

ALL
Glorie
to
SUN
Kirtan

Summer marathon
1995

The Summer Marathon



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Introduction

The Adventures of Svevo, Revisited

In one day from now, I'll have in my hand a novel by Italo Svevo, probably his *Confessions of Zeno*. Let me tell you about Svevo as an Introduction to our *Summer Marathon*.

I first read Italo Svevo in 1964 when I was just discharged from the US Navy and when I had gone during the snow storm to live on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. I rented my first apartment and felt that I had attained a mystical heaven. I set up my room simply, whitewash on the walls, red curtains, and just a few pieces of furniture. Prominent was a big writing ledger I'd picked up while on one of our cruises in Italy. I'd fancied somehow that this setting was something like that of a monk. But unlike a true religious person, I had an ample stack of "grass" (marijuana) to guide me into my daily visions. I had no bed, just a cot, and no girlfriend.

I wanted to write and was simply looking for the subject matter. It started when I began visiting new acquaintances, Eliot and Anna. They lived together and I used to visit them in their apartment where we would smoke marijuana together. Eliot was an abstract painter and sometimes we would assist him in a kind of "happening" by throwing paint onto the boards on which he worked.

My involvement with Eliot and Anna is a long, painful story and now is not the time to tell it. Suffice to say, I started writing of my visits to them. I also developed a

romantic attachment to Eliot's girl, Anna, who had been born in Italy during the war, a couple of years before I was born. My writing consisted of a series of poetic, autobiographical vignettes. It was not an attempt to make a developed novel with a plot. I was writing things as they happened and included many plain descriptions of events and places and my sense of dedication to a hip artist's life. I had been waiting for this for so long.

During this time, I read Italo Svevo. I can't remember right now so much about his actual book. I admired his truthfulness. I remember a scene in which the main character went to work in the office and how he blandly moved around the different objects on his desk and the author captured a stream of consciousness. The book was also anti-romantic. His hero was pursuing a love affair but never got very far with it, and his thoughts revealed his own emotions as sometimes in love and sometimes not at all in love. It was a dedication in the writing to capturing the actual state without fictional theme.

The most tangible influence I picked up from Italo Svevo was his last name. I decided to use it for the main character in my own writing. Why? Because the word "Svevo" is very similar to my name at that time, Steve, or Stevie, or Steve-o. So it was a way to thinly veil my personae.

A new name for my character gave me impetus to go at it, and a little bit of distance that helped. I'll give an example of a vignette. One night over at Eliot's, we painted a big board together. Eliot put a lot of black into it and in the end, we threw raw eggs at it. The vignette is mostly a description of the three of us walking through the late night streets carrying the large board. I saw my Svevo and his friends as something like the fig-

ures that Picasso drew during his "blue" period, like graceful acrobats, sad, artistic figures.

Getting t-high everyday, my reality constantly changed. It was like floating in air, so I thought. I lived as much for my story as for my relationships with Eliot and Anna. One day Eliot was with me alone and he warned me that if I continued to keep his company, he would "corrupt" me. By that he referred not to any particular sinful activity, but he felt that he would destroy my idealism, which I still had at that time. When he said that, I felt somewhat confident that he could not do that to me. Perhaps I should have been more afraid. Eliot and Anna began reading bits of my manuscript of adventures of Svevo. She said that I was "a genius."

I remember another conversation I had with a friend at that time while we were walking west toward the Village. My friend said that he wanted to get as much life experience as possible before he began writing. Life came first. I said that for me, writing came first. I said that life was the stuff that I would use in my writing. My friend was alarmed and disapproved of my attitude, and he said that even if I became a great writer, it would be Pyrrhic victory. This refers to the Pyrrhic wars in which although one side was victorious, their losses were so great that one could hardly consider it a victory. So if one doesn't live life and attain art, my friend reasoned, it would be better not to have won such excellence in art. In a sense he was right, because I knew this martyrdom to art was not making me happy. But neither did I want to lead the kind of life that he was aspiring to, which was mostly a lusty kind of sense gratification, which he admired so much in Henry Miller.

I sent my novel-in-progress to a Chicago editor. He wrote back and said it was “superb” and that he wanted to publish it, starting with an installment in his magazine.

My actual life story grew dark and darker. I eventually broke off my relationship with Eliot and Anna. About two years after I left the Navy, I was disillusioned with the Lower East Side, and one night while on a LSD trip, I jumped out of a window and broke both my heels in the fall.

Now let me move ahead in this desperate story to say that I met Śrīla Prabhupāda in July of 1966 and became his man. One morning during Prabhupāda’s lecture, Eliot came to the front door. I knew he was a trouble maker, and so I chased him away and wouldn’t let him enter. Anna came by one day with a crude invitation and I repulsed her also.

A chapter of my Svevo manuscript got published but I never got around to sitting down and reading the magazine. I was too much absorbed now in the surrender of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One day, the Chicago publisher came to New York City and he visited me in my First Street apartment. My apartment was now turned into an *āśrama* that I shared with Raya Rāma dāsa and Hayagrīva dāsa. I spoke with the publisher in one corner of the room and I told him that if he liked, I could write a sequel to the story about how I came to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I told him a little bit about the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. He said he would be interested in the sequel. But I never saw him after that.

I wanted to talk to Śrīla Prabhupāda about the sequel idea. So one day I went into his room when there was no one else there. I said, “I have something practical to discuss.”

He smiled and asked me what it was. I told him that I had written a book that somebody wanted to publish but that it was not about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. However, I could write a sequel to it, telling how this person who was in so much illusion and suffering finally found the true path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda said yes, go ahead and do it. But he added that I should try to make money from it. He said that just because we are religious, that doesn't mean people can take advantage of us and get something from us for nothing. I was pleased that Prabhupāda had approved the idea, but somehow I never got down to work and did it. That's probably because around this time I was thinking that it would be better that I completely renounce all writing. It all seemed to issue from the false ego.

One day, I carried all of my life's writing up to that point, about half a dozen short novels, many stories and poems and diaries, and threw them all into the incinerator in the hallway at 26 Second Avenue. The only manuscript I saved was the Svevo story because Prabhupāda said I should do a sequel. Eventually I lost that also.

So what does this have to do with the book I am proposing to start now, *The Summer Marathon*? I'm not sure. I'm hoping that when I get a hold of the actual novel by Italo Svevo, which I haven't seen in over 30 years, it might spark something off. Aside from this, I plan to start traveling to temples on July 29, and each day I'm hoping to seek the truth. I want to write about that on a daily basis, what I call a "timed book," lasting for the duration of the ISKCON summer book distribution marathon which goes up to Janmāṣṭamī. This will be my *saṅkīrtana* effort as a devotee-writer. It will not be a Pyrrhic victory because whatever else hap-

pens, I'll be serving Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa each day.

I'll have to see whether Svevo has any useful connection to these present day services. I had a hunch that it might and so I've described it here. If it just gets dropped here with no follow up, then so be it.

Pre-Marathon

July 20, 1995

My summer marathon begins July 29 and goes up until Janmāṣṭamī day, August 18, 1995. This doesn't exactly coincide with the summer book distribution marathon in ISKCON, which I think begins earlier than mine. But for both the book distributors and myself, this is the home stretch of summer, our last chance to pour on Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the ideal, relaxed, and climactic condition which summer brings. I will be traveling to some ISKCON temples and giving lectures on my way toward Belfast, North Ireland, where I'm scheduled to attend the Janmāṣṭamī festival.

We've been looking at *Confessions of Zeno* by Italo Svevo, which arrived in the mail. The fictional preface is written by a doctor of psychiatry, who told his patient to write his autobiography as a means of therapy. Of course, I like this kind of thing, a fictional editor or publisher who puts the whole story into a further fictional realm. As I began to read the first chapter, I did not remember any of this. Maybe all I really got from this book when I first read it was the name Svevo. And yet, I do recall that I felt affection and allegiance for the author and his book. I remember telling my Lower East Side buddy, Steve Kowit, how much I liked the book, and he read it and shared my enthusiasm. One time, in my presence, when Kowit was talking with another friend, the name Svevo came up. Kowit said that I liked him very much and that he was "like Somerset

Maughm but a genius." That remark seemed to minimize Svevo, and I didn't like it for that reason.

Anyway, even if I don't remember any of it, I find it interesting as I read it now. Somehow or other I've been drawn to look at the book, so maybe I can use it. If I write some reflections on Svevo in *The Summer Marathon*, it will enable me to dovetail my tendency to be a college professor. I sometimes think that if any material career was suitable for me, it would have been to become a college instructor in English Literature or World Literature. That probably would have been my fate except that my father sent me into the Navy as an enlisted man. Usually I curse my father for that, but it may have been a hidden blessing. One college instructor who encouraged me in writing said that if I actually became a college professor, it would be the death nil to my life as a creative writer. And so I was spared, but I still like to make classroom presentations in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and sometimes dip into World Literature for a comparative view, summaries of content, and so on.

The fictional set up, a narrative written in the first person, by someone who is not trying to write literature but is writing therapy on the advice of his doctor, is fascinating. At least theoretically it seems like a good technique. Let's see how it goes.

Aside from Italo Svevo, the literary reference which I think of as a main theme for my writing during the marathon, is this quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson:

These novels will give way, by and by, to diaries or autobiographies—captivating books, if only a man knew how to choose among what he calls is experiences and how to record truth truly.

I'll let you know what I mean by that in terms of my own odyssey and writing, during the course of this marathon. But as a pre-marathon remark, I will say my in-

tention is to try to find my truth on a daily basis. That means the absolute truth of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and my own honest perception of what is true to me each day. Taking the opportunity of our travels, and the urgency of awareness that this could be one's very last summer, I will try my best to choose from among my experiences that which is most interesting and meaningful, and I will try to record truth truly.

July 24

I imagine a critic surveying my writings and saying, "You wrote mostly about writing itself. He struggled with a guilt that he was not more active in ISKCON, was not accepted as a writer by his peers." Or the critic might discuss the Pyrrhic victory I mentioned in the Introduction.

Perhaps I should avoid playing the critic to my own works. Yet I cannot leave the critical concerns behind. These are important issues for me. And since I write to purify myself, these concerns will come up repeatedly.



There is nothing to be ashamed about the fact that I often write about writing itself. It is an exciting and fascinating subject. I often ask myself, "What is the well-spring of creativity? How can I write to please Kṛṣṇa, as a means of worship of Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda?" And I praise the joys of writing and again seek to link it with God who gives all good things. I also seek to fashion an art out of writing, to make a poem or book that will attract people and bring them to Kṛṣṇa. I write to help myself. I have an obsession to leave a record, as so many mortals have had. But because of being connected with the pure devotee and with Kṛṣṇa, my record can have transcendental value. But it depends on how deep I can go, it depends on some measure of success and struggle.

As for being guilty that I'm not doing some other service or that I'm not accepted by my peers or that perhaps this is all an act of compensation—these are not such wonderful concerns. I have nothing to say of them right now, but I know they will come up.

Subject of the Pyrrhic victory, meaning that I may succeed in the art of writing, but fail in the art of living, is of course a crucial one. I like to take the positive approach and say that writing is an important aspect of Vaiṣṇava life, especially one who chooses it as his vocation (or who's chosen to do it).

So I don't want to unnecessarily create a conflict or dichotomy between writing and living. And certainly I should not make a false distinction between writing and devotional service. Neither does this kind of personal writing have to be branded as "false ego."

As for this present book, I can only guess at what it will become. But my guess is that the writing itself will be the basic act which drives *Summer Marathon*. The writing of the book is the main adventure for these

home stretch weeks of summer. Keeping up the writing of the chapters constitutes the marathon. We're continuing it under all circumstances, travel, headaches, temple duties, lack of subject and inspiration—that's the challenge.

As I prepare for this literary marathon, I have thought of two books and today my friends in America sent them to me. One is *A Passion for Truth* by Abraham Heschel and the other is *A Life of One's Own* by Joanna Field. I don't think I'm going to have to study these books or even read them in the upcoming travels. I've read both of them before. There is something basic in each of them that I wanted to employ in my daily writing during the marathon.

From Joanna Field's book, I'd like to remember her diary method for seeking the truth in terms of that which made her happy each day. She started to do this because of feeling an uneasiness that her life was not being lived in her own way. She says, "I was so dependent on other people's opinion of me that I lived in a constant dread of offending." So she tried to get inside into her own life and decided that if she could write down each day what made her actually happy, that would be a good indication of what was important for oneself. So her method was to keep a diary, "melting in it everyday when I had been particularly happy and anything that I wanted. At the same time I would note anything else that seemed important so that if it should turn out that happiness did not matter I should have a chance of finding out what was more important." Joanna Field's emphasis was on trying to get beyond other people's images of you or just living a life because of the sense of duty, but actually finding out who

you are through the method of self-observation. Here is her report from the first two days of the experiment:

The only special happiness that I could remember (after the first day) was hearing someone playing the piano in the distance and watching the splashing water in my bath. The next day, back at my work, I apparently had only one moment which seemed important. It was a moment of absent-mindedness when I looked up from my desk and found myself gazing at gray roofs and chimneys, a view typical from a million of London's top floor windows. I do not remember exactly what I say but only the shock of delight in just looking.

I thought this had some usefulness for my own purposes and hope to keep it in mind.

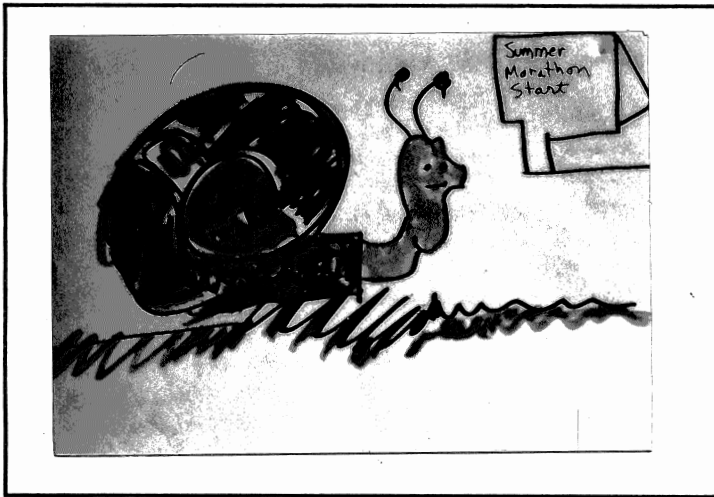
Heschel's book is more profound. It influenced my own writing of *Truthfulness, The Last Leg of Religion*. He studies two teachers, the rabbi known as Kotzger and Søren Kierkegaard. Both of them had the "passion for truth." Heschel writes:

. . . This was not a philosophical inquiry into the nature of Truth but a scrutiny of men's lives in relation to truth. Religion, Kotzger maintained, as not simply an act of adopting a system of beliefs and certain modes of conduct; test and trial were needed, and one had to ascertain through introspection whether one's beliefs were genuine or not, and whether one acted out Truth or lived the life of pretense . . .

I doubt that I will have occasion to quote more from Joanna Field's book. But the Heschel book is recordable, and I may at least remind myself of this passionate discipline for undeceiving oneself and spice my chapters with occasional quotes, even if I just pick them at random from *A Passion for Truth*. And I hope that this will help me in my own truth seeking.

I just tried reading *Confessions of Zeno*. I found it tedious and unappealing. I doubt that I'll read any more

of it or include it in my marathon in any way. But the Introduction about Svevo may still be relevant. The fact that I was a writer even before I met Śrīla Prabhupāda, and that I was writing an autobiography with a fictive touch, means my “hero” Svevo—and my friend’s accusing me of a Pyrrhic victory in the name of Art—these ought to continue to have meaning. But I won’t be attached to carrying out the Introduction or pre-marathon themes. They are mostly to keep up my interest during these last days before the starting bell clangs and we begin the race.



1924

July 29

1 A.M.

Nowhere to go but here. I hope to write at this time each day. Maybe an hour later. If I have to stay up late to give lectures, I'll still try to rise by 1. Then the first activity will be to read *Bhagavad-gītā*, as I did this morning. Lord Kṛṣṇa says He is the transcendental chant, the father of the universe, the mother . . . The pure devotees seek Him out directly, *satataṁ kīrtayanto mām*. They are fully absorbed in glorifying Kṛṣṇa. Why should I do less? I don't want to be considered among the "others," such as the non-*mahātmā* impersonalists. Follow the path of praising Kṛṣṇa, with firm vow for rules and regulations, bowing down, offering and worshipping the Supreme.

Do I do it? Is this an ideal I cannot reach yet? Is my writing fated to be something less? Let it climb, the devotional creeper. Let me sing with this voice and pen.

Free-writing, free expression . . . very well, but why not freely in Kṛṣṇa consciousness? Yes, yes.

Calm, fairly calm. We're at a house in Italy. It's early Saturday. Cars go by regularly from Friday night midnight activity. I seek peace but should know you can't have it in this material world. But there is an abiding spiritual peace. Those who know Kṛṣṇa as the object of sacrifices, the Lord of all planets, the best friend of everyone—they attain "peace from the pangs of material miseries" (5.29). Confidential knowledge of Kṛṣṇa grants relief from miseries. So it's not wrong to seek

peace and solace and relief—even quiet. But the way to do it is not material. Not just by going to live in the countryside.

I'm going with Madhu in our van, driving all day today to reach by night a country called Slovenia and within that a city whose name I can't spell or pronounce, where the ISKCON temple is. ISKCON temples sometimes get attacked by thugs. They sometimes have their own internal lack of peace as devotees deal with each other from as yet imperfect motives. But I want to go there. It's part of my duty as a *sannyāsī* to go and preach the scriptures. It's for my purification that I ride in this marathon. As you speak Kṛṣṇa consciousness in lectures, you will help others and you'll help yourself.

Non-stop marathon effort to be Kṛṣṇa conscious.

It's certainly summer. Sweating hot. Mosquitoes kept me awake last night. Summer marathon . . . full of mosquitoes too. Everyone is active.

And so my friend, will you write out of your head and hand and headache? Will you tell us of your journey?

Yes, I will do so. When I can't think of something edifying to say, I'll still speak because I live. My heart beats. My material father is dead; he died eight years ago from a heart attack. It happens. Was he thinking of God? Is he my father?

Kṛṣṇa is the father of all. The spiritual master is the real father. My master, father, teacher is Śrīla Prabhupāda. I can continue my relationship with him, even after his departure from the world. I'm doing so.

Following guru's order. Taste of mosquito repellent on my tongue. When I get bewildered by outer events ... I'll try to gain hold of inner Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Last night, nightmares of cruel persons torturing us in various ways. That's the material world. Whatever I get as a token of sinful life, I want to see it as another way to make surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Headaches are like that, highway delays, inconveniences, mishaps. See them as adventures for this soul's attempt to reach the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.

And your Svevo, is he a puppet show you will put on from time to time?

I hope it will be better, more real than that. We declare no holds barred in this wrestling match. That means the book can speak from many mouths. We are not making a show for an audience. We are not an ordinary audience.

Should you not be perfect before God? He knows my heart. I am speaking, writing, it might be said, just to keep myself busy. It's something I do to pass the time. I dig up things. I show off. I say I seek to go beyond pretense. Seek to find myself as pure self, eternal servant of the Lord. As Śrīla Prabhupāda writes (and I want to repeat it), the devotee aspires to gain his eternal association with Kṛṣṇa in one of the five transcendental *rasas*. That's it. We are seeking Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this summer marathon record.

Toot-toot, we pull the train whistle. Get into our white van. Chant, lie down, body bumps over the miles. Think of friends and projects. Is it possible I'll have to leave it all?

End of the road today is supposed to be a thriving temple which in the last year has added 50 devotees.

They will see old Svevo cranking into their courtyard in his white van. "We have been on the road all day. We just want to rest. See you in the morning." Usually we travel only about five hours a day. Today will be more like eight. I'll try to catch a few note-times during the day. Not so external? It's all one, external-internal. I will tell you something.

This cannot be a book written in one place with no other occupations during the day. This fact may be an advantage. I'll try not to complain, "I'm distracted and can't write." If we are traveling, then give us the benefit of special road perceptions. Anything. My desire is for protection in the Lord's energy. Not outside of that energy.

Road stops, mental jerks, ups and downs—all this and more is ahead. Bumps with others. Ruffles within. Concern of the body and its organs. Admitting the truth. Seeking the absolute. Avoiding the fault-finding.

I read in Heschel that Kotzger wasn't content to week out doubts and faults, but wanted to face them. I'm not sure I agree with that procedure. If we know things are not good for us, why not weed them out? Even if it is done in a routine way? Oh, but nothing should be done unthinking. Yes, but take the doubt of atheism. There is no profit in it; in facing it, what can I gain?

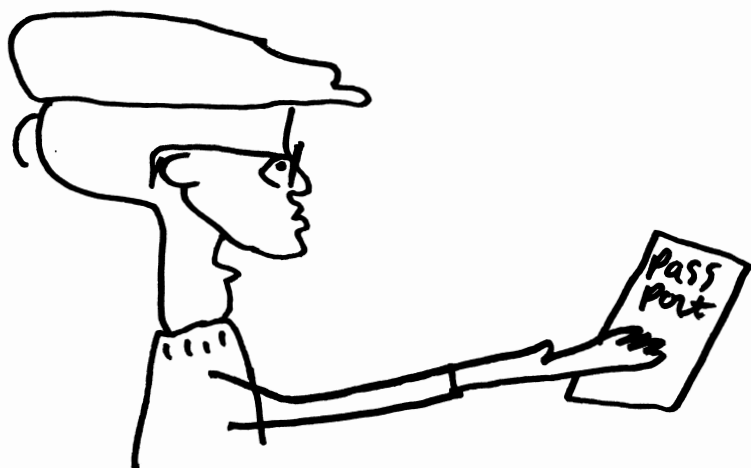
You could argue against it. Yes.

We too say that weeding out is not a sufficient way to remove weeds. They have to be fried in their seed stage, otherwise, cut-down fields will rise again. *Kecit kevalayā bhaktyā*—devotional service does the job. Ultimately, it's not by my introspection or heroic acts to undeceive myself. By *śṛṇvatām sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ*, hearing about Kṛṣṇa, the Lord who is in my heart, cleanses

desire for material things and brings me to pure taste in hearing of His acts, His form, name, etc.

So I will weed out wrongs. I'll have to cry sometimes, and if at a particular moment when it's time to write I'm filled with complaint . . . I may say, "Ouch!" But I prefer to say, "Gaurāṅga!"

Svevo tied his bow. He put on the straw cap his friend bought him, try it on for size in the mirror. Look okay? It's just in case you have to pretend you are a nondevotee. I don't think there will be occasion for that in the next 21 days. Devotees are not hated or illegal where I am going. But just in case.



O Lord of the universe,
O soul of the universe,
kindly deliver us from the pangs of death and disease
and old age and travel and fear of cruel persons. De-
liver us by enabling us to think of You.

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

8:30 A.M.
(at a gas station where we
stopped for breakfast and rest)



You'll have to do some writing even when you don't feel like it. Dreamt of Guarinos. One group of us arrived at some place and had a car ride scheduled for the next morning. Then Uncle Mickey who was physically big and another uncle arrived. They needed a ride to the same place where we were going but Mickey was considerate. He said maybe they couldn't all fit in our car, since I had my luggage including my — *Book*. I said in the morning when our car actually arrives we can try to all fit in, we will see. Then I wanted to tell them my childhood memories of the Guarinos, especially something my father used to say—that if the five brothers had got together to form a business like maybe a furniture moving business, it could have been a great success. But they could not cooperate in that way.

Do I dream of them because only two days ago I learned that my father died in 1988?

Svevo mourned the principle. He waited for words that would be his own, not those of John Berryman's "Henry." If he knew who he was, then he'd know his story, what he did.

Is he the one right now ascertaining whether he has indigestion? Is he hearing the highway sounds? Is he afraid?

He has joined the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement; that much we can conclude. But that also is changeable.

In another dream, I came back to my room and a black man and his family had moved in. We were to share the room. I played with his son but he became disrespectful and pulled my ears as if I were a boy like him. I told him our natural relationship was that I was like the spiritual master and he the disciple.

Wait and hear in the highway. Speed. Not like the surf on the beach. You hear distant death. Everyone in ISKCON knows of the attacks on our temple in Armenia. We dream of it. We see the photos of the wounded devotees. I dreamt I saw a confidential file of photos showing the men with bodily wounds.

I would like this to be a bright and light narrative, like the way I felt when we first stopped for breakfast.

No use recalling childhood.

It's not that we now and
even at the time . . .

was not God conscious,
doesn't help me except
I was a self and so were they.

Illusion of happiness is
also a kind of happiness?

Śrīla Prabhupāda said What if a man builds
a very nice house and you ask
him why he built it
and he says, "Just to set fire to it"—
you'll think he's a crazy fool.

Tortoise draws in limbs. Swami means master of
senses. I'll be listening to his lectures.

The dictionary says "marathon" is a foot race of 26
miles, 385 yards run on an open field, especially as an
event in the Olympic games. It's derived from a legend
of the Greek runner who ran from Marathon to
Athens to tell of the victory over the Persians. A mara-
thon is also "any long-distance or endurance contest."

Lie on your back and dream. On your side. The day
turns mild. You will reach your day's end destination,
Ljubljana, it's called. Zagreb is to the east and south of
it. I don't go where there's trouble. The shapes and
forms he drew in his art studio.

Prabhupāda. *Kṛṣṇa* book. "Who is Kṛṣṇa and who is
the girl with Kṛṣṇa?" You can't expect to write so
smoothly in a life like this bouncing on the highway.

I was happy to put a wet towel on my head and bare
chest and arms. Madhu was driving through sweltering
front seat traffic jam and I asked him if he'd like a wet
rag. "Yes," he said. Later he thanked me and said it
gave relief.

Those sentimental feelings others have. Mine are not
like that?

"I stayed one night at Tripurārī Mahārāja's temple,"
he said.

Now words come to you from letters you answered. You wonder why you are not more Kṛṣṇa conscious. This is why.

Why. Hot and cold, learn to tolerate.

Did it ever occur to you that you are not making progress? Drive on, only two hours from the temple. A place I've never been to. But I don't get in anxiety about that. I'm a faded, living legend, wrote the biography, was there in the beginning, have no teeth, don't care so much what they may think. I anticipate but not being thrown in a clink. Amnesty International.

You were saying what made you happy as a means to find your unique self. But plenty of people would like the wet rag on hot body, the whole wheat spaghetti (no tomato sauce) with some veg. I looked over at the desk in this van, my desk, my new desk lamp and an index card I had taped there reminding me to write. That made you happy?

True happiness is far away. Unique self is known by revelation. The Supreme makes you happy. When you serve Him, you can know a drop of His *sac-cid-ānanda* nature. No other process can do it, not introspection or speculation.

Scratch the surface. That's why, bub, these attempts leave you cold or hot but not spiritually where you want to be.

Get ready. Put on pouch with passport. Roll on and over their border, they will probably not be unwelcome, we guess. There at the temple, youngsters, initiated by a Godbrother. They will receive you and give you a spot to park your van. It's a sign of bettering that I don't ask myself so much, "Why am I coming here, what can I add to their lives?" You just go.

I said to Bala early this morning, "I will be going to two ISKCON countries where I have never been. But even more important for me is this book, *Summer Marathon*." But when it gets hot, after lunch, you are mostly melted, a body awareness, get more rest. I did look at a 1974 edition of *Kṛṣṇa* book, hard bound, George Harrison and Satsvarūpa dāsa adhikārī who helped with the typing and preliminary editing. Eternally lucky I got to do that. Read it again.

It's a marathon in the sense that it runs until Janmāṣ-ṭamī, like the book distributors' summer marathon. And I keep going. Twenty-six miles, twenty-one days. The BBT "made up" their marathon, a competition, a means to spur on the distributors who also like it, like sports. Summer and winter contests. So I go with this timed book.

You will find here the Kṛṣṇa conscious movement in microcosm. Worrywart outgrown. Turn to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Pray for a right thing. And try to learn from others, not thinking you already know it all with your own brand of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Learn, be simple, give a lecture, and in the same way write it down.

Words bejammers, foot on the accelerator. Kṛṣṇa is the cause of all causes. If I don't feel well, I'll have to cancel something. But I expect to give a class, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Now get ready to travel again.

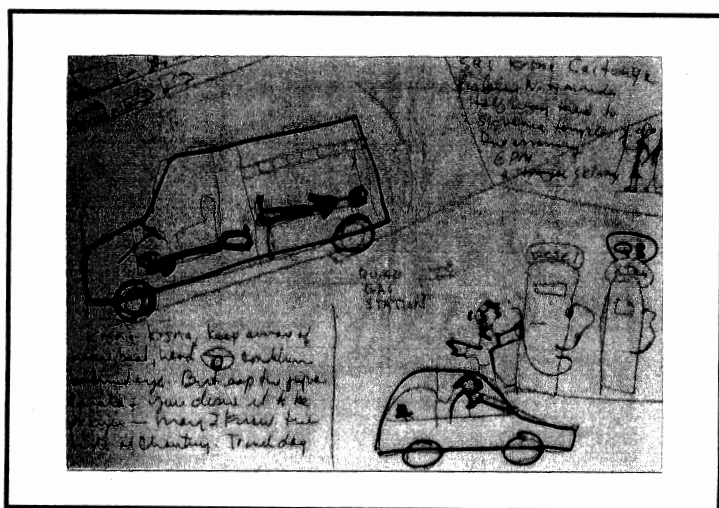
It was important that I reinstated early morning reading of *Bhagavad-gītā* back into my schedule today. Fight to keep it there. It's like a compass fix, a firm foundation to all else. You feel reassured in reality of Kṛṣṇa—which can so easily dissipate for me. And assured that you actually have taste for it.

You tend to say in your public lectures that we don't need anything or anyone but Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa. The Lord says that and so does His pure devotee. One can only say it, however, if he has experienced it. The early morning reading does that even more than a quick outline to give a lecture. And I don't want to state a duality between reading *Bhagavad-gītā* and my own writing, but suffice to say, I need to read. Charles Mingus, "The Clown," indeed. You will lose taste for all things of this world in the proportion that you gain serious attraction to the Lord.



Learn to read "the same thing," *Kṛṣṇa* book Preface, slowly and with appreciation. The six opulences of Lord Kṛṣṇa which prove Him to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead—are not myth, trivial, dogma. Parasara Muni gave something great in that definition of God as all-attractive Supreme Person. Our spiritual master uses it. We depend on him but he's not inde-

pendent. He's linked in the chain of disciplic succession. From him we receive it, "only he could lead them." I read it, maybe a little at a time. Go for those time-honored teachings. Satisfy yourself there. On a hot day you want cold water, that's always true.



