on strengthening my everyday commitment to Krishna consciousness as a part of my working toward Krishna conscious self-expression.

I shared this with Trivikrama and Linc. In one sense, I am in a different category than them. I'm older, and I served for many years without indulging in creative expression. As if now I'm entitled. I admitted that I'm in the same boat as them in that yes, creative expression is wonderful, but yes, it can be dangerous. No one will want to hear from a flaky devotee. On the other hand, creative expression, as a cultural weapon, is an important way to preach. It cuts through. One could say there's no need for art in Krishna consciousness, but the rendering of scriptural themes in painting, music, drama, dance, etc., are natural expressions. They also help prove that Krishna is everywhere and that we can see Krishna in everything. From the beginning days on the Bowery, Swamiji used to encourage us to become artists for Krishna (or to become whatever we already were).

* * *

3:55 a.m.

Thinking about repetition in my writing. But you know, spring and summer are always revolving. Here is the sankirtana devotees. Here they come, pink elephants on the run, clippetyclop. They're here, they're there "pink elephants everywhere.

In Tokyo, red *sari* stops another denim guy, Joe Japanese, and he's giving money and taking a book. These distributors carry so many books. She's got the large *Light of the Bhagavata*. And that seven-foot guy at the Philly airport with Rohini-suta Prabhu. Same things, new things. It's now 1997, and this year they'll meet new people, there'll be new distributors, and Prabhupada's books are full of repetition. It's not bad in itself. We simply have to open ourselves and pray that even a few of these words that we have heard over and over can enter our hearts as if for the first time, or at least cut deeper than they ever have before.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna "the same few words of the mantra repeated again and again. We don't grow tired of them because from apparently the same syllables, so many new things come. That's how it works. One should think of oneself as lower than the straw in the street, more tolerant than a tree . . . It's a *new* thought when we hear it again and face ourselves, allowing the rhythms and sweetness of that humble prayer to pass through us. More tolerant than a tree and ready to offer all respects to others without expecting any respect for ourselves. In such a humble state of mind, we can learn to chant constantly.

This is not intended to be a fast-moving story. We have been in Spain for more than a week. I have had the chance to read. I have loved to hear the sound of the rain on the skylight and the sounds of my own voice chanting. Prabhupada speaking in the storefront like a lion tamer without a whip. He had only his learning and his gentle demeanor, his old age and his Krishna behind him with which to speak to the crowd who followed him home from the park. Hare Krishna is the transcendental sound incarnation. It is an *avatara* coming from the spiritual sky, the Absolute Truth. It gives us the full effect of the spirit even here in this material world. It is not that New York City has entirely become the spiritual world, but the heat of the spiritual world reaches us through the *avatara* of the holy name. We can each link with this sound: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna.

Some of those people chose to remain distant and criticize what he said. They resisted him. I'm always afraid of those people because I want to protect Prabhupada, yet I'm no *ksatriya*. I have to defend my Swami. Chuck said he would stick with it unless he found something better. He didn't find something better, but dropped out anyway. The movement is imperfect. He might have had good excuses. What was missing? Why just give up everything? We always have to be honest.

* * *

Irvin Jenkins maneuvered past the streetlights and down the rhine. He had rhinestones in his pocket for his girl, his babe, as he called her, and as Little Walter sang, "My babe, true little baby, my babe," he suddenly realized he wanted to give it all up and become a shepherd in the highlands. He wanted to find God.

What? Nobody wants to find God in Postmodern America? Whatcha talkin' 'bout?

God, God the spirit, the realization. They jimmy the lock and speak and don't worry that it's not in fashion. There are still people you see and want to hear. We say that the soul is originally pure, so we go ahead and speak and trust that pure souls will hear us

despite their coverings that tell them, "God is dead and we can't even talk with Him anymore."

Brahma came down and we are sorry that he accepted the flattery of a *daitya* who wanted immortality. Of course, Brahma deceived him, but still, he granted HiranyakaSipu a long time in power, during which he became like meningitis in the brain of the universe. Later, the Supreme Lord mildly reprimanded Brahma, saying, "In the future, don't give the demons such benedictions."

In Timisoara, in Soaring roaring Camp, the good luck of giving a book from the BBT. The GBC, the IrT rapid Transit, the Erin bus with its Irish setter, the Brigham or bust bulge in the wallet. The guys are going to India, although I'm not. They want to see Krishna on *parikrama* and hear His holy name, touch the Vraja earth even if they cannot get beneath the coverings. That's better than sitting for a few sessions with me because I may cancel them anyway, in Rhode Island or wherever I plan to hold them. Let's play a record or have live sessions. Please be quiet. Please rid me of distraction when I chant. Please allow me to taste the nectar.

The story goes like this: We get in the van and roll down the hill while a few devotees wave good-bye. They say they will pray to Lord Nrsimhadeva to free us of the Spanish jinx. One year, upon leaving this farm, our engine collapsed and that was the end of that van. Another time the van suddenly stopped running due to some broken electric connection. On our last visit, Prabhupada *murti* was not strapped in and he fell and broke his arm. This year we hope for smooth sailing.

Anyway, the story is we drive off and I start writing in a small notebook while riding in the front, trying to note down places like Guadalajara or Brihuega or those names and places that I'll see. I won't have time or presence of mind to read Prabhupada's book while traveling. I'll talk with M. about our schedule, stop for lunch, stop again for the night, then begin again the next day. I can only hope he doesn't have a heart attack while driving, or drive off the road. I'm not ready to die. I have to eat more and read more and see more books published. I'm not even sixty. My passport is faded, but it can be renewed in the year 2000. We live a year at a time in Ireland. The Lord decides everything. Oh, and we will always chant.

* * *

5:55 a.m.

HiranyakaSipu prayed to Lord Brahma as if he were God. Learned prayers that the Supreme is the source of all, the controller of all (cuts down the duration of life by days, hours, minutes). Everything is His part and parcel. After these prayers HiranyakaSipu asks that he not be killed by any creature of which he can conceive. He omitted the form of a lion-God who could kill him with His nails, on His lap, between day and night. Foolish demon.

Now any minute the car should arrive so this dog may be fed soy milk with a cup of porridge. Remember your limits. I can answer a letter briefly if I get one. Last day today.

"I'll write to you if I'm inspired," he said, meaning not otherwise.

* * *

Private "don't let them hear it. Can they understand? It just happened and it's still too personal. Let twenty-five years go by first, then when you see it clearly, let it out. But who will understand or value it then?

Soy milk. Brahma. Last day here. Bang the pots! Krishna,
Krishna,

Rising like a phoenix. All bloomed devotees go back to Prabhupada and
that's no joke unless you've got a hangman's humor and
that's not good
either.

Compose yourself "last chance to be cleansed by repentance and to chant Krishna's
name with more desire than you have ever had. The rehearsals are over. This is it.

