

ELECTRONIC BOOK

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Every Day, Just Write

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Simplicity

in Irish Spring

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Also by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

Srila Prabhupada Lilamrita

Handbook for Krishna Consciousness

Readings in Vedic Literature: The Tradition Speaks for Itself

Your Ever Well-Wisher

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Japa Reform Notebook

Qualities of Sri Krishna

Vaisnava Behavior/ The Twenty-Six Qualities of a Devotee

Still we live meanly, like ants; . . . Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail. . . . Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary, eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five, and reduce other things in proportion. Our life is like a German Confederacy, made up of petty states, with its boundary forever fluctuating, so that even a German cannot tell you how it is bounded at any moment.

"Henry David Thoreau, Walden, "Where I Lived, And What I Lived For."

March 12, 1997

6 a.m.

Just attended greeting of the Deities, of Radha-Govinda, here at Jaya Gaurasundara's home-temple. We're about to leave for the airport. Feeling nervous, I turn to the *Bhagavatam* and this is the first thing I read: "For absolute protection from all sorts of fear, as well as for all our needs of life, you must take shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord, not only on this planet but also on the upper, lower and heavenly planets." (*Bhag.* 2.6.7, purport)

Everything depends on Krishna; there is no other shelter. real salvation means to know this fact. I may not expect to achieve liberation by the end of this life, but if I can remember Krishna, then regardless of my destination I will always live in truth.

* * *

8:45 a.m. "take off, U.S. Air flight

The alarm sounded as I walked through the security arch. Took off my coat and tried again. The alarm went off again. "Stop for scanning," the airport official said. It was my new eyeglasses case "the metal hinge. You've got too much metal, man. Locate it and divest yourself of it. Going through those scanners is like trying to enter the spiritual world with material desires.

Bright silver plane. I chant as we go, heading, I hope, for a quiet day in a New York apartment before our transatlantic flight. Srila Prabhupada *murti* is already there, waiting for me. When I get there, I'll open his box and begin his massage. Then his bath and mine, lunch, then rest.

* * *

[artwork]

* * *

12:15 noon, New York Apartment

Shaky behind eye; tummy too. relaxed atmosphere here "quiet. Nothing I have to do. I'll carry the stack of mail to Ireland. Won't attempt to answer it here.

I saw a black woman in the street wearing a bulky black jacket that made her resemble a policeman and tight black pants. I'm so old I thought she looked like she could beat me in a fight. But I'm wiser, right? Like the portrait in this room of a *gosvami* "don't know who "old, creased forehead, long, gray hair, sitting under a tree writing *tikas* on Vraja.

Heard three quarters of the congregational devotees at New Govardhana have joined the Gaudiya Math. What to do? Shall I worry? All I know is that I want devotion to my master, Srila Prabhupada and nothing else. I have slowly and gradually earned the right to this devotion by preaching and fighting for ISKCON, praying for faith, sticking with his books. And writing.

Uh . . . a sweatshirt arrived in the mail. I'll leave one behind here. The one I'm wearing has been in Vrndavana. That makes it sacred. Never been washed.

March 13

3:30 a.m.

Spoke last night with two devotees. One of them mentioned that although she's dedicated to her preaching project, she doesn't feel the same dedication to ISKCON. I told her she shouldn't feel that she has to love all of ISKCON. Overnight I thought of Frank Sinatra's old patriotic song. He sings it as a guy who tells us what America means to him. The first line is about "the house I live in." One's love of country starts with the familiar, the domestic, and is perhaps the best way you can love a whole country. Everything beyond what you know starts to become too abstract.

*The house I live in,
the people that I meet
the butcher and the baker
and the man across the street
. . . all races and religions "
that's America to me.*

It's typical of New Yorkers to think only of New York City as a worthwhile field and hardly beyond that. It's not so real in one sense, an ant's view. In another sense, it's probably best to focus it even closer "on their own project "and to by experiencing something positive there, to extend that positive mood to greater ISKCON. The house I live in. The temple I live in. The Deity I worship. That's ISKCON to me, and not the other, bigger things "the GBC resolutions, all the news. The fires on the other side of the river.

I remember admiring Paramananda's attitude when he was the temple president of Gita-Nagari. He never paid attention to outside things, never went to international or even national meetings. He set a good example of dedication to one project. I want to encourage these devotees to do the same. And myself too.

* * *

5:50 a.m.

The spiritual world is described wonderfully in the Second Canto purport (2.6.18). They're always praising Lord Narayana or Lord Krishna.

To hear *this* I'm free from money-making and management. Therefore, I should contribute to the society in another way.

"How do you householders preach?" I'll ask him, but I know they do preach vigorously "especially this couple.

Oh, and I checked out Kelsey, who wrote a book on dreams and even met the devotees. He says God reveals Himself in life here on earth through dreams and other miraculous happenings. I tend to be skeptical about that, or even about God's appearance in the everyday. It's not exactly our philosophy to be skeptical, but my own demeanor. I tend to wonder why God would appear in our little lives when there are so many big problems needing to be solved in this world. Thousands killed by tyrants "or by earthquakes. Is that His punishing rod? Can I pray to alleviate the world situation? Is that other than praying simply to serve and love Him? Well, I guess I shouldn't tell Him how to do His business. Still, I like to talk with Him about it and to try to understand.

O Krishna "I always revert to praying for my own cause in the end "please reveal Yourself to me. Please improve ISKCON. One devotee told me that she prays the *sannyasis* will all keep their vows. To make such a prayer requires a sweet and generous heart. And faith. Innocence. I don't know. I pray for *Sraddha* and my own increase in understanding of *sastra* and the sweet taste of *nama*.

Lord, make me simple
allow me to face the trials
thinking always of You
as a resident of the spiritual sky would.

* * *

10:30 a.m.

Some thoughts after reading Dreams: A Way to Listen to God, by Morton Kelsey

I want to express something about Kelsey saying that Christians tend to cut themselves off from the experience of spiritual reality. I tried to apply this to my life as a devotee, and especially to how I have lived it within ISKCON. Kelsey gives various reasons why Christians cut themselves off even though their tradition teaches them to experience spiritual reality. He says they have intellectualized their spiritual truths. He says that's because they have been following Aristotle's teachings, given to them by Thomas Aquinas.

Our situation is different in that regard. Our scriptures teach that formerly, great devotees had all kinds of experience of spiritual reality "through dreams, visions, and through Krishna's direct appearance. And, we don't rule out the possibility of experiencing spiritual reality now. We teach that the holy name is Krishna, that the Deity is not a statue, and that the guru is not an ordinary man. reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* brings you face to face with Krishna. When you eat *prasankirtana* and in so many areas of devotional service.

Nevertheless, I am dry. I accept the validity of the Deity being Krishna intellectually, and accept the nature of the holy name in the same way. I defend all these points of philosophy against doubts and unbelievers, and I'll defend with logic and reason. I even accept that spiritual reality is beyond our material senses, and that we may have to be patient while we build the *adhikari* to experience more. I also defend that I have met a pure devotee in Srila Prabhupada, and that he has convinced me of all these truths. But I don't feel them. I was about to add, I don't feel them anymore. But whether I used to feel them and now don't is a moot point. The real point is that I don't feel them now.

I would like to get in touch with the spiritual world through our Krishna conscious practices, and I would like to be able to pray with heart and simplicity.

Kelsey asserts that dreams are spiritual and a way we can listen to God. He seems to say that the Supersoul sends the dreams. I find it hard to claim that all the dreams are coming from Supersoul except in the sense that everything comes from Him, but I do think dreams are worth looking at. Dreams are only one expression, however. I want to see more and feel more spiritual reality. At least I would like to think more about it. Same old process, huh? You have to think about it. Okay, but why not also feel it? Pray for it?

* * *

4 p.m.

In answer to my musings about how God (Krishna) used to reveal Himself to great devotees in the past but how I don't feel Him in my life in the present, Srila Prabhupada writes that nowadays, both demigods and the Supreme Lord are not seen by our covered eyes. "Modern men want to see everything with their eyes, although they are not sufficiently qualified. Consequently, they disbelieve in the existence of the demigods or of the Supreme God. They should see through the pages of authentic scriptures and should simply not believe with their unqualified eyes. *Even in these days, God can also be seen by qualified eyes tinged with the ointment of love of God.* (Bhag. 2.6.29, purport, emphasis added)

Nervous. Time to go to the airport. Madhu said, "Think of the airplane as an ambulance to take you to Manu's house." The devotees in this apartment are laughing, cheerful, younger. Is it old age that has stolen my laugh? Or pain? Let me laugh with the joy of spirit and in the assurance of Krishna's mercy. Even these days God can be seen if my eyes become tinged with the ointment of love.

* * *

6 p.m.

We're in the JFK lounge, waiting for our flight. I am trying to rise above my nervous state to ask Krishna for His intimate protection. Hare Krishna.

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They paid for this ticket so I could rest in flight. O please, I want to help and encourage them. They already have mentors. I'm an uncle. Aer Lingus. Traffic was delayed on Vanwyck Expressway. Some cars cut in front (other guys shot at them with guns last week, rasaraja said). Past Shea Stadium, past houses and fantasies of what it's like to live there. Maybe some neighborhood peace, but sometimes robbery. Then arrive at the Aer Lingus terminal and our friends depart. Now it's just me and Madhu and the folks on this plane and the sky and sea and Krishna holding us up. Second Canto says He's the source and maintenance of all. I pray for permission, "Lord, may I do this? May I do it in devotional service. Please inspire me to act right."

* * *

Less than an hour before landing in Dublin "an uneventful trip. Two men behind us finally quiet down after hours of garrulous Irish nonsense. One in particular had a loud, raspy voice. White-haired couple in front of us slept mostly, or tried to sleep, looking for a comfortable position in the lean-back chairs. I said silent mantras while fingering my beads. For awhile it was bumpy. The captain, Hughs is his name, said it would end in about twelve minutes and it did. But I kept on chanting.

March 14
Gealum, North Ireland
11:35 a.m.

* * *

We went through immigration, luggage pick-up, and customs quickly. The immigration official stamped my passport good until June 5th. Arjuna was waiting outside, and he then drove us to Gealum. We arrived at Manu's house in less than two hours.

* * *

10:15 p.m.

Couldn't sleep, so I'm up at this strange hour. In the *Bhagavatam* Brahma says, "My dear son, whatever I say is infallible because I have taken the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord with great zeal. The devotee in tune with the Lord is as infallible as the Lord. Devotional service always begins with service to the pure devotee."

But I can't pay attention.

Pain.

I want to develop attachment and attraction for Radha-Govinda and Srila Prabhupada while I'm here. Got that book, *The Beginning: Srila Prabhupada in 1966 in New York City*. I'm there too, Steve G., referred to once as "Satya-svarupa". Later he called me Satsvarupa dasa. I was the boy who gave money. Don sent apples. Thanks. I remember that stuff. 26 Second Avenue.

Brahma in his normal mood

is never wrong.

Pressure on me to never be wrong either, but at the very least, not to fall down. Pressure to not be another statistic. Still, I have to find a way to live that makes sense to me. I can't do things always pressured by reputation or the people watching. Sometimes I have to wear sweat pants. And often, I have to feel pain. Some people think that my headaches are some kind of deviation or sign of my decadence. They don't like it that I keep to myself, either, and that I don't attend the Mayapur festivals or GBC meetings. Then they look at my wild, free writing.

He writes of himself, a
sure sign of false
ego. How can he be a
pure devotee?

O Prabhupada, when you answered the question regarding "psychiatry," it was fine. I must love you, then you'll love me. The question of the nature of Prabhupada's perfection came up in Baltimore. One devotee tried to remove the pressure by saying that Prabhupada is not important in his particulars, but Krishna is important. I couldn't agree with that. I asserted that Prabhupada *is* important in his particulars. Still, I appreciate that devotee's point too. I don't want to be a fanatic. I mean, I want true devotion to Prabhupada that is well earned, and I want it to be based both on the objective and the subjective.

Be not proud
a hairy squirrel crouched in
a tree
doing the dance
St. Paddy's, St. Vitus', Vat 89 in
Trinidad, Port of Spain, Carnival time and
yearly Guinness Stout brown in the glass "
I saw last night in Aer Lingus lounge and now I better
get back to bed because I
feel a little twinge
behind the earnest
physical eye
and aye
Ginsberg is gone, his money and advice to early ISKCON with him.
March 16
6 a.m.

During this sleepless, headachy night, I sat up for awhile. I went into the hallway to see if there was a light on in Madhu's room, but I couldn't detect any. The hallway was chilly and through the big windows I could see outside lights on a distant shore, and I heard the wind. Special moments if you can perceive them, this precious life.

Back inside my warm room I remembered that Rasaraja had given us some healing music tapes and I thought I'd try them. I listened to "Drone Zone" by Kay Gardner. She plays bamboo flute improvisations, using notes from an Indian healing scale. She's accompanied by various drones, including the tamboura and a choir of chanting *om* sounds. With the lights out, lying in bed with three pillows propping me up, I listened to these sounds and droned along with them. Sometimes I vibrated Rama,

or *om*, or just "ummmm." Then I tried slow Hare Krishnas in a prayerful way. For awhile I thought maybe it would actually work and the vibration would break up blockages in my head. This would be better than allopathic medicine or any other thing. As it turns out, after almost an hour of listening, my headache was still there. But it was fun, and a kind of loving exchange with the self and the sounds. It was at least a good way to spend the time during the pain and sleeplessness.

So far I'm calling this volume, *Simplicity In Irish Spring*, but it's more like a "wanna be simple" volume than success so far. I have to be patient and wait to overcome the jet-lag before I can get into my early routine again. I hope I can rise at midnight once again and read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and write. And I hope I can stop increasing my "German Confederacy" of interests and involvement. Jettison. Aspire for a simpler life where I concentrate on the most important of all things.

* * *

11:30 a.m.

I'm looking for simplicity. One practical way to apply this in my life is to jettison the nondevotee books I have here. Someone gave me Susan Sontag's book on disease as metaphor, and I have a couple of dream books. Becoming simple may mean that I'll know less about the world. I won't be able to make sophisticated replies as ISKCON's representative. I may blunder and sound like a right-winger if anyone asks me about AIDS. But there's a price to be paid for becoming informed by sophisticated nondevotees. I'm deciding in favor of simplicity.

Becoming simple is appealing, however. It doesn't mean to become foolish or a simpleton. Worldly people may see simple devotees as uninformed when they are actually humble and fixed on the great knowledge they already possess. Seeing through the eyes of the *Bhagavatam* can sometimes appear arrogant when we claim we know everything. Prabhupada was able to say that, but we certainly can't imitate him in that regard. It doesn't matter so much for me anyway, because ninety-five percent of the time or more I am speaking to devotee audiences. I don't need to know so much about the world. Madhu is fond of saying that it's not such a great embarrassment for the *Bhagavatam* speaker not to know the name of the U.S. President, although it's a great, great embarrassment if he doesn't know the essence of *Bhagavatam*. I will be gnashing my teeth at the time of death if I know many things about this world, but don't know love of Krishna. Please let me become simple in this Irish spring, or anywhere.

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2:45 p.m., Shed

Susan Sontag's *Illness As A Metaphor* discusses tuberculosis and how it has been mythologized. She writes, "The romantics invented invalidism as a pretext for leisure, and for dismissing bourgeois obligations in order to live only for one's art. It was a way of retiring from the world without having to take the responsibilities for the decision . . ."

That struck me in a personal way. I am always asking myself whether I have "invented" my own invalidism. Am I in pain as a way to avoid responsibility? I'd prefer to think that I'm taking responsibility for my life the way I am being forced to lead it now rather than to think I created my present situation to avoid something else. It's a hard point because although I don't really believe I have created my headaches, I am grateful for the relief from pressure they afford me. Yes, my invalidism has served me well. But I know that even without it, I'd be willing to take the risk of stepping back from the institutional life to some degree and spending time alone. I don't need the pain to find the strength to do that. And I do wish I was without the pain so I could have more up-time in my day, even if that day is spent in hermit-like pursuits.

Don't disturb this man, this
monk, don't disturb
this monk at work.
AIDS "I don't know why, or
TB I haven't met, but simplicity.
Who needs to know
the American Vice-President or
Premier Mitterand
of France? De Gaul?
War? Peace, Pax "
Nobel Pax winner "who?
I don't even know where my own
momma is, although I'm pretty sure
my dad is "
where? In Naples?
I don't need to know.

* * *

To simplify my life I seek regulation
and no more snow to shovel.
I mean it "I'll stop thinking about dreams
even though I have given something to them
and I'll pray mantras while awake.
O radha-ramana of Vrndavana "
it won't be easy to simplify *my* life.

* * *

I'm back in this shed at last after two and a half months away. Make it plain, man. Be simple.

* * *

* * *

9:25 p.m.

"The Personality of Godhead is pure, being free from all contamination of material tinges . . . great thinkers can know Him when completely freed from all material hankerings and sheltered under undisturbed conditions of the senses. Otherwise, by untenable arguments, all is distorted, and the Lord disappears from our sight." (*Bhag.* 2.26.40 - 1)

I'm up writing and reading because I couldn't sleep. Thinking of old times, like when I was twelve years old, going to Washington with my family. Those memories mixed with memories of my early life in ISKCON Boston, my wife leaving to join the artists in New York, then me leaving to move to the Dallas temple on Turtle Creek Blvd. Lilavati wanted to know if I was married or not. I showed her Prabhupada's letter saying that it was okay for my wife and I to serve in separate places. He encouraged such detachment in my case. These memories are forcing me awake and questioning my sense of self or mission. A *sannyasis* Godbrother will be arriving at Inis rath in a few days. If we meet, what can I say? I'll ask him whether the GBC resolved anything about the *rtvik* paper, but I mean, about myself, now, at fifty-eight years old.

So I come to this verse, translated in Prabhupada's language: "Free from . . . material tinges . . ." translated by the same Srila Prabhupada who spent twenty-two cents on bananas on one day and thirty-three cents on bananas on another day in January of 1966 in NYC. Ten years later he was the king of thousands of disciples, although he could hardly walk, his legs were so swollen. Still, he was making yet another world tour with Hari Sauri at his side "Tehran and Bombay . . .

Back to *Srimad-Bhagavatam* for me. Mayavadis and nonbelievers can't accept that the Absolute Truth is a person. But He is.

* * *

* * *

The Lord is pure: *suttham apapa viddham*. Grasp what you can and pray for the rest. Aspire to experience spiritual reality. "A grain of devotion is more valuable than tons of faithlessness." (*Bhag.* 2.6.34, purport)

"The conclusion is that one cannot know the Supreme Personality of Godhead fully by any method, but He can be seen and felt partially by the devotional service process of hearing, chanting, etc." (*Bhag.* 2.6.38, purport)

March 17

9:25 a.m., Shed

Guy down at quay waiting for boat. I thought everyone had gone to Dublin for the St. Paddy's day parade. I'm left alone today, but I'll talk with Syamananda after lunch if my eye is okay. The motorboats and motor skiers around the lake island could ruin the peace here. At least the early and late afternoon hours will be quiet. *Advaita acyuta* "remember and feel what you can.

Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He never falls down; He is always infallible. The nondevotees cannot understand how He can appear as a person. I want to be a devotee with reason and heart.

Read a book on spiritual abuse and religious addiction. It said God forgives us and assures us that we should feel His love when we read His word. The authors discourage reading scripture from a cultural or dogmatic viewpoint, or with feelings of shame imposed on your interpretation. To test whether you hearing God's word, you should be feeling God's love. His word should also speak to you, and enable you to face the reality of who you are while you learn to cope in the world.

O Krishna, sometimes Your words
are stern and I
can't change that. Your
pure devotee too is
as soft as rose but as
hard as a thunderbolt "but not
to shame or force some dogma.
Therefore, we are left free to approach You
in truth.