We stop at Duino, an Agip station for refueling. Is this the same place where Rilke wrote *Duino Elegies*? No sign of it. Big motorboat on a trailer ahead of us on the diesel queue. Pretty girl runs by. I'm no big poet, can't sacrifice on that altar following Rilke. Want Kṛṣṇa consciousness this day and everyday.

Hello, hello, I imagine ahead to arrival at the temple, they look at me and me at them shyly. We ask for electric hook-up. Go in and see the Deities? Not at this hour? Too tired to lecture, you tell them. Head still spinning from the road. First the border crossing. Bye-ciao—Duino.

6:30 P.M.

Ljubljana

Me, me, Svevo, Satsvarūpa Mahārāja, son of my spiritual master from a long time ago before most of these boys and girls were born. Weary-ing from traffic jams and the long drive, strain, finally on a street near warehouses and railroad track our van with IRL license plates and blue and stars flag of Europe finds the right place. The *saṅkīrtana* men are just pulling in their van coming back from a day's book distribution. They are all in Western clothes. They start a *kīrtana* to welcome us, maybe 12 of them and a few *mātājīs*. We are escorted to a big guest room. We say no, first the temple room. So we go there. A full-sized *mūrti* of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I'm not so conscious or feeling, but know what to do. Bow down. On the altar, a simple painting of Pañca-tattva, picture of Rādhā-Madana-mohana, and Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva of German farm. Then a separate altar with their gurus on it. I bow before the pictures and I recognize Harikeśa Mahārāja, Śacīnandana Swami, Rohiṇī-sūta Prabhu, Smita Kṛṣṇa Swami, others, others, the devotees watch as I prostrate before their gurus, my Godbrothers, ISKCON. Then our whole group moves back toward the guest room, but I remember, "Oh, we will stay in the van." So we communicate that and ask for electric hook-up. And one of them, a young man, I think his name was Viśva-mūrti, says that most of the devotees have gone to some "camp" and maybe I will go there too. Madhu says I'll stay here. Here we are. That's the external arrival.

I'm bushed. Sticky, want to rest.

Then a FAX comes asking us to go to another place two hours further to join the camp festival there where four ISKCON guru *sannyāsīs* will be lecturing and holding *bhajan*as and 250 congregational members from Slovenia, Croatia, and Austria will be gathered. They even expect me to go there tonight! Forget it. I'm taking rest and I'm going to stay in this place even if not so many are here. Enough is enough.

July 30

I woke at 1 A.M. reading *Bhagavad-gītā*. It's very important, and while I want to keep the reading time inviolable, I can't help but write here too, to capture some of it. Kṛṣṇa is the goal, the sustainer, the Lord, the witness, etc. We reach Him and perfection by taking the elevator. In other words, if we consider Kṛṣṇa in His energies and approach Him in that way, it takes a long time. "One should directly approach Kṛṣṇa for that will save time and energy." One climbs a skyscraper step by step? Śrīla Prabhupāda encourages us to take the elevator. He doesn't say that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme inconceivable and you cannot expect a relationship with Him, He's unknowable, unreachable. Rather, he says Kṛṣṇa is the supreme goal but people don't know it. We (devotees) are supposed to know and get on the elevator. This is also known (as described in today's *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse) as the path of Garuḍa. Take it, follow it. How? Prayer, chanting, service, association of devotees.

Śācinandana Swami is among the devotees at that camp two hours from here. He phoned to ask me to go but he is also sympathetic to my decision to stay with the devotees here. He is going today to Serbia and then Croatia, even though there is war in those countries. He and I exchange letters although we never meet. In his last letter he wrote, "The art of preaching is in my humble understanding in art of giving. Unfortunately in this condition of material existence, a con-

ditioned soul like me is only expert in the art of taking—taking attention, taking respect, even taking nectar. When I became more aware of this ‘wavelength’ (of giving), I was overwhelmed with gratefulness and admiration of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his merciful mission.” He then tells me some of the practical strategies in their zone to “make” devotees.

So am I giving or taking? I want to be among the giving. Remember that movie where St. Clare goes to join St. Francis and she says something like, “I don’t want to keep taking love for myself, I want to give love”? Okay, I’ll have to give right here. It shouldn’t matter so much whether one goes to the summer camp where 250 people are and five swamis, or he stays here and speaks to 20 or 50 people. It shouldn’t matter so much if you are shy of Zagreb and stay in Ljubljana. Every place needs Kṛṣṇa consciousness and every devotee can be a giver, a preacher.

To go like a bee after the nectar will also make you a giver. Go directly to Kṛṣṇa in His words in *Bhagavad-gītā* and come out “sticky” like a bee covered with pollen.

When I put on the light, I saw the little container my ear plugs come in. On the road I’ll be using new plugs as much as possible. When I’m in quieter places, I employ the used ones. So the box of the pair of Classic Ear Plugs has a little “classic trivia” label on the back and this: “Elephants have a trunk so flexible that some of them can even untie a knot with it.” That’s giving too, to tell you the trivia.

Last night heard shouts of kids. I think this temple rents spaces in a large building that houses other people. I didn’t know whether these shouts were devotees or nondevotees. I also heard them singing *sundara-ārati, kiba jaya jaya gauracandra*, resounding young

voices of men and women. They asked Madhu to give the *Bhagavad-gītā* class and I lay down in the van and drifted off to sleep, dreaming some classic trivia.

Somewhere in a dream I (or Svevo or someone) was producing illustrations on a large scale of Disney-like characters. It was well done and was offered to Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa and the devotees. But in the course of the dream, the artist said he came to realize on his own that this was not the best offering. Śrīla Prabhupāda had been tolerant to accept it, but the devotee-artist somehow figured out that although he liked this art, it was not the first-class offering; it was more his own indulgence, a whim. And so he told others that he was giving it up and this discovery by him was enlightening to them. Wow—talk about pertinent dreams. Here I am. But I can't yet give up my cartoons.

My aversion of going to the summer camp or the war-torn city, of giving and not taking—what is it? My summer marathon. And what is yours, dear reader?

Machado wrote something like, "I don't owe you anything; you owe me for my poems."

My offering, if I can concentrate and remember it, is to record what's happening and share it as nectar, as instruction. Everyone is running through life, me too, but some of us want to record the human and spiritual essence of the experience. A poet senses the secret. Preserves it. This may be vain, another way of taking. But it can be giving too, if you do it right.

I not only want to do it, but I want to be *understood* and appreciated for doing it. So I write and make propaganda for the validity of writing. Or when I feel less confident I plead or argue the case. I fight off inner gremlins. I feel unworthy, "Oh, he is merely writing, a writer. He doesn't go to the summer camp or Za-

greb. He doesn't hanker to be with his Godbrothers on a stage in a big tent staying up late singing *bhajan*s with amplifiers. He doesn't give in that way."

Doesn't give also in taking responsibility for face to face encounters with new people or initiated persons. Doesn't get involved in zonal effort to actually convert people. Where is his zeal to actually wrest souls from *māyā*'s grip? Śacīnandana Mahārāja tells of seminars in these temples and "We also offer the guests to take walks where each devotee in the seminar preaches to three or four guests and in the end we have a question and answer session . . ." He tells of street *harināma* with Kṛṣṇa conscious pantomime, after which, hundreds of people stand around and are inclined to hear the swami's five minute lecture. He also recommends Bhurījana Prabhu's *The Art of Preaching*. He finds there "many nice instructions which I find very valuable in my preaching and also teaching of disciples."

Śacīnandana Swami is a generous and loving person. Now I want to be like that in my own way. Be generous in writing, you say. It seems strange. I produce so many private edition books which people don't read. They're not interested and also I write so privately that I cannot share it, at least for now.

Shall I blow the writer's horn? Tell how writing can preach to people in the future? At least be sure it's your way and work it. There is pantomime, there is a zonal seminar—and there is Satsvarūpa dāsa's proliferation of books that sooner or later may reach people's hands with a special, private message. Lest someone say that ISKCON is only concerned with vigorous proselytizing and institutional life, they may see my "Anne Frank" approach. The private person preaches.

Śacīnandana Swami also wrote me, "In our zone we have a prayer devotees recite after the *darśana* of the Deities and before the class. 'My dear Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi, please send us more *saṅkīrtana* devotees. Our only desire is to increase Your *saṅkīrtana* mission and to do this, we need many more *saṅkīrtana* devotees. Thank You for considering this prayer.'"

Am I a *saṅkīrtana* devotee that they are praying for? Or are they praying for book distributors only, those who go on the streets everyday carrying a book bag and stopping people cold? Yes, they are praying for *those* soldiers. An old writer may help too, but by the zonal ISKCON jargon, he is not "going on *saṅkīrtana*," and not a *saṅkīrtana* devotee.

Leave that issue aside, but I'm aware of it. I would prefer to pray for any devotee anywhere. And send them these books. Tell them, "Get on your own summer marathon."

It's very important to me to actually realize Kṛṣṇa. I don't mean this in a very advanced sense. I mean it's important I overcome agnosticism. When I read or hear how Kṛṣṇa is God, I don't want to think, "This may be a myth. It's very hard to accept because there are so many religions in the world claiming their God is God, and they don't think Kṛṣṇa is God per se. He may be an Indian cultural manifestation." I can run here and there preaching, but it's more important that I be convinced. One could say the only way I will get this conviction is when Kṛṣṇa becomes pleased with me and the quickest way to catch His attention is to be a preacher.

I agree. But there are ways to preach. It doesn't have to be on the stage at the summer camp. It cannot

be that for me. My health won't tolerate it. I can't live like that anymore. I must find my way, Choṭa's way.

Heschel is intellectual, involved, considers opinions even by great Western philosophers and finally offers the Jewish point of view. In his book, *Passion for Truth*, he advocates what Kotzger and Kierkegaard said. I don't have time or capacity or desire to analyze it, labor over it. But it is filled with themes relevant to our ISKCON life. Maybe we needn't bother with the moral questions involved, the intensity of self-scrutiny. Maybe it's a deviation or distraction, like looking at the "classic trivia." But I think there are sparks here. My mind may be dull and limited and tend to go over the same material. So I propose to occasionally write down a fragment from Heschel and give a quick Kṛṣṇa conscious fix on it, although I know this isn't professional philosophizing or even adequate.

He says it's quite possible to act in religious life for self-love, and out of fear of punishment or desire for reward. But to attain holy life, one's incentive should be pure love of God. I think in ISKCON, since our theology is so pure—all selfish religion is kicked out—we may tend to think we have already attained the purity. We need to be humble about that and part of the ability may be a scrutiny of self that exposes our falling short.

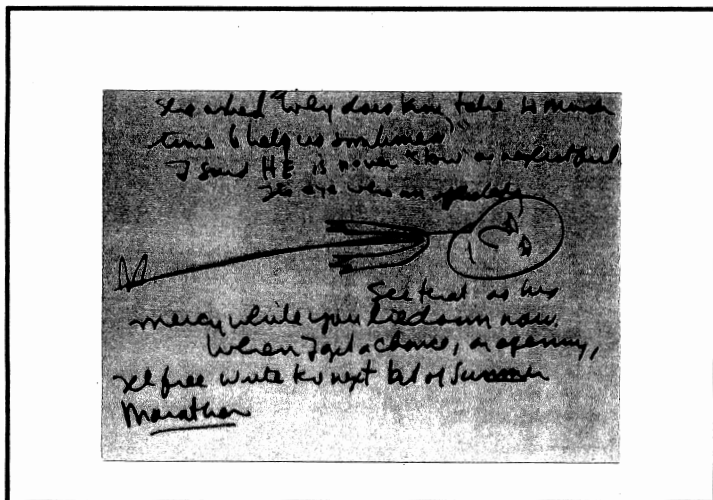
Heschel and his teachers admit that self-esteem is an important human motivation and a need but "such esteem becomes questionable, however, when it serves as an inducement for moral and religious action."

Leave that for now, an incomplete thought. I also noticed while pursuing this, that I fear too much rigorous thought will bring me a headache. So much of what I do is shaped by that. Things have to go easy for

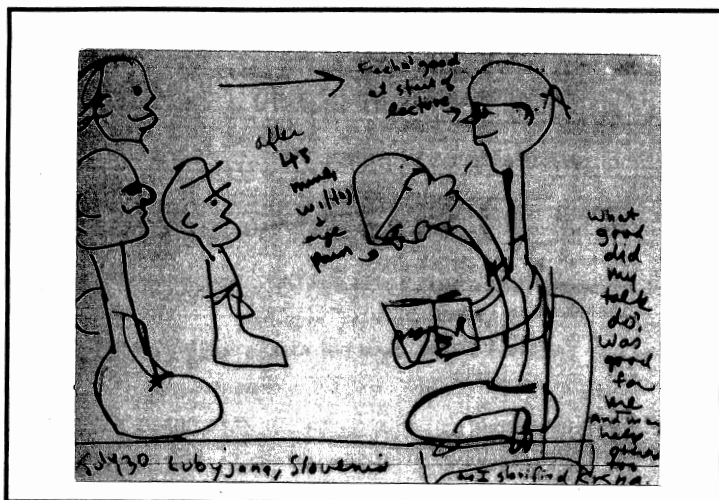
me; I need to go with a flow and not create opposition. Find truth naturally in *Bhagavad-gītā*. This morning I felt sweetness in coming close to Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*. In Heschel, I sensed more opposition and a difficulty. I know his teachers specialize in difficulty. Spiritual life isn't easy. But it is also easy. It's the path of Garuḍa, on his wings. Śrīla Prabhupāda says that big speculators fail to attain perfection in devotional service. ("Too intelligent for his own good," was Bhakta Fergus's comment when he peeked into Nietzsche.) Śrīla Prabhupāda: "The path of devotional service is undoubtedly very difficult to follow, but it becomes very easy if the candidate actually wants to follow the path of the *mahājana*. In this age there is the path of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who appeared to deliver all fallen souls. This path is so simple and easy that everyone can take to it by chanting the holy name of the Lord. *Harer nāma harer nāma* . . . We are very satisfied that this path is being opened by this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement because so many European and American boys and girls are taking this philosophy seriously and gradually attaining perfection" (5.14.42, purport).

I can't recall whether I dreamt this or it happened while awake: I was speaking to a group and in between speaking there were pauses. In the pause came a total and very rich silence. Maybe during the silence I saw a patterned wall-papered wall or a cloth texture. The silence was so terrific I savored it, startled. It was almost loud it was so silent. It was desirable, a relief. And only in pauses it came, then things returned to normal. Now it's gone and I don't know where it came from. I offer it as a confession—I mean, I know it's not directly Kṛṣṇa conscious, but I have to write here what honestly happened and what strikes me.

As far as a Kṛṣṇa conscious relation—"Of secret things I am silence" (Bg. 10.38). Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Among the confidential activities of hearing, thinking and meditating, silence is most important because by silence one can make progress very quickly."



They said, "Only five devotees are at the temple. They're all here at the camp. So come here." But it's not true. They were maybe 25 devotees here for class. One woman in Western dress asked, "Why does Kṛṣṇa sometimes respond to our difficulties with relief only after a long time?" I said He is not slow or neglectful. It is we who are slow to see Him acting in our favor, which He may do in many ways. Have faith whatever He does, it's for our own good. Profound concepts of the pure devotee's awareness of Kṛṣṇa in his life at all times. I can't claim to know this by realization. But I spoke the ideal teachings, the ideal examples and what



I believe (by hearing) is the care and protection the Lord affords to all His devotees. As I spoke—it was the next to last question after an hour of lecturing—my head pain was beginning. I lingered on the answer to her question and then took one more. A smiling, very young man asked, “What is the meaning of second initiation?” I said I couldn’t answer such a topic at the tag end of a lecture. See you later.

It may seem odd that I stay cooped up in such a small space in the rear of the van all day. After the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class, I walked out of the temple and into the back of the van. I didn’t care much if anyone thought it odd. I laid down on my saffron bunk and heard Madhu explaining to someone why I can’t meet with devotees during the day or sing *bhajan*s in the evening. I heard him say, “He gets up at midnight.”

From *A Passion for Truth*: “While self-love or self-interest may be regarded as a legitimate component in the love one’s fellow man, it is incompatible with the

love of God. If purity of heart is to wield one thing, and that is to be the love of God, then desires must be excluded, particularly erotic desire, Kotzger and Kierkegaard agreed."

We say the same thing. *The Nectar of Devotion*: "The word *love* can be actually applied only in relationship with the Personality of Godhead . . . What goes on in the name of love in the material world is nothing but lust. . . . Great authorities like Bhiṣma have explained that love of Godhead means completely giving up all so-called love for any other person. According to Bhiṣma, love means reposing one's affection completely upon one person, withdrawing all affinities for any other person. This pure love can be transferred to the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

What to do about one's inability to attain to that stage? We say, "It's a gradual process." I like to write books and I hope Kṛṣṇa will like it and accept it as an offering. I don't know what He wants of me in that regard; whether He might want me to give up that particular satisfaction of writing, or the solace of privacy. And if I did know, would I be able to surrender? It's very hard to know. We accept what Śrīla Prabhupāda said, but now, who can you trust in that way, especially in very particular and personal affairs?

De Kotzger discussion reminds me that we sometimes say things that are too heavy in mood for the devotees to accept. Śrīla Prabhupāda presented Kṛṣṇa consciousness sternly but with great optimism in the ability of the average devotee to attain the pure state. We just have to follow the *mahājanas*. The difficult becomes easy, by Lord Caitanya's grace. That's a significant difference between Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the Jewish and Christian teachers, K and K. We mostly see K and K as struggling and struggling. The devotee is

dancing in *kīrtana*. I admit it's not easy. Inner motives, inner dislikes of the "devotee" scene plague my mind. Sometimes I cut through to expose this side of things not only for myself but for others. But mostly we don't speak about it. Sure, there are dark and cynical things in our hearts. But it's nothing a good *kīrtana*, *prasāda*, and *Bhāgavatam* class can't drive out.

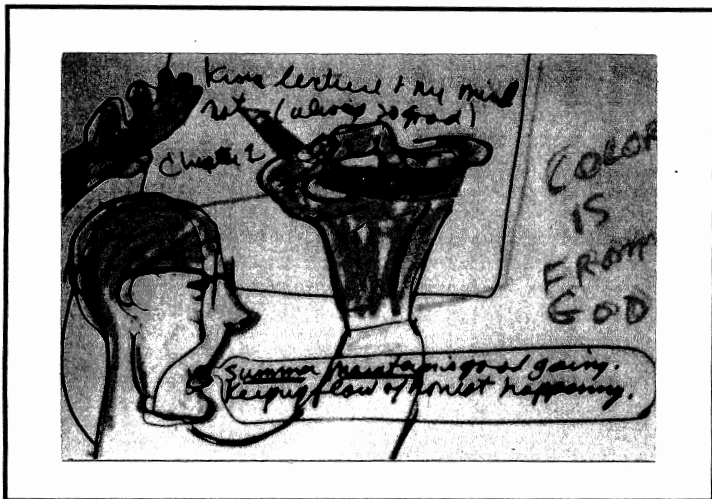
Travel in hot summer days bring out the fact that much of what we call happiness is in staving off natural miseries. Relief in our parked van if it's a cloudy day, even for a few hours. Absence of mosquitoes.

I think maybe the swamis, Godbrothers, may come here today, return from the camp. They say I can expect about 150 congregational members at the 5 o'clock Sunday lecture in the temple and maybe 60 devotees. I think I may speak from Śrīla Prabhupāda's Jaladuta experience, the poem he wrote in Boston. But what if the Godbrothers return? We'll see them and talk with them, that's what.

One said, "We tried to get in touch with you for a month but you were on retreat."

"No," Madhu replied. "We were (preaching) in Sicily."

Busy temple life. Lunch supposed to be at 1 P.M. Cook says, "It will be 1:30. What can I do? I'm all alone." At 1:15, M. gets called out for a phone call. I busy myself with crayons. "God is color." At 1:24, a *brahmacārī* knocks on the van. I go up to the window. He says, "*Prasādam* is ready." And I say, "Madhumaṅgala went for a phone call. As soon as he returns, I'll tell him to go." Then I go back and try to stay calm, not



think of hot *prasādam* getting cold. Just accept whatever happens. Van surrounded by voices, temple life in Slovenia. A voice I can't identify against side of van. Language I don't understand.

Classic trivia: "A cheetah can achieve running speed of 60 mph (96.54 km)." In class this morning, I gave the example Śrīla Prabhupāda gave, that *bhakti* is like a bicyclist catching onto the back of a truck and going faster than he could than by pedaling—going under a power beyond his own. We latch onto Kṛṣṇa and go by His power.

Yes, Godbrothers are returning from the camp. One from Brooklyn asked, "When is Mahārāja going to take lunch?" M. says better leave me alone today so I don't jeopardize the scheduled Sunday lecture.

Can't you get beyond all this? Can you latch onto a power greater than your own? Can you transcend your self and the story of a fellow who comes to visit the temple in a strange land that becomes mostly familiar because it's ISKCON family? I *can* transcend if you mean ignore all this and write of something else. But—

If they ask me how do you feel, I thought of saying, "I feel happy, fulfilled (or say optimistic, satisfied, *creative*). And then add, "Physically I am the same." I need to remind them of my weak health so they do not over-run me.

Get beyond this life? Then you're talking of fiction.

Svevo bedazzled the poof. Did not go jogging in shorts with his Godbrothers of the religious institution. Did not join a New Age soul movement. In black clothes he—wait, this isn't 1964. He don't wear black. Saffron. Who is he?

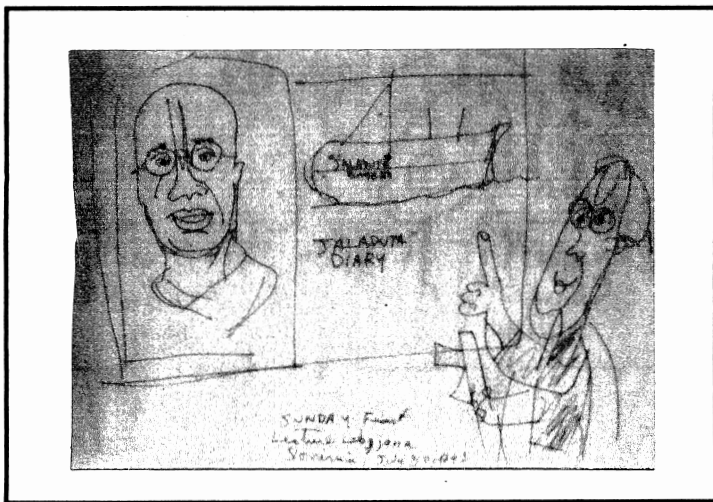
Chief. Components. I mean to convey the irritable, ruffled surface of life in the temple courtyard in van, everything is going okay as long as I can deliver that lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda coming to America. The rest is my private stuff and maybe not so important, huh?

Post-lunch dream: TKG in US Naval officer uniform with full regalia. I come walking toward him in the ship's passage wearing dungarees and dungaree shirt of an enlisted man. There is a stain on TK's jacket around the breast. I look at it closely along with his mother and him. He concludes the uniform is ruined by that stain. I was wearing a brown shirt over my dungaree shirt and TK Mahārāja thought for a moment I was imitating an officer. Then I'm putting on a US Naval ensign's uniform and looking into the mirror. Just in case Lieutenant Richardson comes and see me doing this, he should know I am not imitating an officer—the uniform belongs to someone else—maybe Rāvindra-svarūpa's son—and I am just trying it on.

Are these dreams of a former GBC man?

Now you are up in reality of day. Your Godbrothers here from the camp, don't think they are dying in anti-

cipation to see you, you behind the doors of the white van. At lecture time, they will see me . . . But it's a fact we don't have an intimate love or friendship.



The lecture of Śrīla Prabhupāda onboard the Jala-duta. I'll start by holding up the book, then say, "Anyone coming to ISKCON will notice that Śrīla Prabhupāda is the center of attraction (except for Lord Kṛṣṇa), and he is the final authority. His leading disciples quote him for their own authority. So if you want to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you will be following Śrīla Prabhupāda and it should be done not blindly or dogmatically but with acquaintance and gradually love for His Divine Grace." I'll say that and then say, "One good way to get to know him is . . . reading his books, of course, but also hearing about his life." The lecture assumes a shape. I'm keenly aware that some senior God-brothers are listening, as well as the others in Slovenia. "For those coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, knowledge and appreciation of Śrīla Prabhupāda is very important."

Fan running from sky light and I'm in my own world, hear only some loud parts of the *bhajana-kīrtana* from temple. Śrīla Prabhupāda in the Bowery loft, June 1966, said he was always busy there, working alone, something reading or writing, something reading or writing, and when I feel hungry I take some food and when I get tired I take a snap . . . you can ask Mr. Paul (he will tell you these are my activities).

Me too in this van. But I'll come out with *Jaladuta Diary*.

"Hello, hello."

"Can we meet and talk?"

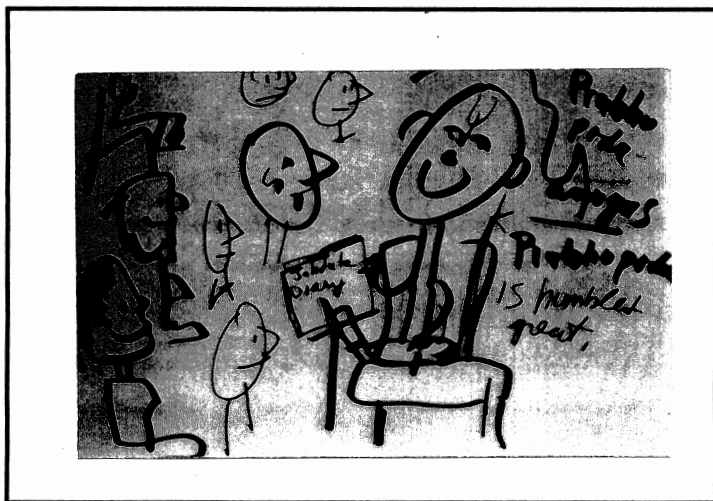
"Sure, why not?"

How to prepare for each onslaught?

Ecstatic time in a temple lecturing on Prabhupāda. Godbrothers were there and that added to the joy of it.

Some of my notes are like spoil sport complaining compared to the mood I'd felt when speaking just now. It seemed like the ecstasy just increased more and more as I was able to explain the verses of Prabhupāda's poem which he wrote in Boston.

The questions afterwards were also excellent. One of them pushed me to describe further how Prabhupāda combined the qualities of humility and yet great confidence. For an answer, I turned to Prabhupāda's poem which he wrote at sea. He described himself as



the via medium. Through him the great confidence surged, the victory that would occur on the order of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. And yet Prabhupāda himself felt unqualified. I quoted Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī who said that as one has love of God, the first symptom is that he feels he has none. Then a young man with stumbling English asked an excellent question. He said, "What's the difference between a neophyte devotee who has no love of God, thinks that he has no love of God, and the advanced devotee who thinks that way?" I said that even in the neophyte stage, that spiritual poverty is a jewel and that he can increase on it. It's better than having no love of God and thinking that you do have love of God. When I finally finished, the audience burst into applause, which is maybe something they do for all speakers here in formal settings. It was nice. Then the translator announced that I would sign copies of the *Prabhupāda* biography and people came up respectfully and I wrote their names and signed the book and the date. Partly their piety seems to come by their national situation and

their lack of being very puffed up materially. It makes me proud to be part of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. It also makes me think that my life of running and hiding, trying to spend time alone to develop attraction to Prabhupāda's books and writing to attain self-honesty—these can be used profitably so that when I speak about Prabhupāda, you can come out with some solidity and some freedom from pretense. I like to think that I pay for it by spending time alone, achieving integrity.

After sitting in the temple signing books, I finally made it back to the van but Madhu was bringing in more books and I continued to sign them.

Happiness: underarms of *kūrta* soaked from sweating while lecturing.

July 31

Yesterday you signed your autograph in books. Today you are back to point one again, asking yourself are you humble, do you have love for Kṛṣṇa, and are you compassionate to preach? I looked at my essay, "Kṛṣṇa Recognizes the Preacher," to see why Śacīnandana Swami said it was good. The main thing he found inspiring was the quotes from Śrīla Prabhupāda. The essay focuses on the Vaiṣṇava's compassion and quotes one of the best references to preaching in Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports. It's no wonder that one would find this inspiring. It's Lord Śiva's expression when he went to swallow the ocean of poison to save the universe. "It is said that great personalities almost always accept voluntary suffering because of the suffering of people in general. This is considered the highest method of worshipping the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is present in everyone's heart" (*Bhāg.* 8.7.44).

I should never desert the preaching field. Śrīla Prabhupāda said he wanted to die on that field, like a warrior who dies in battle. How I may preach, whether by writing, taking care of disciples, and how to do that—these are important details. But somehow don't forget that people in general are suffering and Kṛṣṇa consciousness is great mercy for them. Take trouble to give it to them.

"The Vaiṣṇava understands that Kṛṣṇa wants to bring the conditioned souls back to Godhead; therefore he takes the same mood as Kṛṣṇa. He doesn't become Kṛṣṇa yet he thinks like Kṛṣṇa: 'Kṛṣṇa wants all

the conditioned souls to go back to Godhead. Look at them, they're all suffering. They should be enjoying with Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa wants to enjoy with them. They are so unfortunate.' That's the mood of the Vaiṣṇava . . . Within the realm of devotional service, the quickest way to get Kṛṣṇa's recognition is to become a preacher. Kṛṣṇa notices those who try to help others come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

Our prayer is, "Please engage me in Your compassionate mission." Whether we become compassionate, I said, that is secondary. But please engage us in Your mission.

You have to risk and suffer for helping others. I so much like to avoid the dangers of Croatia and Serbia. I want to travel on the *autostrade*. I ask for medical exemption. Concessions for senior devotees. Treat me gently, I'm a writer. Don't intrude on my privacy because in solitude I'm preparing a nice message for the people—so don't strain me or subject me to the wear and tear of socializing. Yeah, yeah.