* * *

#17

Madhu's found a new polka
on his accordion "
where do they come from?

* * *

One bird whistles "Hare?!" Startles
me every morning in this place,
near Guadalajara.

* * *

I walked twenty-five minutes into the
country, first time ever on that
path, didn't want to meet anyone
because *no hablo espanol* and
besides . . .

* * *

Read of HiranyakaSipu turning his body
into a golden youth as
strong as thunderbolts
when Brahma sprinkled him
with water.

I'm feeble almost every day,
wings folded or shorn, back to
bed for repair. But I've got
a country air, a transcendental
polka of my own "not
better or worse but

my own.

* * *

12:47 p.m.

Feeble, although I'm only fifty-seven and three-quarters. But I rise up again. I have just enough energy to pack the van for travel. Filled the water bottles, packed the green luggage with items, orange book bag with more items, and stashed my two small note pads. Put away most of the art materials and fountain pens. I have compartments for everything, so I have to memorize where I put the Trifalla, the Scotch tape, the Tombos, the poetry books. We will be living in the van for about five days.

Why do I travel, you ask. To lecture in temples, to fulfil obligations, to meet with the devotees. The next stop is Italy. Any last words for those here? I can't hold individual meetings. Saw what happened yesterday when I met with Sucandra. Ask them to accept me as I am. I read the obit for Robert Mitchum. It said he looked at the world through half-closed lids, amused, manly, "take me as I am." I look at the world with a mixture of amusement, fear, hanging on for the ride, alertness to write it down, and an attitude of always listening for the chance to be true to the self and to guru. I can't say more than that, and even that was too much. Can't make any real claims because I have no holy passion.

Dickinson wrote:

Not what we did, shall be the test
When Act and Will are done
But what Our Lord infers We would
Had We diviner been."

* * *

She also wrote:

I stepped from Plank to Plank
A slow and cautious way
The Stars about my Head I felt
About my Feet the Sea.

* * *

I knew not but the next
Would be my final inch
This gave me that precarious Gait
Some call Experience.

* * *

3:45 p.m.

Quiet afternoon. I packed all I could think of. Now just a few hours until bed. I'm thinking of what to sankirtana, as in the picture of Lord Caitanya and His associates.

It will come "automatically," he said. So with the relationship between guru and disciple. It cannot be forced. I don't tell them to think of me all the time, or that they can only serve Srila Prabhupada and Krishna by serving through me. That's the *tattva*, but I don't say it. No, I will be there and say *something* "thank you, and perhaps what I'm saying right now about keeping our relationship real and free of artifice on both sides. I'll also remind them to keep up the communication in letters, and I hope they will read my books. That will give the relationship a chance to grow.

* * *

The same example in the books: open to it. I'm the same person with my blocks. It's not necessarily getting better with me, it's just becoming finished. Maybe I (and others) used to maintain a vague hope that toward the end of life I would clear everything and attain pure devotional service. I didn't face the alternative enough and put off my earnest attempts in my youth. It's almost over, and I'm still not an intense veteran of Vraja *parikramas* or one who never flinches in his attempt to stay close on the heels of Srila Prabhupada's example.

* * *

4:35 p.m.

Pure devotees turn any place into a *tirtha*. Yudhisthira said that to Vidura when Vidura visited Hastinapura. There's the third part of the First Canto here, and I just read that section: *tirthi kurvanti tirthani*. I love to read the *Bhagavatam* and to drift into it and forget other books, other philosophies, other life, for a little while. After some time the mind begins to resist. It wants to return to what it considers more important. I'm always grateful to have gotten what I did out of my reading.

Thought how Srila Prabhupada wrote this section in India while living at Radha-Damodara and going to Chippiwada in New Delhi. I love that story of him preparing the First Canto. Lone writer, mostly keeping to himself in Vrndavana, writing all day, then going to Delhi, collecting donations to print, bargaining for paper, working hard. Not a wasted effort. By comparison, I have it easy.

* * *

6:17 p.m.

M. and two men downstairs talking. Makes it hard for me to concentrate. They're loading the van. He's telling them as soon as they get to Boston to immediately send the package to GNP. "Get a tracking number." I hope they don't mind him bossing them around like that.

The moon was full. Now it will have to diminish. It will be the same when I begin *japa* at 1:15 a.m. It won't improve.

But maybe it has. I can't perceive it. I don't seem to bring the mind back under the control of the higher self, and don't beat it with a broom or with shoes. I say I need peace. I feel fragile. I sail along in a mental atmosphere "is it sky or water or land or air?" and wade through mantras. I'm helpless to concentrate.

At least I'm *near* the holy names. I do *hear* Them, even if my mind is not fixed on the sound vibration. Maybe tomorrow He will let me in.

September 18, 4 a.m.

"One who is not seriously inclined to put questions before a spiritual master need not accommodate a show-bottle spiritual master, nor should a person who may be a spiritual master for others pose to be so if he is unable to engage the disciple ultimately in transcendental loving service of Lord Sri Krishna." (*Bhag.* 1.13.2, purport) I'll read that to them this morning and say that although we may both fall short of the ideal, let's work at our relationship. It is already serviceable; now it must be maintained. Don't be artificial, and don't let it atrophy.

Thanks to Lord Krishna for providing the Ford van so new and strong. I pray to Him for the strength to endure when the way seems difficult.

"The pure devotees hear from the authorities and chant, sing and write of the glories of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 1.13.10, purport)

"Either remaining at home or leaving home, the real qualification of a pure devotee is to become rapt in the thought of Krishna favorably, i.e., knowing well that Lord Krishna is the absolute Personality of Godhead." (*Bhag.* 1.13.11, purport)

* * *

You, bum, who brought the toilet paper roll into the storefront, did you come back as a devotee? reading the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and thinking and acting as if there is no other literature or religion in the world. We know others exist, but we live in this *Bhagavatam* world and speak of the Pandavas, demons, Vrajavasis, Lord Caitanya, and His followers. We speak of *prasankirtana*." We respect the GBC, we acknowledge their governance over us, even if it is not perfect. We live in this world to preach and then hope to go back to Godhead or join Srila Prabhupada or come back here with a stronger desire to take up Krishna consciousness as soon as possible (as Kali worsens).

Hare Krishna.

M. chanting rapid

Rounds downstairs by Tulasi.

We live in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*

and I will move along in writing.

Wearing a coat, wearing the

Pride of a thin-veneered head.

Accept what comes and keep speaking.

I wanted to do more radio Shows but my determination is not great enough. I thought of springboarding off SK or doing a *Bhagavatam* radio Show. While traveling long hours in the van I could find half an hour for it. But I lack determination. I'm afraid it may exhaust me to the point of headache. Still, I also know when I do such things something good usually comes from it. I also want to remain steadfast in this EJW writing "don't want any competition.