Today while I was reading the *Bhagavatam*, I was thinking that I just want to hear whatever it is Krishna wants to say to me. Yesterday Srila Prabhupada told me to practice pure *bhakti*. Therefore, I've dropped my interest in dream work. Each day that I hear, new abilities to renounce come through. O Krishna, I am pleased with You; be pleased with me by teaching me how to become better at pleasing You, as the *gopis* do.

Material happiness is based on sense gratification and is won through envying others; spiritual happiness is to find your joy in pleasing Krishna and to enter the competition between Krishna and His pure devotees.

Advaita acyuta . . . so many devotees went to Dublin. "On my behalf," I say, my disciples have gone. I have stayed behind for a quiet day. May I have the energy to read what Srila Prabhupada did in Hyderabad in 1976 or to hear him speaking on tape. And may I also just sit here while the sun ventures from behind the rough gray clouds, the ripped and ragged porous
cumulus
and stratus-bearing beams
sun burning
through while Prabhupada experiences winter
in January '66
while I get ready to receive him.

* * *

2:50 p.m., Shed

Ye yatha mam prapadyante, "As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly." (*Bg.* 4.11) Prabhupada writes, "Krishna is the object of everyone's realization, and thus anyone and everyone is satisfied according to one's desire to have Him." Here are some of the ways in which I seem to want to have Krishna:

(1) As one who brings me peace.

- (2) As He who relieves me of physical and mental pain.
 (3) As the source of creative, artistic inspiration and enactment.
 (4) In his blissful appearance in *kirtanas* held in the association of devotees who share the same mood and who worship the holy name.
 (5) He for whom I feel separation.
 (6) He who will deliver me from death, give me liberation, and bring me into that great unknown we call "back to Godhead".
 (7) He about whom I read, who is served by pure devotees. These devotees find their happiness (*vilasa*) only in pleasing Krishna, and He is similarly pleased to reciprocate with them and to thus create a transcendental competition.

Do I mean to say I have a selfish and limited conception of Krishna?

Yes, that's what I mean to say. But that doesn't mean my list is bad. It's just subjective. It shows I need a downpour of mercy.

* * *

3:10 p.m.

Where were You? Where were you?

I (i) was reading the *Gita* and *A Poor Man's*. Big I, Krishna, was with little i everywhere.

Was He at the St. Patrick's Day parade in Dublin too?

Sure, because devotees were chanting His holy names there.

And you, then why weren't you in Dublin with Him?

My health is weak. But I spoke with Syamananda. He and Pandu stayed back on the island to serve Radha-Govinda. Everyone else went. Tilaka's here too, but I didn't talk to him because he's a dog. He has mange, but he's already starting to look better. It's a sad world. One devotee here had a little money saved to rent a house, but she left it at a friend's apartment and it was burgled. Yes, a sad world.

I know I have it easy, even though I'm writing from this army camp with a humble thumb ache and only a slight pain in my head today, thank God.

I have it . . .

Not answering mail for awhile. Let me get into the routine where I can love and be myself and be with Krishna. I often have to push to be compassionate, and that push makes me lose touch with my own inner self. Looking for the balance.

As they approach Me, Krishna says. And if you know Me, you will come to Me. *Tat tvam asi*. He is the one Lord, the all, the all.

God.

Never abandon service

and you'll reach the *param gati*.

Swans swimming on the lake on this cool, gray day.

Memories floating in my mind. Who am I? I ask myself that question. And why all these pre-Krishna conscious memories? Or, if I focus on my thirty years in ISKCON, why all these uneasy or unpleasant or merely odd things? Is there nothing else? Did Srila Prabhupada know how off we were?

He spent thirty cents on bus fare to go to Harvey's apartment, but Mr. Cohen was not in. Srila Prabhupada wrote, "Hopeless," in his diary. One night he spoke to no one at all

because no one came to his *Gita* and *kirtana* class. He spoke anyone and recorded it on his Tr "spoke until 10 p.m.

Therefore, I'll do my duties "read and read and put up my hair in curlers over my old face. Then I'll take out my teeth and lie in bed beside my husband the turtle. The reptile on the right is me with my corned skin and curvy half-closed eyelids, the creepy, obnoxious non-saint exuding wet sores.

"Don't touch me," he said to Lord Caitanya, but the Lord replied, "I am touching you for my purification. You say your body is horrible, but I say it is like nectar and a mixture of *aguru* and camphor."

Now, calm down and get back inside to your clickity-click mantras. This quiet day is winding down and what did you accomplish?

* * *

5:50 p.m.

Prabhupada managed and preached on a grand scale in 1976. I am just one tiny person in his movement "mentioned twice in passing in this volume of Hari Sauri Prabhu's diaries. I lived in America, and I wasn't an important disciple. Who *is* important? One devotee asks Srila Prabhupada in this volume, "How can I please you best?" He replies, "Become a pure devotee."

We want to do that. He says Krishna especially recognizes the preacher. The preacher is the dearest devotee, not, Srila Prabhupada said, the one who goes alone to meditate.

Am I alone here meditating?

No. Yes. I mean, not with a sense of selfishness. Prabhupada cites the Six Gosvamis as great preachers, but they didn't travel or hold lectures. They wrote books and lived in secluded, sacred places such as radha-kunda and at Govardhana. Of course, we also hear that Sanatana Gosvami spoke to people. I do too.

For me "or for anyone, I guess "I have to deal with my nature. I don't have to suppose that I have to do everything on the scale that Srila Prabhupada did it. Obviously that's not possible. What Prabhupada wants from me is the best *I* have and am. He wants *my* life, not a replica of his own. We're each different. We don't have to be ashamed if we're weaker than our father, or if we get headaches or that we have other problems. I just can't seem to be anything other than what I am. Now I'm trying to learn to live with that.

That doesn't mean I'm not true to ISKCON. I am true to ISKCON, but in my own way. I offer what I can in example and precept to others who may also not fit the main mold that ISKCON offers.

Be encouraged. Now do *puja*, the dance of love of Krishna and guru. Yes, when I was in the shed today, I glimpsed myself as I really am now, in this life. I am not tuned into my death yet, although I know an end will come. I live in a kind of illusion that death is a ways off. Maybe I'm right. But that illusion allows me to "be like Prabhupada," absorbed in my present attempts to serve and living my full life as best I can.

Another point that I have come to accept: I don't add much by my traveling and lecturing here and there and everywhere. My contribution is different. I am a full-time writer. Some consider that a small contribution, but I can't think about that. I assure

myself that this writing is what I have to give. Robert Lax was described as living in voluntary exile. I am too.

Reading Hari Sauri Prabhu's diary is sometimes difficult because he presents Prabhupada accurately, and Prabhupada was so strong, so much wanting to push forward the preaching, so demanding of his disciples. He was not always able to give his fullest time to individuals, but he demanded the utmost in practical work from each of us. He expected us to follow the rules without deviation, to chant our rounds without fail, to cut through the nonsense of self-absorption and psychology, to surrender. He cut devotees off who approached with something less than full surrender. He didn't reject them, but he didn't spend time on them. He reserved the right to be a gruff, demanding, teaching father. No nonsense.

But since his disappearance, we are gentler and allow more scope for self-expression and individualism than Prabhupada appeared to allow. Although some of his staunch followers try to cut the same figure Prabhupada cut in the name of loyalty to Prabhupada's way, it doesn't carry the same weight. We all tried it for awhile during the zonal-acarya days. We pushed for and demanded submission from devotees, sent them out to collect money and sell books, but then fell down from the principles or disappointed in other ways. Many devotees can't bear that authoritarian style leadership anymore. We still have the GBC, and we try to follow, but we as a movement are seeing that we have some healing to do, some "self-work," and to search for a different style of cooperation. Of course, these kinds of discussions do not appear in Hari Sauri Prabhu's diary, the notes for which were written in 1975 and '76. It's hard to accept such a full account of those times with Prabhupada demanding so much surrender and us now knowing all the falsity that occurred after his disappearance.

* * *

* * *

9:15 p.m.

I want direct spiritual contact with Krishna, but it's not easy. It takes many lives of spiritual practice to develop the desire for *Krishna-bhavita*.

Well, then I'd at least like more awareness of my spiritual identity.

Same thing "you have to earn that too.

That book on religious abuse and addiction says you don't have to earn it; you just have to become aware that God already loves you, and thus become more aware of His presence.

But (complaints accepted here) I read and chant, the most potent ways to developing *bhakti*, but I don't realize His loving presence in my life.

Because you commit offenses in that chanting and hearing,

are materially attached,

harbor doubts,

don't please guru.

But I thought my guru *was* pleased with me, even though I offer only flawed service. Can I see the signs of my spirituality on the map? Is it wrong to want to see them?

Oh, but you are afraid of more spiritual awareness because it means

anxiety
sleeplessness
sacrifice of material comfort).
giving up complacency.
You want cheap redemption?

But I'm even more afraid that I'm doing all I can within the limits that seem to be imposed upon me "health, etc. "and I don't know where else I can go. Still Krishna doesn't reveal Himself to me. Spiritual life isn't easy. I don't preach enough to be considered dear,

don't love the devotees enough,
aren't chaste enough to Krishna,
and fall short in so many ways.

I'm headed for many more lives in this material world at the rate I'm going now.

Where is patience? That's a virtue too. Keep hearing and worshiping guru, and be grateful that he keeps you in his movement. With faith. And earnestness.

March 18

I Too Can Praise the Swami

Swami Bhaktivedanta's 1966 New York
world *sankirtana* journal has been published.

Always I want to remember
I was there and he, he was
in charge and surrendered
utterly to Krishna.

* * *

The journal starts on 19 January, 1966, "By the grace of Guru and Gauranga an encouraging letter is received today." It's a National Diary, maybe 12" x 6", produced by the National Blank Book Company, Holyoke, Massachusetts. A fine thing they did to produce it for the Swami to use. He signed his name vertically, "A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, New York, U.S.A.", on the title page.

* * *

I had a dream that I was hanging out with Allen Ginsberg and then William Carlos Williams. They had me copying out their poems. At first I did it on a chalk board, then a large scroll. Hayagriva tried it for Allen, but Hayagriva said it couldn't be done. I did it. Allen was getting a long poem off " I don't remember what about. Then I was working for WCW. I said I preferred him. "Yes," he

said, "I'm good," or something like that.
Maybe it wasn't WCW, but one of his disciples.
I said, "Everyone loves you."
Then he left me to go into
a bar in Great Kills and
I realized that I had been *cheated*.
My own writing opportunities had been lost.
By serving them, I'd gotten
nothing.

* * *

I have to laugh now, awake,
how the dream source made it a joke.
But it's serious too. Serve the Swami
and don't hire yourself out
to celebrated poets.
They can't give you Krishna,
which is all I want "to serve the Swami
so that Prabhupada will give me
a tooth like he gave to Hari Sauri.
He earned that tooth through his hard labors
late at night, massaging Prabhupada
until 1 or 2 a.m.

* * *

9:30 a.m.

Diffuse pressure on top of head occurs as I wake up after a light, brief rest, 8:30 a.m. I hope it doesn't build because I am scheduled to talk about eligibility for initiation with two devotees. I push M. to make a phone call he is reluctant to make. I also have to talk also about a controversy issue because one of my disciples has written a strident paper about it. I wish my life was simpler, but I can't "and don't "live in an ivory tower.

I asked someone to buy more India ink in several colors. Instead he got tempera paint, which I cannot use in the same way. So I've come out here to write, then stop to think, "Don't worry about literary value. Don't try for a prayer with artistic merit, something the editor can publish."

On January 19, 1966, he was living uptown.

O Krishna, can I touch You today in the *Gita*, even if I can't read it spontaneously?

Stop worrying about connecting one sentence with another.

Politics, war, the difference between love and lust, dreams, and ultimately death "even before these issues are settled, life goes on.

"I love You" "blurt it out.

"Please be gentle with me" "go ahead and say it.

Khrushchev's, "We will bury you!" "there's no diplomacy in that.

Learn to speak in a way that causes no waves on Lough Erne. Don't torpedo the pleasure boats. *Don't* make sense. Don't hurt anyone. Follow Srila Prabhupada's example.

Jesus said he didn't come to bring peace, although . . .
Don't worry, this is not a position paper.

* * *

Aches

Henry

Aiks

AIDS

Rescue the swimmer in the sea.

Despite the lack of grateful response, the rescuer does it anyway.

God was kind to send His son, the Christians say. I dream of a balloon with eight lights and an art studio, and me not free of pain.

Simplify your life,

but here comes the sunlight glancing too brightly through my window, hitting my delicate eyes. Stop, pax, I have to avert disaster and steer this little ship elsewhere.

March 19, 1997

4:20 a.m.

No theme. "No time for poetry, but only what is." Then who are you? *Gopi-bharta pada kamalayor dasa dasanudasa*.

Keep awake ten more minutes, sir, and we'll award you with a memory of a shiny, Schwinn bicycle. Walking on private woods path alone, I was surprised from behind by young Jayananda on his little bicycle. I couldn't understand what he was saying because my ear isn't tuned to his Irish dialect. Besides, it was a windy day and I wore a knit cap, sweatshirt hood, and coat hood over my ears. I didn't feel his chatter demanded a response, but every once in a while I said something to be friendly. At the house, I mentioned that Jayananda asked me to respond to his statement that "the Wicklow people would be coming in four days to stay at this house."

M. said, "He's a little person" " Jayananda is a person, even though a mere boy, and I can't ignore him. He wants reciprocation.

I will tell devotees that Lord Caitanya is the most munificent incarnation and then explain it. He's *audarya*, liberal. He gives the love never before given. Even though my audience has heard it many times before, I plan to explain it again.

I heard that 350,000 people lined the Dublin streets for the parade the other day. The devotees chanted in the parade and received the full attention of the onlookers. The special treat for them, however, was the American marching bands "the ladies dressed in bikini bottoms and dancing to dazzling choreography. They outclassed all the Irish. "No fit place for a gentlemen," a *mataji* said to a *brahmacari* on that street.

* * *

Swami Bhakti-vedanta
was the one, the guru and
pure devotee who came to
America the beautiful, America
the trashy, the nation divided over
Vietnam.
'Merica, my tears of thee
I too surrender to the guru sent
to our shore by Sri Krishna.

* * *

I canvassed devotees to take initiation, then announced that I would hold a *yajna* on Gaura-Purnima. But actually, I don't want to give cheap initiations. Some of the devotees turned out not to be qualified. Others were barely qualified. In a surprise move, I decided to cancel the initiation. I'll meet with the candidates and tell them why. And I'll assure them that there's no harm for them in waiting. Even in the highest stage, Krishna made some of the *gopis* wait to join the *rasa* dance. Certain *gopis*, who were not completely pure, were not able to get out of the house when Krishna called the *gopis* to join Him. Those who were detained thought so much of Krishna that all their last material pious inclinations were burned up in the fire of separation. Vishvanath Cakravarti Thakura compares this pastimes with the *gopis* to the ripening of a mango. Krishna always picks the fruit that's in the perfect stage of ripeness.

* * *

* * *

5:55 a.m.
Swami is the name we called him, the title
when he appeared in our midst and we said we accept
and decide to follow you, guru.
At that time he accepted
me and Keith, Howard and Paul,
Joy and Judy, and Bruce Kirwan
came much later, the '70s or '80s,
then was gone from sight. Hari Sauri
mined his diary and said here is the Swami again
tough, decisive, manager guru breaking the hearts
and will, hitting the opposition with
hard logic. He draws line between
in and out and we
chose in, with him.
We didn't want to miss Krishna's heaven
or lose this valuable human form
of life. We agreed that Vyasa was true, Krishna

was truth, and allowed
Prabhupada to capture us. Simple,
a life surrendered to the master.

* * *

Did you know that Dylan Thomas's mother threw out tons of his writing> She thought it was madness, a waste of time. Well, it was, too, but the Krishna conscious version is important. Brother Lawrence said he could think of God in the midst of anything. Krishna, I wish to be with You like that "in the midst of everything. You have placed this great challenge (and possibility) before me, and given me the burden to carry that will purify me. I can't avoid the conclusion of Your teachings. I simply wish to please You, and to be free of that idea that the little self is as good as God, or especially that any void exists anywhere. Krishna, please save me.

O Hare, I address You, and
Rama, pleasure,
I don't have to spell it
out but continue chanting.
When the tape stops I'll go on my own
ever-fresh mantras
ingrained in me.
No time for theme or method.
It's spring and the wind blows all night
leaving me cold.
You know the rest.

* * *

* * *

Prabhupada says that the government servants, especially in India, don't work, but they lose your files. I used to work in a government office, but performed *karma-yoga*. I'm sitting here now, still wanting to give everything to Krishna, but I have more diversions. Prabhupada says that we should just use whatever we have, but he didn't want his devotees to gather new things. He even saw Ayurveda as a diversion. Now he has disappeared and we are more permissive. But we still beg him to accept our spontaneous offerings.

* * *

12:15 noon

When I went to the shed this morning, the sunlight was so bright that it contributed to the headache I have right now. I tried to answer some mail, and that didn't help. I went back to the house with sharp pain. Again I'm thinking of the idea that chronically ill people often deny the extent of their illness. They attribute their pain to something they themselves have caused, either to avoid stress or for some other reason.

The fact is, I'm semi-invalid. I titled this book, "Simplicity in Irish Spring," but I haven't come to Ireland for a simple springtime retreat, as if life could be that romantic. I'm here because it affords me a space to deal with the pain. It's interesting how soon I forget my limitations once the pain is gone.

* * *

* * *

5:45 p.m.

Do you want juice in the afternoon?

No.

Do you want tea?

No, thanks. If there was some snack to tempt me, I might have gone for it, but I didn't ask for it. I'm supposed to drink a lot of water. Then I heard Prabhupada, say, during a Gaura-Purnima talk in Mayapur 1976, "When drinking water, we should remember that Krishna is the taste, and when we see the sun, we should remember Krishna." This is how a devotee practices the presence of God. Let me stop and recall it, and thank Him.

O friend, if you want to enjoy joking and family life, then don't go see Govinda at Vamsivata. If you see Gopinatha, you will give up all else.

I'd like to.

But not in India this year. Because when a headache strikes, as it seems to be doing nearly every day these days, I want to be near a bed without obligations to others.

The tight well brimmed, filled, lying
mucus telling the truth of the body the hard poets defy
and cause trouble for us timid, soft, quiet
Revelers of the Hare Krishna mantra.

Oh, they would put us down if they knew, but
we put *them* down too. My Swami
put them down "kicked on their
faces with boots. I boot on their mittens with fisticuffs
and ram it down their throats
with an ecumenical grin.

* * *

I pray in silence, but I should pray out
loud "sing mightily on St. Patrick's
day before half a million people
who line the streets and inch their way
toward the *kirtana*. But I was silent here
at Manu's house in Co. Fermanagh, and
couldn't fall asleep while thinking someone
might come and invade.

I would have bluffed them that I had no money
because I'm only a guest. Would I die

before giving them my money and
much stamped passport?
They might kill me anyway.
Sometimes they want you to beg for your life
and then they shoot you.
Better to beg Krishna for life
then see what happens.

* * *

Okay, Morty, the end of another day and you're still safe and sound. Check it off on the calendar.

March 20
4:30 a.m.

Reading for Gaura-Purnima class under the lamp. Then to stay in the mood about Lord Caitanya, I turned to *From Copper to Touchstone* and appreciated it. Glad we published it. Lord Caitanya, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appeared as the best devotee of Krishna. He knew that in Kali-yuga, so many fools would present themselves as Krishna, so He didn't want to set an example by doing that Himself. rather, He appeared as a devotee to demonstrate even better than Krishna did in Vrndavana, how to worship God with *prema*. He is particularly relevant to the conditioned souls in this age because we are unable to approach Krishna by more difficult means.