The Beatles sang, "She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah." I'm a devotee, I'm an angel, a special writer, a jewel of ISKCON, yeah, yeah, yeah. I've got bad ankle, bad headache, good purpose in prose and poem, I read poetry books to learn from them, and as for why my eye goes flitting to the face and form of a pretty girl, well—

She loves you
and you really should be glad
yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Now this early hour in prose run-on. The young boys and girls in this temple look up to us. Bow down to

them too. M. and I have so much inside strategy to get through the entanglements. It's a fact people and situations can entangle you and before you know it, you get a headache or your time is wasted. So you plan how to get through it without offending anyone but not getting caught up in their games and trips. I'll give the lecture if they ask.

It's important to be vigilant, cautious. Śrīla Prabhupāda says that in the purport for today's verse. Mahārāja Bharata was somehow not vigilant, and so affection for a deer fawn entered his life and eventually ruined his worship of the Supreme Lord. Be vigilant. Therefore I joke about my lack of pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Heschel: "Kotzger and Kierkegaard revealed how twisted man's inner condition was and suggested a way out of it that was straight if hard. Both were passionately concerned with the problem of what man means to himself. Beckoned to soar to infinite heights through his spirit, he proves too earth-bound to make the voyage."

Heschel says that Kotzger and Kierkegaard were criticized for not being concerned with the sociopolitical dimension of religion existence. They regarded individual choice in its purest form as the key issue. I seem to have a kindred sympathy for that way of life. I focus on myself. I thus imply that everyone should focus on the self, on purity of inner motives. We see how motives can be corrupted even while carrying out religious duties. I want to talk on that if they ask me to give the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class.

Mahārāja Bharata gave up things that are hard to renounce, and he surrendered his life for the spiritual cause. But then he redeveloped material attachment. I

think many young persons, such as those here in Slovenia, come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and give up careers and girlfriends, etc. But in the guise of religious life, our material desires may resurface. Śrīla Prabhupāda called this “hippie seeds.” Or he gave the example of the bed bug who appears to be dead but at the right season he bites again. Dangers: pride as a preacher or devotee, fault-finding, misuse of facilities offered to a preacher, lacksidy in chanting and hearing. Follow the two tracks, *bhāgavata* and *pañca-ratriki*.

So you ask yourself, “Am I a hoax?” You catch yourself at something. One writer called this “catching butterflies.” Like a butterfly hunter (unseemly analogy), you are always looking to catch the absurd and the inconsistent *anarthas* in yourself. Ah, there you go again, being a nonsense. See it at an early stage; be prepared to nip it in the bud. Be able to laugh at yourself.

Even *teaching*, always thinking of oneself as the instructor, can be a wrong attitude. I try to write for myself to escape that. One has to teach and be a crafty person (“the art of teaching”) when lecturing. But then give us relief from that. The teacher has to be a student also. At least I crave that. A student of whom? Of Śrīla Prabhupāda, of course. I do that by reading his books, repeating his philosophy in new ways, in my own words. And I am a student also—of life. A student because I admit I am not a master. The teacher assumes that he is better, somehow, than the students in his class. At least he usually doesn’t focus on his own improvement at that time. Teaching could do this, however; the teacher is also learning and remaining humble.

Heschel: “Once a religious man plunders religion, his thoughts reflect back upon the reflector. What

about yourself? they seem to ask." It's important for me to do both: to teach, lecture, guide, share, especially with these young folks. But also to practice it myself, to inquire how my life is transforming from the truths I teach.

How to pursue this? You lecture and then you write more privately. This kind of writing has to be primarily for self-improvement.

One way to do it is to skip beyond logical, merely intellectual writing and thinking. That's the method in the madness of free-writing. Skip to m'Lou. Find a better one than you, my darling, skip to m'Lou—and catch the surprised face of the auditor.

He says, "But this is impossible. This is not our orthodox method of inquiry."

Skip to m'Lou.

Now you have to go put in time on beads. You are making some good endorsements on your own methods, brother. I see you doing it. Do you see that black bear in the woods? Look ahead to your own future. There's a deathbed ahead and you may not even get the comfort of a bed, but it could be a forest floor or the street macadam. Prepare here. Last will. Scatter me ashes in the Yamunā, please. And my bank balance to the cause of ISKCON, ashes and sparks my words among mankind.

Free-write must be based on a life of simple prayer and that's done right now by chanting.

I couldn't follow all the trains of thought—I got interrupted by the sound of the actual train here in Ljubljana.

Free-writing will help me escape the syndrome of always being a man who is writing in his diary. I mean,

escape the *pose*, the consciousness that "Here I am writing inner thoughts in my diary just like a Kierkegaard or some other religious writer of inner truth." Escape the syndrome of preparing a diary for others to look at later (even if it's only for yourself to read later). Writing can do better than this self-consciousness.

Dream: A split appeared in a temple community. I give up my position of controlling authority. But we decide we will have to kill one group of devotees or animals using some kind of gas spray. They hold up in one part of the temple and resist us. We can't seem to kill them.

I overhear two devotees talking outside, deciding who will be the new authority. They notice I'm listening. I tell them don't worry about me. I want to be replaced. It's just a matter of who will replace me. I explain to them how in the absence of authority a country is turned over to the robbers as is explained in the *Bhāgavatam*. And now this temple has fallen into chaos and I admit we have resorted to bizarre actions.

Tolerate being insulted by rude devotee. Don't brandish a knife. Give him a milk sweet.

Aside from what this dream may mean specifically, it indicates to me the difference between public attitudes in temple behavior and private thoughts.

Break loose in language. You are your own main reader and you are willing and able to follow this when you read it. Let it jump. Why? Because it is necessary to get beyond the routine.

But aren't appearances important? Don't we need to give devotees a straight presentation? What is the justification of this other?

I told you. It's private. Even so, it's coming out Kṛṣṇa conscious, sort of.

I don't know.

Here, let us take breakfast together and talk it over. It's only an hour before the morning program recommences.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says be very cautious. A little inattention can lead to havoc.

There's a stooily odor in the rear of the van, comes from the toilet.

Ups and downs. Anti-climax of my *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class this morning. I felt their lack of inspiration in hearing me; it weighed in the air and on my body. I carried a load of feeling, my phrases were tired. It was hard too because two Godbrothers were sitting before me, right in front of me. I had prepared my speech with Post-its. They were somewhat ISKCON cliches, and in the questions and answers it became even more like that. When I said, "Prabhupāda said," I thought, "This will satisfy my Godbrothers." As a result, I feel . . . what? Let down. Went through the motions only and that's the way it is.

Don't want that to carry over to this writing. This is supposed to be a perpetual place of wonder, freshness. But here too.

Kīrtana in the courtyard. They are seeing of a Godbrother who is traveling to Switzerland. Does that mean we will end up with them there? Are we on a preacher's circuit?

Question in class: How can ISKCON devotees prepare themselves for marriage?

What do I know?

Brr, brr. The forest is cold. The sentences are supposed to make sense. But I don't want to be confined to that or else it's just telling you a re-hash of what M. and I have already discussed, which is mostly plotting our way through the forest of social etiquette. If I don't give the evening lecture, will I have to attend it? At lunch, if he asks me where I was before coming here or where am I going next, what is the best reply?

You want to write some marathon of words. To go somewhere, not the same as where this van takes us. Not exactly the same as what we go through on the road or at the temple. When I write of July 31, 1995, can't there be something else that occurs when I go to write it?

Write upside-down. Draw a face that way. Maybe just calm down and read *Kṛṣṇa* book and be a regular devotee like you appear to be. Sarvabhāvana said if the *brahmacārīs* put down *grhastha* life, then if they should later become *grhasthas* themselves, they will be ashamed to change *āśramas* and they will become hypocrites engaged in illicit sex. Yes. I agree. Hypocrites. People who act one way but are different underneath, in private life. I wanted to twang that chord for them. Get them to think about it. The life they need to live with full stamina, a whole lifetime in *Kṛṣṇa* consciousness in the *āśrama* that's best for them.

Hurts, until it hurts you keep writing. Sad boy, he ain't more of a devotee of *Kṛṣṇa* because at present he doesn't want to be more of a devotee than this. He's not inspired by anyone. He's not cynical, but maybe he is too. He thinks if he could have more time alone, he might cut through in writing.

In this van
I hide the day

is hot but I'm a cool guy
hiding out,
in courtyard nestled, the
buildings on either side inhabited
by bright and gentle and innocent
young devotees of ISKCON
whose gurus tell them
chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and if Satsvarūpa comes
(or someone in his category)
give him a nice reception—he
may use my room or phone
but don't expect him to fire
you up so much for book
distribution. For that you
need me.

Mourning dove. Pots. Gals in Kṛṣṇa consciousness,
voices, they do the work but I tended to ignore their
presence in class. I spoke of the men changing *āśramas*
but didn't mention the women, as if they don't count,
the young gals and lasses and *mātājīs* who when I asked,
"Do you have any questions?" the whole mass of them
said nothing at all, no movement of raised hands al-
though you know they are full of feelings.

What about lust? he asks.

Lust? Lust? Oh, it's a bust

I say. Forget it. It brings
anger the all-devouring enemy
of the soul.

It's a new kind of literature, as Emerson said. The
truth. People may get to like it even though it isn't tight
and great lapses are allowed when we sink into a mun-
dane valley. At least it's all true.

What made you happy?

I cannot recall. Then recall now. The breakfast did not make me happy. That made a distinct impression on me, but I felt tongue-disappointed. He did not prepare figs but I think it was my mind as well, dissatisfied and could not feel perked up by taste of hot cereal with milk and honey. Either too sweet or not sweet enough, that was the problem. You better find your happiness in something eternal.

Lunch won't be so happy either because it's a social affair.

Happy, important—a little rest. This guy or beyond this guy.

Svevo seems out of it, hardly a trace of him. Don't want to write of me before I was a devotee. And I'm not any "Svevo" now, so it's just dropped. You seem most interested in *A Passion for Truth* but afraid it won't look good in your book if you get into that too much. It will be another Satsvarūpa trip—leading us into something not exactly the Gauḍīya *sampradāya*.

But it's a cogent discussion of truth, truth-seeking, and I'm interested in that and can give the Kṛṣṇa conscious version. Don't boycott it.

But . . . hey, watch out, no one is going to see this. Don't want bad times. Mediocre sort of fellow getting ready to pretend. He's on guard in social lunch. Can't speak his mind. Just eat some peas or bread with adhesive-held teeth and don't tell him your soul but carefully calculated points in sensible and interested talk. Fortunately we say in Vaiṣṇava circles that talk during lunch should be light and not controversial. Get through it, return to your van.

1:06 P.M.

You know I think your little life reads well later if rendered honestly in detail. Is it Kṛṣṇa conscious

enough? Well, the falling short is poignant. I can't help but reflect worldly stuff, how I learned to read and write and imbibe literature. Words like stuff, poignant, reflect, practically every single one, I learned them in some school or context and it comes out now. You can't invent language. You borrow it all. So you are not unique, original when you write.

But your soul is unique. You write, therefore, your life as best you can and it may approach real self. What's the benefit of that?

You know. You want to love Kṛṣṇa, tired of cliches, can't break through the norms of mediocre—but even that word and that idea is borrowed. When you repeat *paramparā*, that's not borrowed, it's not like you are being *influenced* by *sāstra* and Śrīla Prabhupāda. Rather, you are repeating them without change. You are a loving tape recorder. But still, that is to be done in your own words.

Shit and bathe. Put on *tilaka*, wait 20 minutes and go up for the social scene. By 5 A.M. tomorrow we hope to be rolling again, on our own up for a couple of days.

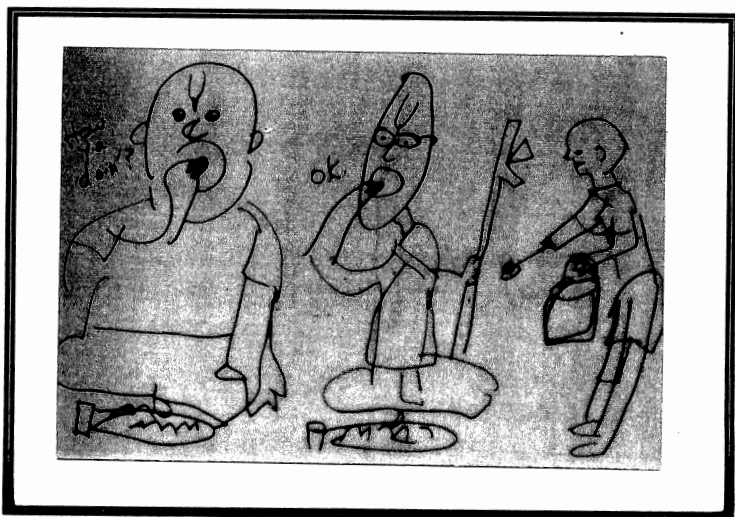
Nothing turns out quite as you anticipate it. So does that mean that death and a next life—?

You'll see. Or you won't see. The consciousness will dim out and will come on again and it may not (will not) be the same, not son of Steve Guarino again born in Queens, December 1939. New, new something. But self is same. You can't expect to understand it. Don't try the ascending method. Yet you write in attempt to be non-canned, not cliché-ridden. That's an effort.

Kṛṣṇa book in big print, 1974 edition, the book is warped a little, the surface of each page not exactly flat but wavy. I looked at a little and then close my eyes and review it—the Introduction, Śrīla Prabhupāda

pays respects to his spiritual master and *paramparā*, says Lord Kṛṣṇa comes when there's evil (so in Kali He comes in *harināma*). You go over a little of it. Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu . . .

Now it's 1:14. Gab. Gab. Maybe you'll be able to spontaneously say some good things with a Godbrother. Respect him in his innocence and faith in ISKCON, in his surrender to it. You are alike, two blokes; if one of you lectures it's not that different than the other. So talk with him and be with him. Don't make such an obvious show of guarding your inner self from him but make it look like "What you see is all there is." I don't need to imply, "There's more to me than meets the eye. I'm a writer of private books." That's obvious, that we have our own hidden self that dreams and that is withheld from view of brothers.



5:30 P.M.

I told M. a recap on the social lunch and prefer not to retell it here although it goes through my mind. He

spoke at length on the virtues of Covey's *Seven Habits of Very Effective People*. Said the author makes \$40,000 a day when he lectures. The methods of psychology can be used in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We spoke how cheating lines on book distribution have hurt our movement. Sad to hear dwindling and oppression of our movement in Russia. Sad to think we don't learn lessons, are not a fast growing religion like Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons who agree to go door to door when they get baptized. He squeezed two lemons on his meal but I didn't get one; didn't speak up. I did ask at the end, "Is there a sweet?" The vice president came to the door and decisively said, "There is no sweet." My Godbrother didn't settle for that and asked why they didn't serve the Lord a sweet. (I hoped the vice president didn't think by "the Lord" he meant us.) The v.p. said, "Maybe because we worship a painting of Pañca-tattva, we don't think of Him as a Deity." The Godbrother didn't settle for that either. They later brought us sweets they found in the fridge.

I didn't get a headache. I insisted that he give the *Gītā* class tonight which begins about 8 and it's my penance to stay up for it. He said what I am doing, traveling as a *sādhū* and lecturing, is good service. I like that. He asked if I wanted a copy of *Seven Habits*, and I mumbled that I don't read many things . . .

So there. It leaves some sadness, some irony and wish to move on in time so it will be my bedtime and get up not too late tomorrow.

Wave the flag of the little life. Here are my seven habits, jokingly, as quick as they come from my hand and gauche slow wink:

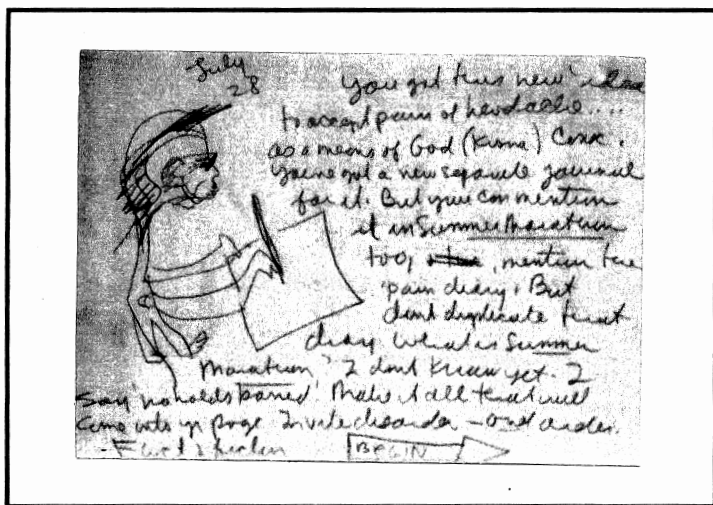
- 1) to not get headaches
- 2) to write timed books

- 3) to read *Bhagavad-gītā* and love it and not read much else
 - 4) to lie down when I am tired
 - 5) to be a devotee of Hare Kṛṣṇa and wear saffron
 - 6) to give up bad things
 - 7) to memorize a *śloka* per day, seven in a week, never to eat pies or bananas or tell any lies
 - 8) to abandon—something
- That's it.

August 1

2 A.M.

I have been trying to take a new attitude toward my old pain. Don't resent it or fear it. Don't even wish it goes away. See it as sent by Kṛṣṇa and as an opportunity to think of Him. But here it is again, impinging on my desire to read *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* and to write.



You do wish it would go away. It would be a relief, "Ah, it has subsided." Like the end of a traffic jam and now you can go forward and flow. But in a subterranean way I can try to commune with the Lord in the spirit of the *tat te 'nukampām* verse. I'm getting off lightly. It is a token of karma. The material world is a place of misery.

I went to rest last night—not attending the *Gītā* class lecture of my Godbrother—with only a small headache in the early stage. Then I had a dream that I was dressed in suit and tie and walking through the streets of Great Kills Village. It was about 8 A.M. on a Sunday. I heard coming from the other direction some drunken, menacing singing from members of a young men's gang. They had been up all night. Some were singing, "A hundred bottles of beer on the wall, if one of those bottles would happen to fall, there'd be 99 bottles of beer on the wall." I thought of walking quickly in another direction so they wouldn't see me, but it was too late. I had to pass by in their sight. It seemed they would leave me alone, respecting that I was returning from Sunday morning Mass. Some of them were bloodied. They had a gang leader. One old man in their group objected to something in my appearance or behavior. I tried to appease him saying we were like-minded. Then I woke up and discovered a sharper head pain. It canceled my early morning plans to rise at midnight and read and then write and then chant and then attend *maṅgala-ārati* and lead the singing and then be fit and happy for the drive. Things don't go as you plan. I probably shouldn't even be writing this, it make provoke more pain. But I want to keep my marathon moving, and learn to enter deeper, spontaneous states. The marathon is the writing itself, so I can't allow the time to pass in silence; it's my service. Also I wanted to state something about my approach to seeing pain in a positive way. At least we are not driving as previously planned today to see a *prāṇa* therapy doctor in Switzerland. My *prāṇa* doctor is Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa and I will try to think in that way. No other cure except getting the spiritual body and going back to Godhead. But also, healthier habits in this life.

It's important for me to write the mixture of absolute truth and my perception of the world through imperfect senses and intelligence. People may criticize me for mixing it and presenting it as if it's Vaiṣṇava literature.

I reply (for myself) that if I can go deeper with this, the mixture can bring me to surrender unto Kṛṣṇa. If we look closely, we will find many sâstric statements also contain this mixture. Even examples to describe Lord Kṛṣṇa's beauty and pastimes are analogies from the material world. We are spirit souls but we now live in the material world and can't help but see what goes on. Kṛṣṇa says the liberated soul sees everything in Kṛṣṇa and sees Kṛṣṇa everywhere. I hope for that vision. But now I'm bombarded.

When I can concisely write down a dream I had, it seems a victory. When I can present honestly a mixture of absolute truth and sense perception, it seems like a gain, an addition to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. And if I can present it clearly, then it's a presentation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness through the art of writing. They may call this a Pyrrhic victory and say that whatever I have gained I have lost the essence of straight Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But I disagree. If I can go deep and remain pure and simple, the mixture won't be vain aesthetics or literary vanity. I pray for Lord Kṛṣṇa's protection as I take some inevitable risks.

8:30 A.M.

Over the border, easy does it, wavy-haired young guy allows us into Italy. But his co-worker says, "Whoa!" as we start to pull away. He wants to look into the van. Then cruising in greenland, big ball of the sun up, countryside, deviated off *autostrade* before Denezia, then back on, M. driving hard to reach Como, Italy,

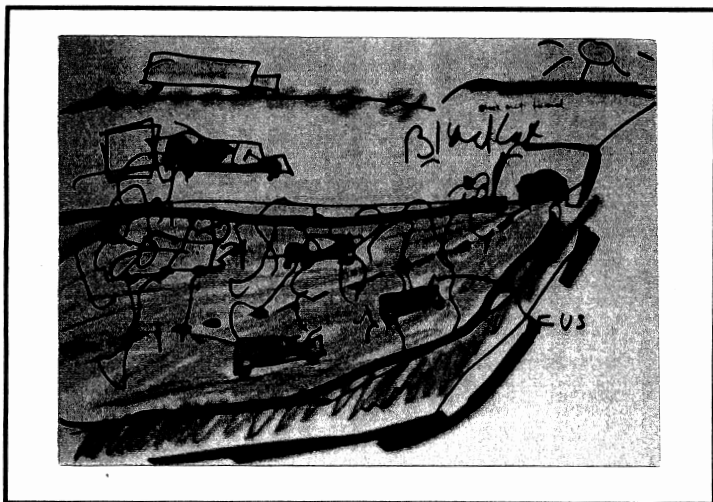
where we stop for the day. I try to sleep, and I think of time and when I can write. Look at the shelf of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and think, "What might I find fresh and interesting even when I don't have the best time and energy of the day?" I pick out a letters volume and open to 1968. Śrīla Prabhupāda is telling Subala in New Mexico that he'll send Umāpati down to join him. Maybe I can read these letters from time to time.

Oats, boats, coats
crap-a-doo, travel is too
excruciating to think
pink sweater packed away
until autumn in India
and . . .
check out a poet and write
your own, something new,
for a change
but stay on the track.

He don't accept me, he says, as absolute anymore. What does absolute mean? That whatever I said, he accepted as true. He could do that if he believed the *paramparā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous *ācāryas* and Vedic *śāstras* are absolute. But he doesn't believe that anymore. He says nondevotees may be more evolved than devotees. I agree not every Hare Kṛṣṇa member is so deeply committed to the truth, to love of God. But a deeply committed and realized devotee like Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Prabhupāda knows more than any highly evolved nondevotee. So you don't accept me as absolute anymore. You see me as just an ascetic. And I see you . . . and it hurt.

Autostrade

This book is not being written at a retreat. There should be some flavor of the road in it. Or I could imagine I'm at a writing retreat, that house in Puerto Rico and everyone leaves me alone. I write a story. You wouldn't know this was penned while moving 60 miles an hour in the back of the van.



You get interrupted. The van stops. What's up? Are we in a traffic jam? Do I have to do something?

Surface: Khaki shorts. *Sannyāsī* Godbrother wears shorts and shoes, goes jogging everyday, what's it to ya?

Once a minuscule fellow heard of artificial intelligence. He was riding in the back of the van and had lurched to a stop and he fell over. Then it pulled forward and he swayed in the opposite direction but kept on writing with a pen labeled "MAGROS d.o.o. OPATIJA."

Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement goes slow, repeats same mistakes of burning out the public with ruthless

tactics of book distribution. They see the cult as made of cheaters. One way to stop this is have seminars and train the leaders. Impress on them how costly it is. Better to be aware of quality, not just quantity. They may not agree. Push on book distribution. Another approach is to quietly visit temples, speak on what Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in the purports, read his books daily and write these books.

Earth-bound sinisters. I'm just a passenger in this van. They are filling us up with Agip diesel.

You bend over. You lie down. You stay away from. The temple life in Slovenia was a surprise in that senior devotees were visiting. I interacted okay. They will say to others, "He's in the same ballpark as we." And I saw that I'm doing what's regarded as simple *sannyāsi* duty and it's approvable, although not regarded as tremendous work to bring about change. Or some may say it is. According to his book of seven habits, we empower other people and forces to live our lives. We do what pleases them. This is not good. But neither should we go to the other extreme acting independent. He said there is a quadrant of behavior divided into urgent-important, urgent-not important, not urgent-not important, and not urgent-important. Mostly, he said, we act in crisis management and do urgent things but best is not urgent-important. I guess reading of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and my own writing is not urgent-important. So I'm okay?

I won't get the book to find out more.

Stop for half a moment and the guy behind you beeps his horn. Roll on, find a campground, shade tree, please, we've got money, give us shade. Under

that shade I'll read and write non-urgent-important. Yes, I too have to watch out I don't escape to non-urgent-non-important trivia.

Van careening. M. goes in shop in Como. Buys something and asks direction for a campground. I go on reading *The Best I Could Do* (March '95, Wicklow). I like it! I thought it failed but so far I like it. I'm on his side. Even if later in the book he writes less and says, "I'm petering out, this isn't working," I'll still be on his side. He's inspiring me to write this one.

Stopped again. He's in some quiet town, hot noon, at the tourist office? Where is a campground? I don't see anything, just the walls in back of van with pics of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, back windows covered. Sweat and careen and happy to discover today that you can write in a pad while moving. I thought it was impossible.

Get past that guy who writes.

But it takes so much

acceleration,

it will give me a headache, I fear.

Apply wet rag to head.

One for Madhu too.

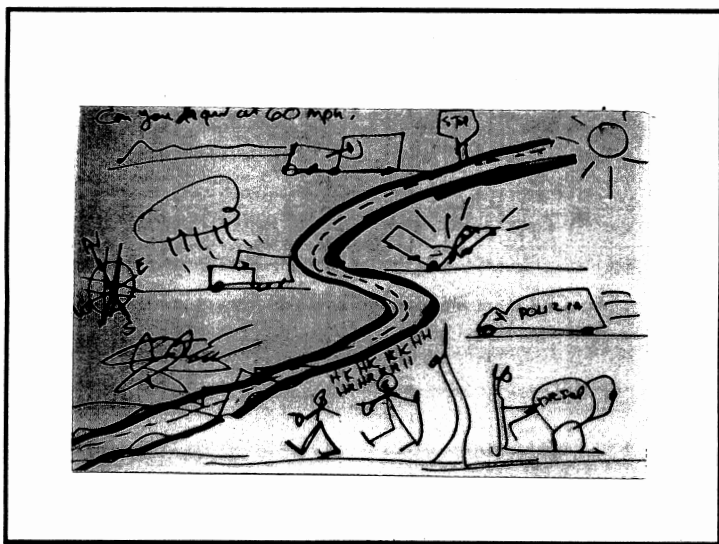
He's passionately

seeking the campground and I'm passionately seeking the cigar?

No, the emblem, bull's eye of modern prose.

What they don't know.

Do you like it?

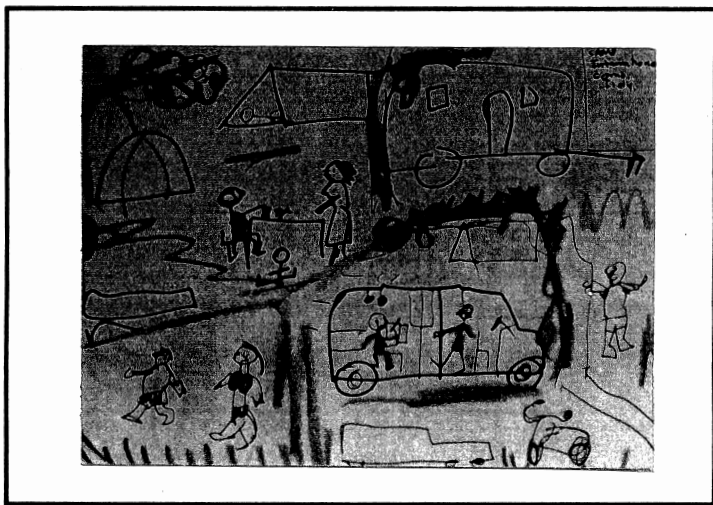


If someone were to ask me, "What are you looking forward to in your life?" I'd say, "To getting up at midnight after a nice rest and going to read *Bhagavad-gītā* an hour in quiet, with notes and then writing in that atmosphere. Feeling Kṛṣṇa, the instructor-guru, the divine friend, the all-in-all is with me. He's in the book directly and personally and He's in your heart in a friendly way. He never leaves you even though you forget Him. May He keep me aware of Him. Zaney, want to surrender and even before I do, to help others. That's what's nice about preaching. You can do it even before you are perfect."

We went around and around, got trapped to return to the *autostrade* before we found entrance to campground. The office just closed for Italian lunch hours, 12:30–3, but M. somehow roused up a white-haired woman to enter the office. I am watching this from the van. You have to pay for bringing your dog here. Tattered American flag. Passport. Shade? Now we drive in-

to the heart of the place, packed with campers, beware of loose, exposed young flesh. I look out just so I can decide it's better to stay in back of van, my cell, my reading booth.

Surrounded by radios and T.V.s, we turn on our motor fan and drown it out.



5:15 P.M.

Fan motor blots out the world. Small space we live in. If you had to stay here all the time in solitary confinement, you'd go bats. Imagine, writing, pushing the microtapes out of small opening in the door, receiving a plate of food through that opening, never going outside. You have all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and tapes here and you can chant on your beads and write. Maybe people write you letters and you reply. They even publish your books and the books you write start telling about the strange, limited existence in a space about 12 feet by 4 feet. Could you do it if you had to?

Śrīla Prabhupāda said he stays indoors and he's satisfied with that knowing that he could go out if he want-

ed. But if he had to stay indoors, he'd feel imprisoned. He gave this as an analogy but I forget it.

We pass over some things that occur to your mind. Teeth loose. Poor people who read you get weary of same old particulars. Tell them, "I'll be dead soon enough, folks. Then this show will be over. Sorry for the repeats."

So you can make up something but you prefer not to.

An elephant was churned and a horse and Dhanvantari and the goddess of fortune.

She split her sides laughing
the poet in the grave.

The soul goes up, up to next
body and concoctors can't know.

Matthew Fox says, "Here's a picture
of our liver. Now thank your
liver for the work it does.

Here's the pancreas . . . " Yeah,
where's God who makes
it all function, why not pray
direct to Supreme Person?
That's what I say.

Don't eat all afternoon, don't hear nondevotee music or read their books or go out and look around at their scene, have faith and keep on going.

This is the summer marathon. At the last place I went, I heard severe criticism of certain lying tactics used by book distributors. After all these years it's still a controversy. But next temple, Zurich, is world famous in ISKCON for top scores and book distribution. I'll go there and hear respectfully something of their spirit.