The *matajis* have arrived with our *prasadam* for the road. M. is chanting. I hear him explain to them he wants to chant early in the morning before we leave. There won't be time later. They can hear this tapping of the old-fashioned, manual typewriter. Used to write short novels and then try to rewrite them; thought I would make a career as a writer. Planned to make a lot of money, be published and loved. Or to starve and keep the dream of posthumous fame (like Kafka). Die, you urban rat, you odanist, you poor soul, tragic misfit squeezed to death by penury and NYC madness. I've been saved from more than you can imagine. Hare Krishna.

* * *

5:20 a.m.

Met with devotees here. Told them our relationship is a sacred trust. Neither disciple nor guru should pretend to be higher than they are. They shouldn't pretend to love each other more than they do. To be so honest is painful, but don't become so "honest" as to neglect the relationship. Honesty means following the vows. Being sincere doesn't mean we become instantly perfect, but if we fall we try again. The guru shouldn't enjoy the facilities offered by his disciples, and he should not relate to disciples in any mundane way.

Good advice. Write me letters. See you later, I hope.

She said, "The spiritual master may see himself as fallen, but the disciple sees him as savior, is this right?" Yes, I said. We should not be nihilists, whose only business is to destroy faith. Guru is servant of his disciples.

* * *

On the road before 6 a.m. After twenty minutes of driving in the dark, we hit a rabbit who jumped out onto the road. M. slowed down quickly, but the foolish creature remained transfixed in front of us and went under the wheel. For twenty minutes after that, neither of us spoke. Then I said, "Too bad about that rabbit." M. said he also saw moths coming into the headlights. I felt guilty. M. said, "There is no alternative but to take to Krishna consciousness. Otherwise we incur karma with these bodies we have." I was thinking how we have bought into the modern technological society so that we have a powerful van that must speed and sometimes kill. The only way to avoid or minimize it is to stay at home. Jains go to extremes to avoid killing. M. said maybe people should stay home unless they have to go somewhere in Krishna consciousness.

Now at a Cepsa gas station. M. speaking in Spanish with the young attendant in her red and white striped shirt. We are leaving the rabbit in our past, but Krishna takes account of everything.

* * *

10 a.m.

M. asked me to read the map. We want highways A - 7 and E - 15 going north of Barcelona toward the border. We're ____ kilometers above Barcelona. Talking about devotees in Spain and Italy and how I can help them.

When speaking to devotees this morning, there were coins on the table. I said, "I am like a poor man. Krishna has given me a health limit. Each day I have a small amount of energy to spend. I demonstrated my meaning by pushing the coins forward. "If I meet with someone "" I pushed away all the coins. The little boy laughed. They all got the point.

Round the bends. White stripes blip out in sections. Black asphalt. A trailer truck full of orange propane bottles. Words of the world. Passed the sign for a Cistercian monastery. Steel towers carry electric lines across farming fields. What are they growing? Small trees. What do you notice, what do you know? Very little outside the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and even within the *sastra* I don't know much. Do I know my self? Spending energy.

One Spanish coin had a hole in the middle. I ate breakfast traveling at seventy miles per hour, in the front seat, in the dark, from three paper plates. Couldn't juggle the yogurt cup, so I omitted it from my meal. I'm writing this up front, but the traffic is too tight and it's sunny in the cab, so back.

Stopping to pay the toll. Transdonat Alzamar, Almera "what I see on trucks. The world of the senses and mind "we seek peace and rest, not involvement. Let me speak Srila Prabhupada's teachings to submissive devotees who are seeking (struggling) to improve themselves. Traveling for that. Sunshine coming through a haze.

I wonder how Srila Prabhupada is doing in the Geaglum room. I think of him when I rise early. Since we left Inis rath I haven't been able to rise at midnight, but at least by 1 to chant. Today offers the opportunity to chant extra rounds.

* * *

10:30 a.m.

Pull into the Shell gas station. Policeman (*guardia*) standing outside his car, dressed in green. I imagine he looks us over, curious about IrL and the shape of the American Ford. Silhouette of sexy dame on back of trailer truck. Silhouette of black bull on back of an rV trailer. Guy steps over guardrail to take a leak. Devotee-would-be chanting Hare Krishna in his imagination. We're going above Barcelona.

M. is going to shave his face. A few times in previous years we were stopped at borders, France's especially, and our space intruded as they looked into ashtrays and bins, etc., because M. looked seedy. Or so we imagined.

Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishnaloka. In a dream last night I depended on inner reliance upon Krishna; didn't seek other help while in the oppressive Navy.

* * *

Noon. Approaching French border. El Vola. Pyrennes separate two countries. EEC days. Old fort on hill. Brown rocks with green mountain bushes. The highway goes right up and into Francia.

* * *

At the border that pyramid-shaped hill with temple on top, but no Deity. Custom agents were preoccupied searching a bus, a beagle sniffing the luggage for drugs. We cruised over slowly with no questions asked. Free to enjoy France on the Sud Bonne route. Peage "not free. Many police agents at the toll booths scrutinizing the cars. Again we pass unstopped. The Pyrennes bathed in blue sun mist. Good-bye to them, passing places, passing truths.

Aire du village de Catalan, the first of many charming places to stop.

Rabbit . . . We're making such good time we estimate we'll arrive in Medalago Friday night instead of Saturday morning. Therefore, I'll be available for three mornings of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* classes, unless I have to cancel due to headaches. Seems okay. We're out here to preach. I said I feel confident I can give a good class. I'm Swami's *cela*, and living alone (apart from controversies) helps me to speak. Lifetime harvest for this purpose. Flat land now, very low hills. We're on the coast, the riviera (faint memories of Navy days), going around and down toward Italy.

Stopping soon for shower and lunch. Take the yogurt you skipped in a.m. Tourist picnic. Life is but a dream, merrily row your boat. Home-car.

Monte Pellier, Toulouse, signs vanish. Narbonne. Sandy outcrops, pleasant September. Carry this preacher to the ISKCON temple. On a stretcher? No. At ease.

Deja vu in words. Orange highway men. rubber cones on dividing strip. They repainted it white. AC on in the cab so the engine heat doesn't bother the driver "but I'm chilled. If we don't stop soon, I'll retreat to my cave in the rear.

* * *

#18

Batten the bins,
clasp the locks, tie the
motorcycle straps "

* * *

We're in *la bonne* France
to go to a congregation of
balding *brahmacaris* (or maybe
they're white by now) "

* * *

To where ladies are ladies
in *saris* and borders and
there's a leader and
money troubles and rumors
and dissatisfaction but

* * *

Where on Saturday morn I can
speak on Cc. or SB
and everyone will agree in
theory and even in practice
krsnas to bhagavan svayam "
to that Cathedral Villagio
I'll go

* * *

headache or no and
throw myself
at the feet of Prabhupada
and his followers another year.

* * *

3:05 p.m.