I am trying to set a tone for simplicity in this volume of EJW. I am trying to maintain the mood of the talk I gave in Baltimore, quoting from the First Canto and from Thoreau's journals. My version of simplicity is concentrating on reading, writing, and chanting. That's "counting your affairs on your fingers."

My life has been a bit awry since I have in Ireland, but it has shown me that I can't be starkly simple. Aside from my main three interests, I have poor health with which to cope, and the complications of living in the Geaglum community.

* * *

"Fix and fix "you're all better," said poet Zimmer to the kids in his neighborhood. He was playing doctor. Cured them so they could go back and fight the war. He said what he really wanted to be was a poet, to fix and fix in a different way.

Of course, the real "fix and fix" is Krishna consciousness.

We always say that.

We follow our master's lead.

But I'm sometimes tired of it. Not of following the lead, but tired of saying it like that. I admit it.

Sometimes it exhausts me.

How often I get tired. At least every day.

Where is that deeper expression while following the master?

When I walk I follow the cow's hoof prints, and later I drawing, although

I don't always feel like doing that either. Still, the colors save me.

Admit it, fool. Confess to your priest, your journal.

"My journal is that of me which would else spill over and run to waste, gleaning from the field which in action I reap. I must live for it, but in it for the gods. They are my correspondent, to whom daily I send off this sheet postpaid . . . Nothing goes by luck in composition. It allows no tricks. The best you can write will be the best you are. Every sentence is the result of a long probation. The author's character is read from title page to end. " (From Thoreau's journal, February 1841)

* * *

* * *

Srila Prabhupada said, while walking on Juhu beach with Dr. Patel in 1975, that the scientists are first-class asses because although they may discover so many small particles "the electron, the proton, the this-ton "they never discover the one ten-thousandth particle of God, the *jivatma*.

Dr. Patel responded, "You are so harsh on the scientists."

"They are not really scientists. They always have new theories. A true scientist is one whose knowledge is fixed."

I doubt for a moment when I heard that. Why is a scientist one whose knowledge is fixed? Can't we say that a devotee scientist's knowledge is always open to change and discovery? Then I accepted it. Prabhupada also said that we should not think we are perfect; we should always feel anxious to improve. But we are fixed. Fixed means we know that Krishna is God and we accept what He says as absolute truth.

Syamananda said he got a chance to preach to a guest and was happy that Krishna consciousness was really so wonderful. He says that sometimes when he's focused on the daily chores of cooking and Deity worship he misses the point. Whenever a guests asks him a question, however, he is reminded how wonderful Krishna is and he becomes enlivened.

Yes, preaching does that to you.

* * *

A poet said he would rather watch the world, the word, than speculate or believe in or recite absolutes. I know what he means. I get tired of reciting them too. I would rather rescue the immediate now "a dog walking and the wonder of me seeing it, me, a tiny *jivatma*, then rescue the experience for Krishna consciousness. Everything exists within Him. Rescuing the immediate moment doesn't mean I am more than I am. It just means recognizing that God is present in the tiniest moments in the universe "in all of them.

To become a poet, you can't spout dogma exactly. You have to give experience. That's what I mean when I say I am tired. I don't want to recite dogma as if it has nothing to do with the dog on the street "the one I saw.

Am I boring you with these needles (needless) arguments worn threadbare? I hope not. It's part of my simplicity in Irish spring.

* * *

* * *

9:07 a.m.

Read of several incarnations, especially Rsabhadeva, who practiced *jada-yoga*, although he was a *paramahamsa*, and Hayagriva, who breathed out the sweet sound of the *Vedas*. Kurma, Nrsimha . . . brief sketches given with a little philosophy in this canto. Still, just by hearing them we can become pure devotees. The elephant king prayed to the Supreme Lord, addressing Him as Tirtha-Srava and by other transcendental names.

* * *

Maintain the body and the
vaidhi duty, don't
invite falldown. Keep it up "
the daily *sadhana*
toward perfection you'll never
Reach.
Ah, maybe . . . if He wills.

* * *

Instead of *darSana* I get
doo-shan. Huh?
Never mind, you can't under-
stand "I'm just fooling around
with words.

* * *

2:48 p.m.
Had a dream
I ascended to the spiritual world by
giving up the world's
temporality?
No, but read it awake "
Bali Maharaja attaining the Lord's
eternal company. I'm on his side,
and he helps me not to commit
suicidal blunders
if I'm tempted by Satan
the Evil One. Screw it!
I mean, "Get away, Satan!"
Could say it stronger . . .

* * *

Prabhupada changed one devotee for another in his search to find someone who could handle ISKCON Vrndavana. He called bad management "Ravana," and said, "How can we defeat this Ravana?" He named names and said they could do nothing.

Exposed to this harsh, judgmental nature Srila Prabhupada displayed as a manager and in private, I wonder how he would view me. I can't take much austerity "especially not in India "and I found being his servant difficult. He would see that I am attached to my comforts, selfish, intolerant, and that I prefer the amenities of American life while wanting to have the prestige of being a leader of a group of men. Not so surrendered.

Can't get Krishna's mercy that way.

Please . . . don't even say it. What did you do today?

I got a haircut. Didn't say much. Set the alarm for midnight.

Did a little, a little . . .

a little more. Trying to accumulate.

Hari Sauri said that Srila Prabhupada said Srila Prabhupada getting physically weaker, but still giving the *Bhagavatam* class. Faced with the poor management of the *aSrama*.

Hamsaduta, HarikeSa, Hari Sauri the Englishman, Aksayananda "this one, that one and the Monkeys,

Nitai dasa,

babajis who "could not move the cause of Lord Caitanya even one inch."

* * *

Oh, chant a lakh

a lackaday, alas

I chant a peck and a bushel

but no amount seems to earn

me *Krishna-prema*.

I am too restless to

chant absolutely.

* * *

O Pain, please go away.

Daffodils! The Irish robin is much smaller than the North American one, and what kind of swan is it that floats on Lake Erne? Is it a mute or a wild one?

I want to not come back, Swami, and I should agree to go back to Godhead "but can I? So much to expect "perfection.

* * *

8:30 p.m.

Went to bed around 6:20 p.m. with a headache. It has gone down, but now I'm not sleepy. Grateful.

Pray to love Prabhupada.

I want to overcome the problem I have that I feel Prabhupada wouldn't like me, wouldn't accept me as I am now, even though I accept myself.

I pray for a solution to that puzzle. We do things so differently now than when he was here, commanding us. He could lead us into battle, but no one else has the strength to do that for us as he did. We have to live with the inevitability of change.

He seems so harsh when I read about him now. I don't really mean that, but I feel I have to say it.

These things are hard to say. It raises the problem I'm trying to solve: I want to like everything he says, relate to it, follow it, but I don't. They do seem harsh, some of them. So either I am not true to my feelings and I fake pure devotion, or I remain true to my feelings "and what? It reminds me of my recurring dream about false currency. All claims to be true and loyal to Srila Prabhupada are false if you don't feel them. How to find the resolution between all these feelings? No one can answer that question for me.

* * *

Go lie down now and breathe
easy,
blankets heavy on legs.
Can't fall asleep? Anyway,
Rest and time will pass. It's already almost time to get up
to hope and chant
your rounds with strength.
Pray for that.
This ink flows to the Don
River, the ocean of *bhakti*. My
master is there in *gopi* dress I
don't imagine.

March 21

5:50 a.m.

Got up late, I know, because you couldn't sleep last night. Now the moon looks cold and foggy. Or is that the moon's natural glow or the Geaglum atmosphere? It's not quite full, but in a few days it will be Gaura-Purnima. Madhu has been quietly reading his one-volume *Caitanya-caritamrta* all week whenever he gets a chance. I am not. I have Post-its ready for a talk on Sunday, but I am not.

What am I?

Not so simple.

At least simple in an external sense, and I'm grateful for that.

Dreamt again about Allen Ginsberg and WCW. WCW was asked to write a favorable review of Allen's poetry. Why is the dream source sending me this dream again? What does it mean to me?

I woke from it and let it go. It took me awhile to fall back asleep, and when I awoke, it was already 2. I tend to think the dreams mean more than a random combination of images. I wish I could understand them.

* * *

It's a fact we do many things we wouldn't do if Srila Prabhupada was personally present. I see a brother do his thing and I say, "Well, then I can do *my* thing." We see someone else claim, "I do only what Prabhupada was doing up until 1977," and we think he's too rigid. Neither do we believe him. We seem to have a new freedom. That point is obvious, but how should we use it?

* * *

* * *

Prayer

Prayer escapes me, must be for
advanced mystics and simple pure folk.
Religion is the thing they study
at the University of Vermont religion's Department.
Remember?

* * *

Add to that prayer is the
missal book, the thoughts
for the wild horses-filled mind cannot
concentrate on prayer, St. Teresa
of Avila knew that and taught her
own conversations with God that seem to
demand you already have devotion
and you follow in her Church.

* * *

Why is prayer so hard for me?
I don't even recall that Prabhupada
wanted me to pray. But he does.
He said chant Hare Krishna, the name of God
the best prayer.
It means please let me serve You
and be active. Work hard
for the spiritual master and
your whole life becomes prayer.

* * *

No loafing or bluffing. Arjuna
didn't sit down on the chariot long
before Krishna told him get up
and listen to the truth.

* * *

9:37 a.m.

Dear Moony dasi,

I got yer letter. You sure wrote a long one. It took time to
take it all in. Now here's what I got to say:

You be a good girl, d'ya hear?

Don't drink beer.

You got to listen to the Mick "

I mean, the Master of all.

Don't lessen your hopes,

don't prepare a hangman's noose "

just goose a juice and don't

watch old TV.

You'll be free maybe

before me

and waltz your way

into the arena

in three-quarter time.

* * *

Gee, that's no kind of responsible advice, father.

Okay. Frown. Furrow brow.

Look here, little sis or bro "

always be on time and chant and

pant and want no evil in

your short life. Do as told

by higher

authorities.

Do and don't. I like you

as you are with some

improvements.

I only hint at them though,

knowing you can't change your

spots.

So live with them and take

this offer as sincere.

(Here follows a selection of paraphrased *Slokas* inserted to fit his or her character and situation.)

A sign-off and a kickback and then select a blue Tombo for a blues compensatory dream. Something was playing on a phonograph, hard bop, a good rendition, although not the one with rollins or roach or Monk. It was "Brilliant Corners." I remember it from my youth. The devotees sat down respectfully to listen and I was too shy to dance under such formal circumstances. We were all hesitant.

Was it a curse from the past?
We each choose our own suffering.
So if that's the stakes
then give me Bengali
bhajana "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna,
Krishna Krishna "
Bhaktivinoda Thakura
and all that.

* * *

3:30 p.m.

A devotee wrote and said he had a seizure that felt made him feel as if he was being electrocuted from within. It happened suddenly from an apparently innocuous cause. He's better now, but subdued.

And another devotee who already has a problem heart, has to undergo another operation. He says his marriage is difficult, although he thought it would bring him happiness. His friend suffers a similar fate.

Where is happiness?
Not here.
Only with Krishna in the spiritual world.
Yeah, and some think it's going all right for them but that's not so.
No children yet, another tells me.
No children, no house, and no income, another states.
Simplify.

Read in Second Canto verses about Krishna's original form. He killed demons and captivated His transcendental parents by His childhood pastimes.

I read and need Krishna
in gut and brain
and when I die
I need
the holy names and
my spiritual master to connect me.

March 22

3:08 p.m.

O Swamiji, please guide me. The only way to know the unlimited God is by surrendering to Him. Surrender to God is offered through surrender to His pure devotee. The pure devotee engages us in devotional service. I wish to love You in that way.

There's nothing new to learn outside of Krishna consciousness. I've been here now for thirty years, trying to pray. I have not been a success, but I'm here. Lord, I plead my case. At least today I opened a book and read about Your unlimited prowess.

* * *

Started listening to Ravindra-Svarupa Prabhu's lectures on Anton Boissen and Krishna consciousness. Became hooked on it. He's giving Krishna consciousness in a novel way. Vaisnavism in Christianity. No *upadis* "accept pure love of God where you find it.

Oh, open that mouth for the dentist,
to put in bread and
sabji and a cream puff if
possible
or any large dessert made
with butter and honey.
Open that craw to say
Krishna, I
ache for You.

* * *

Madhu is rehearsing songs he composed to sing at Gaura-Purnima. He used to sing in a hall with punks, and now he sings before Radha-Govinda and devotees.

It is good that we are pacified and toned down to sing of Lord Caitanya. Manifest wisdom. It's raining now on this shed. I lent it to Madhu to woodshed in tonight.

March 23

4 a.m.

It's Gaura-Purnima, a happy, Christmas-like feel to the morning. I want to chant today. I wouldn't want to be in Mayapur today because the crowds are too huge. You can't even see the Deities, and everyone will still be discussing ISKCON's problems dragging you into it. Still, to be in Mayapur today, remembering that you're there and looking at Lord Caitanya's moon shining over the pilgrims filing in and out of the temple. Mayapur is the holiest place.

Hope my head remains clear today so I will be strong enough to go over in the rowboat and preach. I'm aware that I'm prepared on paper, but not in *bhava*. Perhaps the excitement of speaking will rouse my mood, and my audience's too. But I won't and can't fake it.

That's what's nice about Ireland "they don't expect or want a false show. They accept anything said with sincerity in *parampara*.

* * *

No breakfast this morning. Chanting.

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9:50 a.m.

After my lecture, the leading men raised their hands and asked questions about how to recognize that Lord Caitanya is God even though He didn't want to be known in that way. I felt their questions were technical and not really from the heart. Later, Bhagavata dasi asked a real question: "If the holy name gives love of God, *Krishna-prema*, why don't I feel it when I chant?"

* * *

A nice dream: dreamt of some process which, at the end of it, produced a woolen blanket in nature. It developed the way a flower blooms and fell like a falling petal. I picked it up and proposed to offer it around the shoulders of my Prabhupada *murti*.

* * *

March 24

4:45 a.m.

Practicing the presence of God. You make little glorifications, remembrances, expressions of gratitude, etc., and thus maintain a continual conversation with God. It's mostly silent, but that makes it easier to do it no matter what you are doing or where you are. It takes mental concentration to overcome the *cancala* mind, but you persist and gradually you are living in Krishna's presence. And He reciprocates with you. So it goes.

When I speak in my natural language, I notice I ramble and dwell on particular thoughts. I have also noticed that I tend to be an impersonalist. Maybe the time will come when my non-Krishna conscious chatter will stop. Is that possible?

Or perhaps I will stop speaking in what I now consider my natural language, and I will speak only perfect words heard in the *sastra*. I don't know. I only know I will have to be myself regardless.

Saw the language of Gregory Corso and didn't like it, although I may be able to springboard from it. "Sophisticated, elder bibliophiles": Ginsberg's description of those who might like to read Corso.

Fall out of
teeth, then dentures,
doubts and dandruff
bombs fall out, and
years "the planet spins even then.

Hah!

On Gaura-Purnima, a shouty skit of Jagai and Madhai delivered. Volume loud. Jagai and Madhai shouting, "I hate it! I *hate* that sound!" and laughing drunkenly. Lord Nityananda was also loud, but chanting Hare Krishna. The audience laughed (also loud), and the young children cried in fear. It was an Irish shouting match. Leo and Arjuna played the drunkards well with their stocky bodies and brotherly appearance. They rolled on the ground wrestling, drunk, black-wigged, faces in need of a shave. The *avadhuta* Lord Nityananda wore a low-slung *dhoti* and thin white top-cloth. Amateur, hairy Western bodies with long black wigs, but it was sincere and a good time was had by all.

Quiet as we rowed back over the lake, Uddhava rowing. No headache, but retreated anyway.

* * *

9:15 a.m., Shed

Hot sunlight, but I'm turning my back to it. reading the opening verses (1 - 6) of "Questions by Maharaja Pariksit" in the Second Canto. One goes on hearing the *Bhagavatam* until the end of his life. Spiritual perfection comes from it. It's a personal commitment. You don't have to learn some form of inner meditation or how to sustain a constant conversation with Krishna. At least Sukadeva doesn't stress this much (he does say earlier that a pure devotee always asks Krishna permission to do anything). Sukadeva stresses hearing and chanting as the ultimate means to attaining Krishna.

And especially hearing. Maharaja Pariksit perfected himself by hearing attentively for seven days. Good advice for a boy who picks at his cuticles. This is the only relief from mortality.

O tell us, sage, what's the best remedy?

I already told you, man. Now do it.

But sometimes I get drowsy.

Write your way out of it.

But sage, sage . . .

You're on your own, kid.

* * *

The mail:

"I think you cancelled all the initiations because I was on the list."

"I'm angry at you for cancelling."

"I'm sad. I even handed in my beads for you to chant on. It's an abortion."

"Are you a bona fide guru? Do you doubt yourself? Is that why you cancelled?"

(The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* says that the spiritual master has to answer all the disciples' questions and be able deliver them, or else he's a fraud for taking disciples.)

"We think you're afraid of the *rtvik* philosophy."

"You know, you're not as qualified as that Gaudiya Math *sannyasi*. Why not send your disciples to him?"

Are you waiting until your dreams clear and your astrologer gives you the go-ahead?
Or maybe until the GBC writes that paper.

Or just another auspicious day. Janmastami? Or even sooner "Nrsimhadeva's
appearance day? Still too soon?

* * *

3:15 p.m.

Ravindra-svarupa Prabhu says Boissen rates the symptoms of schizophrenia on a
continuum from successful explorers of inner life who become saints to ordinary
confused, insane people. I wish I could hope I was on that continuum, moving toward
spiritual breakthrough.

I recognize that my reading and chanting is stuck. That's my *problem*. "Everyone" has
the same problem to some degree in this movement. I can't live merely on reading and
re-reading the *Bhagavatam*, although there are *Bhagavatam* texts that tell me such
repeated hearing is sufficient: "Persons who hear *Srimad-Bhagavatam* regularly and are
always taking the matter very seriously will have the personality of Godhead Sri Krishna
manifested in their hearts within a short time." (*Bhag.* 2.8.4)

And chanting "I get tired of it because it's so mechanical. I count and count and count
some more until I feel like I'm doing nothing but counting. I can't *talk* with Krishna, or
even glorify Him properly, because I don't know Him, don't love Him enough. Why,
because I haven't tried enough? Or I haven't received His mercy.

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura and Srila Prabhupada emphasize preaching. I
guess I haven't sacrificed enough in that way. Stuck in myself. ravindra-svarupa Prabhu
said, "Every day I go around asking myself what Srila Prabhupada thinks of me. I don't
care what *I* think of *myself*, but only whether Prabhupada is pleased with me."

When he said that, I thought, "I do care what I think of myself." My self is precious to
me because it's my God-given identity. But yes, I have to please Prabhupada. When he
said that we internalize the judgment of a person like Srila Prabhupada and Lord Krishna
within ourselves and seek to please them through that internalized sensibility, I had to
agree with that. None of us wants to follow atheists or Mayavadis. We each want to
please Prabhupada, but in whatever way we have understood that he wants to be pleased.
At the same time, we're persons, and we have to work out how to surrender as we are
while at the same time, honoring that internalized judgment. It's not easy.

* * *

Flashes off and on of headaches, of insight, of elation and depression. My way is
gradual. I haven't lived a life of huge crises, great blocks, or big breakthroughs. The slow
flow.

Maharaja Pariksit asks, "Please explain the duration and measurement of the life of
the . . . demigods, the human beings . . . "

In other words, I'm about to die and I want to know what more I can do to make
spiritual advancement before my body and mind are annihilated.

Leo asked, "If we don't make perfection in this lifetime, do we continue it in the next life?" Of course I knew the answer, and I answered it correctly. He seemed relieved to hear it.