Or will I? I'll mostly stay to myself and prepare the lectures. Śrīla Prabhupāda doesn't directly talk much about book distribution or "*saṅkīrtana* stories," and my talks are review and enlargements of what he says in a particular purport. But if the *saṅkīrtana* men have something to say about book distribution's glories, I'll hear it and not bring up those criticisms I just heard.

This is the summer marathon. You keep going, approaching new sentences. Try to convey Kṛṣṇa consciousness from your heart and memory. I read how Lord Kṛṣṇa sat atop Garuḍa with Satyabhāmā beside Him and He killed all Narakāśura's soldiers with inconceivable display of military might.

This is the summer marathon. I avoid killing insects as much as possible but sometimes it happens and one appears in a bath tub and you don't take time to pick him out and he goes down the drain. You could have taken more care like the ex-hunter Mṛgrari who brushed ants out of the way so he wouldn't step on them. Don't burn your votive candle in a place where moths fly into it. They have a right to live. You are counting 21 days for this book and figure to write many more, but an insect may not live even 21 days. Yet you shouldn't cut his life any shorter.

Summer marathon, Madhu chanting his rounds at night, he drove seven hours this morning. I'm resting, I told you. I'm avoiding subjects that don't seem suitable.

What made you happy? That headache went down. The quick getaway from temple at end of *tulasī-ārati*. The fact we crossed the border early (it seems so long ago). The morning and the rest I was able to take on



my cot, fact I wrote some while van was speeding along, relieved (if not happy) that we reached our destination, a campground, and that we have all day tomorrow with no duties except my private reading, chanting, and writing. Happy to be a devotee and aloof from many contentious struggles and disagreements about this movement's slow progress and also aloof from sociopolitics of the material world. It's important to stay away from material influences or they leak into your writing, your life, and dreams.

Sarny mariti, summer morn, summery merry, thong of bath slipper. merry thong, merry song, summer mid-summer's night dream . . .

I'm aware it's 50th anniversary of World War II and 100th of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

You keep at it.

Right now reduce moment to what is here in present in this van space, fan motor above head, M. chanting *japa* next door, stay focused on a limited specter. Kṛṣṇa is here, this is your day what little is left of it. Select the

best. Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, the holy names said in chest in jest and even inattentively have great power. I want to be free of distractions to write a song of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, recalling good times I've spent as Swami's student and finding it right now.

Tomorrow may be a longer chapter reposed in Como. You can tell whatever comes, the blank noise, the blank wall, the Kṛṣṇa conscious version of Zazen, avoid all Christian centering when nothing comes and you go on writing. You beg, you say, but even that is just a word, a pen scratch, hoping to find a self that feels real, your pen scratch, a trace of love, time passing, couscous, I'll do a little exercise before anyone is out and then the rest of the day in here.

August 2

1:21 A.M.

You are serving Kṛṣṇa and the devotees by your services of hearing His words and trying to enter them with devotion. As you do it yourself, you tell others this is valuable. You are a lecturer, that's a *sannyāsi*'s duty; also a *sannyāsi* should write. Then what to write? In honesty, you are forced to speak of your experience of emphasis on chanting and hearing. Since I myself am not involved in rural development, in the training of ISKCON members in terms of community and temple organization, in public affairs, book distribution, etc., I can't speak of these in a way to advocate any point of view over another. I don't enter controversies or try to push causes. I try to push the cause of *bhakti* itself and the need to dedicate our lives and not fall prey to *māyā*. I realize the dimensions of social organization and public affairs are important in spiritual life, but it doesn't seem wrong to me that I, and at least some *sannyāsīs* and other devotees, do not concern ourselves much with that. We become fully absorbed in our own practices and thus become a resource for others, for busy householders struggling to make money and maintain family life, and to pro-active managers. We remind everyone to remember Kṛṣṇa by *śravaṇam-kīrtanam*. Thus we preach to the family of devotees.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa. In the van I have to whisper my first rounds so as not to wake up my companion. Bring those mantras somehow to the forefront of your

consciousness; dwell in them. Make this mental and prayerful effort.

Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa. What else happened in Los Angeles? I am curious to know the result of the GBC resolution worldwide. Did you hear about the health of a *sannyāsi* who went to the hospital? What about the one who went out of external circulation? What's the latest about this and that? I tell myself don't be so curious. Essential news of this world will eventually reach you, although not with the speed it goes to those who monitor COM and LINK. I try to tune in again and again to what Kṛṣṇa is doing in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. And now I propose to read Śrīla Prabhupāda's letters, starting from 1967 because I'm curious to savor his sweetness in personal dealings with disciples, his care for them, his teaching, and his pushing them to preach and expand ISKCON. Curious to read the eternal *śāstra* and the life and teachings of our found-*ācārya*.

Be a source person.

Linking process, devotional service.

You are a be-bopper, a kind soul, one who gets awake early, you could sleep more, I know.

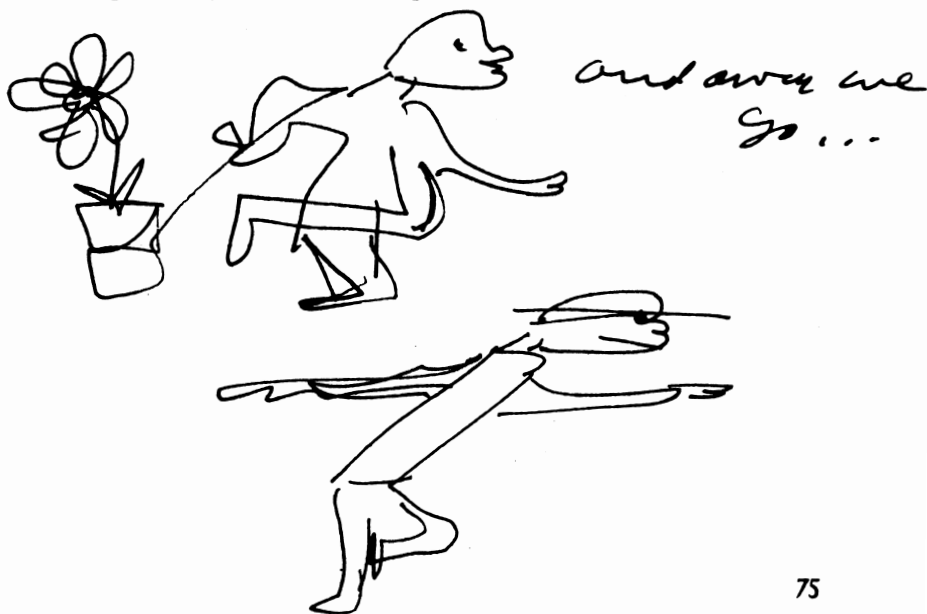
Svevo entered the deep precincts. He created indigo coloring works. He drew lines and circles and then saw in them possible pictures he could develop. Usually he settled for some simple, cartoony human or animal figures. Brought them into shape. Sat back and watched it, firmed it, and colored it.

Inner life, inner vision cannot be so easily depicted.

I dreamt one after another of prize fight matches. We saw each contestant and their particular appeal. Some of them seemed not so strong or young or likely to win. But someone always won. Why should I dream

of persons who never existed, whom I never met, these prize fighters and their fans and the contests, dreaming it seemed a long series of these fights and the opinions and interests of the spectators of the gladiators? What does it signify to me? That I too am one of the fighters, am old, an unlikely one, build as part of a night's entertainment as I square off to battle someone? As I travel and encounter ISKCON situations, temples and persons, is it like that, a series of boxing matches? Do I want this sporting life? How long can an old fellow keep it up in the life of a boxing ring?

Devotion to Kṛṣṇa, as He teaches in Ninth Chapter, especially verses 29–34. I can't bring it out in classes when I lecture. Something escapes me as I read or lecture, I'm aware of that. The love, the *bhakti*, which Kṛṣṇa says is the main ingredient in every offering—do I know it? This is a typical question I ask myself. I ask it sincerely and sometimes rhetorically for all of us. I say this we must do, act with devotion, and now scrutinize whether we do this or perform devotional activities thoughtlessly or with wrong motives.



We serve the Lord almighty. Then we rest after energy is expended. But Kṛṣṇa Himself doesn't expend or need to replenish Himself.

Campground finally quiet. Several times I hear different burglar systems go off, then they quieted. People living very closely to one another, tent by tent, camper by camper. Breathing in the night air of summer. Then get up and putter around, try to control your kids. Then we move on . . .

Kṛṣṇa vision, Bhaktivedanta Manor and villa and *deśa* and cultural hall and library and T-shirt. T-shirts in Slovenia worn by young boys. One shows the arching capitol M of McDonald's hamburger stores and then the word "Murder." You get an odd impression seeing so many young men with the word "murder" boldly on their shirts. And another, "Have mercy on the animals," and on the back a photo of a boy embracing a calf and the words, "Don't eat my friend." T-shirt culture. Girls with young, firm breasts. Boys with their hands in their pockets. *Sannyāsī* with a big belly. One with secret practices, all with secret practices of the cajoling, chortling, and fearful mind. Behavior symptoms, patterns, and talk and finally you run out of time.

Trees, words, a speck of paint on this desk. Ink smears when the side of your hand passes over it too soon after writing.

Transcribe the poet's experience. Straight back, sore buttocks, quotas, compilations, reviews, avoid the big guys. Beat-thump, thump-thump, the rhythmic heart. Better not bring into your mind anything that will avert you from Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Then memorize again some verses. You don't give your digester any rest. The little heart muscle, like a generator engine,

has to pump and never miss or stop—if it does, then you die. Your whole show-effort is over and what really matters then? It's what you've done. Devotional service is never lost. It's added up and likely not 100% this lifetime. If you don't have full faith and devotion in Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual world, how can you expect to go there?

You see your own lack and falling short. The method to improve is more applied *sādhana*. But Kṛṣṇa's mercy is the main ingredient. Can you act to attract that sooner?

10:30 A.M.

Day by day, you portion out your own existence, with pitifully small awareness. The goal you say you want, love of Kṛṣṇa, in such a degree that it will carry you at once back to Godhead, seems far off. You seem to have to settle for something less. I'm not even broken-hearted by that. You want peace of mind and positive attitude—and Śrīla Prabhupāda seems to teach that optimism—and so you don't weep or bemoan. You don't care so much, it seems. You mostly care to keep up at least the little devotion you do have, attachment and obedience to *vaidhī* rules. For example, I just read the Tenth Canto chapter, "Kṛṣṇa Teases Rukmiṇī." It is sublime. I read it as a faithful follower. I did that. But . . . just one chapter. Nor do the implications for my own life strike me with force, such as why don't I have intense devotion for the Lord as does Śrīmatī Rukmiṇī? Why don't I at least love more to hear this pastime or any pastime? Why doesn't move me more and satisfy me more?

Same is true of *japa*, you count your quota and that's it. This writing seems to be a place where I can cut more into the issues, the flame, the edge. You ram-

ble and repeat, you fall short with a gasp like a cricket jumping or like a turtle slowly crawling . . . The effort is expended here.

Write, write the purpose
is told
he wants to be bold
but cannot because he truly
hasn't got what it takes,
never did,
and so should admit it at least.

But how different we are from the campers in this campground. At least our concern is *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, or our lack of it. Allude to it in private writing or mention it in a passing way in a temple lecture, without sounding a heavy, depressive note. Alas, we are far away from the goal, or at least I am. And have no great wish to rouse myself.

Want gentle treatment; not willing to strain. I may be picking up some of this from looking at K and K.

They condemn the mediocre, compromising practice of their religion. What they say sounds harsh to me, selling short the importance of the Vaiṣṇava's mercy and the power of performing simple service in a happy mood. There's even a hint of doubt in their negativity, as to why a devotee can't make the supreme effort to achieve surrender and give up all other pursuits except loving service to God. They are not clear in their relationship with God or they are speculative, breaking new ground. We don't break new ground; we say it's all been charted by the munificent, expert previous *ācāryas*, especially those in *Caitanya-sampradāya*. Yes, we may be sunk in complacency and that's not good. But . . . don't dwell in it. Sing and chant *japa* and serve . . .

Grr, brr, be pardoned awhile. Tune into the words willing to come, more than your intellect or philosophy. Dance . . . I hear the French speaking out back of this van, young and old bodies. One in the distance, is it the chest of a man or a woman, person lying on back sunbathing? Do we have to leave here tonight because they don't allow you out of the camp before 7:30 A.M.?

Please, my heart flutters as in a jazz tune or bath tub, Carroll's nonsense, moment of no-meaning into Zen haiku, bird on branch—I do see relief too in similar way, call it breakthrough in writing. Remember you'd take a word and see what it set off in you?

Parson. You can cluster with it. Parson leads to pardon, to parsimonious, to persimmon. Persons and prisms.

In person we saw the Rheingold girl. The poll as to who was the Rheingold girl each year. Memory trip. What is true and good? Let it go and pick up new thread.

Parson Jones, a country preacher marries you in the song "Winter Wonderland." Parson—pardon me and pardon my persliffage, small talk.

Leave trails and explosions like that. A little morning exercise. Keeping private, we will travel as if with some powder like gold or magic dust kept in a box. We open it occasionally, not like sniffing a drug or calling on hallucination. Then? A mystic doctrine? A personal secret? A hope springing from the unconscious which you cannot even express?

Something . . . drive and park in gas station parking lots. Supply of new and used ear plugs. So many things we use in our control, plug into, eat, "heart of the palm tree" and couscous.

Heart of the palm. Self, tongue, eating, scheduled routine. I don't want to rip up anything, just tell my moral tales and

skip

skip to M'lou.

It should more interesting, a road book and maybe less calm and with less continued train of thought. More outward adventure you will get. Maybe less daring at heart of honest. I'll have to camouflage so I don't express an offensive feeling to a brother I may meet or in a temple. But don't be too much like that, please.

Grr, brr. He roots out. He used a bathroom on a ferry and will do it again. Restrain and control and go on planning and gobbling up the days and months and then you and all your brothers will leave your bodies. Your spiritual master did it and you will too, simple as that.

We are impersonal and unfeeling in ISKCON, he said. Yes, yes, I replied politely. We say this so often it's a cliché. I don't even desire more loving friendship with them because how do you do it, in a mundane way based on what Scott Peck or Mr. Covey says?

Can't give me love,

etc.

they sang.

Love, love. I would like love of God, it seems. But can't pay the price. That significant verse—buy love of God in the market right away but the price is *laulyam*, not attainable for many lives. That says it.

Here at least you pick-axe at it. Your feeble shovel digs at it. I don't want love as they're talking of it. I want not self-love, however, in false ego sense.

Thought (still do)
that love would come down
like *śuddha-sattva*
while I chant and read
catching me unaware and
in meantime one is so busy
fending, keeping the bee
outside the van,
putting in ear plugs, waiting
for another meal and ability
to pass stool, to travel to
France and Ireland—it takes
all your attention sometimes and
you don't concern yourself
with love of God.

The best I could do. The work I could do. At my architect's planning desk and lamp, a feeble stroke here and there is not the master plan for the Māyāpur temple and city or raising the money for it. Who has that conviction?

Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa he.

verse II in Kings 3:15:

As the minstrel played, the spirit of God came upon him, "was rendered in this way by the Great Maggid:
When the minstrel was like the instrument—free of self-consciousness—the spirit of God came upon him. Only when, like the instrument, the minstrel is neither self-seeking nor self-conscious, can the spirit of God come upon him.

—*A Passion for Truth*, p. 136

12 noon

I just listened to "The Clown," Jean Shepherd telling his story with Charlie Mingus band playing as back-

ground. I had the tape with me and was putting off playing it, thinking that it was *māyā*. So I finally heard it in a hiding way, listening on the earphones. It had a positive, moving effect on me. I had a pretty good memory of the whole thing, but the rehearing surprised me. Shepherd wasn't blatant, he was under-spoken almost. He had a sad story to tell, one with a negative view of humankind. One thing that caught my attention was that I had a better understanding of jazz in connection with the sad story that Shepherd was telling. That is, jazz musicians play blues—that means they have immersed themselves in the sadness and hard times of life, which they almost claim as their birthright as black people being mistreated in the white world, as well as the fact that we all get hard knocks who live in this material world—and they turn this blues reality into a upbeat music. The music is entirely made up of the bad news of life and yet it somehow shines happily, is peppy, upbeat, and *sings*. It sings the sad life in a way that makes us feel some kind of relief. That's the purpose of art. So the music was like the art of blues, and the Shepherd story was a mark of philosophical commentary on the nature of man. Of course, it was his own story because he is a comic as well as a social commentator. As he says about the clown, "All he wanted out of life was to make people laugh." And so the clown learned that people laugh to see your pain and your misfortune. That's very funny to them. One who learns this learns a kind of ultimate message, "He really knew now, he really knew."

What has this got to do with Kṛṣṇa consciousness? Perhaps nothing directly. But the reason why I wanted to hear it again was to see if I could get some hints for my radio shows type of talking. Also I think I gained something by this understanding of blues. Because, as

strange as it sounds, there's a kind of ISKCON blues or blues for the Kṛṣṇa conscious *sādhaka*. I remember Hayagrīva writing a poem something about *brahmacārī* blues. We try to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, we try to become perfect, but we fail. We remain earthbound, we still have our material desires after so many years of trying. And the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement seems to be going backwards sometimes, keeps repeating mistakes, and people leave it saying there's no love here, and so on. So there's plenty of falling short and unhappiness and we have to admit a kind of dose of negativity even in our perfect philosophy. The philosophy is perfect, but we remain imperfect. When Śubhānanda dāsa (Steve Goldberg) left ISKCON, he gave a parting kick with an essay he wrote, "The Fading of Utopia." So maybe it's true that a utopia has to fade, the misconception of how easily we would attain the perfect society in ISKCON, but we can know make blues music, real expression of our heart-felt attempt and determination to continue practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, despite all the discrepancies. I would like to be able to express that cry more earnestly and maybe more frequently. But does it include admitting *māyā* into your life? That I would not want to do. Listening to "The Clown" is a rare exception in my daily practices. I want to hear explicit Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Prabhupāda's books and teachings. But I want to be able to tell of ours struggles in a way that won't be just some more ISKCON debate and *īṣṭha-goṣṭhī*, but something like that music, alto sax, laughing and crying trombone, steady beat.

3 P.M.

Whirr, whirr, mechanical sound of twin fans drowns out chatter and song and radio of surrounding camp-

ers. Don't know if we'll stay here for the night or have to quickly pick up and cross over border into Alps. If you do, don't forget . . . you can write while you travel.

Swamiji was hopeful about his San Francisco center. Wrote back to us in New York that if we are feeling his absence, we should know the sound vibration of *vanī* is the real presence of the spiritual master. But you can place his picture in his sitting places and that will give you inspiration.

When I gave up my self
I mean false self
I unclenched my fist and
thought of Kṛṣṇa's mission and
the Swami's desires for me and
didn't figure myself as the center
of existence.

When did that happen?
When I no longer considered this
body as my being.
When was that?
When I breathed and thought,
“It’s like a horse or dog
breathing.” When I read and
was absorbed in the
commentary and worked in
the mission. When I went
on chanting after sixteen.

Sigh. Killarney. Foot dust of Vaiṣṇavas. *Kavitra* of saffron color worn around Lord Nṛsiṃha’s neck. Foot dust of Govardhana Hill and Ekacakra. You will go there again? Many effort produces a flutter to your head. I told you that could be a trigger to remember Kṛṣṇa and His instruction that the body is miserable and we should not have come here. Hare Kṛṣṇa, I know it isn’t easy. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a solace. Hear and be relieved. But you can’t expect smooth sailing. Remember, Śrīla Prabhupāda told you that in the beach hotel room in Jagannātha Puri. He said Kṛṣṇa didn’t give Arjuna a magic ash (as some so-called incarnations give their followers). He did not say, “Arjuna, just sprinkle this ash and everything will be all right,” or, “You lie down and sleep on the chariot or smoke *gañja* and I’ll deal with the enemy.” Arjuna had to fight as Lord Kṛṣṇa ordered him, but the Lord guaranteed that Arjuna would be victorious. So you may think like this when head twinge comes. We won’t unnecessarily provoke it. Stay calm. Try to move to places to lecture and rise early to read and write, although it’s a strain. Then if the pain comes, as it seems to do of its own will, you can be thankful it’s not worse and somehow think

of God, Kṛṣṇa, in prayer, slow mantras, Hare Kṛṣṇa, appropriate feelings and thoughts.

Little spurts one after another not connected; in this way we bridge the marathon. Four days gone already. Each day I can't seem to write as much as if I were in a retreat house with several one-hour sessions. Besides, even if I had the time, do I have the long-range stamina? You mentioned if the minstrel forgets his self-conscious self, then God appears in his song. Whaddya mean?

You may apply it to free-writing. But the self as servant always remains and through him God plays. He becomes the instrument, like strings the Lord strums, as He did when Rāmānanda Raya spoke to Lord Caitanya.

The way he lets go.

Noting a stiff neck but words come despite it. The van door sounds. You look up. Write despite it. Put periods at the end of sentences. Kṛṣṇa, recently recalled. Aside from what I read today, there is the backlog of consistent acts and life molded so you can always serve the Lord. Plug in. If you don't feel always so enthused and aware, "I'm a servant of the servant, doing his duty and inspired"—as you were through and through while lecturing last Sunday—still, you are in the right place, refraining from sins and doing what should be done.

I noted that when you were with a respectable brother,

you are skinnier than him,

you bite your fingernails,

you can't keep your schedule as they seem to be on a looser schedule, in other words, by comparison you feel you are doing all right in your own life. It's not

that I am off and they are on. Or that I am on and they are off.

That Svevo fellow, I thought he was supposed to help carry the burden of the marathon and also you've dropped Joanna Field's idea of telling what made you happy each day.

Yeah, I don't know.

Svevo hit a pillar. He was in one small car and tried to merge with traffic just outside Ljubljana, Slovenia, and there was a crack-up. Back of one car crumpled up, the other car's glass was all smashed. And that car was disabled in the middle of the highway causing traffic jam. Svevo not hurt, no one else in need of ambulance. They all sat down and waited. Cops arrived and used their walkie-talkies. Svevo said this is my turn. It's like a numbers game. Everyone gets a turn in a car accident or delay on highway. It's your turn when your plans are stopped and you have to wait. You can be grateful it wasn't worse.

Well, that was a nice tale of the highway. Please feel free to tell us more of Svevo.

As for Joanna Field, I threw out her book. I already know the idea. Happiness—like listening to "The Clown" and getting insight about blues. Or do I just think, "This will pass as an item of happiness"? It's just a little perk of interest. Happiness, I'd have to think deeply and carefully as to what would quality. But Ms. Field's point was that you can in privacy admit what was happy even if it's a silly thing, or sounds so to others. Just note it in a scientific way as an observer.

Still, it's not so easy.

You call that happiness that may be mistaken later and which goes away? The man in hospital is visited and he says, "I'm all right," but what is that all right?

The lunch made you happy, you say. The hot *kicchari*, the raisins in the *kicchari*, the texture of the bread. Too much exploring and you won't be able to even say what made you happy.

As for Heschel, I gave you some quotes, although I see their mood is different than ours. Fact is I'm being moved along by time and take the opportunity to write anything I can. Therefore, outer moments seem important. If I could become the minstrel one with song and lose other concern—such as trying to perform in a book, as a writer—I'd do it.

5:45 P.M.

They decided to let us out by 6:30 tomorrow morning so we'll stay here overnight. Busty woman in green bathing suit peering into our van. Shut the inner door, put patches over front window as well as rear. Talked with M. about hurts I received in Italy and our plans to return next year. Complicated ISKCON with its different subcultures and points of view. I walk into situations and speak what I do and sometimes am unaware what they are thinking. We are aware that Zurich ISKCON is a stronghold of book distribution. So we will be respectful to that. But I won't strain to say something out of character for me. Look at the verse and purport and say what you remember, what you've learned.

Sweat, eye twinge . . . you can't finish this day in a blaze of writing. The marathon book won't be so huge, a fairly slim chapter each day, all I can crank out. Avoid too much outside influence. Tell us instead how many sons Lord Kṛṣṇa begot to His queens. (161,080)

August 3

1:15 A.M.

There was a "ladybug" on the page of *Bhagavad-gītā* I was reading. Remember the song we would sing when we saw one?

Ladybug, ladybug
fly away
your house is on fire and
your children—
your children are doing something
that rhymes with "away."

And then you blow gently on the orange, spotted body of the ladybug and she will fly away.

Wrote a note to M. that if I talk of my timed book in progress, he should respond with something nourishing to the creative process. I hinted last night to him that I like reading my book, *The Best I Could Do*, as it is helping me through the marathon, and I expressed appreciation for the fact that Cddd can type such confidential work without being adversely influenced. (I said I believe that these writings are basically healthy for spiritual life and that the outer covering of sometimes raunchy or doubtful references to past or present conditioned life, are not harmful provided one reads it in the right spirit—it's part of the purifying process.) He replied in a sober way saying 1) not everything I write should *ever* be published; these books are for my own reading, and 2) Cddd might be adversely influenced by what she types and so I should look after her and inquire how she's doing. These were good advices but

not accompanied with any encouragement for the creative process. That's okay, you should expect that. Go back at it by deeper conviction that it's right.

Read *api cet su-durācāro*. The devotee's faults are like the marks of a rabbit one sees in the moon. Glad I got up early. The densely populated campground is mostly silent now, campers breathing in and out in tents and caravans, the pen scratches away, ladybug help me through, the light of good desk lamp is like a transparent yellow liquid that flows down onto the page, welcome, and the ink meets it in a dance and rapture.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not a tag you add on. It's not a label on a shirt or sweater, "made in a union shop." It's the warp and woof of the threads themselves. It either is or isn't Kṛṣṇa conscious. Of course, by deliberate action you put Kṛṣṇa in your sentences. But He is already everywhere. I bow to Him and beg Him to inspire me. He said to Arjuna, "You should engage in My devotional service." He said it to Arjuna and everyone. "Therefore having come to this temporary and miserable world, engage in loving service to Me." We have come here wrongly, most foolishly. Now we should know it's "not habitable for any sane gentleman." Get out as quickly as possible. "Take to My devotional service and come quickly back to Godhead, back home."

Why should my writing not have Kṛṣṇa consciousness at every step? Why should there be any question of someone being adversely affected by the writing of a Vaiṣṇava? Because I admit to being sullied by the material modes. Śrīmatī Rukmiṇī said the modes of nature are the real rulers of this material world and the powerful enemies. But Śrī Kṛṣṇa has defeated them and His pure devotees also cross over the miserable ocean of birth and death which is ruled by the *guṇas*. Let's recall Kṛṣṇa, let's chant His holy names without stoppage.

Bhagavad-gītā 9.30 admits the power of the material energy. A sincere devotee may accidentally fall down. Don't find fault with him. And 9.31 states that we have come here to this dangerous place. My writing tells, unearths the worms of my past and tells us of the worms' present proximity. I keep away from the dangers of illicit sex which I may compare to poisonous snakes slithering outside of our van in this campsite. But I may mention it; I may say it's here just so that we can avoid it. (Some will object that I put down the material world; that's another kind of criticism of devotional writing.)

I name the spade. Don't be adversely affected. Dear reader, if there is one aside from myself, if you are quick to take objection, perhaps you better not read me. Kierkegaard dedicated many of his books to "that *individual* whom with joy and gratitude I call *my* reader." I am the first reader; the one who draws the direct benefit. See oneself in that way. And don't think so much about the rest.

Joy of creativity.

Responsibility of it.

Hey, you can't just write whatever comes to mind and expect a tender disciple to hear all this stuff about the Navy and your past sins and the dangers in the mind even today.

Why not?

Why not? Because that's how it is. A guru has responsibility or you should not have taken that post. You could have remained a writer only.

Fair enough. I don't publish everything I say, but I have to say it and need to risk that someone can type it and be aware of what it is and not get confused. I can't be only an official and perfect and always careful guru of others' souls. I too have to cry out. It's even part of

the guru's duty to look within himself and tell the truth—if only to himself. He needs to undeceive himself regularly. I do it in writing. I call it blessed writing. Blessed with the name of Kṛṣṇa and the power phrases of quotes from *sāstra* and with preaching—and also blessed with the attempt to throw off the clinging and dangerous modes.

I did not—do not—seek any trouble or illicit thoughts in this campground. But a woman looked in at us. I cannot find a place in the world where there are no impure women. Or where the mind does not look for enjoyment outside of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The world is full of danger. But I can be a healthy organism that knows how to throw off evil influences and spells of demons. I laugh at them. I call them by their names and diminish their power over me. Sometimes I curse them in their own language, you frigging insult, you turpid worm, I remember you. You'll not get a hold of me this time. I kick on his head, the serpent.

Got a good morning schedule, to leave at six, head for a temple in a new country. I was there in 1974 with my Gurudeva. We flew over the Alps from Rome. He turned to me, we sat side by side in the airplane. Yet I wanted to leave that service and go preach on his behalf in America. O America, I don't much hanker for you now as a preaching field. I seek more isolation and find it in Europe wanderings. But I do want to be close to my own spiritual master (in his books especially) and be part of his movement. So it's crucial today to enter the temple life and be welcomed and to speak to devotees. I've got my eye on a Sunday lecture about "dove-tailing yourself with the supreme consciousness," tell them the historical setting of Śrīla Prabhupāda preaching like that to hip musicians in the Bowery loft—and

then relate it to today, to all of us. Do whatever you do but do it for Kṛṣṇa; it's easy. And start by hearing from him, even if you don't change anything else in your life. Everything will be adjusted (you'll give up sinful habits and become a devotee) just by hearing *kṛṣṇa-kathā* from Swamiji. He has come to the West for this purpose. Let's take advantage, become his disciple. Write your best for him. And don't just label your writings, "Another offering to His Divine Grace," but make them through and through attempts to serve him.

See that moon, that book by SDG?

I see spots on it, like a rabbit.

Yeah, but see the glow? The sincere art? The total—oh well, not total, but the attempt to report the struggle and joy of release from sin by the process of devotional service?

Yes, I see it. But he sure talks a lot about himself and brings in these mundane authors and stuff. Where is he at in ISKCON? Is he approved?

Yes, gentle reader. I approve it. I am writing it for myself, for myself and a ladybug. Or I may say to you as I gently puff my breath at you, "Go away, you are not my reader, spread your wings and fly off because I heard your house is on fire and your children want to play. Better you go and check them out."