Ready to go again. Guy with NL sticker ahead of us, gray-haired, looking over at Madhu in *dhoti* cleaning our windshield. Another man filling his water bottle. Hot sunshine blazing. Let's do some driving. Drink water from bottle. I did. Better? Chant!

* * *

4:36 p.m.

Bored. It's hot in the back of the van. I can't seem to *do* anything there. We're moving too fast and lurchy to read or write much. There's no comfortable sitting position either. I can either lie down (it's too warm) or half-sit up (uncomfortable). I tried chanting clearly aloud "it started as a voice mocking me and the process of chanting, then locked into the rhythm. I stared up at the skylight and imagined being alone in a solitary prison cell where no one objected if I chanted my crazy mantras. Can God-Krishna hear me? I'd have to chant a long time at this rate and even then . . .

The chanting itself contains the meaning of the names.

Now I am up front with M. and the air-conditioning, and the road traffic. Passing Aix en Provence, enroute to Avignon. Pour him tea, give him the tape of "Getting Along in Italian." I need one for getting along in Hare Krishna.

Aire du Merle Sud 500 m.

* * *

5:15 p.m.

Stopped at Esso station. Driver hosing front of a Tradisa (Barcelona) trailer truck. Hot day in South France. In residence I can follow a routine of reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* a few times a day and bleeding that into my journal. Bare-chested young guy enters Esso shop. Completely shaven-headed youth enters wearing one earring. Saggy woman in bright green top, with gray-haired fellow "how long have they been

together? Their youth is over; a different kind of sense gratification now. That Tradisa driver seems to be enjoying splashing the water from the hose. Long-haired young man in tan shorts exits from the Esso shop, rips the top off the can, and drinks. Now M. enters that world. He's as oddly dressed as any of them.

September 19, 2:26 a.m., between Cannes and Nice

Fairly quiet P-stop overnight. Dreamt several times of Hridayananda Goswami. In another dream Roy Campanella appeared in his old age to complain how the government drained his former fortune through taxes.

I didn't get up earlier because (1) I felt it might be good to rest more considering the day ahead; and (2) I feel awkward making sounds, even whisper-*japa* ones, while M. gets much needed rest after ten hours of driving yesterday. More today.

* * *

Srila Prabhupada states that we should not ask for benedictions that we cannot maintain peacefully. Please bless me with attention to the holy name and the ability to control the mind while I chant. Please bless me with genuine humility and a preaching spirit. I pray to be able to please my spiritual master.

Never leave his service. I'm afraid of Kali-yuga and what may happen next. We grumble about ISKCON's inadequacies, but to live in the material world is much worse. Move along.

* * *

#19

September's going but
I don't care "I do care
about my welfare, want to
get through this tour manfully,
give the lectures
make tunes on my flute,
Record the starts and stops,
the awkward meetings with
ISKCON leaders or
immigration cops.

* * *

Then back to Inisfree and
the motorboats "or none
this time of year "the beginning
of Karttika, my Prabhupada.

* * *

A poem by Emily Dickinson:
As imperceptibly as Grief
The Summer lapsed away "
To imperceptible at last
To seem like Perfidy "
A Quietness distilled
As Twilight long begun,
Or Nature spending with herself
Sequestered Afternoon "
The Dusk drew earlier in "
The Morning foreign shown "
A courteous, yet harrowing Grace,
As guest, that would be gone "
And thus, without a Wing
Or service of a Keel
Our Summer made her light escape
Into the Beautiful.

* * *

6:20 a.m.

We crossed the border into Italy. It was at the end of a tunnel. It was too early for immigration or any other police, so we cruised over. Now we're in that friendly land. The Alps tunnels are less pretty than they were in France. Madhu wants to keep driving until 7:30. Then we'll stop for breakfast.

* * *

7:15 a.m.

Sea. Narrow roads. Faint pink over hills in mist. Factory smokestacks striped in red and white horizontals. Savona. Torino. Trafori. Building crane. Highway lamps still on. I think of the Navy again, our PIO office.

M. tells me why we can't stop immediately for breakfast: the roads are too narrow. Okay, but I'll want to wait five and a half hours after breakfast before lunch.

HiranyakaSipu misused his benediction. Didn't Brahma know he would? He could not forget that Visnu killed his brother. He took over Indra's palace. The demigods were told to wait, that he would be killed. We have to wait sometimes, assured that Krishna will act on His own time. All we can do in the meantime is be tolerant and be Krishna conscious.

Albisola. Genova. Tunnel turns this writing black, then again I can see. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna.

Staying in an ISKCON temple is a mixed blessing for me. *Going* there is nice. I get to see the blazing pink fireball lifting out of the sea! I said *gayatri* "and there is Surya rising over the calm Mediterranean. The mountains go right down to the water. I want to be a devotee, not a nondevotee, no matter how poetic.

* * *

Stopped for breakfast finally. Q8. Agip Servicio. "Getting along in Italian." I told M. how the artists and writers of North Europe have always sought beauty in Italy. Goethe warmed his northern heart. Keats and Shelley died here.

* * *

10:30 a.m.

Parked again in a bit of shade against an abandoned building near an Agip gas station. M. is out chanting *japa* and I'm here reading the Seventh Canto. Narada is describing how all the demigods, and even he himself, had to offer prayers to HiranyakaSipu. The rivers on the heavenly planets (milk, yogurt, etc.) flowed in tribute to the demon. Srila Prabhupada several times states that we follow the authority of Vyasadeva and Sukadeva Goswami regarding the structure of the universe. We don't follow the material scientists who claim that all planets are vacant except this one. As I read it, I felt a twinge of doubt, not in favor of the scientists, but more an unwillingness to totally accept the exclusive knowledge of Vyasa and Sukadeva. To accept that they are not merely great Vedic scholars, but that their specific vision is the *only* correct one. But no other culture or literature completely agrees with the Vedic, so the Vedic alone must be right. For someone like me, a long-time *sannyasi* and guru, it's scandalous when these things come to my mind.

It's scandalous, but I don't actually "think" these things. They come into my mind briefly, like dross, and I *feel* them for a moment, the way I sometimes feel head fog or indigestion. I live with the condition. At the same time, I go on giving lectures. In public I repeat Srila Prabhupada's convictions. Is that hypocritical? (I recall hearing that one BBT translator was removed from his work by local authorities because of "philosophical doubts," although he said it was just an excuse to take away his service.) I can say what I believe "that Srila Prabhupada saved me, that I read this book praying for faith. Maybe I should be stricter in some ways. I'm looking always for that leap from reason to faith, but Srila Prabhupada prefers to say that the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* statements do not offend reason; they are scientific and logical.

Admitting these things, I read on.

When we transgress the Sastric laws we enter the path of destruction. I don't want to ever ease out of my spiritual obligations. HiranyakaSipu achieved power and opulence, but he was always dissatisfied. He had been cursed by the Kumaras. I may not know even all the rules by which the *sastra* governs us, but I accept their rulership. I'm afraid of transgressing. Maharaja Rahugana said he was afraid to offend *brahmanas*. I'm afraid of offending *brahmanas*, my guru, and the Sastric law taught by the saints.