But what realization do I have of this article of faith? What faith do I possess? I know I'll die. I have faith in that. I also have faith that I am helpless. I have nothing left to fall back on, and I have fallen short. I'm not a hero. I know that too. I'm left only with my prayers for the next life, for my ongoing Krishna consciousness. I guess that's faith in what I said to Bhakta Leo.

March 25

12:50 a.m.

I just realized that there are two approaches I can take to chronic illness. One is that I can feel the anxiety that comes naturally at the first sign of pain, and then when the inevitable headache comes, I can consider it down time. That means, I lose time because I cannot perform my regular reading, chanting, and writing. I consider it a waste of time. I also feel grateful when the pain goes away.

The second approach is to consider the pain an equally valid use of time. This idea occurred to me after reading one of Brother Lawrence's letters to a nun who suffered from a chronic illness. Brother Lawrence wrote:

Happy are they who suffer with Him. Get used to suffering, and ask Him for the strength to suffer as He wants, and for as long as He judges necessary. The worldly do not understand these truths . . . they consider illness as natural afflictions and not as graces from God, and therefore they find in them only what is difficult and harsh for our nature. But those who regard them as coming from the hand of God, as signs of His mercy and the means He uses for their salvation, ordinarily find great sweetness and perceptible consolations in them. I wish you were convinced that God is often closer to us in times of sickness and suffering than when we enjoy perfect health."

In the introduction to Brother Lawrence's letters, the editor writes, "On several occasions Lawrence addressed those who were suffering from physical problems. The remedies proved to be ineffective. Today, when the powers of medicine are far greater, we would be less quickly convinced. [Lawrence was writing letters in the 1680s.] The surrender that Lawrence "himself suffering, handicapped, ill "recommended to those who had tried medicines of the period in vain, and who had furthermore vowed their lives to the Mystery of Christ and his Church, proceeded from the mouth of a man who had personally overcome suffering. Lawrence of the resurrection experienced and submitted to it, but at the same time he governed and directed it. He transformed it into love. Suffering, personal imperfection, and emotional problems have never been satisfactorily explained, yet many saints have found in their faith in the living Christ the means to fill every void with Presence and Love."

The editor's modern-day caution not to completely avoid medical treatment provides balance. Thus I have my pills, although I haven't been taking them lately and consider it a gain when I avoid them. I avoid them not so much for the highest spiritual reasons, but because I don't want to become addicted to an allopathic drug. I have them because if there's an important engagement I must attend, an opportunity to preach, and I can participate by taking a pill, then it's not an absolute virtue to avoid the pill.

I come close to having a full-blown headache pretty much every day these days, and there's no way the medicine can free me of this problem. Therefore, I regard the advice not to see headache pain as down time as welcome. It is a way for me to come into God's presence. I don't have to be weak-hearted about it, or to feel as if my whole day has just been cancelled. It's true that it's hard to chant and read at that time, but I *must* find a way to remain in Krishna consciousness even at those times when I am incapacitated by pain. Krishna consciousness is not just for people who are well. Pain should help me to realize the truth of the soul and love of God.

* * *

It's good to remind myself that honesty doesn't *only* mean fearlessly exposing how I feel. Honesty means adhering to the vows I made to surrender to my spiritual master. Honesty means being true to Krishna, the Supreme Truth.

* * *

4:55 a.m.

I'll be going out in about an hour to experience the old thrill of walking just as dawn starts. Yesterday I did it and saw a fox loping down the hill. Is that why the cows howl at night "to keep him away? Walking in the morning fills me with hope. Can I really turn to Krishna? "The warthog," Corso writes.

The fox was loping. He eats the insides of small animals while they are yet alive. I saw that in Wicklow, the rabbit spilling his guts and the precious fluids fresh on the rain-streaked macadam road.

* * *

Geaglum is happy
but also glum, he said, and
claustrophobic.
He doesn't want to move, but is considering
Dublin. He knows people who have moved
and improved themselves.
I don't want to comment,
but since he asked, I'll say he
should chant Hare Krishna,
and "you're a free man."
But consider your wife and children
and somehow remain part of the society of devotees
because ultimately, we're social souls.
Don't stay alone "
that's illusion "
and don't go with anyone else
under the apple tree
except Krishna and His devotees.

Yeah, he replies, "But where can I find the devotees?

All I know are pseudo devotees."

Kierkegaard couldn't find any Christians, so what's a man supposed to do when he feels like that? I guess it's pride. Although I respect Kierkegaard's honesty, seeing the hypocrisy around him where the Danish state was nominally and officially Lutheran.

Saw the video of the Hare Krishnas marching in the St. Patrick's day parade. Great show with many stands for reviewing. The devotees passed, and one announcer after another said, "Sрила Prabhupada was like St. Patrick, bringing love of God to foreign lands." Each asked for a cheer for the Hare Krishnas marching by. Happy girls in green, waving.

Wave your arms, white-dressed Janmastami dasa not ashamed to carry one side of the lead banner. "Give peace a chance, chant Hare Krishna," it said "from the Beatles' days.

Here they come chanting, and there is ParaSurama on the cart, holding the white horse's reins.

* * *

O Vrnda, you grow in
communities all over the world.
I'm your small devotee here
spewing out words
of self-interest, self-aggrandizement.
I bow down before you, and
take the brass *acmana* spoon in
hand. Offer three drops
and touch your earth.
Protect this little plant.

* * *

Bhaktin Suzanne enters the unheated green house
to care for her and pick out the bugs
the mites and the chitters
while the delicate fragrance of
manjaris fills the air. *Manjaris* "
that word again. Please make me
a maidservant of the *gopis*
of Vrndavana.

* * *

Devotees are not supposed to imagine anything. We want the real truth. Although it's true that the truth sometimes stretches the imagination. Like those eagles Prabhupada mentioned that fly from planet to planet. Still, we don't create "truth" with the imagination. We accept what has been said by higher authorities "the carefully handed down mango.

We use our imaginations for something else. That is, to present the age-old truth in novel ways. Srila Prabhupada said, "Don't do the same old thing, but something new." He wanted old wine in new bottles.

That's what a poet does; he turns everything upside down to tell his truth, which is not literal, but subjective. Simple devotee poets don't cheat.

* * *

9 a.m.

"Thus *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is not a creation of the mental speculators. The sound of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is transcendental, and the recitation of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is as good as that of the *Vedas*. Thus the topic of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is the science of both the Lord and the living entity. Regular reading or hearing of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is also performance of *bhakti-yoga*, and one can attain the highest perfection simply by the association of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*." (*Bhag.* 2.9.4, purport)

* * *

3:30 p.m.

I read to Madhu from Brother Lawrence's letters about illness. Then I told him that although I liked what Brother Lawrence said, I couldn't see making any big changes in my life. I could at least try, however, to see my headaches differently. I'm really doing nothing so important that it can't be cancelled by pain. Pain comes from Krishna, and it must be just as important experience for me as anything else. I need to get out of the cycle of duality about it.

March 26

12:30 a.m.

Srimad-Bhagavatam is the sound vibration of the Supreme Lord; it's not ordinary sound. "*Srimad-Bhagavatam*, or *Bhagavad-gita* or any revealed scripture in the world is never to be accepted as an ordinary mundane sound without transcendental potency." (*Bhag.* 2.9.28, purport)

I have accepted a bona fide spiritual master. The *Bhagavatam* states: "The disciple, however, must be ready to execute the order of the bona fide spiritual master as Lord Brahma executed the instruction of his spiritual master, the Lord Himself. Following the order of the bona fide spiritual master is the only duty of the disciple, and his completely faithful execution of the order of the bona fide spiritual master is the secret of success." (*Bhag.* 2.9.8, purport)

* * *

There is Vaikuntha, and Goloka is topmost. You can't gain it by your own endeavor (running, spaceship, etc.), but only by *bhakti-yoga*. *Bhakti* involves penance (*tapasya*), as evidenced by Lord Brahma, who performed austerities for thousands of years. In this

age, the main penance is to chant the Hare Krishna mantra and follow the four rules. Preaching is also penance.

Ah, the effort it all takes. It seems to perform certain austerities, you need a better body. That's almost true even of chanting it seems to me sometimes.

Another penance is my having to hear about other people's falldowns. Or debates, hot lines, e-mail fights. Even overwork by committees for social and economic development in ISKCON. Be free of it, be simple, and give attention to the daily attempt to read and chant with submissive aural reception, and to writing that flows from a devotional life.

And I don't need Boissen
or Tolstoy or my old gang
members, gang leaders like
Kafka, Kerouac, and other sad souls,
singers of luscious songs, pop
songs "don't need 'em.
Need only my master and his
dal, capatis, rice and sabji "
I'll take a sweet if offered
but won't be sorry if not
and go on chanting under his
order, read his books
Remain in his society
ISKCON,
and keep going.
Hare Krishna.

* * *

6:15 a.m.

Walked in the rain and the rain spattered drops on my eyeglasses. It was so dark I couldn't tell if a bird landing in front of me was actually a field rat. I walked down to the quay, where the now-dilapidated green ferry waits and rusts and the lake noisily washes against its side. It's a steel boat and it reminds me of another steel boat in my life. I found myself looking out from the quay and not thinking much. Not much remembrance of anything. More counting.

Then it was five past six and I thought to walk back toward the light in the house on the hill, where I'm staying. As I walked between the white and red vans in the yard, still pre-dawn and barely light, I remembered I wanted to change the title of a poem called "Joy Walk." That's too explicit and blissy. Changed it to "All I Do."

All I do.

* * *

9:08 a.m.

I can't get away from controversies. Should X. dasa leave his community? That's up to him (and them). Is so-and-so eligible for initiation? I'll have to ask what "two discrepancies in following the principles" means. And bigger issues. Followers of one

splinter group write to tell me that one of my disciples is writing inflammatory propaganda about them. I caution my disciple, but it turns out that the paper was only attributed to him. He didn't actually write it. It was written by an approved ISKCON agency. Alas.

Y. dasa, who reads my private edition books, said he felt challenged by something he read. He wonders if I shouldn't be reading more literature by the Six Gosvamis and Bhaktivinoda Thakura. I hang my head in shame.

* * *

4:55 p.m.

Up and down with headache today. Clear for the moment. Walked with M., but didn't talk. Imagined telling the psychiatrists, "I don't think I have any big problem, but I'd like to make spiritual advancement in my remaining years." Krishna will have to reveal it: "To those who worship Me with love, I give the intelligence by which they can come to Me."

I took Srila Prabhupada's hat off. Is he comfortable? I judge by my own comfort: if I don't need a hat, then I figure he doesn't either. He holds a dictaphone when I rise early.

O Radha, O Krishna,
this is Geaglum
with its chuffs of wind.

Manu's car tire has a puncture, and he asked Leo to repair it. Trying to open the car trunk, Leo broke the car key. Manu left to sell paintings in his used van instead.

"That's Inis rath," said Madhu. We walked down to the quay where we saw Bhakta Randolph hiding in his parked car, writing.

Mute swans fly over lake, flapping over devotee in rowboat. They remind me of swan airplanes described in the *Bhagavatam* as they fly heavenward.

Windy chuffy around this cement-walled house. I'm safe at Krishna's lotus feet.

March 27

12:35 a.m.

Don't be proud. We are only the Lord's instruments and not the doers. Brahma wasn't proud, although the Supreme Lord shook his hand and empowered him to create. I'm familiar with these passages and teachings of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I never want to abandon them to seek knowledge elsewhere. I should never think I have completed my study of any of Prabhupada's books, and I should never tire of giving the same examples.

As soon as I hear the word "sun" in an analogy, I tend to turn off because I've heard it so often, but this morning I appreciated its aptness. The sun and its energies are one, but the sun exists apart from the sunshine. Similarly, God is the Supreme, transcendental person, aloof from His all-pervading energies. Yet the energies are nondifferent from Him.

The bicycle in my dream was enjoyable, but it was taken away. Krishna takes away whatever attachments His sincere and aspiring devotees possess (unless they give them up voluntarily). Although devotees may use things in Krishna's service, Krishna won't allow them an enjoying or controlling spirit. In my life, it's hard to maintain an enjoying

or controlling spirit since the twinge, the dreaded pain, may begin at any moment in the midst of any endeavor. It constantly comes to remind me that I am powerless to do anything, even to expend creative energy in Krishna's service. Krishna is the controller. Therefore, I don't have to be afraid of pain, or dread how it devastates my time. I have to find a way to switch to a more internal gear when it comes. And I have to find deeper detachment.

Like today, pain sometimes comes, then ebbs. It teaches me to be flexible and to serve Krishna according to whatever energies I have. My dear Lord Krishna, there is nothing I can give You that You don't already have. I may think I'm a unique preacher, but it's all You. If You want my writing to help devotees, it will. There is no point in taking credit for myself. Still, I thank You for allowing any good thing to come through me. Literary life is not my purpose, but service to You and to Srila Prabhupada.

* * *

9:35 a.m.

He existed before the creation, He alone. Now in the period of universal maintenance, He exists (all else is His energy). After the annihilation, only He will remain (first verse of *catur-Sloki*).

Someone may claim that some persons or things have no relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Lord Visnu denies this. That which appears to have no connection to Him is His illusory energy and is compared to a reflection of the sun that appears in darkness (second verse of *catur-Sloki*).

Didn't go out to shed. It was raining, but that's not the reason. Thought how I get a headache almost every day starting while in the shed. Maybe I won't get one if I stay back.

The Mayavadis must be challenged and defeated. I call him out "Stevie. He's like a Naval reservist of the *Sannyasi* Corps. Send him on a mission to Africa or Somewhere, U.S.A. Tell him go join a GBC committee in London and preach against the latest controversy. The world's a fight. "In this corner, ISKCON, weighing in at . . . And in this corner . . . "

Don't make light of it. Get out your arguments. I may be called on the carpet.

No, I'm not afraid of that. I'm afraid I'll die while yet another issue is ground to dust. It will still be going on while my fate is being decided. Will it be colored by these relative issues that live on in my mind?

Daffodils "a fresh bunch on my desk. Their centers are yellow, their petals pale whitish-yellow. They are like singing canaries, silent stars, empty trumpets, and as delicate as silk with their smooth green stalks and leaves. Daffodils.

You shouldn't misunderstand me. I am concerned about ISKCON. Whenever I feel I can't get involved and think how one day, all this will be behind me, I remember that as long as I have disciples, and as long as ISKCON is functioning, I'll have to remain aware and write letters to help.

* * *

5 p.m.

Okay, you don't want to be part of ISKCON controversies or management. That's a negative statement. What do you *want*? I want to read. I want to build up to it. I want to read nothing but *Bhagavatam*. Srila Prabhupada said, "*Srimad-Bhagavatam* will teach you all you need to know of the Supreme Lord and His abode." His books are mine, and I pray to taste them. Although I thought it wasn't possible for me to read in an extended or repeated way during the day, I see that it *is* possible, and just suited to my demeanor.

Old times, new times, present times. While the water on the lake strait blows and ripples like a river tide, and the sky remains dark like Krishna's own body, I pray to read under this good Italian desk lamp, with my new prescription eyeglasses and the flame of the intelligence Krishna has given me to live out my brief (and rare) human birth.

March 28

Read "

to overcome prejudice that Lord Krishna and Lord Brahma are myths

to save my skin (salvation)

because I'm going to die and want to be absorbed in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*

because I am meant for this

because my Swami made these books for us

because I am free to do it

because he ordered me to read his books

because I like to, and I like the *Bhagavatam*.

"Through Sukadeva Gosvami's grace and by the mercy of Maharaja Pariksit, we are all given *Srimad-Bhagavatam* perpetually to learn the science of the absolute Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna." (*Bhag.* 2.9.38, purport)

The material disease is sense gratification, and freedom from this disease is "re-engagement of the senses to see the beauty of the Lord, hear His glories and act on His account." (*Bhag.* 2.9.39, purport)

"The pure devotees of the Lord, like Brahma and persons in the chain of disciplic succession, do not do anything to instruct their subordinates without acting accordingly themselves." (*Bhag.* 2.9.40, purport)

The devotees are always anxious to know more and more about the Supreme Lord, the master of all energies.

By reading his books, I can be in touch with Srila Prabhupada in my constitutional position "as his *Sisya* and as devotee of the Lord.

I escape the miserable material world.

I want to read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* repeatedly, even in increments, during the day "all twenty-four hours.

I have these big BBT books "*Srimad-Bhagavatam* and others "and the perfection of seeing is to read them. The perfection of intelligence is to understand them. This is the way I can best worship Krishna.

I want mystical *darSana* with the Supreme Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

I repeat "I want to overcome the idea that *Srimad-Bhagavatam* topics are mythological. Kick on the heads of those who say so.

Defeat the Mayavadi poison.

Develop love of Krishna.

It is the ideal occupation for a *sannyasi*

I pray for the health and ability to read at all times, to hear when I cannot read, and to be somehow repeating what I read when I am not hearing.

I want to learn to relish each section in a chapter in my own way. One way to taste them is to remember how Prabhupada wrote them when he was here, how I helped him, and how I always read each new volume with such anticipation.

There is no need to make this list of reasons to read the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. reading is simply my duty, my love, and my daily nourishment "my method of living and loving. And I need to read so I can write. That is, I need to write what I read.

Srimad-Bhagavatam is the medium while simultaneously remaining both the means and the end.

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare. reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is the perfect accompaniment to chanting Hare Krishna.

"O expert and thoughtful men, relish *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, the mature fruit of the desire tree of Vedic literatures."

"All that is troublesome to the heart is almost completely destroyed, by regularly reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and rendering service to the pure devotee."

* * *

It's Good Friday, the day of Christ's sufferings on the Cross. Christians observe it. It is too much to contemplate. Srila Prabhupada has offered that Lord Jesus had a spiritual body and did not suffer or die.

The best I can do is obey the teachings of Christ regarding morality and love of God, service to God and all His creatures (love your enemy, etc.). This includes allegiance to Jesus Christ as the son of God, the pure devotee, the only way.

I request Jesus to please accept my single-minded devotion to Srila Prabhupada and Lord Krishna. To be a Krishnaite is almost the same as being a Christian. All glories to Jesus and his true followers, who created faith in God in our hearts so we could accept the theism's and personalism of Lord Caitanya's teachings.

* * *

5:25 a.m.

I have the sniffles and my voice is heavy with catarrh. My sore throat has progressed to these cold symptoms. But it's mild and I shouldn't complain. The question now is whether it's too risky to take a walk in this windy, cold pre-dawn. Well, what can I do but be alive and hopeful? Let me go.

O Persona, who have you been? Once a student, once young, looking up to Srila Prabhupada in his rocking chair at the Boston temple. A rare opportunity. You also served in separation and felt him present in your life. O Persona who lived in Beantown, those times were tough, and the city people were tough and wild. The devotees tended to be unruly but sincere. We had so many *anarthas*. We have been washed over.

O Persona, this is just another scene that will be replaced by time too. Don't you see that? You won't always be sitting in Manu's house trying to decide whether or not to take an early morning walk. Where will you be then? Montana? That would be a surprise! You could be blown by the wind just about anywhere.

I was saying
the gift of the Magi
the gift of Christ,
the suffering of the stations of the Cross.
I'm excluded "this is *their* day
for mournful repentance.
Don't imitate it or deride it. They have their devotion.

* * *

I make my own confession:
I love the Lord, and He and His holy names
are one. I do not preach
with total dedication or
meditate the way I should
although I'm still here trying.

* * *

6:05 a.m.

Out walking, I try to remember the particular verses and purports I read earlier this morning. I can only dredge up one verse, maybe two. Maybe it's not so important to have everything I read in my memory file, verbatim. The reading doesn't have to be justified by my being able to produce it again like a clerk who's asked for a file.