Life going by, it's right to notice it. All folks will be washed away, like dirt or food remnants on a greasy plate. Gone in a flash, one by one. You don't believe it and that is the most amazing thing. Churn out your books. Go join your spiritual master. "Among the dead," we say, join the ranks of the immortals. Kick the bucket, curtains, die, die, kaput. But the fact is . . .

What?

Gītā says . . .

And you believe?

Yes, I try to.

As an article of faith?

Oh bug off, doubter. I'll keep this book *Bhagavad-gītā* to my chest and worship and hope some devotees may help me to remember it and to chant. Chanting without stoppage is very good for the soul.

In days of old we used to write nine pages in a hour. You can do it still. Oh, but me rear end hurts from sitting so long. No, you can get relief, stand if you like but just a little longer, stay with us.

Freer:

Discharge bullets. I will not partake in devil's temptation. Won't even mention it here. Won't give him the privilege of space in my book. Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa says it's to "Me," Himself, we should surrender and He will protect us. Even if one commits an abominable from the past, in this war against *māyā*, Kṛṣṇa will excuse and rectify. Don't deride the devotees.

Yes, you may return to Italy next year. Yes, you may be allowed to travel and use your free will. The God-brothers who are leaders are trying. Some say they are not well trained and that's why our movement flounders. We are not organized according to sound business principles and psychological principles.

I emphasis chanting. Is that hypocritical? No man, it ain't.

I heard you listened to a jazz tape yesterday.

That's none of your business. This is a private book, unauthorized persons not allowed to enter. Only lovers of me, kindered souls with intelligence.

I heard

You heard

A cough from the campers. I don't know or think even what they are doing in their tents. Visions of sugarplums danced in their heads. We will start our drill sergeant's chanting now. Secret sharer, be with me. See you at the dance next Friday in lone sanctity of your van's rear section. Do write here, write as best you can.

Fritter away. The remaining days. He writes what he reads. He bows down and if he don't love some of the more troublesome and cantankerous and materialistic or pushy ISKCON devotees, at least he tries not to criticize them.

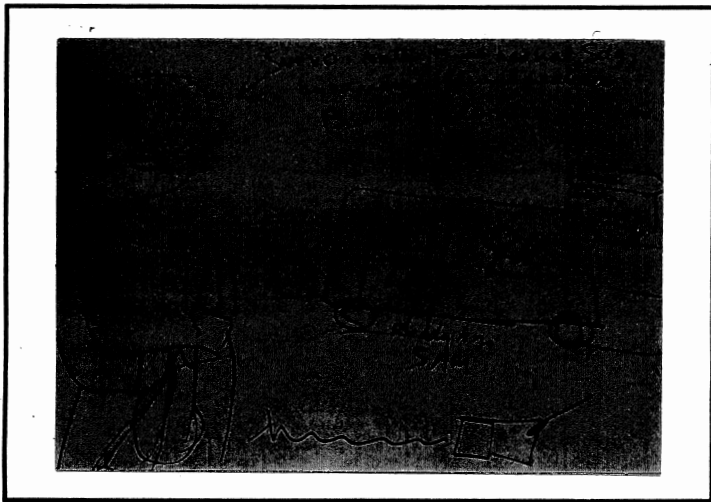
Svevo wrote khaki shorts in the campground. He is not me. He is (can be) a scapegoat. He can be a Scottish province. He can go get a job with Bhakta Bob. Publish 20 books. Glances of Lord Kṛṣṇa may fall on us all, please worship Him, the real hero of books and spiritual space

not your fictive hero
unless you're going to construct
some tale to convince us of
the efficacy
of devotional service.

If you're going to write what comes, better warn your readers that's what it is and try not to claim it's perfect.

A good wish for health
and cooperation. May we reach
Zurich ISKCON
show sincerity to their
devotees and Deities and their
GBC direction
and our master Śrīla Prabhupāda

who rules them and my heart.
(ten pages in an Ecology pad in an hour, like the
good old days)



Smooth border crossing, immigration guys wore no uniforms, unshaven, spoke in Italian to Madhu. Agents in the other lines wore uniforms and pistols in holsters. I sat chanting, enjoying the 6 A.M. atmosphere and high hills and harbor, trees, I saw high corn growing.

That's the outward. Inward, a contented cat, he looks at the tourists, thinks what is it to be a devotee, could you attain love of Kṛṣṇa? Could you even think of that? By chanting.

Ask now—what would it take for me? I seem unable to do much. Kierkegaard wanted Christians to admit their failure. That was the first big step but they couldn't take it; too complacent, wanted a religion to lull them in this unhappy world.

But I cannot do much more. And what austerities would I do, eat less? *Japa* increase? Dive into ISKCON front ranks? None of that? Write better?

Rest here, dreams of Italy you have left. Dreamt some Italian devotee-friend took us up above land and we saw different portions demarcated and statues in honor of not so great persons . . . If I could discern the truth amidst all the deception and follow that truth, I'd be a devotee according to the liking of the Lord. I know that in theory, but it seems so hard. We act for our pleasure. And in ISKCON, including its outer reaches and its critics, everyone discusses issues which mostly divert you from the real issue—your own individual surrender and how to please Kṛṣṇa. Or is it something easy to understand yet difficult to do? Something like, "Live in a temple and push on this movement and chant your rounds and go to Māyāpur"?

8:40 A.M.

Now move on to Zurich. The last thing I wrote here was rhetorically asking myself could I become a pure devotee? Could I concentrate on that, make that at least a main topic of this marathon?

How? By keeping asking yourself, "How can I do it? Could I do it if I knew how?" And influenced by K. and K., you ask, "Does it mean separating what others think from what I am alone?"

Every individual has a unique vocation and task to perform. He must be his own master, not rely on other people's wisdom. Even when the Messiah and all man, are redeemed, the Lord will still review each individual to ascertain whether he deserves to be redeemed on his own merit.

— *A Passion for Truth*, p. 144

What if Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa want me to try real hard and to preach to others, saying we should all be pure devotees, look what it says in scripture? First preach it to yourself. Gain taste for reading

excellently three hours a day which he said you could do. Transform your own book.

Slow marathon winner.

I'm free to think of this while Madhu, in sunglasses, sits up front studying the veins and arteries of the Europe road map, to get us where we're going. Back seat driver to heaven.

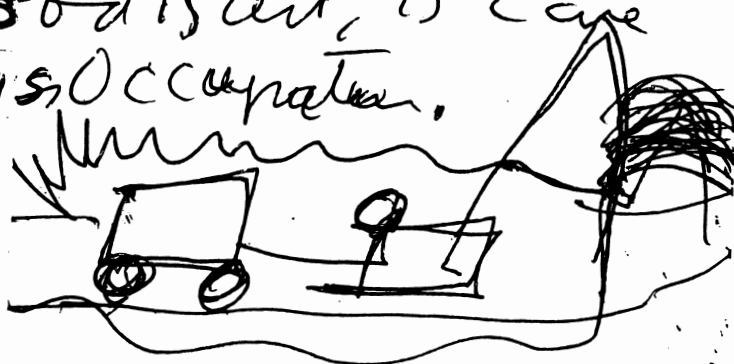
I know it's no joke, Lord. But I'm a sad joke. This question, "How can I be more serious in this last part of my life and make some tangible progress towards surrender to His will?"—is not an insignificant thing. But I tend to raise big questions, or hanker awhile for bigger gains and then go back down to routine. Start a going back to Godhead notebook?

Make some post-midyear resolutions. Pray now Hare Kṛṣṇa mantras this last stretch to Zurich. Kṛṣṇa never takes an insincere act as useless. He will listen to you. But you've got to show you're willingness to change and sacrifice. Śrīla Prabhupāda says the process has been made as easy as possible by Lord Caitanya. But you have to take it up seriously.

They say Switzerland is a beautiful country. I'm sealed up in the back of the van as we speed along. Often we go into blackness of a tunnel. I think maybe it's very beautiful out there, going through alpine mountains. But there's too much sunshine in the front seat. So I prefer to sit in the back and look at the spines of Śrīla Prabhupāda *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatams* and letters from Śrīla Prabhupāda and the holy pictures and water bottles and think, "Wouldn't it be nice?"



Here we come into
 city wood-carve this
~~Back~~ Like Krishna
 prints to remind folks
 God is art, is love
 is occupation.



and what about
pains? Cruelty of
man to man? It's
caused by our mistakes.
Can't write well in
bumpy Van.
Cient HK



3:45 P.M.

We arrived at the temple building around noon. It is very elegant. I felt a little like a gypsy foraging around in the resident GBC-guru's room looking at the books and photo albums, etc. There was one letter from a devotee who has left ISKCON and sends out his booklets on practical ways to improve material society and ISKCON too. I've seen his pamphlets before, lots of material research how to improve democracy by stopping cheating. He mentions in his letter that in ISKCON, the *brāhmaṇas* try to control everything while they themselves live like demigods. People should have financial incentives and not be expected to do service for free while leaders live on a very high material standard and don't disclose their own bank accounts. He also says people need to see more practical results, not just philosophy and building temples. Hard hitting stuff, but I couldn't read through his plans for revived democracy, American dream. As he himself writes in his letter, "I chant my rounds almost everyday. Otherwise I get mentally sick. I really can't take the material world. I study it too much and I'm getting to be known as a very intelligent politician."

I leave it but take warning not to live high on the hog and ask others to sacrifice. Be truthful about money, about everything. As for being impractical-practical, it's not wrong for someone in society, namely *sādhus*, to go around speaking philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It's what I do. And someone writes books so we can have culture in our American dream practical society and not get mentally sick.

So we are like two poor children in this suite of rooms, trying not to stain the spotless rugs or think bad thoughts—who knows, maybe thoughts are monitored.

Don't use the piano or the exercise bike, don't break the shower, and don't be so nosy in the desk drawers or at least don't be a fault-finder.

I've asked M. to bring the typewriter up there. Maybe I can bang away at it and reach some freedom. My Prabhupāda *mūrti* is here, bathed, and he ate and rested. I'm preparing for tomorrow morning's class about prayers to the Supreme Lord.

5 P.M.

I am sitting in Harikeśa Swami's chair, and a very handsome and good back-fitting chair it is. But that does not make me a hardworking, multifaceted leader. I am still the toad, the handsome prince, the worry wart. You want to say something that will come out on the typewriter. You think they may hear you or see you through a crack in the door and think, "He is a writer, he is writing something in Kṛṣṇa consciousness." They don't know.

Listen, the cars are going by in Zurich. It is another day in our life. I complain that I will have to stay up late for me, two nights in a row, to give the *Gītā* class here. You know what it means. It means I won't be able to follow my schedule where I rise at midnight. Unless you are willing to get up after only three hours rest. I could try that. Anything, just to follow my schedule. You will get up and read the *Bhagavad-gītā* on your own in an unmotivated way, or maybe I'll have to use the time to prepare for the next *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class. Adjust to it, man. It's only for three days. It's your *dharma* to do this. It's your *tapasya* in a summer marathon. The book distributors here in Switzerland, led by the legendary Harināmānanda, have been out all week as usual and will come back for the weekend. Why don't you think of their austerities and do a little of your own? Yeah,

but my schedule is also my austerity. What if you told those book distributors that instead of their regular schedule for distributing books, they have to follow another schedule? You see my point.

Yeah, but still you have to do it.

Tell us more how you are set up here. They have a little balcony-porch with a chair and an umbrella over it. I sat there for lunch but it felt too hot. They said, "When you eat, you should go into another room which is the dining room." But I didn't want that because I'm not after luxury but privacy. To go into the dining room, you have to go first into a big hall. So we said that I will take on the floor, Indian style. But that may not be orthodox. I did get a little spot of *dāl* on the floor—but don't worry! I wiped it up. Okay.

Then I was looking in another closet and found a big collection of *Back to Godheads* over the years. You can easily lose an hour in that. I saw the years of the 11 gurus, His Divine Grace Jaya-tīrtha Goswami, His Divine Grace Bhavānanda Goswami, smiling and every face in the room where he was initiating was smiling back at him. That's a trip to read through that, leaves me dazed. You think, "Did we really go through all that, where does it leave me now?" His Divine Grace Gurupāda, Viṣṇupāda, there are so many *pādas* flourishing and in Slovenia the other day after my lecture they called out, "His Divine Grace . . ."

I look at this and that . . . there is a nice painting here by Puṣkara . . . there is a chance . . .

Let me tell you a little about the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class for tomorrow morning. In the purport, Prabhupāda says that Arjuna has just praised Kṛṣṇa in four verses and now he's asking Him, "What is this *brah-*

mastra coming at me?" In other words, he wants the Lord to save him from the *brahmastra*. Prabhupāda says that before a devotee makes a presentation or a request of the Lord, he first praises Him with respectable prayers. So I will discuss that these prayers are not mere strategy. To praise the Lord in learned and heartfelt ways is itself a service, called *vandanam*. The prayers are very instructive, theological treatises. When you read them, you can understand how the Supreme is everything and everything comes from Him and He's always a person. And then we get to the requests. If we analyze them, we'll find that they ask for things to aid them in their devotional service. I will give examples of that. Rather than read from a stack of books on the *vyāsāsana*, I will say, "I like to study these prayers and I have written some down on index cards," and then I'll take a few and say, "Here's one by Dhruva, here's one by Prahlāda, here's one by Devakī," and I'll tell the requests that each of them makes after they make their respectful prayers. I will also mention *Śikṣāṣṭakam* as the best. And then I'll say, "What if a devotee has material desires?" I'll answer that by saying that he should still pray to Kṛṣṇa, and I will give examples of Gajendra and the prayer by Kuntī-devī where she asks that her material desires be severed. Sounds like a pretty good outline, huh?

In Zurich, the door knocks, in Zurich. He enters.

Night Notes

You are about to take rest and say some things. What made you happy? I told you I can't claim or ascertain that. But I'll go over the day for some perks. When you go to take rest like after breakfast in a P-stop just over the border in Switzerland, you are glad you are making

regular progress with no breakdown. You have a quick breakfast and M. says we have one hour. So he takes a nap in front and I lie on the cot which is delicious because I have been up early and will certainly fall asleep, and it's not too hot or cold. I just go off to sleep in that situation. It's happy but it all passes so quickly you can hardly grab hold of it.

Maybe that's what I want to say—that you can't grab happiness. It just goes by. Now it is later and you look back at it and proclaim it was happy. That's the way it is, I guess. Maybe that's a sign of becoming free of false ego. You don't delve into this like something for enjoying. You do it and it's nice. I liked the moment when I read in *The Best I Could Do* and it seemed to work. I liked when I wrote a new page and the scrawling drawings. Sure, I didn't like it that my chanting was dry and I wish I could read better. That's the brick wall. It's almost too complicated to say that I like this and don't like that. What is lasting?

That train of thought that came while we were traveling, as if a gift from the road—that I should aspire to be a pure devotee, should pray for it, and it could be done by chanting and I would be ready to sacrifice—the state where I act for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa not for myself, what about that? That theoretical line of thought.

Happiness you call drinking water in the hot afternoon. That's more like a little gratification given by the Lord to let you get through. Coping is maybe not the same as *ānanda-mayo 'bhyāsāt*.

I will produce as much as I can on the marathon that is taking us up to France. I'll get more shots at it. Don't complain. Give the lectures and be glad you don't have more physical pain. Be glad you are out of that era of the 11 gurus, as you just read in *BTC*.

August 4

Reading *Bhagavad-gītā*, slowly only does it come, in regular measures. The statements are full of potency, they can touch your inner self. But there's a covering of matter, gross and subtle, the identification of false ego. The statements—Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Devotees hear from pure devotees and in faith and devotion they surrender to Kṛṣṇa and He reveals Himself to them. Then they get out of this temporary, miserable world. Statements like that go straight to the heart of the matter, but you tend to think, "I've heard this so often . . ."

You are preoccupied, become insensitive. So you need to find a way to be open again to these statements and allow them to act on you with their potency. Kṛṣṇa becomes real for you. Your own faith and devotion is activated.

As I read I think this is all I need. And I think how I can tell the Sunday guests something like this. Kṛṣṇa, in the beginning of Tenth Chapter, says He will tell Arjuna even better things than He's told him so far, because Arjuna is dear to Him. Lord Kṛṣṇa is unborn, beginningless, and the Supreme Lord of all. Great sages and demigods cannot know Him by their mental power. He's known by devotees. Nothing is auspicious in this world except working under Kṛṣṇa's direction, by guru, *śāstra*, and *sādhū*.

The spiritual master and disciple don't have to know anything but Kṛṣṇa. I've told you how I for one want to stay aloof from the world of nondevotees and even

from the world of wrangling how to improve ISKCON and manage it. I can take this privileged position, free of other responsibility, provided I actually fill it up with chanting and hearing. Then it becomes a responsible position.

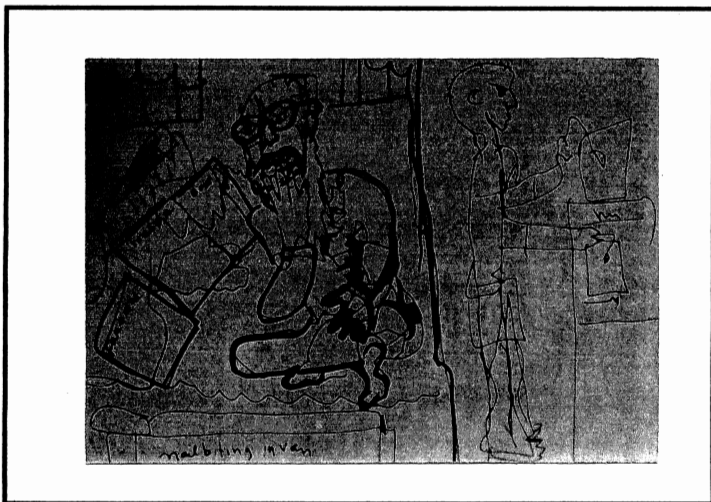
I tell other devotees of our main priorities in chanting the holy names and hearing about Kṛṣṇa. I myself write everyday out of a life of devotional service, my flow of expression. Of course, this expression includes my falling short, the facts of blockage and distraction, the news of the world as it confronts my senses and as I cope and experience. I am an organism like an insect with feelers. The insect "thinks" or feels, "There is something up there ahead of me, blocking me," or the creature smells, "Is that an enemy? Can I conquer it?" But we are human organisms capable of hearing about God and our loving relation with Him.

Forget self and those preoccupations, we sometimes say or we hear that. Be absorbed only in God, Kṛṣṇa, His name and *guṇa* and *līlā* and teachings. It seems, then, that we are living in a basic big mistake whereby we are concerned more with our petty self than with God. We may be concerned with self in terms of how to get this self to render best service to guru and Vaiṣṇavas. But not another self-preoccupation.

Skip lines, skip heartbeat. You ask for a Kleenex and pen refills. Your world phone bill has run up too high and AT&T won't pass the calls anymore. So we have to plan a more economical way to communicate. Maybe don't demand such rapid back and forth every week or more often than that between M. and our workers in America. Be more *sādhū*-like, break loose from paying AT&T. Oh, but we live in the modern world.

Beg money. Flatter to collect. Or drop out. But you need fuel to travel. Stop at the temple and take your meals and give lectures.

You started this chapter-day sublimely telling of Kṛṣṇa from *Bhagavad-gītā* and then “deteriorated,” drew a sketch of your nail-bitten fingers on the page and said I’m hot here, I write of coping, my phone bill is too high. Can you climb to the summit again?



Kṛṣṇa can't be known by sages but only by devotees. He invites us, He invites us. Having come to this temporary miserable world, engage in My service. Think of Me, bow down to Me, and surely you will come to Me. The impersonalists say Kṛṣṇa is not the one you have to surrender to but the eternal within Kṛṣṇa. Maybe in ISKCON we sometimes say, "It's not to Kṛṣṇa the person in *Bhagavad-gītā* that we have to surrender, but to the organization, community, development of the land, propaganda, training, organizing, etc." That's true too, devotional service is not just *bābāji* absorption (alas) but practical work to spread the mission. Think of all

that Madhu has to do to keep our van on the road. Keep me moving around so I can lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā*. But still, Śrīla Prabhupāda said a *sannyāsī* should have a cool brain for philosophy.

My little notes of my little life. I “solved” my stay up late problem. I’ll stay up past usual bedtime to speak *Bhagavad-gītā* in temple. Then I will rise an hour later than usual and go straight to this writing, not reading *Bhagavad-gītā* in the unmotivated way. I’ll count my lecturing and lecture preparing as my reading time. Yes, but you are able to start writing directly Kṛṣṇa conscious this morning because you came from the reading. That reading is primary for me. But yes, for a few days I can suspend it. No time later in the day equals the sanctity of midnight, reading in quiet in desk lamp-light. But at other times, you might write down verses on index cards or something like that.

Just read a poem in *The Best I Could Do*, pages 139–40. It’s good. I should do them. I did one every chapter, as an assignment. Keep that up. You first looked at a poem by a published poet, to function as springboard, then went for your own.

Lines divided,
hail to Lord Kṛṣṇa,
my phony voice, chewing
fingernails again—why is that?
Maybe I’m aware
unconsciously, of my mortality—
something is reminding me.
I learned how to bite nails
with false teeth.
Leave red shreds around cuticles.
Nice guy, huh?

Listen, you can relax and be
elegant like this Swiss
ISKCON temple. Did you see
their Prabhupāda museum?
They didn't crop my head
out of the photo of him in
Tompkins Square Park. I'm in
the picture and my books are
here. My place, Steve-o with
overgrown crew cut.

Prabhupāda includes me as one
of many. Don't love yourself in
Narcissistic way. But whatever
you do it's alone,
no one does it for you.
Kṛṣṇa speaks *Bhagavad-gītā* and says
now you decide for yourself.

Outside a bell rings, it's 1:30 now. You better go
chant rounds. There is not so much time. Just one
more page. Kṛṣṇa is God. He says unless you are sinless
you can't know Him. The opposite is also true: if you
know Him, then you will be sinless. Receive what your
spiritual master says. He says discussion of Lord Kṛṣṇa
can only take place among those who are really anx-
ious to know Kṛṣṇa. Don't be guilty that you want to
simply hear about Kṛṣṇa, apart from how to apply it,
and how to improve ISKCON, what's your role, what
the GBC thinks of you, etc. Main thing is to hear from
Kṛṣṇa and engage in His service.

I will, I will, I will die. I will not become president of
anything. I will browse through some more *Back to God-
head* magazines today, maybe tell Madhu (it's on my
mind) that he may hear "The Clown" (it's only 20 min-

utes long, and it's not Kṛṣṇa conscious). He may hear it some day after he's been driving and needs to wind down. But last night he said when he's in a state like that, the brain too fatigued, he likes to chant a round. Said sometimes he wakes from sleep and discovers he's been chanting. So why should I insert "The Clown" into that? It would be so that he could know more my creative hankering to make an art for presenting Kṛṣṇa consciousness in entertaining, thought-provoking, improvised ways. And the point about the blues, singing your sadness and failure into a tune that's enjoyable for others and speaks of what we all think? Yes, maybe that.

Now go chant. I care for you; keep healthy and keep priorities.

Is there a marathon personae? I don't mean Svevo. Is there? Yeah, I guess so. He is encouraging himself, write throughout the day, keep at it, wherever you go have a connection to this book, it's very satisfying . . . in dim light of Zurich temple room, 4:15 *ārati* begins.

6:35 A.M.

Here they pray, they all pray out loud one time in the morning in the temple room asking Gaura-Nitāi to please send them more new *saṅkīrtana* devotees. They say, "Our only desire is to spread the *saṅkīrtana* movement and for that we need new *saṅkīrtana* devotees." What is a *saṅkīrtana* devotee? That gets translated as "book distributors." So that is the prayer. It troubles me somewhat, but I will keep my mouth shut. I will keep my mouth shut on one side but I'll speak on the other side.

You say the same things, you say these defects about yourself but not deeper ones, and your praises . . . Speaking of prayers, the Lord is praised by *uttama-sloka*, beautiful prayers. It is not that all prayers are petitions. Mostly they are praise, describing the inconceivable qualities of the Lord, and then some request is often made in a single verse. I will talk about that in the class.

Drowsy fellows push on. The beautiful temple room. Then I came up and as usual took nap. Dreamt we were producing little books by me all in one morning. I would write it, it would get printed in color, and produced within a few hours. Yes, this is due to the high state of tech, we said. At the same time, another group of devotees were practicing rifle shooting. They were gathered outdoors in a place like Washington Square Park. Different groups of devotees were gathered around the project that interested them. I roamed around looking at the groups. I was producing literature all in one morning. Yes, it is due to tech, she said. And then . . .

I woke on time for breakfast and the dream was not going anywhere auspicious. You don't have to tell all this, is Madhu's motto. But there was once a boy in Switzerland who didn't like being called "boy" because he was 22 years old and could think for himself. That's why he joined the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. But when the leaders insisted on calling him boy, he quit.

A bird was singing melodically just outside the window of the bathroom. The window is such that it's half-opened and you cannot open it more to look out. So no chance of seeing that bird. He was there when I was in the bathroom last night around eight, and then I heard start up just before dawn. Very nice, not a wood

thrush, it could be many kinds of birds because many are melodic especially this time of year.

The big picture of Lord Nṛsiṃha on this desk. Look into the dark inner sanctum of His *darśana*. A picture of Prabhupāda looking very quiet and to himself even though he's on the *vyāsāsana* with microphone in front of him and probably many devotees out front. Still, he is thinking thoughtfully not in a participatory way with the group. Our Prabhupāda away from us, within. In the temple room, I looked on the altar for a picture of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, but there is none. I look for one in this room . . .

Who are you? I am the classic motor car, classic Coca-cola, classic ear plugs, the classic joke on me is he couldn't go to Vaiṣṇava because he was not eligible but hoped maybe some concession would be given to him or at least in next life make it not so hard and meet up with devotees as soon as possible, and ones that I can live with. And let me get a good vocation in the movement as soon as possible, prefer not to get married, not to be a manager. I can have whatever You think is best, Lord. It was best for Mahārāja Bharata to become a stag and associate with *sādhus* and then next life to become Jaḍa Bharata. Who would have known that was the best position? Kṛṣṇa knows.

9 A.M.

Lecturing is not less than writing. You get into the pure philosophy, no-nonsense. Any personal disclosures are refined and are made just to make some point. You use your brain to present *siddhānta*. Drive home the points, make it palatable and possible. You go for an hour, live audience. Are they paying attention? Are

you enlightening them? It's another side of life, different than this kind of writing. I do both.

11 A.M.

Wrestled with a *Bhagavad-gītā* verse to get a handle on it for a lecture. Tonight is 3.17. First I look at it and it seems academic, technical, about *ātma-rati*, one who doesn't have to perform the rituals of *yajña*. I think, "What does this do with me?" I find a copy of Prabhupāda's verbatim *Bhagavad-gītā* lectures and scan through one he gave in 1966 and another in 1968 touching on this verse. He gave the example of Śukadeva Gosvāmī as *ātma-rati*. He walked naked, he spoke the verse that you can lie on the ground and you don't need a bed, live in a cave and you don't need a house. How can I apply this to the devotees in this elegant Zurich building and to their spirit of book distribution?

I struggle what to speak and I feel resistance. I don't like this life of constantly preparing a lecture.

I flail and grope. Then slowly the parts start to come together, something I could say. I make a second draft of an outline and it becomes clearer. Then I hit on an idea that I could use the four rules and 16 rounds as an example of *yajña* given by Prabhupāda. Follow this and you'll be beyond the duty of those who look for sense gratification. Then the idea flashes to me of what I saw here in the Prabhupāda museum—the *mūrti* holds in his hand the "Notice" Prabhupāda wrote in November 1966 telling what the devotees should do. If I read this notice point by point, I can say that this is a practical life for us. We cannot imitate the *ātma-rati* as practiced by Śukadeva, Sanātana, and Haridāsa, but we can do this. Then wind up the lecture saying that the perfec-

tion of *ātma-rati* is to work in the *saṅkīrtana* movement. *Yukta-vairāgya*.

Okay, so you can wrestle the lecture into shape. Now the morning has gone. Go worship Prabhupāda *mūrti*. After lunch and rest, start again preparing for tomorrow's *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture. Maybe tomorrow night instead of another technical *Gītā* verse on the same subject of how the devotee does his work even though no obliged, I can speak instead something of Śrīla Prabhupāda. But that also will have to be drafted into shape. They would like to hear some nectar from me.

Gaura-līlā dāsa introduced me this morning before the class and said I've been a devotee for 30 years and that I am able to give unending nectar of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Twice he said that I would be expected to speak about Prabhupāda, so let me think of how to do that.

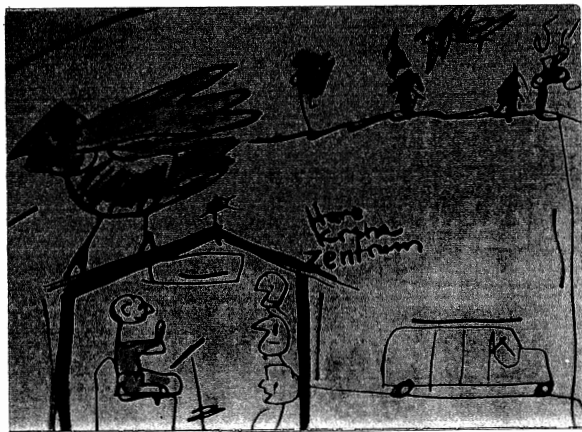
5 P.M.

Rush of head pressure. I have now outlined three upcoming lectures, that's enough. Now you rest on the bed. But now the door opens and there's something new to see, he is carrying something. And now he leaves the room and I'm alone again.

Tell what it is like to live in this temple for a weekend. You get good drinking water in bottles. One man living here is Latin and he says the Swiss devotees are very conservative, even skeptical, and he has very few friends. They are slow to do that. When I lecture, there is a man behind glass, like in a recording studio, and he is simultaneously quickly translating my lecture into German, I guess, and anyone who wants can hear it on the earphones. Maybe he changes some words. I could

eventually slip out of myself perhaps. Tell you stories of people that are not me.