The demigods finally took shelter of Lord Visnu. Srila Prabhupada states that if in the beginning we take shelter of Krishna, "there will be no danger under any circumstances." (*Bhag.* 7.4.21, purport)

The demigods offer their obeisances "unto that direction where the Supreme Personality of Godhead is situated." Srila Prabhupada comments that this means the

holy *dhamas* like Vrndavana. "In the *dhama* there is no influence from Kali-yuga or any demon." (*Bhag.* 7.4.23, purport)

"Performing *kirtana* and hearing the vibration of the sound Hare Krishna is actually seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead directly. One must realize this position, and then one will be able to understand the absolute nature of the Lord's activities." (*Bhag.* 7.4.25 - 26, purport)

* * *

11:45 a.m.

In his "Eulogy on Abraham" in *Fear And Trembling*, Kierkegaard wrote eloquently that the greatest person is the one who struggles not with the world or the self, but with God, and who loves God and maintains his faith. He says life without eternal consciousness is despair. I was glad to hear him say it. I'd like to be able to glorify God with sustained eloquence and strong reasoning, a "Kierkegaard" of Krishna consciousness. Not likely, though. Neither am I a Merton of ISKCON or an Emily of the free.

Oh, little banjo, you pluck and sing of
Lavan Baskar in the wings
before going on stage
to pray as Mary Martin did,
"I love you!"

On goes the saffron-dyed Fruit-of-the-Loom T-shirt, the
clown, his skin shivering
(is that ecstasy?),
his right eye pre-twining
standing by for an Esgic.

I came to Alabamy with a banjo on my knee. I can praise and explain in a simple way as I learned long ago. I did it in Spain and can do it here too if ya'll will just listen with submission.

* * *

2:45 p.m.

Now last stretch to Medolago. We have to go through heavy traffic around Milano. I read a little; I'll read more. Told M. how Narada had to serve the demon as we do in certain ways. Srila Prabhupada sankirtana is as good as seeing God. Vrndavana-dhama is special.

* * *

M. pointed out to me when a car zipped past us that we were doing ninety-five miles an hour, but this guy was going much faster. Remembered that rabbit in Spain.

Now we're on the belt around Milano. I'll go ride in the back.

* * *

Parched corn fields. Chickens. Took wrong turn. Rehearse talk with GBC: Tell him I'm not well, and therefore I'm only visiting two temples in Italy; respect the burden he's taking.

* * *

4:08 p.m.

Parked at Villagio Hare Krishna. Got electricity, bottled water. Stood outside the van and received a flower garland from the leading *brahmacari*. A few devotees standing around. Then I got back into the van. The temple leader is not here right now. I'll see him tomorrow.

Beautiful houses here for friends of Krishna. Buy one and live near devotees without the pressure to attend the full morning program. Rooster calling. Why do they keep them?

So, we're here and my head is just starting to fog. Can I find a comfortable position for this body?

September 20, 4:07 a.m.

I had an ache in my head during the night, but I was peaceful knowing that we were on Hare Krishna land. The sounds were devotee sounds and not too many. I consoled myself that I didn't have to get up for *mangala-arati* if I didn't feel well.

On Saturday mornings here they read from *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. The section for this morning was at the end of Prabhupada's life, when he said he wanted to go on a bullock cart around Govardhana. While chanting *japa* this morning (whispering so as not to wake Madhu), I thought about the intense controversy that took place during those few days, and how devotees on one side didn't want to take Prabhupada on *parikrama* because they thought it would kill Prabhupada, and how others insisted that Prabhupada's will should be carried out literally. How to convey that controversy's bitterness? I was thinking of telling devotees that they should decide things on their own and not go along with the crowd, but that might not sound like good advice because people *want* to follow their gurus, the GBC, their temple presidents, and in some cases, their husbands. Maybe a *Bhagavatam* class is not the forum to tell people to think for themselves. Maybe I can convey some of the stunned and grieved feelings we were going through in those last days, how we were emotionally overwhelmed and really . . . what to tell them? What do I know?

I think I'll remove the references to the main players in that controversy. Better to talk about the issue itself: that the guru may give an instruction, and different parties may form to interpret what the spiritual master actually wants. Each of us has to examine our motives when we attempt to follow the spiritual master. Even if we say we're following one of Prabhupada's representatives, and that we will let him decide how to interpret the instruction, that doesn't let us off the hook. We must each think deeply about why we're doing what we're doing, and we must come to our own understanding of the instruction. We can't avoid personal responsibility.

* * *

4:22 p.m.

Fowl crying. Baby? rooster. This is Italy and it's chilly. Bathed by pouring cold water over my head while I sit on the closed toilet seat. Shaved with cold water. Reminds me of Vrndavana. I won't live much longer.

* * *

In the temple room I saw familiar faces and I was forced to act within tight limits. Those who are Prabhupada's initiated disciples have to stand in front. There was one small place where I was to stand and not move. They were surprised when I didn't want to lead the singing. They give you honor, and if you don't take it, they might become insulted. They're not even aware of how tightly they want to constrict you. We live with so much etiquette that sometimes it's constraining. I did the best I could and sang with feeling in chorus with the leader.

* * *

6:40 a.m.

Don't just make idealized portraits when you speak. The play about Srila Prabhupada's last pastimes doesn't bring out any of the nastiness in the controversy over Prabhupada's wanting to go on the bullock cart, so I won't mention it either. Tonight's will be an improvised performance.

Living in the van is tight. If you turn without thinking, you knock something over. You have to be calm and tolerant. Joke with M. so that we can *both* tolerate it. Only two full days of this, then on to Prabhupada-deSa, where I'll stay in the temple's *sannyasi* room.

Krishna, Krishna, chant

your mantras. How to serve the spiritual master? Don't think everything has to be conveyed in a lecture. It's permissible to speak in a conventional way about him. You can't smash all conventions and masks in a lecture. Work those things out privately "some cannot even be spoken "and understand who Srila Prabhupada actually is to you, how you reach for that reality.

* * *

The class went well, talking about Prabhupada. I was aware of one Godbrother sitting out there, and he was a bit of a distraction to my mind, but I kept going anyway. One topic that came up was whether we have room to negotiate with our spiritual master over the orders he has given us. One *mataji* asked how to avoid accepting instructions from the spiritual master which may be inferior because they are designed to accommodate our desires. It occurs to me now that actually we're always negotiating those orders. It may seem shocking to say that. We think that the spiritual master's order is absolute, so there should be no question of negotiation. But if we were completely surrendered, the spiritual master would only have to speak the word and we would become pure devotees

ready to enter the spiritual world. The truth is it's a life-long (perhaps many lifetimes long) endeavor to give up material attachments. The spiritual master encourages and cajoles, gives stern orders, sometimes gives instructions which accommodate a little of our material desire, is sometimes sarcastic, reprimanding, sweet, forthgiving of *Krishna-katha*, and so on. He works hard to deliver us.