Then what do I want from the reading? It is the nature of reading that something will be retained. More than ready information, I am looking to deepen my impressions of Krishna. I remember that after the Lord spoke the *catur-Sloki*, He said something to Brahma about being fixed in knowledge. In his purport, Prabhupada writes that this conversation in which Krishna spoke everything in brief proves that the Lord is a person and that Krishna and Brahma were face to face. Therefore, there's no scope at all for the Mayavadi's interpretation of the *catur-Sloki*. I want that impression more and more "God is a person, He can speak face to face with His pure devotee, and I can listen.

* * *

10:10 a.m.

I am trying not to be afraid when the first signs of a headache behind the right eye appear. Why should pain trigger fear? I have reduced my life to such a point that nothing is pressing; there's nothing I have to do at a particular time, no crises (except those that arrive in the mail, and no reason to feel like I've lost anything.

Thinking like this will help me use my precious pain-free time well "in reading, writing, chanting. That's my definition of simplicity anyway.

I read about the ten divisions of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and the various subject matters each contains. There's no real need to understand each division specifically. I'm not accountable for it. The main point to understand is that the first nine subject matters are distinct from the tenth, the Tenth Canto, the *summum bonum*. And that much I know.

As I read I thought about how ISKCON is tensing itself over the latest controversy. I'm trying to stay relaxed as I contemplate it. relaxed and pain-free. Avoid the Twinge. I make it sound like some monster. I'm starting to understand that it's benign. I'm trying. The inevitable ups and downs cycling through the day "all within Krishna's control. What can it mean but that Krishna wants me to put aside the book or the pen and to think of Him in some other way? Face the facts.

March 29, 1997

12:30 a.m.

I'm really not writing much these days. I thought it might be because this book seems to feature me so much (body and mind), and I'm not that interested in it. I'm looking for where the *bhakti* is flowing in the midst of the struggle. *That's* interesting to me.

Reminds me of Thoreau's landscape. I have a different landscape, an inner landscape, a different purpose. I want to glorify Krishna, exonerate myself, and disentangle myself from matter. The very body and mind about which I complain I can use to free myself from attachment.

I'm willing to do it.

Watching them row the boat across to Inis rath and back. Ladies dip the oars weakly, almost spastically. A man like Leo is best to get others through the choppy waters. Men or women, however, they all make it to the other side. The children wear life jackets and life goes on.

No one living in the boathouse nowadays. Manu and his family are away at their in-laws for a few days, and I wonder who will feed the collie. No more showing this diary around as a specimen of literature to be commented on.

Then blue ink "

believe. Going down

the page. Krishna speaks

to Brahma "all the answers

in *Bhagavatam*, ten subjects

twelve cantos, and this canto

Rounding out that Krishna is the

source even of Visnu and

I believe.

I want to serve, I

want to be counted among them.

I want to lose the false self "

the so many "I's."

* * *

Time to stop if you plan to chant *japa* at 1 a.m. But come back today, not just to add words, but purpose in the spreading ink
seeing face and hands
not a Narcissus, so don't throw tomatoes at me.
Krishna, I smile,
Br'er rabbit
outfoxes the Fox
and he can go elsewhere for a meal
while I chant Hare Krishna in my habitat,
a writer.

* * *

5:15 a.m.

He died on the Cross, he said, for our sins. But we should not practice a vicarious form of atonement. Boissen said Christ wanted his followers to do what he did, to give up their lives for God. Anyway, in a prayer, we used to say, "He descended into hell." That was after the crucifixion. I don't remember why he did that "maybe to save sinners there. I won't trifle with it because I don't know, don't remember the prayer's meaning. But it continued, "And on the third day he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and is sitting on the right hand of God from whence he shall judge the living and the dead."

There's no point trying to parallel all this with something in the *Vedas*. Someone said he had a vision of judgment day. A devotee said, "Oh, that's the universal form. Time I am, come to kill you all."

* * *

The Christians stand outdoors, then kneel inside. They abstain, some of them, from eating or talking on Good Friday. I don't abstain. I don't do austerities of too many kinds. For example, I told Madhu it's all right for me to eat what he calls "a big lunch" because I don't eat later in the day. Some *matajis* see how much I eat and think it's pitifully small. Let me eat in peace. But I do agree that there could be less butter and sugar. M. says there's no point in his instructing the cooks if I compliment them when they use white sugar and lots of butter. But if I give him power of attorney over my diet, I'll be eating seaweed and soup. No, not that!

Oh, I don't want to starve. Don't worry, I'll live until I die. My body will tell me what nourishment I need.

The *virata-purusa* desires something, then it is manifest in His universal form. Only after that can it be attained by the living beings. The tiny living being is the *adhyatmika* person; the instrument by which he perceives, such as the tongue or genitals, is the *adhibautika*; and the one who controls the perception is the *adhidhaivika* person, such as the sun-god who provides us with light so we can see. All three are interdependent. The Lord, the Personality of Godhead, is the sole independent.

Who gives knowledge to God? He is independent, *svarat*.

* * *

6 a.m.

Out walking. Birds singing. One devotee mentioned Syamasundara dasa's old newsletters from around 1971. He said that they were artistically written in stream of consciousness style, like James Joyce. He seemed to be poking fun at it. I'm not trying to imitate any "artistic" stream of consciousness. Joyce's writing is carefully re-written and contrived in *Ulysses* to resemble what he wants to make us think is the flow of the mind from one moment to the next. I'm giving more my actual mind, or at least fragments of it that comes as I write or type one page after another.

Mute swans swimming like white boats on a calm lake. It's definitely spring. Sounds like a distant flow of crows and seagulls. There! Look! Seagulls skating over the water like surfers behind a motorboat. (And when the sun comes up, we can expect *those* guys out there too.)

The puddles reflect the sky. Look down and you'll see yourself, Narcissus. The prettier sounding birds "I don't know their names.

Down at the quay, the cement dock, and beside it, the old, green, steel barge tilted, rusting, inoperative. One old leader told someone that it was my fault he was driven from his *prabhu-datta-deSa*. That's not true, in my opinion. "What is the truth?" asked Pontius Pilate.

* * *

9:53 a.m.

The Supreme Lord manifests in the world in material forms such as the *visva-rupa*. Various material forms and ingredients are all His external energies. They cover His real transcendental form. The impersonal form, *brahma-jyoti*, is spiritual, but it is not accepted by learned devotees as their object of worship and service.

Guru-seva gave birth to a ten-pound boy named Srivasankirtane. He entered the scene on Good Friday, March 28, 1997. The father and mother look completely different; their lives have changed. They are grounded now.

What do I mean? Do I know anything about what it means to be a father or a mother?

A spider lands by his self-produced thread in this shed. He crumples. I won't touch him. An ISKCON leader phoned for me, but couldn't reach me. I'm not going to touch that controversy if I can avoid it. No statements issued, please.

Gray crayon, what have you got inside yourself as spiritual expression? How many days and years? He wrote and wrote . . . a baby was born . . . he wrote about a mute swan gracefully bending its neck toward the water while a small water bird cruised nearby . . . he wrote about the ripples on the lake and the moderate calm of the water. Too much sunlight glancing off this window.

White clouds bunched on horizon. Handsome, blue sky, are you filled with water or atmosphere? *Srimad-Bhagavatam* says the pure devotees don't accept the material forms of the Lord as His eternal form of bliss. They want His eternal Vaikuntha forms.

Randolph, Arjuna, Syamananda,
the old lady, me, the young-old

man, that white horse pulling the cart through Dublin, Hare Krishna devotees singing and dancing. I'm here now, but the truth eludes me. A pattern of escape. Get down to it, little left knuckle. We'll each get a chance "everyone does "and we hope our friends will stick by us in our times of difficulty. Whew.

I am pushing. Mickey Mantle pushed hard despite the pain of broken bone shards in his heel and knee. The Mick kept suffering.

Listen, friends, this world is a prison. We are pure souls, and Krishna is telling us to get out of here by remembering Him. I'm asking us all the same. This is not a personal epic, like a *Patterson*. I'm not trying to wallpaper my life with the events around me. I'm just not worthy. I'm left with my days and nights as they are.

The birth of the most wretched and respected Earl of France escapes newspaper reports. Hare Krishna mantras puffing out. He says, "I chanted forty-two extra, plus two, plus five, plus one under my breath, and said *Haribol* five times as my act of contrition." Dear Krishna in my life.

March 31

3 a.m.

Because of a headache lasting now thirty-six hours, I was not able to do any reading or writing yesterday.

* * *

Simply Headaches

I want people to know the full extent of my headache pain. I want them to know how it recurs daily, and how I lose the opportunity to read and write when I have pain. I want to use descriptive words like "piercing pain behind the right eye" (but not exaggerations like, "a hot poker in the eye").

I remember reading Adrienne Rich's poems in which she described the pain she feels in her hands. I didn't resent reading about it; I thought it was legitimate for her to share her pain in her poems. It loses its legitimacy when sharing pain becomes complaining, however. Sometimes the way people describe their aches and pains to me becomes tiresome. Why? I think it's when they talk *only* of physical pain and don't go beyond it or do anything with it. Or if they are resentful. Or seem so involved in looking for a cure that they forget the essence. But no matter what their attitude, physical pain is no joke, and often, as Prahlada Maharaja says, sufferers are forced to follow regimens that are worse than the disease itself in order to free themselves of pain.

Sitting here trying to chant *japa* aloud. When I'm in pain, I tend to drift into quiet or even silent *japa*. Chanting aloud requires too much energy. This morning while chanting, a train of memories about my days on the U.S.S. Saratoga overtook me. I remembered that short guy who looked like he was of Italian descent, who came with me from Staten Island on the day I was inducted into the Brooklyn receiving barracks. He also transferred with me to the Saratoga. We flew, a group of about five of us, to Florida. Then we boarded the U.S.S. Shangri-la across the Atlantic to meet up with our new home, the U.S.S. Saratoga CVA 60. I think we had to climb aboard the Saratoga on a rope ladder, because the Sara was in a bay outside Italy.

This little guy, this uneducated guy who was not at all to my liking, was a baker by profession. Although like me he was in his early twenties, somehow he was working in the bakery with his father. He asserted his vocation and it was assigned to him in the Navy. I believe he worked as a baker on the Shangri-la during the two-week crossing. I also found my niche on that crossing. Because of my "English with honors" BA diploma from Brooklyn College, I was assigned to the journalists' department.

I even remembered the moment we came aboard the Saratoga how this fellow spoke up and defined himself as a baker, and how he was immediately sent to the kitchens. I insisted on being a journalist only later, after they had decided to put me in gunnery. He got a special handling, this baker, and yet what was his vocation? He was stuck down in the bowels of the ship in some sweaty, hot, little corner to shove dough into an oven. He had to make endless loaves of white bread for the sailors to devour. Did he receive any human satisfaction to know he was serving others? Or did he think his job was an easy way to get through the military? Did his father and mother, or some uncle back on Staten Island, teach him his lines to get him past the line of fire?

I remember seeing him sometimes in the chow line. He would be serving the bread. We rarely spoke, maybe just said hello with our eyes. Hardly what you'd call camaraderie. And you know, out of everything they served "and it was a limited menu "I always went for the bread and tried to get extra. It seemed they couldn't ruin the bread and butter.

Why does this little baker come to mind now? I can't say. But with hindsight, which I admit might be a romanticizing of the actual history these forty years later, I think fondly of that little fellow and the fact that he stood up for himself as a baker, even though being a baker was not macho. He managed to achieve whatever it was he wanted, even in the huge, impersonal Navy bureaucracy. Maybe he represents that to me "getting what you want in a world that usually pushes you forward according to its own designs.

Well, I don't want headaches, but I get them. Still, within *that* limit, I really want to be a devotee, to write, to serve God by writing. These things have been given to me. That little baker didn't curse his lot but embraced it. I should do the same. The baker produced a wonderful odor from his little sweaty hole; I can do that too.

Yes, that's the point. I was thinking of my writing, then my mind took the train to bread-making. Natalie Goldberg describes writing as making bread for hungry people. In my case, I knead information and feelings about my health into the dough. It's part of my sharing, and I try not to complain. Like bread, it's part of life. Don't leave out such an important detail if you are going to describe your life.

But like that lady "I think her name was Laura Lee "who wrote the book called something like *Walking Through Fire*, tell us not only of your chemotherapy but of your faith in God, your belief in heaven, and how you tried to convince your atheistic doctor of the after-life. Let us see you smiling through your pain. That's real stuff too.

To save the audience's sensibilities, don't opt for vague, metaphorical language that no one can understand. Tell us where it hurts and how you actually triumphed over it, even if on later analysis, your triumph appears to have been short-lived. Live your day to day imperfections and let us know how you progress.

* * *

Noon, Simply Pain

When the pain starts, I often go through one exercise after another. I try following the relaxation methods prescribed on a tape I have here. I imagine my body made of red and blue lights. The red lights are tension areas and I want to switch them off. The blue light areas are relaxed. I imagine a row of silver toggle switches. Each of these switches has a wire hooked up between the pain center and itself, and I imagine myself flipping the switches from on to off. The only problem is, as I go down the row of switches, some of them turn themselves on again. Sometimes I have to switch them off several times before they respond.

Then, the tape advises, I imagine my "advisor" coming to me from a distance. I am to ask him a question. I ask, "What is this pain? How should I cope with it?" I'm not sure whether to imagine that this advisor is Prabhupada or someone else who will help me understand Prabhupada "a guardian angel coming to lead me to guru. A brother? Anyway, in the presence of this "advisor," I think about how I want to surrender to Krishna. I really desire to know that, so I try to feel it deeply. Ultimately, I get to the point where I accept that if Krishna wants me to feel this pain, I will surrender to it. I think over the *tat te 'nukampam* verse, the elements in it: pain is only a token of what I deserve. I should accept it without complaint, always remaining grateful to Krishna for the things He does to purify me. I should also remain detached from matter. Material life is *always* suffering. I need only desire the spiritual and ultimately to attain a transcendental body to find the state beyond pain. I also promise that if I get well, I will serve Krishna and not try to enjoy my body and mind by eating and sleeping. If I do this meditation successfully, and carry it through the period of pain, Krishna will be pleased with me.

Of course, none of this cures anything, so sometimes I decide to take an Esgic. This time, fifteen minutes passed, then thirty, forty-five "no change. I tried to imagine the effects of the chemicals going through my brain and reducing the pain, but that didn't help.

Then I sat in a chair and looked at my Johns Hopkins' pain-rating instrument. I set it at about seven. Then I tried to enter the pain with my consciousness, to concentrate on it. I asked myself, "Can you tolerate this?" Yes, of course. It's only pain. But I kept watch on the scale, to see if it would climb higher. And I remembered those biofeedback techniques I used to practice and imagined warmth going down my arms into my hands.

But do you know what? I think all this pain is just old *prakrti* that has worn itself out. Headaches go down when they want to, and not with all the meditation in the world. At least in my case. It's happening now, at noon. Thank God.

What does all this have to do with Krishna consciousness? Brother Lawrence said he was more likely to be God conscious when he was ill than when he was not. Can I say the same? Of course, pain cuts me off from my service; I can't read, write, or chant properly when I'm ill. But there's something else that comes through, something similar to a prayer of the heart, and I feel Krishna's presence within the activities. The activities themselves often seem mechanical or ill-motivated, but when I'm in pain, I have nothing left but to think of Krishna as genuinely as I am capable. I don't welcome pain "I'm too frail a being for that "but I wouldn't *pray* just for release from pain. I simply pray to become Krishna conscious in any situation.

* * *

6:35 p.m.

Time to rest, mate. You've had quite a day. It could have been much worse, and eventually it will.

Wildflowers, a little yellow, a little purple, on the forest floor. red berries "are they holly berries, the Christmas plant? Waxy, green leaves. Trees stretching up.

A speedboat parked at the Govinda-dvipa pier. That's good. Tilaka suddenly touches my hand with her nose while I'm talking to Randolph. I jump, startled. "Oh! It's Tilaka! How much affection do you want?" I ask her (or him "I'm not sure which).

Tomorrow, if there's no pain, I'll finish the Second Canto.

I prayed to the Lord in the eye of the pain. Now I pray to Him in the eye of ease, and I hope, when I'm between the two states. Hare Krishna.

So many wonderful cloud formations here at Lough Erne. The bleached, golden thistles lining the shore. The sticks of winter trees waiting. Tomorrow it will be the beginning of April. Look around and see what there is to see. Today was real.

April 1

12:30 a.m.

Deep, ready faith in holy names of the Lord and in the process of hearing about Him from His pure devotees. Even as an uneducated boy, Narada gained these from the *bhaktivedantas* who visited his home. He served them menially, and ate the remnants of their *prasadam*. I did this too, in the beginning, with His Divine Grace. How happy I was to see my name appear in his ledger accounts listing the sums of money I donated to him in September and October of 1966. That's "real money in the bank." I never spent anything better in the last thousand lifetimes. It gave me faith. Although I'm slow.

* * *

Good morning and April fool's. Your dunce cap is on at an angle, I see, and you're smiling your toothless grin. You play a trick and a trick is played on you. Who is kidding whom? We are both (fooler and fooled) under the control of material nature. I'm a spirit soul and shouldn't bother fooling around in the material world.

Even the wildflowers are foolish; like me, they think they are safe on this enchanted wooded path. Spirit soul enchained in matter.

* * *

Read a paper yesterday defending the way the GBC inquired from Prabhupada about how he wanted initiations conducted after his disappearance. I recalled feeling we'd gotten the order, and the mantle was placed on our shoulders, *amara ajnaya guru . . .* "Become guru on my order," as Lord Caitanya ordered. It was a natural step in our service, the next service we could offer to His Divine Grace.

But that original feeling has been sullied and crippled in many ways. So many of those original eleven gurus fell down, and we spoiled it by both limiting the number at

eleven and then trying to worship them on the level we would worship Srila Prabhupada. We discriminated against non-guru Godbrothers. So many mistakes.

But it wasn't all bad in the beginning. I mean, it wasn't rotten from the start. Just mistaken. Now we are in a different place, struggling along, and reduced in so many ways. *Ayi nanda tanuja kinkaram* "O son of Maharaja Nanda, I am Your eternal servant, but somehow or other I have fallen into this ocean of birth and death. I sing that song and pray for faith and patience. I want to join my voice with the cry to become one with the will of Krishna and His pure devotees. I want my joy to be only in serving Him, the heart of my heart. I am not "tethered to an extraneous cause," as one poet accused me. He said real poets have no authority but their own, or least they let their own authority come first. I agree that a poet's cry must come sincerely from his own heart and not from simply quoting scripture, but I cry to have my voice become one with the voice of Prabhupada and the whole *parampara*.

* * *

Swami

Swami, controller of his senses.

Want to be one? Can you imagine?

One guy visited our storefront in '66 and said

(he was from Canada), "I'm a swami."

We laughed, "You! A *swami*?" To us

there was only one.

You, a *swami*?

* * *

9:15 a.m.

Hare Rama. Forty people committed suicide together claiming they were going to join a UFO that was following the comet which is seen in the sky these nights. I went out and saw the star-like object with the smudge and worried that the cult suicide might be linked in people's minds to the Hare Krishna movement. The UFO-following group was vegetarian, celibate, and lived together in a big house. M. commented that they were right in wanting to leave this world, but had no information on where or how to go.

So, my friend, I hear the coo of a mourning dove for the first time this year. No book, no trace in his remaining papers of what he wanted. I thought, "Let them see that I'm a bit zany and jolly and attracted to things of this world. You would not suspect a man like me of plotting suicide, even though I do a crazy thing like chant Hare Krishna. After all, I'm quite worldly; I seek to avoid pain, to go on living, to travel in my van. I take life-giving, painkilling pills if necessary. No cyanide, no UFOs in my program. I do know someone who wrote a book on UFOs, but he's not suicidal either.