Gaura-Nitāi, Jagannātha Deities. The background this morning was a rainbow and Their clothes were like rainbows. Not bad. The Gaura-Nitāi have very attractive smiles. I can't describe it in words. Pucker up. Kind. The Lord in a turban, the Lord from Gauḍadeśa. I thought, If you were in India, you would be nearer the land where it all happened, but maybe you wouldn't feel any nearer. This temple can be just as near, if you are devotional. You need to chant nicely and see the Lord in His element, the *dhāma*. Pray to Him, He can reveal Himself to you anywhere. For some, they may feel more at home in a Western country. And they are not really living in that country, they are in Vaikuṇṭha in the ISKCON temple, Śrīla Prabhupāda said. Is it like that here? Yes, something like it. I spoke and felt confident and even put on a bit of a show, quite forget my



self and made the points of the lecture with my Post-its leading the way. I have three more lectures lined up but now my head say enough, give us some relief. Lie down and ask him to massage your feet, you need to relax.

The afternoon is too hot.

Someone has brought a "hand deliver" letter for me. I hope I will be all right. Prabhupāda says even if a preacher isn't outwardly successful, he doesn't feel disappointed. He tries to please Kṛṣṇa. You can speak even without an outline. Sure, if I had to. But there is no harm going in there knowing what you are going to say and being well organized the way this temple is. One one floor they have a large, costly sculpture of Kāliya-Kṛṣṇa, on another the famous Natarāja statue of Lord Śiva, and other costly works of art.

Going down to give lecture soon. Brain a little fried. I kept trying to remember the topic but couldn't get into the groove. Maybe when you get older it will be like that more. More reason then to just write whatever comes; you may be helpless to exert discipline in a certain direction. Turn the weakness into a virtue or at least a way.

The way. Tao of free-write.

Harināmānanda and his men have returned from their week of distribution of Prabhupāda's books. I weak? Hold *daṇḍa*, hold spine erect, look into book and out at audience. You'll do all right. Just relax your inner head and if pain comes, that's Kṛṣṇa too in that form.

What was it you wanted to say? That this day, August 4, is over. We decided not to use the telephone so much. M. found out why our 1991 Renault won't accelerate; it's a defect in the model for that year. But we

can't afford to do anything about it. And I ate lunch. And I cooled down.

Svevo walked. I didn't kill him; I'd never do such a thing although Eliot and Anna are just as soon dead to my life and my mother and father and sister and brother-in-law. Dead, dead, and you live in the sound vibration of your spiritual master. And you have nothing more than the present moments in each day and a good reputation, "He's been a devotee 30 years and can tell us much nectar of Śrīla Prabhupāda." Yeah, well, not so much tonight. But I'll talk a little bit about that "Notice" he wrote November 1966.

Sorry, folks, got to close out now, may not be the fattest chapter.

August 5

1 o'clock, pen scratch, you couldn't read first thing this morning, but you'll get your chance again to speak twice today to the audience in the temple room. Told them last night how the Swami shocked me when he spoke against work, the *karmā* god. They laughed a little. Afterwards, M. said that Śrīla Prabhupāda said it's good to tell a story in your lecture. Once upon a time, the time was like a sand dune and we rode up it in our buggy.

I have asked Nandī-mukhī in New York City to find me one book a month in the fabulous bookstores like Brentano's. Just give me one lunch hour a month, I said, in which to go, and like a divining rod, you enter the store and find your way to the book you think will be most interesting and useful to me. I told her it should be 1) something diary-like or autobiographical but not written all in the long ago dead past tense; 2) something with an interesting form to it which might lend an idea to me for my writing; 3) a book of integrity. I think of the books she might find. Might it be an Ozarck journal kept by an educated person who returned to Nature? Or perhaps an Amish person's diary or—a writer who has found a way, as Emerson said, to select from his experience and to tell truth truly. Finally, there is no book; it is my own book she is looking for and no one can write it but me. This is the book I sent her looking for, and this is the chapter. Don't ask, "But can I do it?" We have not sent a child to do a man's work or perhaps we wish we could do that. Child, write

what you see and feel in this Kṛṣṇa conscious world.
Without malice.

O Zurich ISKCON folk, do watch my smoke tonight
as I retell tales of Swami and we who went to him. I'm
planning to do it tonight if all goes well.

Last night, head was banging and I even mentioned,
we are so foolish to accept a body full of pain. We per-
form *yajñas* to purify our acts, but at best we get a
higher material body which must suffer. First-class and
second-class prisoners.

First-class gold chains.
Did you tell what the Swami
said and is it a legend or did
you actually do that back then?
I think I did it, left the
storefront in the morning like a
brave flag, headed north
wearing Lord Jagannātha around my neck
on my way to break the picket
line at the welfare office and
on Second Avenue I met Śrīla Prabhupāda and
Kīrtanānanda coming back from a
walk. I bowed on the
pavement before him and he seemed
to be in ecstasy and touched me,
smiling, accepting me, his
son, his *śiṣya* gone off to
the war.

And did you really live it—
did you phone him one
day from your office? Tell us
the time you all went to
the Cosmic Love-in and after

you escorted him walking back
to 26 Second Avenue.
I'd like to hear it again
provided it's true.
Oh yes, it's true, I can
re-live it. Be there tonight.

During head pain while speaking, I thought something like, "This is what it is to grow old and it will increase. When you were young you didn't know of this, didn't know this would be your end or this isn't even it yet, your young old age."

Seek your dreams even as they allude you. You are not in practice of lassoing them with a golden noose thread. Something about trying to enter some place or some menace and a former wife . . . No, it alludes me now.

Yes, I thought this pain . . . is of the body and I am the soul. Finally you can't even write. You never thought you'd be able to write so freely in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and similarly, you don't think now that one day you won't be able to write at all. It will be said, summed up and others will not know what it means to you to not be able to write at all. Perhaps then if there's any remaining time, you can transfer your dedication to the chanting of the holy names.

Tell us more about that hot afternoon where your brain gets stymied, tell us about the book you want her to find, the one you are writing and what the Swami said (or didn't say), tell us where you are at and how it is strange to be here.

In Zurich where Gaura-līlā dāsa asks you a question after the lecture in the roomful

awkward silence when no one else had a question. He asked, "Arjuna followed his duty, didn't he?" I was saying that an *ātma-rati* has no more duty. Perhaps they took it wrongly as if I were saying something different than what their guru consistently tells them about duty to the *saṅkīrtana* movement. I was saying no material duty. We have duty. But in the higher stage you do it because you love it, you cannot bear to do without it. You no longer have religious obligatory *yajñas* to offset your karma. No duty, you know what I mean.

Some dark Indian men in the class, from Tamil, were like taxi drivers, insolent rascals, laughing and smirking and showing their teeth and maybe not understanding at all what I was saying or they were thinking, "Who the hell does this whitey think he is posturing on the *vyās-āsana* as if he were a guru-*sādhū*?" I was on the verge of sarcastic remarks like, "If you don't wish to listen, why don't you leave the room?" They were like children. Their wives, dark and seated in another part of the room, *sārīs* and red dots on forehead, were respectful in the presence of the temple room and Deity, because of deep culture. Anyway, the men left during the lecture and then came back like restless kids, not finding enough to amuse themselves elsewhere. "Like children," I thought, and later I softened to them.

But the main audience had nothing to say. "I don't care," I told myself, "I don't care, my duty is to speak the best I can."

Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, far beyond you.

Kṛṣṇa in everyone's heart. This temple is certainly shelter. Where do they get the money to maintain it? Mostly on the street selling books throughout Europe.

You carp, you smirk like those Tamil men, in your writing. God may say, "If you are going to be a non-

sense, non-serious in the face of deep topics and death, etc., then why do you not leave this movement?" When I hear that I grow fearful and contrite and say, "Please, don't kick me out. I'll be good." I'll even stop writing if that's what He wants or I'll . . . shut my mouth? Or get better at it.

The car went up the sand dune (you said). Yes, it did that. Our van cannot build up acceleration. When it's passing another car, it only inches along and cannot speed up.

I see. So then?

Then I go in the back of the van and leave it to the driver. I go inside myself a quarter of an inch under the skin and I chant Hare Kṛṣṇa a few times.

When you read that this body contains foul smelling feces, urine, pus, etc., and the skin keeps it from being horrible to look at and the feast for flies and others, what do you think?

It's absolutely true. Whether you like it or not. But it's the duty of a *bhāgavata* speaker to be *satyam bruyat*, to speak the truth in a palatable way. You didn't do that last night when you were saying, "Licit or illicit, sex is the same and the Swami spoke many strong things against marriage." And you shrugged your shoulders and you took no responsibility for your casual words condemning people and you left it dangling like that, you a tough, uncaring *sannyāsī* as if you yourself can bite the bullet, which you usually cannot. Just raise the temperature a few degrees on a summer afternoon and you cannot function. And you also are not above sex desire, anger, and becoming cowardly. So why do you put down householders who are your source of income? Something hypocritical here? You bob along from temple to temple with these messages . . .

I mean to be a better person but you see I feel conflicting motives and emotions. I want to be accepted, to be entertaining, to show that I accept the absolute words of guru and *sāstra* even when they are beyond me. I want to say them without embarrassment or showing myself superior to them. Dare to speak what he said and leave it at that. Conflicting emotions as I want them to like me and want me to return and speak again. I don't want to burn out temples so that they don't care if I ever return.

Temples are alibis for us so we can build an itinerary and report to heads of the movement, "We went to such and such a place." We are not good-for-nothing. But God sees, He is the witness. Whatever you do in this VIP guest room and whatever enters into your head and heart, He knows it. As Śrīla Prabhupāda said, He keeps an account. He sees what you didn't give.

Please, Lord, let me speak better.

I should go now and pray *mahā-mantras* while the going is good. But this is the book I asked Nandī-mukhī to look for and she knows it. This is the book—

my life (all I know)

a form (as best I can)

and with integrity. After the lecture, and before it, when you have any energy at all, you come here, avoiding smirking and say

We rode up the sand dune in our buggy chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare—which we didn't do in the more conservative forum of the lecture in Switzerland.

Śacinandana Swami is in Zagreb. A war has started there. He's trying to leave this morning to come here. Phoned ahead to make appointment for lunch with me and then he goes on to another city in Switzerland

tonight and then return again tonight to Zurich. Madhu replied to the message saying better we meet tomorrow. If I meet with Śacinandana Mahārāja today, I may not be able to give the lecture tonight. He is a daring preacher going to war zones. I want to comply with his wishes. He is also well disposed to me, likes to read my books. I want to be a friend as he desires of me, so if he wants that we get together today for lunch or whatever . . . But Madhu is right too, I cannot do so much in a day.

Dim lit temple room just before *maṅgala-ārati*. New day. Look forward to seeing the Deity and keep presence of mind in singing. You had heard of Zurich and now here you are. Will the spiritual world be like that one day—a place you go to? But it is happy and loving there beyond your imagination.

A Vaiṣṇava *sādhū* was going to die. I had some of his last effects. Then he died. Stambha dāsa said he could calculate by astrology the exact moment of the *sādhū*'s passing away, but the calculation would take a long time.

Śrīla Prabhupāda speaking from 29 years ago reserved on tape. You hear his voice, his desire to convince others to accept Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Explaining the points . . . the soul never becomes inactive, we always have desires. We have to change the desire to service of Kṛṣṇa. Arjuna didn't want to fight, then later he was convinced by Kṛṣṇa to fight. Does that mean he was degraded by hearing from Kṛṣṇa? No, he was improved. He did the will of the Lord. The pregnant meanings and their applications for us . . . Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Don't live for sense gratification . . . words and phrases pass through you while you eat a so-so breakfast.

How is Śācinandana Swami doing in getting out of Zagreb? How are devotees in Armenia and Miami? How's our family in Alachua? What are they desiring and meeting to do?

When I arrived here the other day, only one person greeted us at the door and helped us in. That was fine with me, I don't like welcoming committees. He explained, "The managers are at a meeting and could not come to meet you." Very well. Then meet and decide what is to be done, how to arrange things so it goes on in its efficient Swiss way. I crawl up to the suite they have graciously provided for my weekend use.

Now you are ready to speak again, several different sections to the outline, separated by Roman numerals. While speaking you glance down at them. One woman, much older than the others, smiles as you speak and it seems she is following closely and approvingly. She seems to want me to know that. I appreciate it. Better than the stone faces. Often devotees don't make any eye contact. One young woman in the rear was talking to her friend. Men hear or don't. I plow on.

The big bells ring for 6:30 A.M. News, news, of the little world that concerns us. Remember when I was writing haiku and mailing it to the editors of magazines? One prominent man who did publish me frequently in *Modern Haiku* also turned down a batch of poems and said they are more like news items of the events (Rathayātrā at Gītā-nāgarī) rather than actual haiku which is to catch a very special moment or feeling underneath the events. Yes, I thought, but if I can't catch or think so deeply, then am I willing to wait two years for one to come? I will tell you of the bird sitting on the fence like

a spectator to the Ratha-yātrā. We'll tell you the man is cutting down the weeds along the path the Ratha-yātrā will take. We'll tell you what I can.

Hare Kṛṣṇa. Freer. Free up the man inside. Let him relax and say, "Although I am not going to a war zone to preach and not moving so quickly, yet I think this is important duty that I speak today's verse in this protected temple and then on Monday morning drive out of here. It is important to write and write. It is coming out all right. It is important to feel that and feel love for the writing. And it's most important to be Kṛṣṇa conscious, to say what Kṛṣṇa says, and I do that too."

Material body, drowsy, pushed, needs rest, keeps going, dress it up with some colored clothes, wash it, don't let it get sexually agitated, divert it from that, or from anger or other non-spiritual behavior. Move it around, like a donkey St. Francis called it, "Brother Ass," the cart, the cart bearers. 4

Jackson Heights, childhood, names going past you. They said the Studebaker for 1959 is built so that you can't tell the rear from the front. We used to pass some of them on the highways when driving to Uncle Sal's house. They looked in Brooklyn just over City Line but then bought their own salt box house in Rosedale, Long Island, near the airport where the jets flew in low. Uncle Sal and cousin Steve Sessa who was an all-star shortstop on the local league baseball team. Would he grow up to be like me? Gone, ditch it, now come up again here in Zurich Vedic center, Govinda Verlag. I am going to close my eyes and rest before the class so I'll be in good shape. This may not be a haiku moment. I am a soldier or sportsman on a marathon and when your energies start to lag, your supporters talk to you

to keep you awake and tell you, "Keep moving, pushing on."

Writing this in *japa* time while the temple populace hums with holy names. Let me go do a little more too.

8:45 A.M.

It's Saturday, so the devotee audience was a little bigger. But they seem less responsive here than in other temples. When I ask for questions, they're all silent. I wait and wait and then finally someone, perhaps out of sympathy for me, asks a questions. And the questions today were not on the points. I covered quite a few topics such as neglect of duty, not being interested in subtle science, the price of spiritual science, chanting, etc. But no questions. Finally somebody asked, "In a previous verse it states that Lord Śiva once chased Lord Brahmā, can you explain that?" I said I didn't know. But then another devotee said that in the purport to that verse it states that once Brahmā lusted after his daughter and Lord Śiva became infuriated. So I was embarrassed that I didn't know it. But also why ask a question that is already answered in the purport, and it's not even the purport of today's class?

I spoke about the misuse of this planet's resources, but no one had anything to say. I said devotees sometimes misbehave on *saṅkīrtana* and while doing other services, but no response. Maybe they are shy or this is the Swiss conservatism. Anyway, I finally sighed audibly and they let me go or I let them go. "Thank you very much." Big preacher crooning into the microphone, can't get any response.

Freer:

Why don't they ask questions? Because you didn't move them. You were not simple and profound. You covered too many subjects, you were too well prepared

with your Post-its, talking as if you were on stage performing. You don't know how to actually pray. They think that their gurus can preach better than you. You don't go on *saṅkīrtana* or push book distribution and neither do you work with managers or attend meetings, and all this shows when you speak. They have your number. They are not interested in what you have to say. They prefer to hear it from someone else. Or maybe they just don't listen to philosophy so well. What the hell, it's breakfast time. You've been jabbering away 45 minutes so why should they prolong it when—if they don't ask you any questions—they can go right to breakfast and then get on with the day's work? You have filled the air with your orations, now let's give silence a break. You know what it's like when a class is over and you (in the audience) are relieved and you just want to get out of there. That's what they felt like. And they were all in agreement, they cooperated, so none of them asked and therefore they could all exit real quick. The joke is on you.

Besides, you too wanted to get away. Go upstairs and now you have the remains of a late morning to do something with—to prepare for the next lecture. But if they don't ask, if they don't listen, then why prepare? Because you don't want to fail and fall flat on your face. At least you do the job presentably. That's what we all want. Give a presentable class, and then as soon as it's over, we can all leave.

Noon

Śacinandana Swami has safely arrived from Zagreb. I wanted to see him at least briefly, but Madhu went and saw him instead and arranged for our meeting tomorrow. SS would be leaving Zurich this afternoon to go Basel and return tonight. I was thinking, "What's the

harm in squeezing in a spontaneous meeting or lunch together?" But M. is probably right. He saw me yesterday getting the banging headache which put me out of action all afternoon and I limped down to the lecture and afterwards had a worse banging which went away overnight. M. also saw me in Slovenia where I canceled the evening lecture. So I can give two lectures a day but not expect to squeeze in extras. Neither can we say that a spontaneous meeting with SS could be controlled and to just a short thing. I know all this, but it's making me feel a little . . . I won't say sorry, that's too strong a word. But I feel that my life is denied certain pleasures, that I'm something of a semi-invalid. I don't have adventures a normal person does. I have to stay quiet. I like it that way. But for writing it means I have to go more within. Otherwise, I have nothing to report. Especially since my writing stories is mostly what actually happens with me. It's not very interesting to say, "Canceled meeting with vivacious, daring preacher, but we'll see him tomorrow at 2 P.M. for an hour."

Madhu has changed our ferry tickets from France to Ireland so that we will leave two days earlier than planned. We would have spent those days at a campground at Le Havre, but now we can spend them in the more controlled environment of living in our van in the devotee community at Wicklow. That's good, but in terms of this *Summer Marathon*, I will have to go inside myself more. I'll have six days in Wicklow with nothing much happening outwardly. You can take walks in your new walking shoes, or you can look into some nondevotee book if you like and tell us about that. You can free-write. Don't feel sorry. Don't feel denied. Read your spiritual master's books. Go within and find not just physical innards of colon and pancreas, but the spirit soul or at least the voice that calls

out to the Lord. It is not necessary to run around and do a lot of things. But you need to be alert and chant and hear and, then you can be interesting. Is that what you want, to be interesting? Would you rather be someone else? Would you rather have a tale to tell of how you were preaching in Zagreb but a war started and so you canceled one lecture and came back early to Switzerland but the plane was delayed and you didn't know if you could get out of the war zone? That's not your tale to tell. You are not moving so fast. If you were, it's likely that you would not be inclined to write things as they happen. Think of it that way. It's compensation. Those books you liked, *The Best I Could*, *The Search for the Grand Metaphor*, and *Last Days of the Year*, were all done in situations where you deliberately stopped outside action, in retreats. This summer marathon, for me, is an active book caught in motion. It may not be the motion of a SS, but it's "on the run" for me.

4 P.M.

Keep going, the day grows hot. You read along Lewis Simpson's poem or you glanced through it, about action and death of soldiers in World War II. Then leave it. Those were . . . you don't know what it's like. He talks of war with no question of whether it was right to fight. You just did it and tried to do the right thing and be brave. Test of one's character and guts.

But someone like William Stafford and other conscientious objectors, theirs is also a brave story. We devotees say you should fight if Kṛṣṇa wants you to. But we don't take these military organizations nowadays as religious. So you can do something to get out of it if you can. Or if you have practiced as devotees in the Army. But you can't give up your four rules and vegetarian

diet and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. If that's the case, then the Army may kick you out. It's up to them, but you have to be a devotee.

I'm lucky. I'm old now and those duties are behind me. Someone might say I'm coasting in my senior citizen years. Give a lecture and then another lecture at night and nothing in between. "Two hots and a cot," you get your substinence. You speak the high-flown philosophy, organize it into an applicable lecture and you say if they don't listen or ask any questions, that's not my business.

But what are you doing to insure as far as possible that you can go back to Godhead? I haven't spoken yet with S. Swami but heard that he said bombs were being dropped 50 meters from the ISKCON temple building.

What are you doing so that you don't have to come back in Kali-yuga and go through all this shit and grief again? You don't seem to be working very hard for that. You say our philosophy teaches that a devotee is not interested in his liberation. But then what is he interested in? He wants to serve Kṛṣṇa and guru in this life or the next. "All I want is Your causeless devotional service in my life birth after birth." But I don't find that burning in you. It's more like writing and—shall I say it?—taking it easy. Taking it easy would be a sin. And your excuses that unless I go easy I'll get headaches.

Prabhupāda wrote in his "Notice" of November 1966 that his followers should not mix extensively with non-devotees. And not waste time with idle talks or frivolous sports. So I spend a hot Swiss Saturday afternoon staying in this VIP suite, not peeking out. Someone comes to the door with a donation of 100 Swiss francs. Gives it to Madhu. I don't know what they are talking about so

I don't look up. M. said the man was peering in wanting to get my attention. But if I look up . . .

You got your outline for tonight and for tomorrow, and that's all the lectures you have to give here. They are cooking biscuits for us to eat on the road. I keep writing, and when there are no lectures to give, I will return to unmotivated reading again. Find Śrī Kṛṣṇa in His words and the descriptions by our spiritual master. Read carefully what he says. There is nothing more important. The wars are not as important. Prabhupāda says you need to adjust your life so it keeps pace with the mission of the Lord. In other words, you may go on doing your thing, working and being a family man or whatever, but you have to adjust that activity so that you can also chant and hear. It sounds relatively easy. He says it's not so hard; it's been made possible. You don't lose the main purpose of life which is to always think of Kṛṣṇa and serve Him. You can do it while you live your life even if you're not a monk. But what about me? I have given all time for this. I should be doing better. I should be constantly absorbed . . . I should be

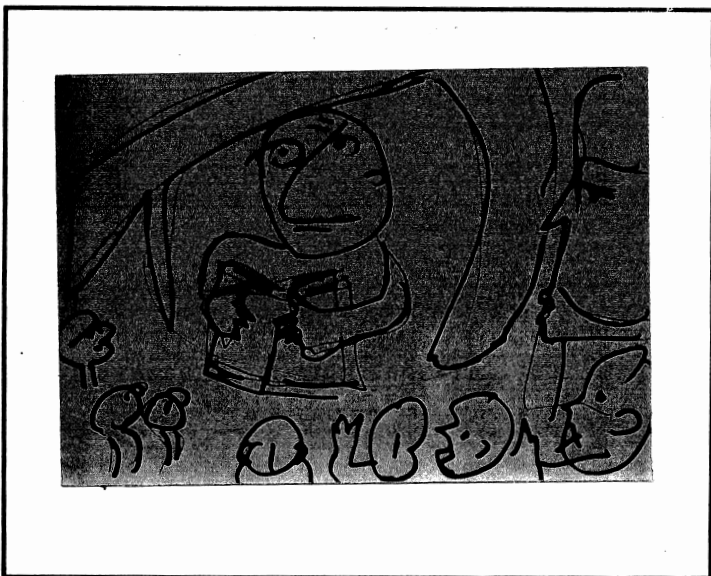
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Where you go next life should be a concern of yours. What will people say of you after you leave the earth? They are survivors for a little while. You are all cycled back, cycled back into the species. An astrologer said Pandit Nehru in next life became one of two dogs in Switzerland. It does not do him any good that there is a Nehru museum in New Delhi and that he's praised. The actual person has gone to a dog's body and that is what counts for him. You want to come back and be with devotees, try to pray for that—the perfect pattern of life if you have to come back is complete dedication to the unlimited Lord, association as friends with His

devotees, and compassion for all living beings. Repeat these words and pray to mean them.

Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna, "You already have the *brahmāstra* weapon, now use it to counteract the weapon thrown by Aśvaṭṭama." You have to do it yourself and yet you cannot do it without Kṛṣṇa's mercy and direction. Get it?

They look back at me. Pack of girls on the right, in the corner of the temple room, like a bank of flowers. Don't look long. Men occupy more space, spread out, listening, but they don't know me and I don't know them. We all know I'll be gone in a day. Are they glad I have come? Am I glad I'm visiting Zurich? Is anyone benefiting?



Do they mind that I come down to the give the class and afterwards I go upstairs? They offer me respect. I've got that. Tonight I try to relax with them and tell

funny stories. Almost all the stories are about me and my approach to the Swami. That may be a defect, why not tell stories of others? Someone might think you are puffing yourself up; too self-centered. But these are the best stories. I could tell the story of Stanley asking the Swami for five dollars to buy gasoline to burn himself to death and Swami says ask the treasurer. But I was not a witness to that. I know my own stories actually happened. I think they did.

So I'll do it. Don't build a big make-believe barrier that Swiss devotees are especially unreceptive. Sure, a room full of Hindu Haribols in Guyana, your own disciples, would listen with gleeful faces, dark faces in the tropics. You could play guru and relax, tell your past. Here it's harder. But still, they don't know you and that's an advantage.

Don't apologize. Or do it here beforehand once and for all. I'm sorry if my stories sound as if I'm trying to cash in on my good fortune of meeting the Swami. Sorry they are canned memories and the same ones I've told before. Having said that, let's go for it. Don't be afraid to say, "I read in Van Gogh's letters, 'Misery is eternal.'" Just tell it cheerful, factual, tell it well, and be sure to make Swami the main person and real.

August 6

I'm scheduled to meet with SS at 2 P.M. Hope I am clear of head pain to do it. I was thinking, "What shall I present to him as an agenda for talk?" He expects me to represent "the inner life." Sometimes we speak of this in a tantalizing, unclear way, as "mysticism" or "life of prayer." Sometimes we allude to private (secret) interest in *rāgānugā*. But for me, inner life means concentration—saving optimum time for—reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and chanting *japa*. And for me personally, it means writing. This is the "*bābāñ*" content of my life. I advocate it quietly as the inner life of the preacher. It's all up front and non-secretive. The secret or private aspect of it has to do with taking retreat time to accomplish this.

Reading *Bhagavad-gītā* this morning, 50 minutes. Good! Please do it everyday and seek ways to have taste and disciplined practice for other readings throughout the day, such as in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, random reading in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and now his letters. Throughout the years one may go from one book to another, tasting nectar like the bee.

Secret life of me. I write.

Yesterday afternoon I typed two pages intended for this "marathon," but then I threw them away. It's good to be detached and not to think everything you write has to be preserved. But usually I do include everything in a timed book and don't crumple it, rip it into pieces, and throw it in the trash. So I have to ask myself why I

did that. Mainly I don't want to lose nerve and confidence in the worthiness of recording as much as possible. That is the endurance in the marathon.



Sometimes a wild dance, words fly off like sparks from a spark machine. That's free-write. Sometimes you write sarcastically, coyly, and often ironically. I prefer to be more direct. But when you can't find access to a soft and sincere heart of devotion, you still want to write. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave the example that we should be like businessmen who are expert to make profit in either a strong or weak economy, by selling or buying. I can be writing profitably on one level or another.

Write for yourself. Here are some phrases from the pages I threw in the trash (along with an empty bottle of drinking water, tissues, filings from sharpened pencils, gone-dead batteries, nervous hours, scraps of typewriter papers left after I scissored them to fit them onto the legal page, etc. You can't keep all; some is junk.)

From trash: “He asked your secretary, ‘What is he really like? What is he into?’

He said, ‘He doesn’t like to go to big festivals. He likes to read and write alone.’”

Yeah, well, I like to do that, the man said. And he likes radishes and polecats and words that have fur on them . . .

Yeah, much of it can be trashed, I admit.

Last night went well, upbeat presentation of my reminiscences of life with Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1966. Oldies but goodies; vintage incidents, the first time I went to his room and asked questions, the time I purchased *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatams* from him, when I resigned from my welfare job, the time I phoned him and said I’d be late for lunch, I bought him a mango (“Very good boy”), I donated my money, I missed the first initiation and he said, “If you love me, I will love you.”

Afterwards, I said to M. that I may speak these remembrances in a place where they haven’t heard it. He said—he was excited and happy—that he’s heard it many times and he loves to hear it again. I think it depends on my being prepared to really tell it and live in it. When I went to Prabhupāda’s an hour late for lunch, he put the food on the floor and I bowed at his feet for the first time. It’s a fact. Preserve the life of these sacred, juicy memories by retelling them. All glories to Prabhupāda and especially to those early days.

File past, march past, the moments and hours. In recent years, I don’t write as the personae who gave up all past impressions and became a simple and sincere and bumbling *śiṣya* of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Rather in a book like *Radio Shows*, I plunge into the flow of my consciousness. I’m sometimes talking of Śrīla Prabhupāda

and sometimes of my material parents, past, present ISKCON person I am, etc. Is that more honest?

How can I do otherwise? But the presentation where I focus exclusively on memories of 1966 is a special act. Like special food, it cannot be served all the time.

In 1964, I wrote my Svevo book. Just previous to that, I wrote a traditional short story, "On the Outskirts of Gloria." It told of the USS Saratoga coming into port. I wrote it under the effect of marijuana, trying to be vivid in details. Murray didn't like it so much, I think, because it was so restrained and formal, perhaps. It was not poetry from my heart. It was constructed. Then in the first flush of living in the Lower East Side, I broke loose and wrote the fragments of my actual life, my visits to Eliot and Anna, etc. Murray said this was it, now I was waxing poetic. Kowit liked it too, he was enthusiastic and said it was terrific. But he thought that I was showing him notes of an outline of a book I was planning to write. I said, "No, this is it, this is the book." He said, "Then I take back that statement that I thought it was terrific. I liked it as a plan."

I argued, "Well, if you liked it, you liked it."

But he said, "No, I don't like it as a final."

Eliot, however, loved it the way it was.

The fact is, when I write nowadays, I do include what might be called writer's notebook or plans for writing along with the writing itself.

I'm glad I thought of this just now because it makes a link to today's writing with the writing of Svevo. The same "problem" or challenge is present. The same two different schools of thought and theory are contending.

I want to go for the poetry, the actual life, sacrifice on the altar of writing expression. But I want it to be excellent and readable and Kṛṣṇa conscious.

As in Svevo, I wrote what was happening, so I'm doing that now.

In ISKCON, some critics said that it was very fine to keep a detailed diary when you were serving Śrīla Prabhupāda. Tell us all that he was doing. But now what is the use in our reading of your complaints, mediocre thoughts and habits? They may say that.

I have to achieve an excellence in all I write, or a higher percentage of good stuff. Write the timed books. Homer nods. How often? In every line.

Nods. Awakes.

Breezes flow. Sometimes hot. The life of day. Avoiding the headache. Chasin' the 'Trane.