In the class I said repeatedly that we have to examine our motives. Another devotee asked how can we avoid trying to manipulate the spiritual master. Our natural *tendency* is to manipulate. The more successful manipulators become businessmen and managers. When we see that tendency arise, we have to check it by remembering that the guru is not an ordinary person; he is Krishna's direct representative. We have to maintain our reverence toward him.

Dear Srila Prabhupada, are you giving me instructions just to suit my mentality? Do you think I'm hopeless, the way Allen Ginsberg seemed hopeless? I hope I'm still open to your instructions.

I also told the devotees that one of my favorite times to remember in Prabhupada's life is when he was just beginning to write the *Bhagavatam* at radha-Damodara and in that room in New Delhi. I think of him and the books that he produced out of those labors and pray to go to him. We want to be instructed in everything by Prabhupada.

* * *

11:15 a.m.

Met with about six *matajis*, all victims of gurus who have left. The majority have been through this more than once. They're all still serving in ISKCON and focused on Srila Prabhupada. Some have been re-initiated, but are asking me for "*Siksa*." Others want re-initiation from me.

I told them from my side that I can guide them by letters and through my books, but I don't make material decisions. I keep myself fit as a devotee by spending time reading, chanting, and writing (living mostly alone, although I didn't say that), and that's my prime service. I want my disciples to be able to say, "He's somewhere in the world setting a good example as Prabhupada's disciple."

* * *

#20

At Medolago this poet
scars his name
again and again on a tree of
memories and foolishness.

* * *

Look at the girls, old ladies,
bags under their eyes, look
in the mirror at my own
starved face "you've been

taking it easy and can't deeply
answer questions such as:

* * *

"What will Krishna think of me at the
time of death if I don't become
Re-initiated?" And, "Can
I say prayers to Prabhupada or
am I not allowed?"

* * *

Tell them "he married me to
a woman and now it's undone
by his will. He's gone
in *samadhi* and I'll rot
soon " I mean the body,
not the self. I forget
what to say.

* * *

The chickens belong to the neighbors.
Someone is washing our van "I hear
the water splashing and I
too will splash some on my
own feathers, eat heartily, and
meet the boss of this
place "bow to him,
embrace him chest to chest,
while keeping to myself.

* * *

And try to give Lord Krishna
His due "the Supreme
all-loving God "
do You know me?
Can we work on
my improvement?

* * *

September days so peaceful
in this rich village,

oh me, the
smoke's gonna curl up
the chimneys before
too long,
make a song.

* * *

2:45 p.m.

I've got a tough assignment for the *Bhagavatam* class tomorrow. I have to lecture on a verse in the Ninth Canto chapter, "King Pururava Enchanted By Urvashi." This beautiful-bodied, foolish man was enamored by a beautiful woman from the heavenly planets. She left him when he failed to follow the restrictions she had placed on their relationship. Then he searched the world for her. He met her at Kuruksetra, and she agreed to become his wife for one night a year. Although he tried to enjoy her within that time limit, however, he was too stricken. He decided to perform a *yajna* to get her back. Prabhupada writes, "In other words, he had so much lust in his heart that even while performing the *yajna*, he thought of Urvashi instead of thinking of the master of *yajna*, YajneSvara, Lord Visnu."

What more can I sankirtana-yajna with any material motivation. I can talk about how we should not become enamored by women.

But it's a touchy topic because there are heavy criticisms of a woman's lusty nature earlier in the chapter.

I think I will form my lecture around the importance of attaining a higher taste. Start with regulation of material desires, but don't stop there. Otherwise, we will never lift ourselves far above the ocean of ignorance.

* * *

5:39 p.m.

Good meeting with GBC man. Told him I had pizza for lunch. He asked me to write a short essay on what Srila Prabhupada wanted of a GBC man and the GBC body. I agreed to do it. He asked me about my parents. I told him my father was a muscle man. He turned off the computer to talk with me. He said he's not a whiz at it. A nice talk.

Yeah. Bonzo, Bozo,
me ate a pizza
in Italy and talked to
seven *matajis* in a house
in Villagio Hare Krishna
and told them I'll be guru
if you like but the
main thing I'll do is be
alone, myself, so you
can say, "He didn't fall down."

* * *

Pleasant parked in the village acreage where they have a garden and cats and you can walk and chant.

He had a photo of Srila Prabhupada with a tough expression. He must take shelter while looking to him; he worked so hard. He said he used to play guitar.

He said I didn't look any older than fifty-three. I'm almost fifty-eight.

Srila Prabhupada said the GBC should do everything the way he is doing. It's not either-or. Both *sadhu* and manager. Give the *Bhagavatam* class and manage the accounts. He kept me because I did as he asked.

"Are you writing?"

Yes. In order to live.

Then I steered away from that topic and said, "Writing, or reading and chanting." *Sadhu* life.

A church bell is gonging a deep brass melody in the September breeze. Gradually evening is coming.

* * *

6:24 p.m.

They leave me alone because I don't speak Italian. Neither do I have a wife and children (or even parents, except my Swami). This is for devotees. I like being loved. What do I give in return? When I speak in class, from what do I draw as experience and realization? I say, "I read it and I remember it from my times with the Swami."

I can tell how he formed the GBC. What did he ask of me? He asked me to write. I'll write simply, not present one hundred Prabhupada quotes that no one can assimilate, but simple, like a *sutra*. In relation to the GBC, Prabhupada called the GBC man "*Siksa-guru*" and another time "watchdog."

I heard they are revolutionizing the annual meetings and are now going to discuss just a few important topics in depth. The devotees, as always are dissatisfied with the management. They're trying to adjust. But it should not go to the other extreme, he said, where they think it's demoniac to form a resolution.

They are protecting our society the best they can. Who among us can claim to be doing better? Some want "love and trust." He said love is to be willing to open yourself to the scrutiny and judgment of the GBC body or your Godbrothers. You may be spiritually okay, but your temple might be in financial shambles "or just the opposite.

I wouldn't like to be judged. Maybe they'd say, "We realize you have a health limit and are not an expert manager, so our judgment is . . ."

No, I wouldn't want to hear it. Life on the Hare Krishna reservation. NATO jets in dreams. God, God,

God's names as I die. Preach.

My Swami,

Srila Prabhupada.

* * *

For the Sunday lecture I was thinking of the guests and what might be good for them to hear, and what they might accept. I thought of reminding us all that there is a strong

tendency to think only of the temporary. We must, of course, tend to our immediate needs of eating, sleeping, mating, and defending even though those things are temporary. Such needs are physical, animal needs; we share them with every species. But there is more to life than that.