Now UFOs have a bad name too. TWA does too, and U.S. Air, because of the crashes, but they keep on doing business. Clinton has certainly survived his bad name "so far" and his publicity experts work hard to change bad to good and plough ahead.

ISKCON has a collection of bad names, as does Christianity. I have a bad name too because I gave the check to Mr. Payne, left my service as the Swami's secretary,

although he forgave me, and was a lousy manager. I was also a member of the "old boys' club" and a guru in pre-reform ISKCON. I thought . . .

but I smarted and

swam

and wrote of pheasant colors

because the bird represented to me a

type of book

or poem

an *oeuvre*

or career

I couldn't put into words.

And I labored under infatuations too embarrassing to confess here. Now I want to go to Vrndavana and there's nothing left to say.

Sukadeva told Maharaja Pariksit of the creation of universes, but when the sages at Naimisaranya heard it from Suta, they became restless. They wanted to hear about the Supreme Lord's internal energy. They asked for a follow-up on a previously mentioned discussion about Vidura going to hear from Maitreya. They actually asked Suta to change topics, and Suta obliged them.

I'm glad the sun is not blazing down here from clear skies. I like a heavy layer of clouds sometimes because it makes the shed bearable. One less trigger for today's headache.

So far, I am experiencing a respite. I just recorded myself reading *Songs of A Hare Krishna Man*. It was okay, I guess. No one will say it's great, but I got it out. That much I can say. What was its point? That I have a right and an urge to sing songs of life that aim at Krishna as the goal. I wrote it because I wanted to preach to JK and AG and to let the memories come and then go.

I wrote it and I am still Prabhupada's *cela*. When I asked on behalf of the GBC what would be the system of initiation after his disappearance, he said, "You become regular gurus," and I understood it that simply. I was not trying to trick him or beg the question. We would have done whatever he asked. I know that for sure. In the paper I was portrayed as a hesitant but sincere inquirer. O Lord,

I say now,

I am a selfish boy

not motivated to perform great actions but

seeking the good in little acts. I want Prabhupada's assurance for this. I do write to disciples, I do act for them, serve them, inquire from them about their lives, and care.

* * *

11:58 a.m.

Foggy head. Patrick Ball plays Celtic harp. We pronounced it "seltic," as in the Boston Celtics. Proof I'm not Irish, but not American either, just floating in space somewhere. Tu Fu said he was like a sea gull lost between heaven and earth. I'm neither in Goloka consciousness nor part of the daily grind. Not in mechanical *bhakti*? Yes, you are, but you tire of it.

* * *

"Of *bhakti* we will never tire." *Bhakti* tires me out. No, that's not true. It's not the *bhakti* that tires me. But the click-click of my beads, the counting, forever counting no higher than sixteen. Ten times per *gayatri-mantra* three times a day. I get tired of the numbers, and saddened that I don't have more than them.

Nice water. Sky I don't own. ragged dark clouds. A little child thinks he's the lord, so he mimics his parents. Because Mom and Dad shout at each other, he and his sister shout when they want something. He finds he has no control. He's pushed by the modes like everyone else.

Got any wisdom on that?

Reading *A Poor Man reads the Bhagavatam*. I was into it, that project. Now I am reduced further and I have no ambitious projects to complete. I no longer compete with Godbrothers in a zone, and the only arena in which I can prove myself is writing and getting through the day without a you-know-what.

* * *

Swami, how they love you
said the *New York Daily News*. Pictures
with him beaming and Henry Street
devotees surrounding him at JFK.
All those smiles "Kirtiraja, Bhav "
"Mr. Swami, please tell us . . . "
I was in Boston.

* * *

Fog ahead.

Some folks have arrived. They're getting stuff out of their car. Who is it? Not my business. The water is almost still, but chilly. You kind of merge into it if you look at it enough. Twenty past twelve.

* * *

5:15 p.m.

I almost forgot to write. I have fifteen minutes left, so had better say quickly what I came to say "

before the positive ions outnumber the negative ions ten to one,
before the caffeine (I'm only kidding) wears out
before the fog closes in clenches my head like a vise,
before I expire hoping to say something. Well, what is it you want to say?

I want to tell you that the water current is flowing to the right, and about the palomino weeds on shore, the lonely boat and its shadow. Madhu and Randolph are talking in the hall as I write this down before it's too late.

Krishna, Krishna. I had a good time reading *Songs of a Hare Krishna Man* and letting it pour through me as I springboarded off Jack Kerouac's *Mexico City Blues*. Why not give him credit?

I did. I chastised him,
my older younger brother.

Is he back as a devotee or again as a Buddhist?

Naren Babu and his friend gave up their Brahmoism and leather shoes, beards, and mustaches to become Vaisnavas. That's in Bhaktivinoda Thakura's *Prema-pradipa*. I'm grateful he wrote it.

* * *

Manasa deha . . . maybe Bhakti-caru Swami doesn't have the throat contralto of a pop singer in his *bhajan*s, but he's definitely saintly. He has *bhakti*, and he follows Prabhupada.

April 2

12:25 a. m.

Dreamt ending in a movie title: "The children who knew the fear of Moon river." It was set in the jungles of Africa. In the same film there was concern that one of the ISKCON gurus was acting as an *avadhuta* (wild hair and non-Vaisnava dress) and allowing naive followers to worship him excessively. I was aware of a history of concern about this guru, but the guru had so many followers that others feared upsetting everything. What to do? I dreamt along.

Now awake I'm trying to read feelingly to receive the *Bhagavatam's darSana*. The *Bhagavatam* is not a treasurehouse that is easily broken into. Maharaja Pariksit and the sages at Naimisaranya wanted to hear the discussion between Vidura and Maitreya which "must have been very purposeful, on the highest level and approved by learned circles." In other words, the talks must have been on *bhakti-yoga*.

They weren't interested in dreams. Dream-sleuthing is so often inconclusive. Maybe dream images *are* random combinations. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is not like that. Therefore, it's a relief to switch to awake hearing.

Thought of talking to Madhu about my writing, that it seems like only I can decide what to do about it. I mean, I come against this same question time and again. On the one hand, I desire to create a more artistic or structured book, even within the limits my health imposes on me. At the same time, I tend to prefer to stay with the actual flow of my life as I live it, to leave the book as structureless as a catchall. In that way, it can contain diary-like entries, *Bhagavatam* notes, poems, small stories "anything I want to put in it. We can mine it for something useful later.

Besides the question, my health is a real point. I should be calling this book, *Every Day, Just Write Before a Headache Comes*.

Why not *Every Day Just Write Even When Headache Comes*? Is that possible?

My head is already a vise. Piercing pain.

Where is my prolonged leap into the world of images and words?

* * *

5:25 a.m.

I also dreamt that a child waiter was circulating around a cafeteria, where I was sitting with a friend. He came to our table and said that Guarino means "warrior" and that it has to do with resourcefulness. I know that Guarino means "war." Is the dream source trying to remind me of something about my nature? Prabhupada says we have to make war against *maya*. Of course, I'm not Guarino any longer, but Satsvarupa dasa. Still, I may have the karma to fight. But I'm a little warrior. Someone once told me that "ino" meant "little".

* * *

The waiter in the dream reminded me of a disciple who is no longer practicing "irresponsible, always goofing, but with quick intelligence. So? I grabbed this waiter's hand and asked him for *his* name, but he never said. Maybe all his forestalling was to highlight the meaning of my own name: little warrior. It means one who fights, who has the resources to do battle, who has a warrior's heritage.

Then where's my courage? Can I gather it? Usually I am a passive sufferer, and I have developed the silent art of tolerance.

Maybe I should fight back more. At least I should fight the concept that I'm a disappointed old man whose time has been stolen by disease. Even if I'm the underdog (who can win against old age, dwindling, and death?) I can be victorious (*jaya*) in my creative and spiritual life. Be like the Minutemen, who ambushed the redcoats' lines. Your insurgency army can "pick off" the disease's assumption that all writing, reading, and chanting must shut down when the imperial forces of the headache appear. It's not necessarily so.

I can use a dictaphone when I cannot write, and hear myself or others read when I cannot read. And if I don't feel like doing even that, then something within means.

Fight, resist. The French resistance movement kept up their activities despite the German occupation. They ran an underground. They set up snipers. I could do that too. I could write a quick paragraph, or mull over something I've read. I could call it "resister's Broadcast," or "resister's Talk," or "Guarino: the Little Warrior Persists in Singing."

* * *

9:03 a.m.

Don't do acts mechanical simply out of duty. This is especially true of reading, chanting, and writing. I do them knowing they're good "good for me because they please Krishna, and good because they are the prescribed way to become free of *maya*. They are the best way to churn the milk of the self into the butter of love of God.

Therefore, to do them unthinking and without feeling is not good. Creative acts are done first because they are fun, and only secondly do you consider the result "the poem, piece, etc. I want to try to perform my Krishna consciousness with the same creative spontaneity. I know this still sounds dry, but I know what I'm trying to say.

For me it means not writing for the audience and having fun to nourish the soul. I want to light and then increase the flame of *bhakti*, and to keep that flame burning constantly without concern for anything material. What does it matter if I publish, other than that it's an aspect of my service to Krishna? Just serve regardless.

M. suggested that when pain comes, I take it as a time to give to Krishna, for dialogue or prayer. Since I can't read or write at that time, maybe Krishna wants my full attention. M. said this when I mentioned I could try to write by dictaphone even in the midst of pain. I have also thought of that when I sit and look into the eye of the pain like a good science student, objectively, not lamenting it or flinching from it, and allowing what I see to lead to a few sincere utterances or mantras "feelings directed toward the Lord and toward my attempt to recognize His presence.

* * *

The children drew me a picture and labeled it, "A mute swan." I was the first one to use the word. I used it to their teacher, and I pronounced it "moot." Because I found it in a book and hadn't heard it pronounced. A swan who makes no sound. I love their graceful "S"-bending neck. Thankful for the gray day.

* * *

3:55 p.m.

A big "*rtvik* guru" (proxy theory) controversial paper in the mail, and a letter from England about that other controversy. Left-wing and right-wing and being crushed in the middle. I want to stay out of both fights. I'm not a coward, but they're just not fights I want to die for. I want to fight *anarthas* and the slow-dying disease of disappointment at not having found love of God.

But if I fight for that, I shouldn't crave recognition. Better to crave to read Srila Prabhupada's books every day.

I was planning to stay indoors and read and write. I thought there was no need to come out to the shed. But something called me out here, perhaps the chance to play with the paints on a page. It's a lonely spot, good for creativity. But whether in there or out here, the important thing is to assert my desire to stay clear of the controversies. I want to hear about Krishna and Vidura and to feel it's okay to do so. Vidura himself was glad to get free of the controversies by going on pilgrimage. He was in the midst of bad association with Karna, Sakuni, Duryodhana, and Dhrtarastra. They kicked him out of the palace. He took it as Krishna's mercy. He wandered alone until he met fair-minded Maitreya Muni. Keep that in mind.

Yes, headaches can be considered a blessing in this regard. They help me stay free because I just can't take the pressure. It causes too much pain. Even if I *felt* the trumpet call to go into battle, I wouldn't be able to do it. Even following the quietest schedule, I am closing shop by 10:30 a.m.

* * *

Writing is like a windshield wiper on a rainy day. I need it to see clear.

Writing as art, as alone, as showpiece.

Brodsky with big nose

and frizzled hair and baseball jacket

a poet of wry wit,

a formalist but confessional, a

civilized voice, they say. Very well. And me? I am a

morsel to be eaten by the demigods?

Stardust? No, a soul proper and encased.

O woolly mammoth, did you really exist? Have

to ask the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* or

Sadaputa might know.

O Krishna and the *gopis*

Krishna and my Prabhupada,

oh, print the essay by SDG showing him the quiet champion of our cause. He can lead us, so leave him alone and send fudge in the mail, and apologies, and gather around so he can put the world at peace and in order if we will only listen.

SDG? But he didn't survive the hundred years war, except to die and come back again.

Heard a former disciple of mine burned my books.

Burned? Not just gave away or sold?

He who reports this uses inflammatory speech.

I do not. I am quietly gripping this pen "squeezing it actually "while the wind howls.

Love moment: I petted Tilaka's long, skinny muzzle. He looked light and clean today, his white and tan fur the color the classic Irish collie. Then I walked on.

O water of lake, heals wounds.

The Kauravas died, all of them. Vidura was shocked to hear it, although he already knew. Still, out of shock and curiosity, he asked Uddhava, "How are the Kauravas?" Prabhupada writes, "Thus his inquiry was psychological and not practical."

April 3

12:12 a.m.

I asked Bhakta randolph and his *gurukulis* to get me the names of Geaglum's wildflowers. They listed primrose (soft yellow flower with bright yellow center) "surely that's the pretty one growing close the ground, blooming now. Common dog viola "purple. Thornbush, little white flowers on a hedge. Common dandelion and lesser celandine, a yellow one I'll have to check out. Get to know them. That's all right. They're not a raging controversy.

* * *

Oh, I'm out of time. If I want to shoot off my rocket at 1 a.m. "I mean, start my *japa*. Common dog viola. That's me, a squat, wild fella, growing close to the ground and tottering on my left ankle in the breeze. I stoop over like a dying flower, brain reeling, and scatter millions of grains of pollen. Not very daring, but home-grown, although hiding on a shady back path. Left alone.

* * *

5:30 a.m.

Reading and writing "because you can't always read *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and you can't write so much either. And because you don't want to always trust in the unconscious or swim in dangerous waters without a bona fide guide. Because you "can't" (won't) write essays structured a la Sheridan Baker, and can't find the way to a neat, developed poem, give us Vyasa in your own words.

Vidura is asking about the welfare of various members of the Yadu dynasty.

Reading *A Poor Man reads the Bhagavatam* sometimes has a strange effect. You begin to see through your own comments on the purports. You see through your lack of realization. The readers become accustomed to knowing that you don't entirely believe what you're saying when you repeat Vyasa in your own words. I certainly lack realization. They're waiting for me to drop my guard or to just admit I'm tired of this preaching. It makes me suspect any utterance I make when I'm doing the straight *parampara* preaching as not the whole story.

One could say that I'm encouraging blasphemy against the scriptures, or that I'm encouraging people not to always hear straight philosophy. I have an answer to that. I say that first of all, if the reader sees through me and sees that I'm not fully realized, that's truth. As for the *Bhagavatam* topics being tiring, they're not, but I sometimes feel they are. We have heard them before with the same lack of realization. Perhaps I am alone in feeling this way, but I know I'm not. That means it's your problem, dear reader, as well as mine. We are restless.

"O my friend, please, therefore, chant the glories of the Lord, who is meant to be glorified in the places of pilgrimage. He is unborn, and yet He appears by His causeless mercy upon the surrendered rulers of all parts of the universe." (*Bhag.* 3.1.45)

In my mind, this topic points to an aspect of Prabhupada's greatness. He preached tirelessly, with conviction and commitment and dedication. He was always with Krishna, and always wanting to give Krishna consciousness to others. One doesn't see through Prabhupada's delivery to a person who is tired of preaching, who really wants to be saying something else.

Therefore, we are inspired to serve Prabhupada. Admittedly, we want something from him. What? Krishna. He has Krishna. As the *bhajana* says, "I'm running behind you calling 'Krishna, Krishna,' and you can deliver Him to me."

We read Prabhupada's lines and hope to imbibe *Sraddha*. "The devotees do not want the fruitive results of their work, nor do they want any kind of salvation. They relish the glorious superhuman activities of the Lord, such as His lifting Govardhana Hill and His killing the demon Putana in infancy. His activities are enacted to attract all kinds of men . . ."

When He was called by his mother for breakfast but he did not wish to have it "just imagine that scene. Imagine being so absorbed in *Krishna-lila* at five years old that you're not interested in eating. Kids stay out and play, but Uddhava was playing in Krishna consciousness.

It is hard for us to face ourselves.

* * *

Prabhupada

Prabhupada! They claim allegiance "
Rah! rah! Who's best?
Ask me. I'll make a fist
beat down some and
house no strangers
unless they say "Prabhupada *ki jaya!*"
Please make sincere acts within and without.
Ask no one, ask yourself
do I love and serve him
always? Sometimes?
Don't indulge in breaking
those four rules!
You made your promise
to *him*.

* * *

Holy Names

Krishna quickest *nama*
Rama is fine
Siva too
non name is void
alas they say it. Krishna!

* * *

Blow your horn
and play a sweet pipe for Him. How do you know
it's for Him and not your own
atma? Your own daddy-
begotten ego? How do you
ever know? The guru approves,
the Lord smiles,
it feels right, some
Vaisnavas approve.

* * *

I set out to make the theme of this book the simplification of my life. Nothing else but reading, chanting, and writing. Of course, I soon discovered that things couldn't be so ideally simple. The main reason is that I'm not on such a high level that I can be nourished only on wonderful *prasadam* and nothing else. I can't just forget the other things I seem to need to develop myself.

I'm not feeling bad about it. Krishna has certainly given me a free scope to live in a simple place. I'm not isolated or lonely. I'm living a stone's throw from Radha-Govinda and the devotees here. This is ISKCON.

Now the rain has stopped and I see raindrops hanging on the bottom of weeds and grasses. Birds are chirping. I see the silhouettes of a couple of small ducks bobbing on the lake strait. No headache yet. The sun is safely behind the cloud bank.

The ISKCON controversies, especially the two on the left and right extremes, and the pressure they create, cause me to worry. But they serve a good purpose in that they reinforce my feeling right about getting away from them to live a more peaceful life with emphasis on what Uddhava and Sukadeva say, what Prabhupada has written in his purports. I'm not reading them to gather evidence for my side of the debate. This is a pilgrim's progress.

* * *

3:45 p.m.

"Sri Krishna, the sun of the world, has set and the world is in darkness, so what can be said of our welfare?" Uddhava said.

Prabhupada, it appears threatening that another guru is coming and some of your followers are going to him. Sensationalism swirls around him "some crying "*maha-bhagavata*" and others cursing. And they're both fighting. Prabhupada, I wish good for your house. This new guru appears to rejuvenate the hopes of tired soldiers who crave nectar. ISKCON appears like the old hold, the institution demanding respect but not commanding it. It appears that lively, seeking souls will go for the live revelation from the living saint rather than to stand in rows to dance in front of the unmoving Prabhupada. So it appears to some.

I don't hold that view. I try not to face what's happened and is still happening, and to feel what has to be felt. We all want Vraja-bhava. Some say we can get it *now*. I don't want to see Prabhupada's work plundered or his emphasis minimized. I want Vraja-bhava from Prabhupada.

O Krishna,
Krishna.

* * *

Swami

Swami is a super-title "I
don't deserve it. Swimming in
ghee, I ate my EkadaSi
meal. Swami, control
your senses and your temper,
and dream on. I mean,
sit up,
and be a nice swami. Deliver
your lecture. Or are you
just a *babaji*?"

O swami,
your necktie is showing and your
brahmana thread's awry.

* * *

Hey, you're not a real swami!
I'm talking about a real
swami, a devotee of Krishna
who doesn't flinch.
Where can we find such
a preceptor today?
O Swami, how they love you.

April 4
12:30 a.m.

April running and the yellow primroses on the path beside their companion, the dog
viola. Compatible colors often occur in nature, this time, yellow and purple. I read a
little, but my mind feels full.

I tried read of Uddhava's ecstasy as he spoke to Vidura about Krishna. Uddhava says
that the world is bereft in Krishna's absence, and the Yadus are unfortunate because they
didn't take full advantage of His presence. Uddhava includes himself in that assessment
of misfortune. This is the symptom of a pure devotee. A devotee laments his lack of love
for Krishna. But despite the wonderful reading matter, my mind travelled to the
controversy. I worried how my letter to a devotee there might be quoted in the paper
written by the other camp, and how my words might be used to help them drain
ISKCON. I'm sure you can see the distraction "the mental film that blocks the words
from your vision so that you can't enter the meaning of what you're reading.