In *The Best I Could Do*, I went strong for two weeks, then lost heart and quit for a few days. Then I came back to it and wrote, "You have to not give a damn what any critics and readers will think, but give it your best. These have been your own kind of books."

I tell what I'm reading in Śrīla Prabhupāda. It's harder to tell of the life of *japa* of Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra although that's equally important as reading. In pre-Kṛṣṇa conscious days, I had no such auspicious activities. I descended to petty sins. I was becoming a louse, fit for suicide or trash. Addicted to bad habits. Worse was probably ahead, "You are a Greek tragedy waiting to happen." Manhattan and its big cats would crush me, spoil me, eat me up and spew me out.

The little saintly spark that greatly expanded beyond any hopes I had, by meeting Śrīla Prabhupāda. Now I am his man. But yes, you are interested to go on with it—to write your pulse-beat, loves, pass the time and practice expression.

I tried looking at Lewis Simpson for springboarding into my own poems. I've been slow to do it. Don't want to talk about his and . . . you can divide lines if you like.

These poets can't help me much, they want to be "cunningly appealing." They quote Baudelaire saying that the more you write poetry, the more you'll get into melancholy. Geez . . . the art, the way to make it come out right. If you speak a plain message, it's not a poem. All their theories and posturings. We appreciate that their books took time to write and they worked to make it come out nice in many drafts, and they keep their poems, some of them, short, and they don't write too much.

But I write for myself
he said
in bed at twelve the alarm
goes off and I put on the
light and now I ought to
go in the other room to chant.

Skip lines and make a clear restart. Nondevotee poets really can't help you much.

I hope I'll be all right. Tell SS my open secrets. And then hear from him. Don't feel yourself superior to him. Be a friend as best you can. You don't expect, and neither does he, that you will be soul brothers. That's all right; we are fellow travelers. I should appreciate he is a rare soul. He actually likes to read what I write. And I do admire that he is so active and *giving* as a preacher, although I can't do it myself. He has a great taste for both active preaching and inner cultivation. Don't be thrown off by the fact that he smiles a lot. Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Prabhupāda do that too. It's good if

you can be happy. And he has his suffering too, as we all do.

Go now, thank you, thank you timed book and timed book admirer.

“On the way back to the house, Prabhupāda told us that it is very good to tell a story in the middle of a talk. He explained that in Kali-yuga people are less intelligent, so the *Bhāgavatam* is ideal for this age because it gives instruction by way of stories” (Hari-śauri’s *Transcendental Diary*, volume one, p. 212).

Met SS in the temple before *maṅgala-ārati*.

I said, “You’re keeping up a very heavy pace.”

He said, “It’s the pace of a desperate beggar.”

I wanted to say it’s the pace of a giver. His words were true-sounding. He wore a sweater and knit cap. He said he is overworked. Why should one overwork? I sat like a pleased cat thinking of its milk—my marathon writing.

I told Madhu I wanted a better pillow like the one Harikeśa Swami has on his bed here in Zurich. I was serious about it. I said, “Unfortunately or fortunately, I’m not like St. Teresa of Avila who had a wooden pillow” (which we saw in her cell in Avila). And I’m not like Śukadeva Gosvāmī who said, “You should use your arm for a pillow.”

“But you quoted him the other day,” Madhu chided.

“Yes, but we can’t imitate.”

Don’t imitate. Don’t eat carob cakes either. Tomorrow is Ekādaśī and we travel. We started traveling today by walking down to the van to pack articles away. And I don’t think I’ll shave my head so I won’t resemble a skinhead as we cross over the border into France and two days later on the overnight ferry to Ireland. Today

. . . no more lectures for me. I'll attend the Sunday afternoon lecture by SS, if he gives it in English.

After my lecture, he asked me how it felt to see ISKCON and Śrīla Prabhupāda become less liberal, less intimate. I said one had to internalize the relationship. Also Prabhupāda gave us assignments so we were able to exercise our controlling tendency. Everything was arranged by Lord Kṛṣṇa for our good. If we stayed too close to our spiritual master, maybe we'd have become too familiar. As I spoke, SS took some notes. I told him how Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "ISKCON may be big, but I am small." In other words, Prabhupāda said, "I'm still personal. You serve and be with me in that way." I was still going strong telling stories at the end. SS. is very accommodating, asking me to do what I want. He makes you actually feel free to do that. Like a rose. Yet he survives and thrives in this "heavy" North Europe zone where preaching book distribution is the highest theology and orders come down from the top for many particulars. He likes it and they like him. He's had some bumps in the road along the way, but seems like he's going under his own steam now as guru and preacher throughout Germany and many other places, especially Serbia and Croatia where he gets big audiences, although it's dangerous.

I am writing this on a toad's back with a quill feather. I have a haunched position. A hunchbacked girl named Kūbjā went to the Lord at His request. He straightened her out. Balarāma's appearance day comes up in a few days and we will fast on the ferry boat. We don't have to observe the day by special readings. I ought to warm up for Janmāṣṭamī by hearing Kṛṣṇa book tapes on those chapters. I could wait until we get to Wicklow to do that. I will not make fun

of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement except in a way appropriate for one who is a member. I am happy to have been with the Swami in the early years, especially 1966. SS said it's inconceivable how Swamiji treated us so kindly and leniently, such as when he saved me a plate from lunch.

As you write, you surrender. The big brass bells sound here in Zurich Sunday morning, 10 A.M. Mass and now 11 A.M. Mass. Sermons given. Worshippers be-fallen in their Sunday best efficient money in the basket.

Listen . . . I surrender. SS told Madhu he will speak in his lecture something literary which I will like. What? Will he tell us he studied Goethe in his youth or Proust? I don't think . . .

The money is right. One hundred Swiss francs. Chocolates, clocks, Swiss Army knives, pillows, Harikeśa Swami's room, the bell gonging and gonging for 11 A.M. Mass. All right already. And in the distance, another church—tall, green steeple—does the same. Seems you are not going to write as much today.



Got to go now. No story. A filet floundered. Svevo got out of the Navy with severance pay around \$600 and a Navy peacoat and black crewneck sweater. Those things are now discarded in favor of saffron. I have to

run now and do the *pūjā* for Prabhupāda but maybe later I can tell you a story how that lad gave up literary pose. But he was not visited by an E.T. creature, so I can't tell you that or his adventures with *prāṇa* therapy or Reiki. He's pretty straight.

No outstanding conflict
except his request
to God almighty.

4:30 P.M.

SS brought up the topic that ISKCON has many deep-seated faults and it's hard for a preacher to keep up his enthusiasm. I said I preach on the importance of chanting and hearing. He challenged that I could be an instrument for misleading people. If ISKCON were corrupt and I ask devotees to remain loyal and to concentrate on their *sādhana*, I could be displeasing to Śrīla Prabhupāda. I replied that it's healthy to admit wrongs and discuss how to reform ISKCON, but I want to stay aloof to that wrangling. I think ISKCON should not be abandoned and I have my niche, my contribution. I stress the essential priorities. I don't say everything is perfect, but I cannot tackle the problems. Neither do I expend my energies attacking persons I might suspect of being manipulative. To some degree, I trust the GBC, and I don't speak against it. I trust that Lord Caitanya's will shall prevail.

I am basically happy and simple. I encourage people to practice *bhakti-yoga*, either inside or outside of a temple. Hear from Śrīla Prabhupāda.

My Godbrother said we have enough preachers who can make learned presentations of the philosophy. We need people to face the facts such as that many devotees don't follow the four rules or chant sixteen, and for many there is no life-long future in ISKCON.

ISKCON may be in a sad state. Heading for a crisis—either it gets well or dies. Maybe that's healthy. But I keep thinking that if and when the conservative GBC leaders admit that plenty is wrong and may become more liberal and want to improve—even *then* I don't want to be at their meetings, round tables, computer Internets and seminars. I don't think it's wrong to support the ailing ISKCON. I think ISKCON's good outweighs its bad. I don't think Prabhupāda wants me to quit it. So as long as there are temples or groups of devotees, they will need lecturers. Yes, simple presentations of the philosophy and books such as I am writing.

I too feel the pinch, the peer pressure. I am criticized for being a little different. But I seek my integrity while remaining connected to ISKCON, in an aloof way. Don't want to even discuss it at length in a timed book. I'd just get swept along in the whirlpools of various diagnosis and treatments. We need organization like a good business has, as taught by Covey of *Seven Habits*. We need community, we need *varṇāśrama*, and so on.

We also need the pine trees
and a few maroon gladiolas
in a vase on a porch
in summer afternoon.

While SS lectures in Deutsch
we need someone sitting upstairs
writing in American-English mining
for his own fresh perspective—
who will travel tomorrow
to France and stop
to write. Please.

With all thy faults,
ISKCON, I make my
sermon-song within your precincts.

I said to SS he should take care of his health, not push himself so hard if he wants to live long. He said, "I don't want to live long; I want to burn out on the altar of sacrificing myself to preaching." He means it.

Do I want to live long? The last two hours of this Sunday I coast. Sit back, don't eat feast, don't meet guests, don't try anything much, except maybe an extra round. So tomorrow you can do the full *yajña* of travel.



I think I am more concerned to improve myself than to improve ISKCON.

Is that wrong? SS. grimaced and said, "When I read your books, I think, 'Why does he doubt that they are useful?'" He is sure that they help people. As Harikeśa

Mahārāja manages his vast zone by writing over the computer, so I write in a different way.

An ominous picture of ISKCON in deep wrong. Like an iceberg starting to crack from top to bottom. What's wrong? What will the outcome be? I can't figure it out, I'm too tiny. Neither do I want to accept anyone's opinion and follow their program for this. Take time alone to seek integrity. Writing also helps. Write for this purpose, to find out more what is right, what is wrong, and what is best for you to do. I don't want to be manipulated by either conservatives who say nothing is wrong in ISKCON but rather all its policies must be supported by all its members. Neither do I want to join the radicals who simply want to bash ISKCON.

This subject matter of a book like *Summer Marathon* may seem to be mostly irrelevant to these burnings issues. But it's not. It is more important for me to wake early, read *Bhagavad-gītā*, and then write some simple lines from the self, and then to travel in the van and keep chanting and writing and following a simple trail . . . even though I don't get spectacular results, I want to keep asking myself in quiet way what Prabhupāda wants of me and what I can actually do.

August 7

Write to purify yourself. Cut through as soon as possible. I've been keen to express my feelings, gut reactions. But also cutting through means reach a Kṛṣṇa conscious expression. Touch it, a verse of *śāstra*, a profound and helpful statement by Śrīla Prabhupāda—get close to it, to them, throughout the day. Kṛṣṇa is revealed only to those who think of Him in *paramparā*. So my writing is for that. My self-expression and honesty is for this. Otherwise, it may be a mundane exercise.

This combination of honesty and openness, even when it means groping through confusion, *and* the striking goal of Kṛṣṇa consciousness by deliberate, prayerful embrace of śāstric words—can be possible in the timed book, *Summer Marathon*. The book should not confine me by adherence to some formula or “story.” Speak to the heart of the issue directly. Some of this feeling was aroused last night after talking to SS. and sharing his feeling of the malaise of ISKCON. (I referred him to words in his German language, angst and *berldshmertz*—he seemed to be feeling them, an ISKCON-*shmertz*.) Madhu also encouraged me that my personal writing should do this; whether it's published or whether it's a book of chapters is not the point. I need help, I want Kṛṣṇa consciousness and writing can serve me. It will be readable. Will it be art? Maybe. A sort of art. And if it's artless but vital Kṛṣṇa consciousness, what's the harm in that?

This led me to think maybe the format of Writing Sessions would serve me better, they are more of an in-

itation to write in the moment, whatever comes. The process of free-writing can lead you to the heart of concerns quickly. And doing them one after another gives momentum. It's similar to reading or chanting; it brings its own reward as in, "Chanting produces chanting."

But I promise to endure for the marathon. It's a nice idea and has been going well. Don't let it collapse and don't let it become conformity to a story (pretended) of your travel and preaching-writing, a novel of autobiography, a performance. Better each time you write you be truthful, regardless of where it starts and stops. Also each time hit a Kṛṣṇa consciousness that nourishes you.

This Post-it note to myself: "Try to write uncensored. Be yourself in remaining days (of marathon)." One way to do this might be to keep the book *Marathon* rolling, but do it more as a series of Writing Sessions. Or think of the "scrap journal" you kept. Or think of *Writing While Reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's Books*. It can be a combination of all these. Let's say that you wanted (and still want) to write a book to capture the summer-end experience as you travel and write in Europe while living out of your van. Let's also say that you have built up a context, achieved it, in the chapters you've already written. Now you can use this achievement to allow you to go further. Your reader (again, I mostly refer here to myself as the reader, the one who wants to sustain a book, to bring a book into existence, and to read that book) is sympathetic, willing to go where you want to take him. The reader mostly wants genuine experience. If you can develop, go further than you have gone so far, he is willing to adjust to changes in style, a different kind of reporting, and he is capable of it. It's silly to think the reader can't or won't follow you and that

you have to “dumb down” your writing instinct for him to keep up his interest. What good is free-writing if it’s not actually freer? And if you consider this a gamble—and that it might fail—it’s still worth a chance. Better to be bold and go beyond—if your heart leads you there—than to keep a safe account, “Because I promised us I’d write a book in 21 days of life on the road, a day by day until Janmāṣṭamī.” You don’t have to shape it; it’s already being shaped by time, by the fact that life does occur in divisions of days and all the other factors.

ISKCON, ISKCON. Remember the time a devotee said to Prabhupāda that the *gurukula* building in progress at Vṛndāvana would be for the ISKCON’s children? Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “ISKCON, FISKCON.” I don’t know exactly what he meant by that, but we needn’t be attached so much to any stereotyped or limited idea of ISKCON. It lives, it continues, it grows. Or it breaks down. It’s pure or impure. It’s *sampradāya* or *asampradāya*. You cannot control it by uttering the word ISKCON. Even the GBC (another word formula) can’t control the reality and destiny of what we mean by the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. It’s Śrīla Prabhupāda’s movement, a branch of the Lord Caitanya tree. It’s our sacred cow. The institution. It has no written constitution. It sells pizza at Māyāpur. It exists in the temples listed in *Back to Godhead* magazine.

In Slovenia, they don’t serve sweets daily to devotees. But while I was there, I got sweets everyday. When I ate lunch with my *sannyāsi* Godbrother, it was served by the temple devotees and they didn’t include a sweet. I asked my Godbrother, “Is there a sweet?” So it was on my behalf that he went out of the room and asked and

created a fuss when they said they had no sweet. I asked is there a sweet, but I would not have made a fuss. If they told me, "No, there is no sweet," I'd had left it at that. But he lectured to the devotees how they should always serve Kṛṣṇa a sweet, even a little bit of sugar, it's one of the tastes. He described it in terms of Deity worship. But it also appears that we, at least I, was also seeking to satisfy the tongue's demand for sweets. I was implicated in an embarrassing scene. It may well have left the impression that we *sannyāsīs* who preach to devotees how they should act, would be seen by them as attached to sweets and demanding them, whereas the other devotees go without sweets-gratification.

I need to be careful about my behavior so I don't come off as hypocritical or demanding when I visit with devotees. I am a *vikṣuṣ tridaṇḍi*, a beggar. Accept what you are offered; "Beggars can't be choosers." The fact is also that many devotees want to serve a *sannyāsi* and so they ask you, "What do you want?" When you indicate you are attached to sweets, they may give you plenty. But if you become attached to heavy, elaborate desserts, that's not good. I am attached to it. I weigh around 118 pounds which for a man who is 5'11" is certainly skinny. But that's no excuse for filling your little belly and allowing the pushing agents of tongue and mind to be uncontrolled and greedy. Eat to live. Take only what's necessary. Śrīla Prabhupāda: "The purpose of food is to increase the duration of life, purify the mind and aid bodily strength. This is its only purpose" (Bg. 17.10, purport).

Write on, MacDuff. Scratching pen under desk lamp, no other lamp on in this guest room, M. sleeps on the other side of this desk. Now I should go and follow a schedule for our departure by 5 A.M. Chanting

until 2:30 and go into bathroom, then load up last articles into van, including Śrīla Prabhupāda *mūrti*. Can I worship him in Wicklow?

Dreamt we devotees—Kīrtanānanda, Jayādvaita, Jaya Pataka were in the dream—were adjusting to life in a rocky, desolate, offshore island where formerly Christian monks had lived. *It was very austere*. We examined little cave-like cells that were built into the rocks. They had a front and rear chamber to them. Periodically, these cells would get flooded when the ocean water rolled in. It would even flood over your head, but only for a moment and then the water would recede. We accepted it and so adjust to life there and found advantages in it. Extreme austerity in everything and a hermit's, *bābājī's* kind of existence while we practiced Kṛṣṇa conscious *sādhana*.

When I awoke, I asked why this dream had come. Is it an aftermath of hearing my Godbrother's anxiety that ISKCON is deeply wrong? Was I imagining that we would have to make a new start, maybe in this life or in the next, something similar to going to a desolate rock island for *tapasya*? Would Kṛṣṇa force us to go there? Is this a survivalist's scenario? I don't know for sure. I seemed willing to make the best of it. The habits and policies of the Christian monks who had been living on this island in previous times seemed to shape and condition our own attempts. Would ISKCON misleaders repeat their same mistakes? Kīrtanānanda was there and right away set himself apart with a separate group and tried developing a community with more than the others had. Jaya Pataka was found hiding under a car so that he could sleep extra. Someone pulled him out by his ears.

You better chant and tell the truth quickly. Do what you need to do to finish the marathon strongly. Put anything into the book or convert it into a different space, whatever. You know, despite this talk of changing it, that you probably cannot change it much. You are who you are and when you go to write it comes out like that. But yes, you can do more than following a routine formula. Release from formalities and bounds is good. Do what is best for yourself and Kṛṣṇa conscious. Read, that's very important. Keep Kṛṣṇa consciousness close to you, a foremost daily objective as you will find it when you come close to Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and embrace even a single sentence.

Border into France

Lady with chiming voice stops us. Other cars go through. We pull to the side while she runs a check on our passports. She asked, "Where have you been?"

He said, "Uh . . . Italy and we've been in Zurich for four days."

"Pull over there."

It's five minutes now. Traffic flows into France and we wait. Madhu studies map. It's 6 A.M. and we have made good time so far. I slept a half hour in cozy dark of back van.

Why is she delaying us? Are we suspicious? I don't think she saw we were Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees, but something caught her attention-intuition to give us some special scrutiny. An Irishman and an American dare to enter the Republic of France.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I want to read your books and learn of your Kṛṣṇa there. This morning, I read *Bhagavad-gītā* 40 minutes and that was nice. Kṛṣṇa helps us in the heart.

"Listen, young lady, we are on a mission from God!"

Rain, pleasant driving talking with M. about my resolution to see my headaches as coming from Kṛṣṇa and not to seek diagnosis and cures from the many mundane paths.

P-stop, France

Got to roll on now, due to stop for the day 100 kilometers short of Paris. Then very early tomorrow we can drive through Paris (which has no good belt system around the city) before traffic builds up.

No time yet for thinking nicely or writing. Later you may get a chance. But you can utter *mahā-mantras* while you ride northward on the *bonne route*.

4:10 P.M.

After about six hour's van travel today, I sit here well fed, a bit dazed, after nap, in sweat pants, looking around in back of van, hear traffic zoom by nearby on the *bonne route*. Words like that on periphery of consciousness, they go by and you hear them but don't get snatched by one enough to write it down . . . Harṁsa-dutta . . . root.

M. said while concentrating on driving, his mind simultaneously played a scenario where he was speaking to a group of people being sympathetic to their criticism of ISKCON yet presenting *paramparā* and my side of things. How would he speak? He went ahead and did it.

What is wrong with ISKCON? Here are some of the charges made by various parties.

Its leaders are cuckoo. They just want to control for themselves and they set up everything like that. It's a scorched hothouse. You can tell which house on a street is the ISKCON temple—just look for the most

dilapidated building. Not enough money. They cheat while distributing books. Keep ruining their own reputation that way. Sad case. All bureaucracy and no sense even trying to rejoin it.

They took guruship but Śrīla Prabhupāda should be the only one. He's not in the center. The Padayātrā is a farce. Where are the practical solutions to world problems? They mistreat women. No one is accountable.

Listen, ISKCON is a heartbreaker, fist-breaker. They have been attacked over 20 years now by anti-cult movement and are tiring of it but still thought of as a cult in days when evil cults become more and more a fearful phenomena.

They lost their head when their Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Prabhupāda, went back to Godhead. All trouble stems from that.

They're not organized according to sound business principles. They are sectarian and don't allow help from psychologists. Could use infusion of love among members. Scott Peck could help or Covey or Eric Fromme, *somebody*, but they don't listen. They pretend they are perfect.

Too much philosophy and no human action for good. Leaders won't allow it. Emphasis on making money and no real preaching.

Or—not enough book distribution.

Too much New Age in ISKCON.

Just the opposite of what someone says is wrong. So it's a madhouse of various opinions.

GBC iron fist but no heart, just laws and bylaws and committees and rhetoric and Centennial but no home, no life-long career. No education, no black justice for blacks except for Bhakti-tīrtha Mahārāja.

Farms dead, no self-sufficient economy. That's what's wrong.

Main lack: still have not implemented *varṇāśrama*.

What's good about ISKCON?

Captivated some good looking women in *sārīs* (saw a guy checking out women as he sat in Zurich temple). Good cooking if you don't mind ghee and sugar and fries. They've got a far out philosophy; good books if you don't mind dogmatic authority. (Hey, that's a complaint. Say something good here.)

Good music. Mice. Cats. Houses. People, yeah, people with actual lives, actual sacrifices. Blood and tears. They get beat up but don't stop. Few members but wide effect. Got some oldsters now. Geez, they got a lot of good things going for them and it's a shame they're so small and without a five year or ten year plan.

They do be celibates, some. Nice clothes for summertime. Links with ancient and contemporary spiritual India.

Links with jinx. I, the central eye, wrote a few letters, dictated them with loud and clear enunciation while the cupboards rattled and the van shook and hurtled forward. It sounds loud as hell, me shouting my letter over the din to Kdd, to JS, to SS, Dear so-and-so, today is August 7 and I am hurt foot, alive, no headache (scrape head on low overhead doors), headed north in France, due in a couple of days in Wicklow, Ireland, can't-live-forever-Jones.

Mountains of Wicklow worn down. Don't believe predictions of tidal wave, but if the earth wants to change her coastlines and has Kṛṣṇa's permission, then it will happen. Jagadīśa Goswami in Śaraṇāgati tired he says of picking up the mess of ISKCON's mistakes by explaining it away, defending its wrongs as if overall right. So he's what? Dropping out from it? He wants to separate his own being and destiny from that created from this monstrous movement with its management

boards and wrong ways and wrong results. Live for what he as a person believes. First he has to find that. After being so long entangled and his opinion mixed in with the group decision of the institution—now find yourself, by reading your spiritual master's books and stop defending the ISKCON way as the solution to people's problems. If you do that (some say), you are just adding to the problem. You don't fully believe ISKCON is right yet you continue to advise people to live in it and join it. Enough! Recover yourself for now, have the guts and principle to find your own integrity. Sound right? Or another crazy? You want to imitate what he's doing?

One solution is like they do in Wicklow. Pull out and start your own community with people you know and respect. Nothing is perfect.

Sats flits like water bug from one temple to another with hideouts in between, says he represents the world of *śāstra*. Huh.

We misfits of the century. Ernest Borgnine as the Centurion in charge of 100 men. When I was GBC of Northeast US, Caribbean, and Ireland, we used to submit up to 350,000 a year to BBT and got a few pats on the back for members of GBC's millionaire's club and a polite applause in that moment informal during the GBC meeting. Was it worth it? Where did the money get spent?

You worked to manage devotees to collect money selling paintings. That was the main effort. Oh well . . .



In P-stop
in France far away
from jungles of New York
and temples of USA and
new New Vrindaban and
hardcore rock scene
and pillow fights and
Mt. Airy Philly temple
Jagannātha
tears, disappeared
scenes and disciples gone,
he writes down
into sunset today
no sun out and that's good
for driving.

Yea, yea, sunset harbor police. Got stubby, heavy pistols on their hips in holsters and armies got weapons stuffed and ready in hangers and silos and rifles and even spears among primitives, to fight and kill and take rebirth punished for it.

You can't have nonviolence in this world. Can't have inaction. Try for Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Yes, he said, despite all faults of Hare Kṛṣṇa people, when we went to the park, we chanted and hundreds came around and I spoke to crowd saying, We have concern for pollution of water and air but who knows about pollution of consciousness? He was able to speak to their mentality and . . . and he said, yes, at that moment I felt Hare Kṛṣṇa people and movement is a wonderful, unique thing.

Whoosh, whoosh.

White spots or stripes on highway. You get dizzy. You intake air and exhale. Sleep peaceful this body and life a charmed because no matter what else happens, you have fortunate link to your spiritual master and Lord Kṛṣṇa. It's the next life that's in doubt. If you are so concerned with ISKCON's wrongs and if as you say those wrongs are actually thorough and deep, then you very well may be born again into this problematic movement, child of some ISKCON *ghasthas* maybe, born and raised in one of those temples you complain about and again you either become part of the problem or you work to solve it. You could be born life after life in a struggling ISKCON. You say that's not so bad? Well, it would be better to go back to Godhead or to solve some of ISKCON's problems.

Write it, roll the dice, serpent, you are playing a dangerous game with high stakes of *samsāra*. If this ISKCON house is seriously defective and you yourself don't even live in it but skirt it and travel through it, then what do you expect? Take a look. Can't figure it out? Make your contribution? Claim you are not implicated by all mistakes others make in the movement. Your bottom line is you think your spiritual master wants you to continue working for this movement. With all its faults, its good is better than its bad, it still must go on, and is the

worthy cause, and you have no other life, all you know
is this, this laughable,

scornful,

cruel,

impersonal,

near bankrupt yet collecting 100

million for Māyāpur temple,

this broken down porch,

unheated in winter,

full of memories as seen in old

BTG magazines, this soporific,

sleeping through the millennium,

daily Deity worship with

heart or not? Living

on the credit of a few

sincere idealists,

this movement invincible as directed by Lord Caitanya but they doubt it now, its own die hard members doubt it,

you will be born again into this

hypey movement begun in 1966. (Don't mind me, I'm just free-writing. I'm not responsible for what's wrong. Or I'm trying to right it in my little way.)

Night Notes

What made you happy? Writing this last section, "What's wrong with ISKCON?"—I saw my place and ability to express wrongs and hurts in a way that releases me, speaks a truth and is a way to help with the problem itself.

In the morning, I rode in the front seat with M. and talked something about attitude to health (depend on Kṛṣṇa) and eating habits.

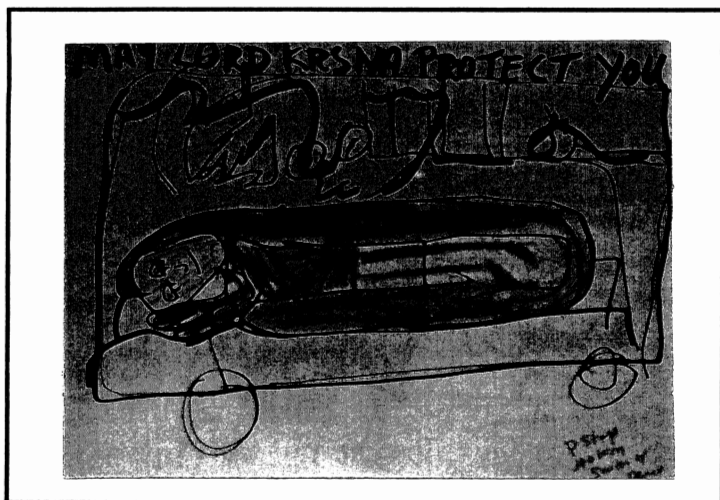
The break away from temple at 5 A.M. Delightful Ekādaśī lunch made by Rati's fiancée. Things happen and you hope there will be nothing terrible like a crash on the highway. Happiness is the quiet absence of disaster. Things stay on the shelf and don't fall off due to earthquake. You don't have a heart attack, nor does your friend. As the British say, "My trip was uneventful"—they mean nothing terrible happened and I got home safely. So that's a kind of happiness and you should note it. Not sad that there are no big peaks. But I want to write and read. Happy to read to end of *The Best I Could Do* and discover that it really didn't fall apart at end; it kept going and I like it. So timed books can continue.

Process is working.

Read of Uśa and Aniruddha, now Baṇa fights Kṛṣṇa.

Important to talk of health attitude, of Wicklow ahead, of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, keep going is all I can say. I feel more conviction, after speaking with SS and hearing of his intuition that ISKCON has some spreading cracks in its foundation—that I'm doing what is best for me and best way to respond to the cracks. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Your love for me will be proved by how you cooperate together to maintain this institution." But how is that done, that working cooperatively in ISKCON? It doesn't mean just going along always with the leaders as I did in the 11 gurus only days. Was that cooperation? It's not so easily achieved. I have to stick up for my own integrity. Śrīla Prabhupāda told me not to give Mr. Payne a penny, even if Brahmānanda and Kīrtanānanda say otherwise.

So good night. I hope you will rise early and read *Bhagavad-gītā*.

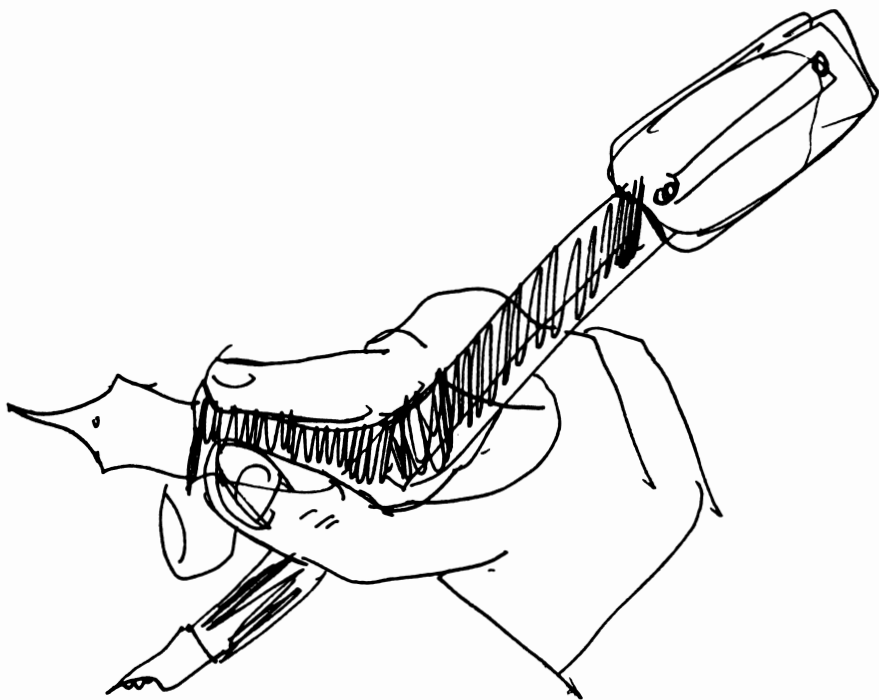


August 8

1:05 A.M.