To know that "more," we have to understand the nature of the self as eternal soul. Vedic knowledge teaches that we are by nature eternal soul. Krishna consciousness accepts this conclusion. I can't exactly say why. We are a riverboat.

No, you can't free-write right in front of the Sunday guests. You have to make orderly progress and build a logical structure if you wish them to understand.

Oh yeah.

We each have to get over the hump of *why* we accept the *sastra* that teaches God consciousness, transmigration, and so many other things difficult or impossible to perceive with our senses. We have to make the leap of faith without advertising it in our lectures. On Sunday, I will be speaking to guests to a Krishna conscious temple. I don't have to get into all this with them. Just tell them that life is temporary, that we have to look for more.

September 21, 3:49 a.m.

Dream-filled night. I had a few dreams about writing. In one there were literary sophisticates, decadent in their attitude toward life and writing, who were exploiting others in order to draw energy from them to generate literary ideas. They were actually drawing on the sexual energy of themselves and others to attract and seduce their readers. When I awoke, I felt a strong conviction to make my writing pure and simple, spiritual, and avoid any of that sort of thing.

One would like to write in order to please guru and Krishna and at the same time leave something that would have literary value. I seem to have no alternative right now but to draw from my little life on a daily basis for my material. It's all I have. I'm a person with limited funds. I can only imagine spending millions, but don't possess them in reality. Prabhupada once said that if a person doesn't have butter, he could speculate on how he had butter in the past, how he could have butter again some day, or on how he lost the butter in the first place, but all this is idle talk. The point now is to get some butter.

For me, the point is to write from what I am now. I am a small person, and I want to be a devotee. I can just put them together and that's what I have now. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura taught us to act like this. Just be who are right now and start serving Krishna with it.

Chanted fourteen whispered rounds while the pain is building.

* * *

4:05 a.m.

I won't lead *mangala-arati*, although they may ask me. I told the GBC man yesterday that my father was a muscular, fighting man. "Just the opposite of me." He then told me that he was raised by an uncle who was also a huge, muscular man with thick eyebrows.

Later, I thought perhaps I boast about my father, indirectly hinting that I have inherited his strength in another way, maybe spiritually. Don't mess with me, I'm the son of Steve Guarino, Mustang Naval officer and Fire Captain!

Yes, I agreed to write an article on how Srila Prabhupada saw the GBC. That was on my mind this morning too.

* * *

Hello, I'm checking in on my ISKCON LINK address. Are there any messages for me?

This Link has only one writer and one reader "myself. It's like Dickinson's poem:
This is my letter to the World
That never wrote to Me "
The simple news that Nature told "
With tender Majesty.

From the back cover of the Ecco selection of Emily Dickinson poems: "Her perspective was intensely private . . . she is the great poet of inwardness, of an indefinable region of the soul in which we are, in a sense, all one."

Of course, the literary people don't know what they mean when they say "soul". But I'm interested in what it means to be "intensely private." We Krishna conscious students may say we're not interested in privacy. We say that our knowledge is absolute, that it applies to everyone, that it is completely public and open. It's what the *sastras* say about us. That's the real self, the eternal servant of Krishna. But I contend that even what the *sastras* say about us is a private world, especially if we are still struggling with our conditioned natures. We ISKCONites have private lives and it takes a "poet of inwardness" "someone willing to stop and take a look at what goes on in truth in the heart "to enter that "indefinable region" of soul and to try to be a devotee.

* * *

#21

Cock crows "a neighbors'?"
Man murmurs Hare Krishna mantras
the chill of September in
my chest and back. Am I
Ready to give *Srimad-*
Bhagavatam class?

* * *

As ready as I want to be because
I want room to improvise
to watch their eyes and
wait for my brain
to make the spring "

* * *

to the soul, the
practitioner if
materially motivated even in
bhakti, can only be
overcome by a
higher taste.

* * *

I'll speak but
what do I know? Not much.
An old woman looks to me as
a worthy guide for her last
days because I speak ideally.
My dreams tell another story:
fear of unseen people
looking at me from an attic
and the literary poseurs who rob
wayfarers just to get
a rhyme.

* * *

7:16 a.m.

A lecturer doesn't have to know everything or even tell everything he does know. He simply has to make a good presentation backed up by his own conviction in the teachings. We say that even one who is low-born can become guru if he knows the science of Krishna. Sounds like a technician, a workman, a person who has studied. He knows it by practice and theory. His lecture performance can't be at odds with his private practice, but still, they are different. Alone he may tend to think in a certain way, but when he speaks from the *vyasasana*, he may express himself differently.

Breakfast eaten in less than ten minutes, but I felt the joy of raspberries and porridge and soy milk on my tongue. Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, I am grateful.

* * *

9:21 a.m.

Post lecture:

I represented Krishna, and they offered excuses and complaints about how we may lose enthusiasm in *bhakti* or how *maya* becomes more subtle. I said, "No." We shouldn't analyze *bhakti* as if it has defects. It's us who must learn to discriminate. I quoted the American athlete (was it Yogi Berra?) who said, "It's not over until it's over." We have to remain constantly aware of our foibles and, although the last line suddenly stuck in

my throat, I managed to get it out: "The association of devotees is very beneficial in this regard."

Did I mean that we should expose ourselves to the judgments of others in order to reform ourselves? I braved that statement, but don't know if I meant that exactly.

* * *

11:15 a.m.

Lie on back. Sigh in *Shack Notes* no more. read with eyes while you have them. It won't be forever. How old are you? That little dog looked up at me with so much longing, shivering at the shoe porch door. When I left, the dog was wagging its tail. M. said, "This dog has no trouble in being happy." We were discussing in the class how initial happiness in Krishna consciousness seems to slow down. One man said, "Perhaps in the beginning we do something that makes us happy, but later we try to make Krishna happy." I agreed, but said that we become *more* happy when we try to please Krishna. Don't analyze *bhakti* as defective, as dwindling. If *maya* gets more subtle as we grow older, then we simply have to become more clever.

The class attention held, then I let them go. Now everyone has scattered.

Cold it will become because summer is over. The chickens are cooped up in a small area. Sorry to see the cruelty, you who hit the rabbit with your quick-moving, pre-dawn van.

How can we stay in Krishna consciousness until the end of life? That's what we want, not semblance of that. I said devotees feel frustrated that their spiritual lives don't move quicker and are hampered by material desires.

Was that original? Will the head man like me for it? He speaks more complexly than I do. Morning moving toward noon.

* * *

12:18 noon

We ISKCON devotees know that it's not so easy to progress. We're in a good situation, with service, a temple, vows. Very good. But it's a long haul. We have minimized material desires for now, but we don't feel ecstatic attraction for Krishna, even for hearing His holy name when we chant it ourselves. I'm speaking for myself, but it seems to be the general condition.