Then I tried again. Uddhava gave the example of a fish not being able to understand
the moon. I thought of Jiva Gosvami and then of the ocean of milk, the Sadaputa
Prabhu's commentary on world cultures and what their "myths" have in common with
the *Bhagavatam*. I heard him speak about that at Gita-nagari. Then I thought of Gita-
nagari . . .

Then read the purport again about how the devotees of Vrndavana "were
unconventional devotees" and could only think of Krishna as their object of love. "The
Yadus accepted Lord Krishna as the Supersoul incarnated in their family, and not more
than that."

Back and forth, attention to text and attention to mind. Made a note to write a letter to
a devotee asking how something we take for granted in Western culture is applied in
Vedic thought.

* * *

When I'm writing, rather than try to control the *cancala* mind, I try to use its
flickering nature to create something offerable to Krishna. Arjuna said that to control the

mind is as difficult as controlling the wind. Krishna agreed, although He said it was possible by right means and by determination. Despite Arjuna's comment, however, Krishna didn't prescribe the eightfold mystic yoga system, the fixed, mechanical, disciplined process. Devotees are allowed more freedom, it seems, in order to find their preferred services.

In my case, I bounce between a more focused, intense Krishna consciousness to an outer circle of awareness. Or at least from one state to another. Since my mind naturally strays, why not try to use that straying tendency in Krishna's service? I move from recording what I read in the *Bhagavatam* to writing what I saw on the walk to how much pain I have been feeling to anything at all "then back again, always back again to Krishna.

I develop this writing style in *A Poor Man reads the Bhagavatam*. I give extensive time to straight commentary "no flickering allowed. Then I switch to what's on my mind. That is, I allow myself to relax and speak what matters to me at the time. It's an exposition of the natural tension between being the perfect speaker and yourself.

Why do I want to present this exposition? I'm trying to kill the atheist within myself and within others. I don't want to be among those persons who deny the Lord's existence. rather, I want to convince them in any way I can "by any way that will attract them "to take to Krishna consciousness. We preach because it's pleasing to Prabhupada and Krishna. Whether or not we are successful, Krishna still wants us to try. Trying (preaching) is part of our survival as spiritualists. We are like nonsmokers creating propaganda against smokers. We all want to breathe the fresh air of Krishna consciousness free from all contaminating influences.

* * *

5:50 a.m.

I burnt your book.

No, you didn't, it was just a rumor.

No, I really did. Because you blasphemed my guru.

But I didn't. We have a communication problem.

Nevertheless, I did burn your books.

Which ones and why?

All I have "*Living A Life of Prayer*, and your joke books. They don't reach higher *rasas*, and you minimize my guru. You are only a pip-squeak.

Well, I'm an honest pip-squeak. That's my Shadow. That's what they call it in Jungian psychology.

That's what I mean "that *maha-bhagavata* doesn't have a shadow. He's pure light, pure *Vraja prema-rasa*.

Well, I'll remain with Prabhupada. You are free to go where you like. I won't object.

No?

And so they argue, and it's all imaginary by the light of the moon, the owl and the pussy cat and all that. I don't dare repeat what they said

in that boat tossed on the sea

I prefer to look out and see

our honest Inis rath citizens trying

to go to and from the island to serve the Deity.
Their dreams, their schemes.

* * *

Swami, how I love you
9:05 a.m.
Lord Krishna appeared 5,000 years ago. Go ahead, write it on the exam.
My sweet Lord.
A fragment of your thoughts "a penny each.
Peach. The surface.
Words go
deeper,
slower,
and finally stop.

* * *

The old-faced lady with
blond hair and curls
was tending to something
outside when Satsfer,
gripping blackthorn cane, ambled
by, suffering
a little in the foot and
"praying" his head
(in his own world)
would be clear enough for
an early Saturday morning speech.

* * *

The Lord appears in the world as Krishna in Vrndavana, and that form is merciful even to the *nitya-baddha* souls. He's more merciful and more beautiful (*madhurya* Syamasundara) than the powerful Lord of Vaikuntha.

Get it?

It's cool enough to use the heat in the shed. But don't kill yourself by forgetting to open the window. Very Fragile the life in this body is. At any moment . . .

I asked M., "Do you need a guitar?"

He said his friends were chipping in to buy him a bouzouki (note: that's different from a bazooka).

Okay, then sing feelingly
the song of a Hare Krishna man.

* * *

Now animus, the shadow "learn your Jung.

Sanford recites it as if it were gospel. "Psychology and religion are inseparable in the dream." God appears as the unconscious, gives a riddle scenario because that's how the unconscious speaks. He does it that way often in the Bible. Sanford values the dreams as spiritual, and their analysis as religion, if you are willing to apply Jungian symbols to understand them.

Idea: look for God acting in your life. Don't deny Him entrance. He doesn't have to crash through in fully manifested glory. He is present in everything, but to see Him requires a leap of consciousness.

Thank You, Krishna, for exposing my theological dryness. I am not of a mystic temperament; I'm too dry-eyed.

Strange, you'd think a guy like you "not *so* brainy, not so demanding of logical explanation, so anti-scientific (hated chemistry, math, and physics in school) "you'd think you'd be open more to Krishna acting in your life.

Okay, I'll look for Him. But I won't invent things. I don't like the "miracles" created by followers who read into ordinary events.

But I could use some miraculous talking in tongues (like a Pentecostal). Heave ho.

Kirtana magic bliss

Did you see how Krishna
convinced that guy to take a
book? Did you see radha smile
this morning during Deity greeting?

O Vrndavana, you are covered
to me because I don't try to
see under the Kali-yuga crust.

The thorn stops me and

I never reach the rose.

Ow! Aghasura!

I stub my toe and curse all
demons and temple proprietors and
beggars and rocks and too-hot
suns.

I curse the world
and wind up cursed among
the atheists.

a fish in the milk ocean who saw the moon but thought him just a rounder fish.

Cursed to miss the boat.

* * *

Sarge (Bilko, Phil Silvers)

I see the miracle in a
good joke,
a 1950s TV screen lit
up black and white and
free of snow "

the Dodgers winning again,
the Nuke and
the miracle of me getting free
of illicit sex in '66,
of loaves and fishes,
of Christ risen.
Risen.

* * *

A *brahmana* raises his arms and his belly bulges over his low-slung *dhoti*. He utters, "Hari!" What do I see? I see only matter, *pan* spit, small sparrow-like birds landing to eat the spit, and red-faced monkeys waiting their chance. I also see my fear and tighten my grip on the walking stick. This is my life in post-reform ISKCON where controversies rain down although we want world peace (and quiet).

* * *

12:18 Noon

Capture, practice, the stroke. Bang "the golf ball sails off a hundred yards. You can sock a bucketful for two dollars and fifty cents on Staten Island. Or you used to be able to.

No, I can't get it write-right in words because

- (1) I don't know my subject well enough (especially when writing of others).
- (2) I'm not honest enough.
- (3) I'm too tired (poor excuse).
- (4) Not concentrated.
- (5) Out of practice.
- (6) Uncle Sal, my God-uncle, doesn't bless me anymore.
- (7) God don't want it.
- (8) Didn't learn how to write in school. (Why you keep saying "don't" when it should be doesn't?")
- (9) Smile! You want to look good, playing it up for a crowd.
- (10) I'd rather be

(a) reading Sanford's *Dreams*.
(b) Chanting Hare Krishna in ecstasy.

(c) In Hawaii, I mean Vrndavana, or where I'm supposed to be "I don't know."
(d) Writing something else such as

The Scarlet Letter
The Mill on the Floss
Andrew Jones
Heidi
Lassie
Wind in the Willows

Chota, Volume Five
ISKCON Historical Fiction
Oh no, I don't mean that.
Hi folks. I'd rather be here.

* * *

5:10 p.m.

Uddhava lamented that Krishna was misunderstood, and that He was so loving and wonderful, but now He has left the earth. He mentioned Cediraja, who hated Krishna. When Krishna killed him, Cediraja attained to the *brahmajyoti*. I read up until that verse about Arjuna liberating the enemy with his arrows. (I read that a few months ago as a *Srimad-Bhagavatam* lecture in ISKCON Bhubhaneswar.)

Srila Prabhupada writes Krishna plays His part well as a human lover, king, child, and friend, and that even His devotees become bewildered when they see the apparent contradictions. He is born, yet He is the unborn; He seems afraid of Kamsa, yet Fear personified is afraid of Him. Finally, a devotee has to understand that Krishna does everything for His own enjoyment. He tests His devotees in order to increase their devotion for Him, so that He can enjoy their love that much more.

Who can tolerate to be separated from such a loving Supreme Personality of Godhead? I want to hear it and feel it.

Shivering "I allowed this room to get cold. Saw little Jayananda outside the window. He was chanting loudly with his hand in his beadbag "a rare occurrence for him. As I approached him I said, "You're chanting nice and loud. The birds and trees will hear it."

"They'll say, 'great,'" he said.

"Yes, and they will benefit." Jayananda has such simple, even innocent, faith.

April 5

4:18 a.m.

Trying to conserve energy so I don't get a headache before the disciples' meeting at 8:30. I cancelled last Sunday's class, so I'm hoping to come through on this one. I'll take an Esgic if necessary, but I probably won't need it.

I'm wearing Mickey Mouse-like white gloves, but they are dirty and worn out from chanting *japa*. Just read in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, Third Canto, chapter on remembrance of Lord Krishna. He's the sweetest and topmost form of God.

Memorable writing has to come from within. I can't create a haiku moment from the excitement of travel. These days I'm mostly alone in this room, trying to enter the *Bhagavatam*? At least I'm reading it. My *tapasya* because there's a crunch in anything you do.

* * *

Thinking more about my desire to remain free of controversies. It's good to take burdens for the Krishna consciousness movement, and I know I don't take them on the same way that I used to. I can't seem to handle it anymore. But even though I'm not right in there in the fight, they beat on my heart from a distance. I feel all the issues involved, the sweetness turned sour, the present animosity, even the confusion some devotees feel.

This seems to be how human affairs go. ISKCON fights back against certain things, and sometimes we are offensive, and I feel that too. It creates anxiety just to think about it. We each need assurance that we are sharing the confidential nature of our problems, and that we are each prepared to shoulder our portion of the problem. All individuals carry burdens and Krishna supports us all. We're not alone in this universe. Krishna is the intelligence in each of us. He is also the one original person we are each trying to please by our efforts, by our service to the spiritual master's order. We assume all this as we go through life, and we can draw on it for solace. This is Prabhupada's blessing on us, that he has transformed even controversy, a potential zero, into something valuable.

* * *

Orange Post-it:

- (1) Gray sweater and scarf.
- (2) Esgic in breast pocket.
- (3) Speak from heart.
- (4) Fixodent.
- (5) Confess a little.
- (6) Try to help them.

* * *

3:30 p.m.

Okay, this Irish spring hasn't been so simple after all. But it's still an Irish spring. My life isn't over yet.

The mail pack arrived. One devotee complains about how ISKCON rubber-stamps certain persons to be gurus. Whoever heard of a board having to approve a guru? Yet even with that condition, some people take up the service of initiating and innocent devotees are misled. He seemed to be arguing in favor of the guru/ disciple relationship springing up sincerely between people, without institutional endorsement.

I responded that although the approval system was not meant to solve all problems, neither is it in itself the source of evil. In traditional Vedic culture, a devotee would not have to receive a stamp of approval from an ecclesiastical body before he could initiate, that standard would translate differently in ISKCON. Such an open ticket would allow anyone to become guru, and that would not afford ISKCON's followers much protection. To give approval to people before they take *sannyasa* is the institution's way of protecting the institution, as far as it is able, from more falldown. Still, I see his point. Once the GBC approves or pronounces anything, then a lot people will take it as the God-given truth. And maybe it's not.

The same person analyzed one guru's falldown as due to staying too much in one place and accepting intimate service from women. He said he had also built himself a large bank balance. All these led to "*Maha-asana* [research proper word "Bg.], all devouring; *maha-papam*, greatly sinful; *vairinam*, greatest enemy; *smrti vigremana*, bewilderment of memory; and *buddhi-nasa*, loss of intelligence. It's all there in the *Bhagavad-gita*. And how long before he gets out?"

Dear Lord, please protect *me* from falldown.

After reading his warning about the dangers of staying in one place, I thought it was time to get those wheels moving again. I should get my act out on the road. But then as a P.S. to his letter, this devotee wrote, "If you just wrote and did your hearing and chanting and never had another public preaching program for the rest of your life, I would certainly support you a hundred percent. Tens of thousands have seen and heard extensively from you for the past thirty years. Now you have ill health and seriously, your time clock is running its course. Your books have impact and purpose, over and above conversing with anyone . . . "

Yeah, okay, I'll stay. But free of *maya*.

April 8, 1997

8:30 a.m. Geaglum, Shed

Yesterday, I suddenly decided to re-start *A Poor Man reads the Bhagavatam* (PMrB) and to drop this writing. I informed my research assistants and wrote a plan to cover two to four verses a day. Then this morning, while walking out to the shed to write on the next verse, something came to mind that I wasn't sure would fit into my PMrB writing. I forget what it was now, something about the blossoming blackthorns "an emotion that seemed to sound like a low note on a horn. Where would I find the room to write spontaneous prose in such a structured book? "Blow as deep as you want," Kerouac said. To be able to write exactly what comes at any moment requires a wide-open approach to writing.

By the time I had reached the shed "two minutes later, literally "I decided to resume EJW. Then what about *Poor Man*? I decided to give it one shot a day, at midnight, and to write here the rest of the day. I'll have to see if it's possible to do both. Anyway, here I am with fresh gratitude, ready to go.

* * *

* * *

Lead me down the primrose path.
Path me down the toothless
lower plate.
Down to the hellish planets not "
unless you need it, did even
Jesus have to go there on a
visit? Did Yudhisthira have to
see? We know Narada goes
there to preach.
Spare me!

* * *

Lead me "lead you, yes
I lead you down the

primrose path where flowers of the genus *primula* bloom "
bearing tubular yellow five-
lobed flowers and a rough leaf
shaped like a spoon,
growing close to the earth.

* * *

Wildflower emblem, I don't
want to mislead you "or me.
"Primrose path" "a cliché meaning
I'm lead optimistically
naively, as if it's all sweet and
good and
I should follow gullibly, but it
turns out to be not so light.

* * *

Why choose such an image?
I want to contradict it,
disprove the cliché,
celebrate the actual wild-
flowers
that grow on the path
I walk with weak feet
weak head
in April
in Geaglum.
Don't want a too prim, affected
precise and proper way "but
the abandoned delight
of small flowers skirting
the walk as if they had been
placed by meditation by Nrsimhananda
Brahmacari as he made a
mental path for Lord Caitanya.

* * *

The way of little flowers.
Fioretti,S. Therese,
little Stevie's little life.
Little strife,
he avoids the worst
for headaches,

dear primrose path
and Nature
springs
temporary.

* * *

I like the image of the primrose path. I'll have to try to get some information on how that phrase was used in literature. Perhaps it implies a person leading another down a path of cynicism, deliberately taking him somewhere for devious purposes. Although the path appears beautifully decorated with wildflowers and brightness, it may not be as nice as it looks. Or maybe there's some other meaning. I think it comes from Shakespeare. I certainly wouldn't want to be using an image that meant something different than what I intend. Anyway, my primrose path is simple in this Irish spring. It's nature as it is, imperfect, but not foolish or devious or sentimentally optimistic. Until I hear more, I'll take a risk and go with it.

* * *

11:30 a.m.

The guy who talked with God, Neale Donald Walsch, said God said to him that feelings come first, then thoughts, then only a poor last, words. God communicates best in feelings. Words are noise. We don't agree. Words are holy writ when given by God in scripture. You can't manufacture scripture. Or I guess you can, call it, *Conversations With God*, sell it the folks, and you're in business.

I shouldn't be so cynical. Maybe God *does* speak to Walsch. What am I, envious? Or worse, sectarian?

I can say this much: if God talks to him, He doesn't reveal as much as He does in the *Bhagavad-gita* or *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. He doesn't tell Walsch of His personal glories. Walsch's God may be presented in a nonsectarian way, but he sure does speculate.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

Every time I have pain, I realize I can't expect myself to do more than I'm doing. I can't be pushed beyond this limiting condition. I will have to find the real essence within these walls, so to speak.

And on judgment day I will not be able to go with all those who wished me well on this path, and no Hindu doctor will be able to pay my way. I can't go on a business-class ticket or stay in the special lounge or take an Esgic. Everything will be stripped away and I will have to do whatever all souls have to do at that time.

Someone gave me a copy of *Conversankirtana*, no mention of God as a person who possesses a face and characteristics. No mention of the long tradition of Vaisnava saints, or even Christian saints. It's just a vague, updated revelation of "God" telling us that there's plenty wrong on this planet (we already knew that), and if we disobey God, we're

out of the game. What does it all mean? I just saw a section where he explains that sex pleasure is sacred and should be enjoyed beyond the need for procreation. He juggles words in God's name, this Walsch, and I definitely don't like what he has to say.

* * *

Dear Lord, please don't let *me* write such a bogus book claiming to have come from You. I am not channeling Your words as if I had no control over my pen, but I am trying to represent you consciously and responsibly. I would never want to offend You, even by my groping explorations in language and *sadhana*. I know I am a living embarrassment to the *parampara*, but I have to be courageous and honest because it is being demanded of me and all of Your devotees.

* * *

Oh, save me from having to carry the circular iron piece I was handed in a dream that became red-hot in my pocket and wouldn't cool that wheel of time, the *cakra* of death.

O Lord, I like to write and consign myself not to hell.

They say if you are God conscious, you should be joyful and wise and carry a message of hope. I am a member of the Hare Krishna cloak and dagger club, free from the mores of the Western world.

I follow no sectarian God, as some people say, but walk down the primrose path and don't feel obliged to explain it.

* * *

Our God is better than Walsch's God.
He is Govinda, He is the Navadvipa Lord they've never met.
We can bathe in the Ganga and Yamuna, know Narottama dasa Thakura and all the saints. We can lead them toward that path, but as Prabhupada says (Seattle 1968) see how few people come to hear from us because it takes a rare soul intelligent enough to know that Krishna is God.

* * *

4:15 p.m.

A warm April day, birds chirping out there. I'm in the little shed with the window propped open. Don't get the tang or tingle of springtime birds as I would at Gita-Nagari or in Stroudsburg. Is it because the layers of memories I have tuned me to American springtime sounds? Here the swans swim on the calm lake and I read the *Bhagavatam* aloud for my own benefit. It's a refreshing shower of nectar, and it releases my mind from loneliness and distraction.

Breathe in the sweet air and thank God for another nice day. This old man gets his fresh air and writes in solitude. What did Uddhava say? He said the fish in the milk ocean couldn't recognize the moon as the moon. He said Krishna used to tease the young *gopis*, but they loved Him in return. They are the best of all devotees. Krishna is better than the Lord of Vaikuntha. When Krishna appeared on earth, He showed His greatest mercy.

* * *

Poem for Swan

transfer to poem for Krishna
my Beloved.

"My Sweet Lord" first heard
if only a snatch at an
outdoor cafeteria on my
way in Brazil from farm
to city. The second time I heard it "
a few bars only "during a radio
announcer's interviewing
me in Port of Spain, Trinidad.
Never heard it otherwise,
Hare Krishna pop song.

* * *

To Swan, graceful
Krishna. To Krishna the names
I recite,
to me self off-centered,
off-color
and off and on like the
light that flickers behind my
Right eye. Krishna
is all, all energies,
yet one. He's Swami
alone on 76th Street
and my thumb aching to

write this down.