P-stop with ear plugs in, after reading *Bhagavad-gītā*. In my reading, Kṛṣṇa is beginning to describe a few of His splendorous manifestations in the world as can be experienced directly by a common person. Arjuna has said he never tires of hearing this nectar. Śrīla Prabhupāda says a superior devotee not only wants to hear about Kṛṣṇa Himself, but wants all humankind to hear it and accept Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

I was thinking of additions of *Bhagavad-gītā* in terms of size for travel, largeness and clarity of print, and so on. Thinking of reading habits, ways to take the nectar. A little pocket book might be nice of just the Sanskrit and English, a very small book like Shambala pocket books. Then thinking which *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* can I carry to and in India. The deluxe is the best (even though the paper is thin) but is it too heavy to carry around? These are nice, external considerations. The internal is to actually taste the nectar. Śrīla Prabhupāda asserts that transcendental reading remains fresh despite repeated readings. This I want. You can't know all about Kṛṣṇa, but you always relish it. This is more important and more fun than discussing what's wrong with ISKCON. We may have a responsibility to discuss what's wrong and seek a remedy for the institution's ills. But that doesn't exclude the importance of going on relishing Kṛṣṇa's statements in *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *kṛṣṇa-kathā* of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.



Write as well as read. You are meant for this. Jay-
advaita Swami said that he doesn't have writer's "kar-
ma," the drive to write. Do I have it? A little, and I ex-
pand on it, use it. I didn't feel much like writing just
now, but I have begun. You can develop it. But I think
many practical people cannot see the usefulness of it.
They will write if they think it can be something "nuts
and bolts," something that will accomplish a purpose.
And then they try to control it and make it come out
right and so on. They don't take the joy of ink coming
onto the page, they don't. I do, is that right?

M. says he very much likes that I always question my-
self and ask Lord Kṛṣṇa, "What is it You want me to
do?" He says it may be a gremlin or a conscience or
whatever, but it's good. Of course, we have to separate
those voices of self-examination. The gremlin tries to
stop the writing. Another voice of conscience may be
more friendly. Some are naggers of weakness. I apolo-

gize to myself and to my readers, sorry it's not good, etc. You sometimes cut through and leave that behind.

Would like to explain improvising to M. How do you do it, by giving him a jazz tape to listen to? No. And why try to convince him? He and others may think that on principle you cannot write for weeks without planning and expect it to come out as a publishable book. Then how do you write a publishable book? Oh, they say, by planning it. And then outlining it and writing a first draft and several others and then submitting to editors. I do submit my work to editor, proofreaders, copy editor, etc. But the main bulk of it ought to remain.

Otherwise, emasculation? Anyway, write for yourself.

Thought if you lost eyesight, you could hear *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. You could also speak it. Chanting and hearing is to vibrate with the tongue and hear with the ear. Writing and printing is a kind of crutch for Kali-yuga. Yet it's glorious.

Citrālekḥā means one who is excellent in drawing pictures. Be like that. If not expert—*citra*—be a lover of drawing. I'd like that. Unload feelings, splash colors as you did twice this year and would like to do twice every year. "Paint as you like and die happy."

Hare Kṛṣṇa pictures of *līlās* and instructions and obsession theme of man reading a book. Read and prayer.

Read the book and go on reading them and draw the picture of people reading. Sometimes you sketch from a live model and try for accuracy, and when you are in a lucky mood you drew how it feels within to read a book, to hold it in your hands and how to make an image of that sacred act. Peter London's book on art is wonderful for me. Ought to read it each time we do an art retreat. At least the first 100 pages.

Paint and draw ever more
Citralekhā drew pictures of
various heroes of the Yādus
and Uśa picked out the one
she'd dreamt of as her
lover. She became shy when

she saw the picture of Pradyumna who was to become her father-in-law, and when Citralekhā drew Aniruddha, Uśa cried out, "That's him! That's the one!"

Rain on roof of this van. Spotlight run by battery. When you feel raindrops, close the overhead opening. Go on writing and then chanting. I explained to SS my open secret of very early morning. When I said midnight, he wanted to write it down although he said later he couldn't rise that early. I immediately said, "Of course not. You are a preacher and have evening engagements." But I am happy to give up those evening engagements so I can rise at 12. Midnight might not be auspicious by Vedic standards (Nanda Mahārāja was arrested for going in the water too early), but Śrīla Prabhupāda set the example and I follow him. Do I imitate? If so, it's the child's practice, another way of being with your master, I suppose.

I told SS yesterday this is my inner life. It's not a vague mysticism; I don't get up and pray according to some silent meditation (or Peter Calvay's prayer blue print), and I don't enter *rāgānugā-bhājana*. But I read for an hour (almost) in one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, then I write for an hour (almost, or maybe not usually, 40 minutes it seems is most lately), and then according to time and place I chant for one or one and a half hours. These are the big three activities and they constitute inner life for me—reading and writing and chanting.

One may say, “Oh, that is an external description of it.” Yes, external, to be up to turn pages of a book, to write notes, to finger beads and enumerate mantras and count with the counter beads. I admit it’s external. But it has an inner spark or why would I do it? I don’t read *any* old book at this hour, but Śrīla Prabhupāda’s. I don’t write any old thing, but the free-write process steering to Kṛṣṇa consciousness (with or without grem-lins along for the ride). And I don’t chant “Coca-cola” or “Mr. John,” but Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare. So the inner is outer; and the outer is inner, if you know what I mean.

The marathon just passed halfway mark. Outer activities will diminish when we reach Wicklow. Maybe I can write more or say more. Be happy and peaceful in all situations. This road life is bliss. Say it, mark it, and read it later as a true statement. Like now, reading by 12-volt light in back of van at P-stop in France—yet it’s not really France. France is a huge nation with culture all its own and great social and economic problems, its own chauvinistic language, etc. France also contains a few ISKCON places. But we are not now in those Frances. We are in our *bhajana* traveling tin bubble at a P-stop. It’s raining but we are dry. We are poised an hour south of Paris, ready soon to bullet-jettison ourselves through that metropolis and get out of it before the *karmīs* start their passionate rush hour. So I write to say I love this life of travel and study and writing as we travel.

Log in the travel book, sir, you haven’t done it lately.

All right, all right
get ready to go and

when you too have to die,
after the Centennial year—
because we have to live through
that, right?
Then after due consideration
of what's wrong in ISKCON
and being sufficiently worked
and smiling and laughing too
when you are ready to
die happy,
after hundreds more posters
colored by you,
loved and loving in return your
friends,
yeah, after Vṛndāvana-Māyāpur,
after plane tickets—
exactly when I can't tell you
and it's not something M. and I can
plan or go to the travel agent
about (although in another
sense, death is something you
do plan for, as the *karmīs*
with their insurance and are picking out
a tombstone!)—after
the tea and biscuits and
the T.S. Eliot references
are done—or before—
or anytime—
death comes and that's
it. But the soul goes
on, I pray dear Lord
carry me,
carry me as soul,
as I depart now
from my friends and memories,

blessing ISKCON with good
fortune, if I have any power
to bless,
lemme go in peace
and honorably
despite panic and pain and
not as a mere stoic,
don't be tight-lipped but
cry
tears
and joy
and ask the Lord to
let you remember Him and
be with Him and His devotees
in the next life.

Okay, another death poem—now get going with *japa*
and arm with this serviceable marathon. Your duties,
these are your duties, travelin' man, just as it's the duty
of the *pūjārī* to rise and go to the shower and temple
room. Trucks shudder, we pray the patron of Kṛṣṇa
conscious travelers will protect us as we go through
Paris on to Le Havre.

At 70 miles per hour

I've already written what's wrong with ISKCON in-
cluding some of the main objections I've heard. Here
are more.

It don't plant 'taters,
it don't plant cotton
and those that plant them
are soon forgotten.

It is an ardvaark (eats ants). It is a dinosaur, prehistoric. They eat white sugar and too much ghee, use aluminum pots, plastic spoons and plates.

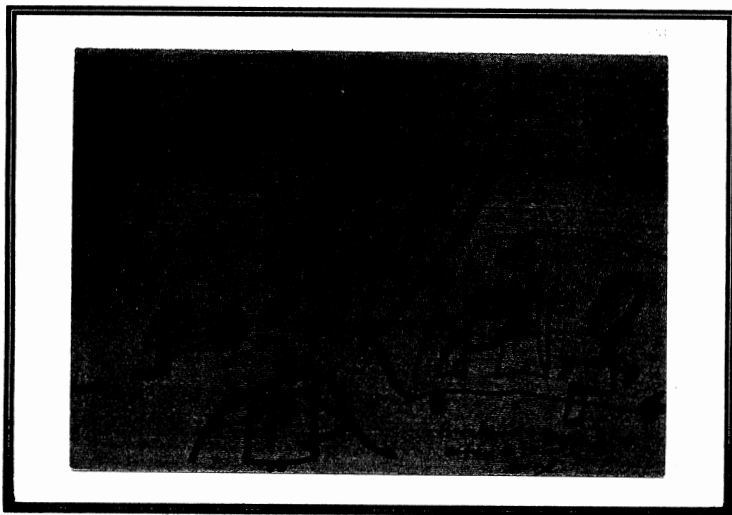
They make noise early in the morning, singing and banging a drum.

Funny looking haircuts. Women pierced ears and nose. Incorporate rock music as *bhajana*.

They don't go out and sing on streets like they used to. It used to be that all devotees were happy to sacrifice and dedicate their efforts to the Swami, Prabhupāda. Now that's gone. His disciples who have become authorities and gurus direct affairs according to their inclinations but it's not the same as in the old days when everyone worked for the Swami. How can we get back that spirit? Is it possible?

Who can you trust?

No Prabhupāda letters anymore.



(Writing this, I told you, while driving and stopping short sometimes and jolting ahead, two hours to Le

Havre, then we have to buy ferry tickets and shop in town, find a campground and go there for the day.)

Parked outside "Super U" while M. is shopping. You "kill" time pursuing the tourist pamphlet for Le Havre and the prospectus for Irish ferries. Why? Read some letters of Śrīla Prabhupāda's. He told me what to do; think for myself and follow his orders even if others don't.

Eyes look around town, old lady with loaf of French bread unwrapped. Advertisements catering to English and Irish ferry customers. Gray sky, cars, cars streaming both ways at 10:30 A.M. Billboard announcing cinema, Sean Connery starring in "Lancelot." St. Joseph's church here like an urban skyscraper with crucifix on top. Śrīla Prabhupāda would like a building like that to be used in Kṛṣṇa's service, like 12-story Manhattan "skyscraper."

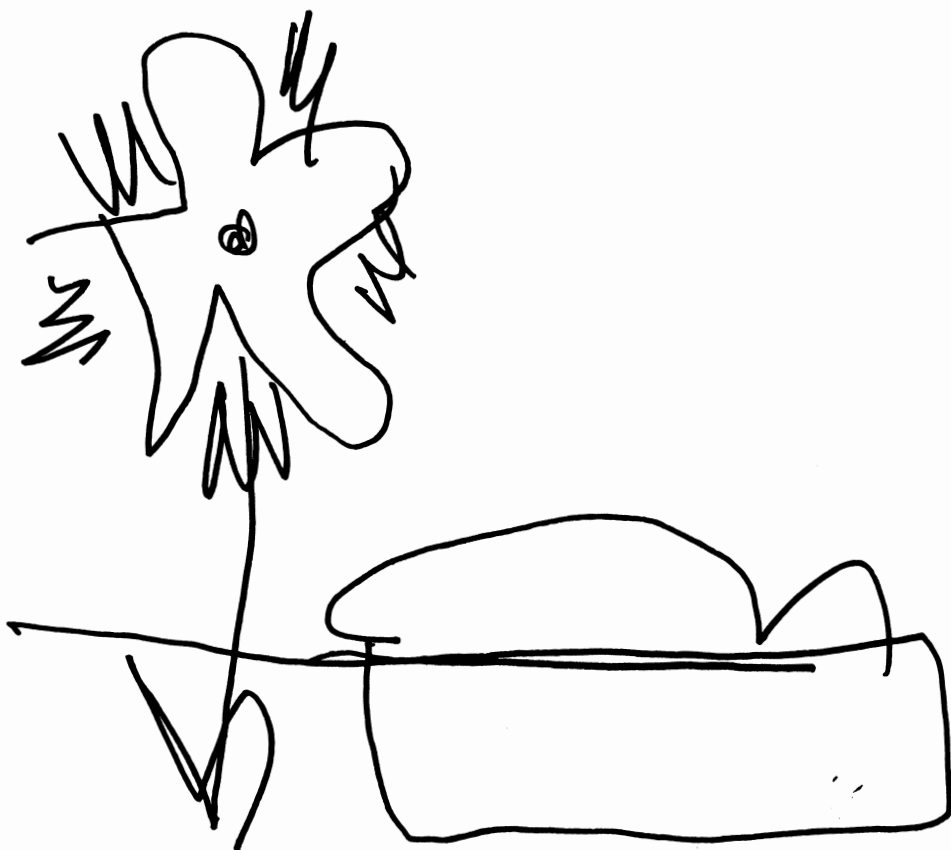
Read more today . . . chant . . . while you live. The body should be kept chaste and the mind.

What will you do six days at Wicklow? When you take a walk in the morning, how will you use that? What will you say to the evergreen trees? Sheep. Of course, devotees.



You, you, you
 I'm in love with you, you, you
 No-body romance
 love spirit and spirit body
 serve in this world and go
 to that world in spiritual body.

I will follow him who says so. Write down your re-
 port, daddy-o, and be a good old man until bath and
 lunch and dreams and more *sāstra*. You get tired of it?
 Everything has its flaws. Let us be quiet down.



4:10 P.M.

Sometimes a *saṅkīrtana* (book distribution) party goes out with intentions to do a full marathon (as may be designated by the BBT worldwide, at Christmas and summer end), but they decide to come back early. Why? Maybe they are not doing so well, stopped by police wherever they go, or the *karmīs* are not buying books. They phone their temple president and tell him their poor results. At first he preaches to them to stay out and keep trying. But after a few days, he and the *saṅkīrtana* leader decide it's counterproductive. They are losing money by staying out. So they come back and continue book distribution locally, although not perhaps with the full pitch intensity of traveling *saṅkir-*

tana. Maybe a few of the distributors who are experiencing trouble in their minds or bodies, come back to the temple and stay back from book distribution for awhile.

That's one scenario, with a tinge of defeat to it. But sometimes the *saṅkīrtana* party may realistically assess that they could do a better marathon by returning to their home city and going out from the temple each day. In that case, their stopping traveling would not be a stopping of the marathon, but just a strategy for improving *saṅkīrtana* results. Superficially, one might think that such a party, on returning home, was stopping the marathon early, but that would not be a fact.

I give these examples because today I began thinking of ending this *Summer Marathon* before the 21 days are up. Our marathon is a literary one, and one might say it is fictional. No one (no Bhaktivedanta Book Trust or anyone) declared that SDG shall write a book for 21 days and he will thus prosecute a summer marathon of a timed book corresponding to a BBT summer marathon. But I did announce it to myself. I don't want to "come back" from the marathon in defeat saying, "It was too hard; I couldn't keep it up."

The prospect of six days at Wicklow, during which I won't have to attend a temple program and will be obliged to give only one lecture—comes as a such a change in our activities of travel and lecturing as we've been doing since August 29. It may be a bit artificial, therefore, for me to keep writing "the marathon." The writing process wants to be spontaneous. I do not want to write uninspired assignments or force myself. I want writing to serve me as a cutting edge in my Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So as I contemplated the days ahead, I felt a lack of spontaneous feeling for continuing the day by day account that has been running ten days now. I

know I have posted signs, “21 days,” and, “Now at the halfway mark,” and told myself keep going until Jan-māṣṭamī. So it’s somewhat embarrassing to call off the *yajña* early. Therefore, I must emphasis that I’m not planning on doing less writing over the six days at Wicklow. But it may be confining and artificial for me to keep up this present story and personae. It has been effective, and I felt satisfied. It was especially beneficial to have a writing project even while in the stress and distraction of travel. It has not been hokey, a hoax, but a traveling *saṅkīrtana* timed book.

Our itinerary has been planned this way—first it was four days in Wicklow but now six and then off again to the temples, Belfast, Inis Rath, Dublin, etc. In other words, *I am not quitting anything*. I’m not ending something in defeat.

Dear reader, you know I just keep writing one long book with different titles. In early July for a week it was called *Why Not Fiction?* Then it became for 12 days, *A Place for Art*. And then this marathon. If I “stop” the book called *Summer Marathon*, it doesn’t mean I’ll stop the endurance act of writing each day, at least I hope not. That depends on Lord Kṛṣṇa.

If I do end this particular format of daily *saṅkīrtana* writing when I get to Wicklow, then what will I do instead? I don’t now. Maybe at first I can switch back to the Writing Sessions, shapeless, open, and just keep the hand moving. Think out loud. Try to write for an hour at a time, at least twice a day. See what evolves from that.

This was the way of Kotzger. Just as there is a difference between day and night, there must be a distinction between one day and another. A man should not even imitate himself. Self-renewal must be constant. To repeat oneself is to commit forgery; one becomes

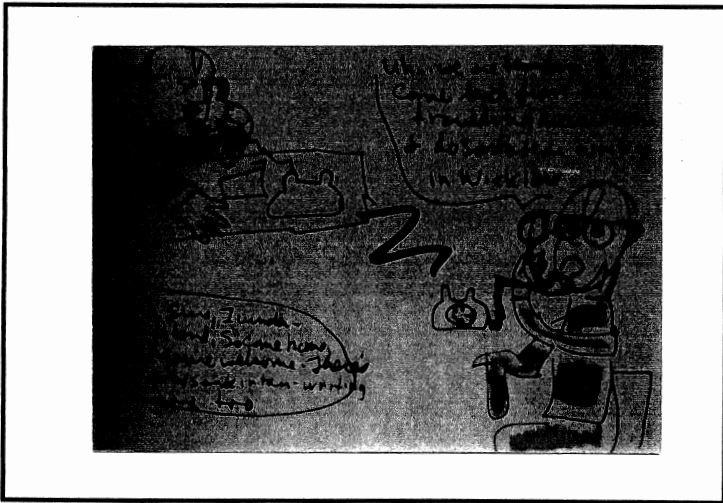
mired in a routine. Therefore, avoid the trodden paths! At least one day a week—on the Sabbath—keep away from sameness.

—*A Passion for Truth*, p. 169

August 9

1 A.M.

So it's decided we will switch to another writing in Wicklow. We'll come back home from the traveling *saṅkīrtana*, at least for six days.



Here's a review of some of our themes on this *Summer Marathon*.

We wanted to search for honesty on a daily basis. But I did not pursue it in a formal or systematized way. The pressure of travel was good in many ways, but demanding. One could not always take time in the evening to quietly ask oneself, "What made me happy?" You live, you flow. You are always within Kṛṣṇa conscious duties. You know you would like to go deeper. But there's a higher priority or pressure to simply op-

erate, cope. At night you don't "meditate" and write down careful gut observations. No, you put out the clocks, set the alarms, and try to take rest. But here and there, I played that game and said that yogurt and fruit made me happy and stopping at a P-stop for breakfast, rest and driving on. In general, I like the van-traveling life. Not only to stop and reside in or live out of the van with its handy supply of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and tapes, and not only the aspect of its privacy and mobility, but all of these things and more. Travel days also, although potentially tiring, have a magic of their own. They move you along in a way that's almost symbolical—how we cannot *stay* in our life but have to flow with it. A way of life. The lightness and nonattachment. M. likes to joke: after a day of van travel when we finally pull into some spot for the night, when he backs into the spot, turns off the engine and pulls on the emergency brake, he turns to me as if presenting me with something wonderful and says, "Here we are, *home!*" It's home sweet home but only for six or eight hours. There is no home, only the road and P-stops. Some stops are more idyllic in a forest, some noisier at a truck stop, and even the quiet one can suddenly erupt into a noisy one. So don't be attached. It's also true that our compact accommodations are comfortable. It's a blissful life. Being out of reach of phones and other long-arm message systems is one of the nice features of travel.

In the Introduction, I mentioned we'd quote from Heschel's book and we have done so. Again, the life on the road didn't permit me to do this in a careful way. Neither was I inclined to do it. One had to prepare for the next temple lecture and I always feel a need for frequent association with Śrīla Prabhupāda and his books. K and K are astonishing in their radical demand

for truthfulness, but I can't read it as absolute shelter. In fact, I have to be on guard not to be carried away with it or accept their mood as if they are my gurus. Seek truthfulness, that's very important. And Heschel has something very crucial to say about it.

As for Svevo, he never appeared much at all. It was offered as a hunch from the beginning, but did not develop. I'm satisfied, however, with his occasional "cameo" appearances. In one sense, he was always with us. That is, we introduced him as the writing life, the writer I was even before I met up with the Swami. This book and all my writing now are a literary sequel to the pre-Kṛṣṇa conscious story of a young man writing as he lives. The art, the love and dedication of writing your life as you live it and seeing yourself as a personae in a true story. It began with Svevo and now he's Satsvarūpa dāsa. So Svevo got initiated, you could say. Or you could say Svevo ceased to exist once I entered ISKCON. Either way, I couldn't get much interested in him in his old *māyā*-bound existence. I thank God he's gone. I've moved on. Don't want to be sentimentally attached.

Related to this is the discussion of the Pyrrhic victory, meaning "a too costly victory." If I dedicate myself to writing and use all life as grist for the mill, I may achieve excellence in writing, but at what expense? If I am not able to actually live but always live only to write about it, that's missing the whole point of existence. This discussion goes on sometimes aside from the facts of God consciousness. But Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the real point. There is no harm in being a dedicated writer in Kṛṣṇa's service. But if you become a good literary artist yet lose your soul, *that's* the Pyrrhic victory. Actually, it's no victory at all but only an illusion. For the doubting soul there is no happiness either in this life or the next. I must continue to seek the right balance.

Don't sacrifice yourself on the altar of the writing life, whether in the form of free-writing, stories, essays, poems, diaries, or whatever. They are all acts for serving the Lord. The purpose of all knowledge in art is to glorify the Supreme. My work is no exception to this principle.

But I think Lord Kṛṣṇa is allowing me to do it. I don't have so many other talents or *śaktis*. I concentrate on this. It works out okay as long as I don't take myself too seriously and daydream that I am an immortal writer, I'll be appreciated long after I'm gone, I'm the greatest, my books are this and that. I think it's all right that I love my books, defend them, distribute them, they are part of Śrīla Prabhupāda's weaponry and charm, because you are his loyal *śiṣya*. But . . . it's just a tiny and flawed offering. You place it at his feet with a fear and trembling.

Write—in the heat of it you may sometimes appear raw, forgetful, totally absorbed in the work of ink on paper. But the truth is you are rendering a devotional service as a means to think of Lord Kṛṣṇa and a way of preaching and serving Him. Someone cooks for the Lord, someone distributes books, you write—all are serving and attempting to be in pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So I pray to be spared from the Pyrrhic victory—the victory of *māyā* over an artist in this world.

What's wrong with ISKCON? Our agonizing call and deliberation, as brought up to us recently by SS. Admit the wrongs, mentioned so many of them that you have to cry or laugh. You see ISKCON as riddled with faults, and by expressing it as fully as possible you also throw off some of the doomsday rhetoric. Don't let the fault-finding become a deliberate bashing or an invitation to hopelessness, nihilism, etc. That can be another trick

of *māyā*: you declare ISKCON is spiritually bankrupt, is a phoney entity and so you better spare yourself from it. Get off the sinking ship. But then you could easily find yourself drowning in the ocean of *māyā*. ISKCON is better than no ISKCON. Yes, a reformed ISKCON is a must. So we join the reform, partake in it. And one aspect of it is to list and admit its faults, feel the pain of it. Undeceive yourself.

One big question now is whether (and in what way, how much) one advocates that ISKCON is deeply wrong. People are already broadcasting that it's wrong in many ways. I become bewildered and don't know which group to align myself with. Better none or I may partially agree with all. Keep your individual integrity. Don't get caught up in someone's trip. Everyone has an opinion and some voice it loudly. It's similar to the cures for physical disease that people offer you. They say, "Listen to my diagnosis and follow my regimen for cure. If you do, you'll have health in a year or less." But I never found it to work after ten years of experiments.

In seeking the help of ISKCON who shall be our doctor? "Prabhupāda!" he says. But then who shall tell us "what Prabhupāda really wants"? Again, many opinions.

Don't be a hypocrite. Be true to his basic teachings. But not because the institution's law forces you or peer pressure forces you. Stick up for your own principles and what you have discovered. Don't give the money to Mr. Payne; don't be one of the 11 zonal-gurus above all others. Don't be proud. Don't be a tool for cynical and mistaken forces.

Writing and being alone can help. Everything is subject to examination. Kṛṣṇa! Please let us go on serving You in *śravaṇam-kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ-smaranam*. Please accept the niche work I'm doing as a contribution to the

whole. ISKCON is not that bad that it should be abandoned. "It just has to be completely changed." Yeah, man, but how, by who, and in what way?



Muninam, Queen Kuntī prays, You are the best of persons. You create illusion. You are like the actor on stage. You are the Supreme Person but we miss the point in seeing You. You have put a curtain between us. But let us persist in calling on Your names and You will one day reveal Yourself to Your sincere servitor.

9:45 A.M.

I'm a clerk to pack my belongings. Found a nearly new paper shopping bag. That will be my extra luggage to take on the ferry along with the orange cloth bag. Some items I'll need: toilet amenities, Śrīla Prabhupāda's letters book volume one, small *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, legal pad to resume Writing Sessions, change of devotee clothes, odds and ends. M. will bring the food.

We fast from breakfast tomorrow because it will be Lord Balarāma's appearance day. Take a lunch. Tonight board by 6 P.M. and arrive at Roslaire, Ireland, around 2 or 3 P.M. next day. Get to Wicklow by 6, he predicts. Then we'll see what comes next.

No one can know all the opulences of Lord Kṛṣṇa. But to help the common man, He gives a small selection. He doesn't choose only the holy and religious things, but the shark, lion, Himalayas, feminine qualities are included. Then He says even this small list is not the way to actually understand God. These are appearances of His energies or representatives. Know that with a spark of His splendor (as Supersoul), He enters and sustains the universes. I read that this morning.

"... an example of human honesty as understood by Kierkegaard, 'That I shall do what I say . . . that I shall honestly and truthfully say *what I do personally*'" (*A Passion for Truth*, p. 163).

It may be that someday you will think that the writing life was false. Your self-examination might lead you to that. But that would not negate whatever devotion to guru and Kṛṣṇa I put into whatever I have written.

Where we are: high hedge, privacy out the back window where I look, but surrounded close on both sides and throughout the patch of land that is the camping ground. English cars here. Le Havre is a jumping off place for tourists to and from France. Bon voyage and welcome, several currencies accepted in the stores as a welcome gesture. To take your money with a smile.

Lunch should be at noon, so M. has time to clean up before we leave by 3 P.M. Bet we have couscous. Hope it doesn't be stormy at sea; almost 20 hours journey in the cabin, St. Killeen or St. Patrick boat.

Inner, inner? I'd say *śāstra* is inner, but it's more absolute truth. It's *there*. On the page, waiting for me to take it in with submissive and attentive reading. And *japa*. Yeah, I'm on a mission. I'll go to Wicklow and later Belfast and speak to devotees what I know, the allegiance to Prabhupāda's books.

I don't have any inner thing right now. Inner pockets of sweat pants contain used ear plugs and Kleenex. I'm aware I ought to write something appropriate for the ending. You could give your *saṅkīrtana* results. How many lectures did you give over the last ten days, in how many *maṅgala-āratis* were you the lead singer, how many Godbrothers did you meet, how many miles in the service . . . ?

Is it measurable, how sincere you are, surrendered, willing to serve and help others, threshold of tolerance, freedom from propensity to find fault or be envious, how fearful, how nice or not nice?

How long? The cobbler and the *brāhmaṇa* asked Nārada, "How long will it be—how many births—before I will get liberation and go to *Vaikuṇṭha*?" The cobbler was simple and faithful. Lord Nārāyaṇa said he'd come back to Godhead at the end of his present life. The *brāhmaṇa* was puffed up and doubtful when he heard the inconceivable pastimes of Lord Nārāyaṇa. That *brāhmaṇa*, Lord Nārāyaṇa said, would have to wait many lifetimes. When the *brāhmaṇa* heard that, he became angry! The cobbler was in bliss meditating on the *acintya* nature of the Supreme Person who puts an oak tree into each acorn.

Bathe, pour two bottles of water on your head. It's still summer but I saw lots of dry and fallen leaves yesterday, in the gutter in Le Havre, under trees that lined the road. Summer ending signs. No heat wave.

Frankly, your time is just about up. Don't be sardonic or even reach for a joke in closing. Be confident your journalism will last and be interesting in the future because it's got Kṛṣṇa consciousness on every page. You really are enlisted, voluntarily, in Kṛṣṇa's service. You are a devotee of your spiritual master.

Free last hopes
fritter and sputter the fire
the last hopes,
that we get no flat tire,
boat doesn't sink,
makes it to Wicklow's
tranquil slopes and cottage
by tomorrow night and
then . . .
you read and write
among friends—
no tidal wave covers Erie.

Sing and be changed and
contribute to improving
the condition of ISKCON
which they are acknowledging
is full of wrongs.
Do I have to say that too?
To show I'm hip to the times?
Outmoded is simple
fresh allegiance of
1960s and '70s?
Oh well . . .

Get ready. Say good-bye. We are going to a base
which is not home base but friends. I hope to be in His
grace and write something worthy.

Now . . .

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