Guests who attend on Sunday may not be as committed to spiritual life as devotees who attend the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* classes. The evening lecture must therefore be different.

I don't have a full outline for this afternoon's class. I'm taking the risk that it may turn out to be an extremely basic lecture on transmigration. If I can think of examples, however, it will keep me going "Lord Caitanya's *janmani janmani* verse, Narottama dasa Thakura's prayer *tandera carana sevi*, Maharaja Pariksit's prayer for an improved situation in next life. Devotees expect to come back for another lifetime of spiritual development. I want to appeal to the audience to think about their preoccupation with the temporary and to remember their ultimate self-interest. Don't commit sins and thus

detain yourselves in the material world. I want not only to give a *Bhagavad-gita* lecture on transmigration; I want to *preach to them* not to waste their lives.

Some say we shouldn't preach at all, but simply provide information and then let people decide for themselves. Don't proselytize your dogma. But I'm not a scholar interested only in academic study. I advocate because Krishna advocates: "Surrender unto Me. Give up all other religious duties and I will protect you."

* * *

1 p.m.

Read five minutes and worried about the pain. Will I be able to give the class tonight? No reading allowed, or not much. Best to keep cool this afternoon until the lecture.

* * *

4:15 p.m.

My Post-its for the Sunday lecture on *Bhagavad-gita* looked too busy with all their subheadings. Better not try to follow them or I'll be reading notes instead of speaking from the heart. Better to look out at the people and feel what I can. Be confident.

It seems my biggest fear in speaking is that it will be too simple, too theoretical, too much the same old thing, "We're not this body"; the devotees have heard it all a million times. My success will be to enter the topic in a basic way, but to somehow make it solid enough that people are touched by it "the congregation as well as the practicing devotees. We are not these bodies, we are pure spirit souls, eternal servants of Krishna. Even though we supposedly know these things, we are caught up in temporary matters. We should be serious about the fact that the soul takes bodies one after another and not bother becoming attached to the present body and its needs. Our physical needs can be met simply. The main effort in life should be to improve our next life. Try to go to the ultimate goal, back to Godhead, and even if we can't make it all the way now, attain pure devotional service as far as possible and take it up again next time.

* * *

5 p.m.

I hear ya have head pressure.

Yeah, but I'll go on stage anyway and try to transcend it.

Well-dressed Italians wandering around the village. To these people I'll say I don't speak Italian, I'm from New York City, then tell them not to get caught up in temporary pursuits.

Yeah, I'm from New York. That's where I met the Swami. My father is . . . a guinea, my mom an Irish mick. Both second generation immigrant Americans.

Oh. Tell us about transmigration, and what's this about King Kong?

You've got a what? A head pressure?

Go manly forward.

* * *

6:35 p.m.

Banging headache, but I did it, I made it through. It turned out to be quite a basic lecture, but I went the full time and even over, until about 6:20 p.m. On my way out I met a woman fortune-teller. She says she tells people about Krishna and Govinda. I told her it was good. Then I got into the van. Madhumangala told me that one of my Godbrothers here wanted to see me for ten minutes. Madhu told him it wasn't possible. I said, "Let me see if I can see him tomorrow morning before class."

Now let's see if this turns into a right-eye headache or what. Thank you, Prabhupada, for letting me give the class. It was a pleasure to speak in such a traditional way. I thought of you throughout it. Thank you.

* * *

Econoline Preacher
Now buckle your seat belt in
the best of Fords
and roar
over *autostrada* to the next
place, private viewpoint of
September-end,
lasagna, pizza, ravioli,
Pavarolli Vivaldi,
and Jaya Govinda.
Inscape and looking out
lecturing from the books.

* * *

I am headache prone and
falldown prone,
so prone
it sometimes hurts
although I do my best
to remember
that Swamiji wrote
with his own hand
on my apologetic letter,
"May Krishna protect you
from calamities."

* * *

In the days that remain
let no one be blind to
the truth of Krishna's *Gita*.
May we surrender to the King, the

sweet Lord in three-fold bending form
and receive Radha's blessing on us.

* * *

I just recalled those pauses in Srila Prabhupada's Bhaktivedanta Purports at the beginning of the Fourth and Eighth Cantos, where he reassess the work he had done so far and prayed for the mercy of the previous *acaryas* and the Lord that he could complete the work.

Prabhupada writes with obeisances to his spiritual master, "by whose order I am engaged in this herculean task of writing commentary on the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* as the Bhaktivedanta Purports." At the beginning of the Eighth Canto, Prabhupada summarizes his first meeting with his spiritual master and the orders he received from him: "He personally told me that publishing books is more important than constructing temples . . . I am continuously trying to publish books, as suggested by my spiritual master." Prabhupada then prays to Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura "to give me strength to finish this work. I am neither a great scholar nor a great devotee; I am a humble servant of my spiritual master, and to the best of my ability I'm trying to please him by publishing these books, with the cooperation of my disciples in America. . . . let us cooperatively publish more and more volumes of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* just to please His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura."

I am a tiny speck from the gold mine that is Srila Prabhupada. I also pray to him for strength to continue my writing, which is now contained under the name of *Every Day, Just Write*. It is in some ways perhaps a whimsical work, and it is as certainly imperfect and impure as I am, but Prabhupada knows my intention to serve him, which fortunately he incited in me from the first time I met him. He has always protected me and given me good service. I pray that he will accept this writing despite its deficiencies and excesses. I trust that the Supreme Lord is *bhava-grahi janardana* and can see that despite my faults, I have a simple intention to serve Him with my work in the spirit of *yat karosi . . . yaj jahosi*.

If Prabhupada desires, I wish to go on writing many more books for my purification and to assist and inspire his many, many followers all over the world. "Thus may we happily chant Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare."

This twelfth volume of *Every Day, Just Write* completed on September 22, 1997, at Villaggio Hare Krishna, Medolago, Italy.

Appendix

Notes on how to write:

- (1) Make things up. Start with any fictional touch of name or place.
- (2) This may help you get the diary monkey off your back.
- (3) Just fly.
- (4) Some daily "writing while reading" (*Srimad-Bhagavatam*) is always nice.

* * *

My way of getting at the inexpressible truth is to free-write. I "process" my ordinary things and transcend them by talk which sometimes covers things too personal to mention. The universal quality of the particulars peeks out in such writing. Reader feels touched. Communication goes on in intuitive way.

* * *

The overall work of EJW feels like a process "I have to keep writing-living it as much as possible. Its potentiality is not something I merely control. Rather, I *serve* it, and it will come. It will be better woven, deeper, more artistic, more whole, as I keep at it as much as possible.

Is it a risk to give so much of my life to this project? Not if you stay close to *sastra* by regular reading and by giving prime time to chanting and other basic obedience to Srila Prabhupada.

It's a risk in a good sense. The devotee is daring and active in the service of the Lord, taking all risks for Krishna.