* * *

O Krishna swan,
I can't wait until 1 a.m.
comes again and
I can chant and
fail You. I know what failure is
because I don't chant in love, but
I try, O holy name.

April 9

A Dream:

I'm in charge of a *bhajana* concert. I have papers printed out with the words of various *bhajanas* on them, and arrange them in a certain order. Finally, everyone gathers for the concert and I introduce them, saying, "Someone has written a *bhajana* up on the backboard, but I don't know the tune." A Godbrother says, "It can be sung in a one-two rhythm." I choose not to sing it, and look for another. Finally, I choose "*Ye anilo prema dhana*." I want to sing it and to feel the emotions of separation. Even thinking about it, tears come from my eyes. Devotees feel awkward because I'm crying, and although the audience is waiting, they won't tell me what page this *bhajana* is on. The dream ends while I'm still searching for the words.

I associated this dream with my feelings of separation from Prabhupada. I may not be familiar with all the modes of spiritual life in the spiritual world, but I'm eligible to understand this one. I have already felt this *bhava* toward Srila Prabhupada.

* * *

4:35 a.m.

Old witch, are you coming out at four o'clock? No, I'm not ready. I'm putting my hair up in curlers.

Old witch, are you coming out at five o'clock?

No, dear. I have to file and manicure my fingernails. Then I have to read my fan mail and fanzine. I have to prep the preppies on their irrational pranks. A witch has many things to do, such as prepare a brew, so don't bother me as to when I'm coming out.

Old witch . . .

(Played on the steps at 76th Street in Queens, in the 1940s, where we also played ringaleeviln War and marbles.)

Pennies from heaven

Requisite forms are available in triplicate at the justice office. Dripping down mercy.

Old guy, is the back of your neck tense? Can you relax?

O man, these recent associations are sweet. Going direct to God means meeting His holy name. It also means giving it out; don't be a miser. Distribute the sweet balls of *hari-nama*.

* * *

8:58 a.m.

Krishna, Krishna. Told a new mother that her surrendering to care for her child is good practice for learning to serve others. I also told her that Krishna is the Supreme Other.

Sanford defended dream work, and any work with the unconscious self, against the charge of self-centeredness by saying that when you open yourself to the forces in the psyche, you will be so humiliated by what you see that your present egocentric complacency will be knocked out. God will speak to you in dreams, and He may demand you change, surrender, become a new being. Therefore, dream work is not selfish.

What is selfish? When we strain at the bit? Have to be beaten by a whip while someone (who) demands we tighten the reins (or loosen them) to produce? If you don't want to be selfish, keep your heart warm and

don't be an anxious fellow
or arrogant.

I mean, use your time to

Remember Krishna,

who killed Cediraja, loved the *gopis* and Yashoda and Nanda,
and who granted liberation to Putana.

* * *

It's 9:15. He wrote (Corso)

"I also see nuns the same way

I see Hare-Krishnas."

In what way?

It's 9:16. Swans. Me, I said a mother serves a baby and is trained thereby to serve Krishna "to serve another beyond the selfish self. The mother replied, "Yes, he trains me good, my kid, but a kid whose two weeks old sleeps most of the time and I still get time to lead my own life."

Krishna on Kaliya

me free of order

and forgetting my cold feet for awhile

as I write with

new primroses in sight.

Collie "I touch his head for good luck.

O Krishna, I just read of Uddhava's lamentation. I don't have to be afraid.

* * *

But yes be harnessed,
you horse of the unconscious
you opposite, *anima*
shadow "don't revolt even
in dreams and say you want

a piece of the action!

Calm down, I say, and brush that dark side away. He's just a dream phantom. You know what I mean. Better to walk to and fro in this shed than to get caught in controversies. I have other work to do.

Some day I may live and write a new message derived from some deep endless variation, closer to Krishna. Yes, some day in the future.

* * *

4:25 p.m.

It has been nice hearing a little of Bhaktivinoda Thakura's *Prema-pradipa* and the sages hearing *rasa-tattva*. I discussed the book with M., and then set up a low table on which I can draw in ink for PMrB. I like this quiet life, although I suppose I'll be broken out of this shell eventually. For now, I'll taste the nectar laced with illness. Jung says the self is composed of opposites.

I know that from my own memory. For example, I spent wonderful days at Isola d'Abarella, but I had a lot of pain every day. Actually, that's why I went there. Yes, and it was cold. I had high aspirations, but I was limited. I was practicing what I had learned, but simultaneously realizing that I hadn't learned anything yet.

Gaze at the lake. Quietly rippled now.

O Krishna,

there are always letters in my drawer,
crayons and colored pencils in
the second drawer, and microcassettes
and dictaphones in the top.

You have the power to let me reach in with my right hand and choose from among these services to You, and You have the power to take them all away.

O Krishna, Bhaktivinoda Thakura described the three kinds of *rasas*. He said sugar and dates are one type "the *rasa* of the tongue. Higher than that is the *rasa* of worldly emotion. It's similar to spiritual *rasa*, but the emotions are temporary and the object unworthy. Higher is Vaikuntha *rasa*. Then all those terms again "*sthayi-bhava* (steady mood of a particular *rati*,) *visaya* (Krishna as the object of love), *aSraya* (the abode of love, radha), *sancari-bhava* (I forget), *anubhava*, *uddipana*, etc. He lists them all and then defines them. I feel the words simultaneously bouncing off me and entering into me with slanting rays. O lamp by which to see *prema*, thank you for helping. Imagine if we had only Jung by which to understand the soul. How far can human speculation go? Although rationalists decry guru and *sastra*, Bhaktivinoda Thakura says, we know no one can enter spiritual understanding by reasoning. *rasa* is to be tasted, not intellectualized.

* * *

If we offer to guru and don't use him as the transparent medium to Krishna, then we'll end up only with heavenly (worldly) *rasa*, not spiritual taste. Neither should the guru try to enjoy a worldly *rasa* with his sons and daughters. It's actually a detestable perversion.

* * *

I asked him, "Are the cows better off in their cement floor pen?" They seem unhappy to be away from the green grass and their freedom, with their own dung lying in heaps around them. But some say this is better for them because they don't have to use their old legs on hilly ground, and anyway, they were eating too much. I don't know what to think. I suppose they will have to suffer in old age like anyone else. The mad one, Kaliya, no longer bellows. Now she makes only a muffled sad, moan as I pass. I asked for clarification.

Krishna, Krishna, Krishna. M.'s tuning up his bazouki, made in Romania. Krishna, Krishna, Krishna.

April 10, 1997

3:55 a.m.

I did some PMrB at midnight. It went okay, I guess; no way to know from sure except to look at it later.

This is the hour I'm often sleepy. I've been up for four hours, chanted fifteen rounds, read from the Third Canto where the Lord was enjoying His play in the Vrndavana pastures. He and Baladeva took the calves out daily. That's the Vedic solution to economic distress: engage in agriculture and cow protection. I'm too old now, too feeble, and I have no inclination in this lifetime to garden. I liked it when I saw Madhava dasa in his little plot outside the window, and I encouraged the devotees in France. Cows and bulls are alien to me, although I accept them as important to human society and understand them as mother and father. But when devotees in small rural communities purchase cows and oxen and say, "We're practicing cow protection," it seems artificial unless the oxen are actually being worked and the cows are actually milk. And to get to that point is a huge endeavor.

* * *

I had a dream I was on a Navy ship, complaining with others about the Navy. I didn't have much time left in the Navy, but it suddenly occurred to me that I could write a story about Navy life, about how they mistreat people or something. Even in the dream, however, I realized just how much dedication would be required to write fiction. I allowed my mind to go over the entire scenario, how I would research it, what it would mean, the implications, and I felt myself becoming euphoric.

But on waking I immediately realized I didn't want to give that kind of dedication to developing a writing career. I want to keep my life simple to read Prabhupada's books and to chant Hare Krishna. Simplicity is something to be attained, and it includes giving up dreams. I also woke with a headache, and again I realized how much pain defines my present reality.

* * *

5:30 a.m., After Ink Drawings

I was having fun. I started with red ink and drew out something I wanted to confront. Then a soft blue wash drawing "a big-headed guy with blue pants and washed out blue hair saying, "Krishna, help me to be holy!" Another outright expression of the dilemma.

The next one was in red again. It looked like a rohr ink blot. See into it what you will. It made me feel free as I let my hand go, Srila Prabhupada's *bhajana* in the background "words like *vedesu*, and *govindam adi purusam* finding their way onto the page. Just two faces, one with a big nose. I don't claim this is art or even sense gratification. It's not for hanging on the wall. But I like to draw to enhance my creative life and to express joy or sadness or whatever I'm feeling. I'm looking for Krishna to manifest Himself and for me to becoming worthy to receive Him.

Next I remembered the crayons and realized I wasn't restricted to blue, black, or and red ink. I made a wax crayon line over everything. That's what I like about crayons; the wax sticks to any surface, and you can use them over ink or paint. I drew a devotee writing with an extended arm. It says, "*Srimad-Bhagavatam* writer, what can you do?" I was feeling the romantic and ambitious desire to be divinely inspired and to write something wonderful. It was like my thinking in the dream. realistically I can't do much more than I'm already doing, but it's fun to make the increase in your mind. So, *Srimad-Bhagavatam* writer, what *can* you do? He's inviting Krishna to move his hand and to empower him to present the loveliest work of which he is capable.

And I drew a few more. If I had had the time and energy, I would have done twice as many. There's no limit.

Hare Krishna, ocean of truth

"I'm on the shore," Rupa Gosvami said.

Then where am I? Way inland, afraid,

can't swim, but belch

and dream of it and

write my scribblings alone. O Krishna.

* * *

9:28 a.m.

Tunes repeat themselves until they take hold in your mind. "My dear Lord Krishna, this is the tune I'm offering to You. It's not so much of a tune. The notes have no ordered progression, and I can't even hold them precisely." Well, I can't seem to control what sound comes out, so I'm left offering my breath to Him, and the rhythm of my day.

He wants my devotion. Still, Srila Prabhupada said that an offering should be first-class "well-spiced vegetables, perfectly ripened fruits, beautifully made ornaments, and well-sewn clothes. And offer it with mantras, especially the Hare Krishna mantra. Prabhupada also said we shouldn't concoct. The rituals don't have to be elaborate; they can be simple, but first-class.

Got the curtain closed against the sunlight. Blew a morning "*raga*" "offered it to Him. Whether I offered it or not, I can't avoid Him. Whether I want to make the offering is the test of my sincerity. Hearing is like that too. Our willingness to hear is a sign that we are attracted to His pastimes. And *what* we hear is also a sign of our taste.

O Krishna. Anyone reading this should be reminded of You. It's a desperate note left by an explorer. "We reached the shack at 8:45 a.m. and read *Bhagavatam* for 15 - 20 minutes. Played horn music. Tried to write."

O Krishna, I've heard from some devotees that one of Your temples is in ruin. Others tell me there has been improvement. When I go there in October, will it make any difference at all to the devotees there?

I can't ask that question. I simply have to go and be humble. I have a desire to help in ways that make sense to me. O Krishna, at the time of milking the cows, I'll gather with the devotees and speak before You the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

When leaders fall, some devotees feel their faith cracking. I read about that too, in the mail. I cannot measure their pain, nor offer much solace. A few are angry about a recent fall: "Why did he assume the role and then leave? Is this all a hoax? How was it allowed? Didn't Prabhupada *know*?" So much disappointment. I can't seem to make it lighter for them.

My dear Lord Krishna.

Ha! The peonies are blooming.

* * *

It's too hot in here so
I push open the window, then
hear the birds' chip-chip, see in
my mind words and form
"grass . . . green." Give up
artifice. Krishna
Krishna Krishna the Morse code
clicking rapidly "
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna.
Who am I asking when
I ask "Is this a poem? Is
this acceptable to offer
the Lord? I am
asking myself and them "
Lord and guru "
I am asking.

* * *

3:30 p.m.

Dear devotees, please be advised that I will no longer be responsible. I have already given over the truth to various parties and I have spoofed enough. I am hereby getting serious. Here is the syrup I used on pancakes past and present "all that sugar. When I go to Africa, I will see the *prana* therapist you recommended.

I hear Dizzy Gillespie died at seventy-six, and the previous year he had still been dazzling them with trumpet riffs. But not after he died. Which proves . . .

Krishna, Krishna, Krishna. I am below the surface, but underactive this afternoon. I feel like taking it easy so as not to bring on pain. It's my day off.

I told them no more cutting off the heads of wildflowers. I have a plan.

Dear people, I left for the UFO. No, I didn't. Instead, I'll be reading the *atmarama* verse. It's very extensive. It is like a double shot of homework.

Naren Babu and Ananda Prabhu are the main characters in *Prema-pradipa*. I'm eager to find out what happens to Mahasya Malik. He was an aspiring Vaisnava at the beginning of the book, but he has been overshadowed by the other two. Now we only hear of him once in awhile, just that he's still doing *kumbhaka-yoga*. I hope Bhaktivinoda Thakura rescues him (and our interest in him) before the book is over.

Drop the names and don't forget Krishna when you die. Death is such a human event. Everything goes on as if it's not happening to you. The rowboats will still be rowing across the strait, and the Deities will be served without a hitch. The dog will have his plate filled and Ernest will be furnished. Someone will even come to take your place. Therefore, the question that should concern you is where you will go.

This is my last will and testament, this pink sheet. I left it in the book bag between the novels I never wrote to the next generation and the scribe's stuff. I'll let others decide what to do with it. I will be too busy getting my *atma* reborn in yet another mama. Hope she'll be a Vaisnava and get me out of this material world once and for all.

Stand up tall and pray, soul. Lord, in my next life, please allow me to have firm faith in Krishna, service to and friendship with Vaisnavas, and compassion for all fallen souls."

Maybe I'll be born in a Northern European zone (poetic justice) and go out all day on book distribution as soon as I'm six months old. Or, maybe I'll be born in Australia or Geneva Lake, and have some other service. I just hope I can remember my master as soon as possible.

I can't figure these things out from one life to another. You get what you deserve. I will go where all souls go, I suppose, and they all seem to know where they're going. You can't cross the bridge before the time. We Krishnaites will be all right. We insist on Krishna life after life. "After me, the deluge!" Did he really say that? I prefer to say, "Forgive me," or "Krishna, Krishna."

Forget the deluge, Mac, I want to be the servant of the Vaisnavas. Give me another chance.

Take me now, Krishna. I am already too foolish and I write too much. O Bhagavan, please excuse me. Although I've got a big ego housed in this humble-seeming body, I want to die in ISKCON. Not like Rimbaud or Joyce, but like Prabhupada, in Vrndavana.

* * *

Sitting in this room "
I don't like the chair and
I need fresh air
but it seems too much to suit up
and go out there, the boots
the coat and then I might meet
a mama or her kids or the dying cows.

* * *

"Is Bach a nondevotee?" someone might ask.
Yes, definitely. Anyone who doesn't know
Lord Caitanya or cry "*He Gauranga!*" can't
help me. And you, are you a nondevotee?
That's a good question.

* * *

We say I'm aspiring. It's
a quaint ISKCON word, as in
"I'm aspiring to take initiation from . . . "
I'm aspiring.
It means I can't do anything I like
such as play the recorder and
claim this is for Krishna unless it actually is.
It means my private life is private
and protected,
just me and the Lord in my heart.

* * *

Short Notes File

April 8 - 10, 1997

KeSava dhrta . . . jaya jagadiSa hare. Srila Prabhupada singing, it's him I like, he
likes to sing this song and so it is *madhurya*. Get the point?

And my head feels diffuse pressure, but that's part of life too.

KeSava dhrta "can't escape it. What I want more than anything is to feel love for
Prabhupada and to feel he accepts me. I have to work for that. I want his approval.
Gregory Corso can't understand it.

* * *

I'd also like to go to Italy to see things there "the leaves turning brown at Isola
d'Abarella, the deer, Dina and Nanda, and to give a lecture, always thinking of the
future. But this place contains what I found there too, especially when I take time to
write it down.

* * *

Often by 5 p.m. I have head pressure. I drink apple juice thinking it might help. It
doesn't. Time is passing and the situation doesn't change. I need to find *bhava* before it's
too late. Dear Lord, please protect me wherever I go next life. My Swami wrote on top
of my letter to him, "May Krishna protect you from calamities." I pray for that blessing
to manifest.

* * *

Ganga the cow is dying. She's over sixteen years old. The devotees purchased her and several other calves when they had the Glengariff farm. Now she's gone down; she can't stand. They placed her in a pen on straw bedding. They moved the other cows and oxen out "so they won't mess her up." Madhu went down to be her for awhile. As I passed her earlier, I saw that she was quiet and tolerant. We acknowledge that she will soon die, then turn away from it. Today is a beautiful, sunshiny spring day.

I noticed Aniruddha had a handful of wildflowers. He said they were for his Deities. I asked him not to pick so many; I like to see them growing along the walk.

* * *

My jaw is rickety. It catches a little and makes a crack sound. The throat bone also clicks back and forth, like parts under the hood of an old car. How much longer can it last? Will my life burst out of this body in some unusual way? One devotee had a brain seizure. Another writes that her hands and feet are cramped with arthritis. The dandelions spring up anyway on fragile yet assertive stems, the yellow lions drinking in the sun and growing stronger every day.

April 11
5:30 a.m.

Madhu is preparing breakfast in the kitchen adjoining this room. I am drawing this morning.

This morning I drew a picture of a man holding a beadbag. Never mind that I draw the same thing over and over. Even when I "let go" and do a person with no Vaisnava markings, I can't help in the end but add the beadbag and the *tilaka*. That's me too.

* * *

Swami 42
Swami some Swami
women at distance
attracts no one but God
means he's kind not cruel
I am not one yet.

* * *

8:56 a.m.
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,
Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
And recks not his rede.

"From Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

That's what Shakespeare said. I certainly don't want to tread the path of dalliance. I think I'll make my primrose path mean something else. The primroses and I actually have little to do with me. I didn't even know their name when I got here. So, dear reader, don't think this hermitage is a place of hypocritical dalliance. I'm really a celibate on a primrose path. And anyway, I'm only there for a few moments each day.

M. says the cow who cannot stand up is Kuveri, not Ganga, and he doesn't think she's just about to die. She's certainly old and gray-whiskered, a deeply furrowed brow like an old man.

O Krishna, You are the oldest, but You always remain a fresh youth.

* * *

O Beauty but
Beauty put, Prabhupada
used to say, pointing out
the deficiency in English.
But he wrote in English.
Sanskrit is perfect,
English barbaric.
Modern is worse "one line two miles
and next two feet.
But Krishna, Krishna my broken
tongue speaks only my mother tongue
which has become my father's English
mixed with Prabhupada's mixed with
my own jargon from America
and the jargon of ISKCON "

* * *

but I'm not hesitant.
He's gone to Goloka or
to a pure devotee place
and I'm talking in this shed
to You. He could
understand me without
translator
interlocutor.

* * *

"What is the word
for being in chains?"
I supplied "shackles".

"Yes." He took it and went
back to his work, dictating
in Bombay flat, low desk while
I exited downstairs to
bathe from a barrel.
Do you remember, Prabhupada?

April 12
4:40 a.m.

This morning I am thinking about audience. One person who has been reading my books became enthusiastic to help with their publishing and distribution. But now he has lost his enthusiasm. I gave him *Churning the Milk Ocean*, but he had almost nothing to say about it except to tell me which section was his favorite. I then gave him another book, but he had only a criticism. Another person who read *Churning* was taken aback because I used the word "crap". Someone else wanted to know why I grouped all the writing sessions together. He said he didn't know whether or not to take them seriously. He's decided to read one of them, then skip to another part of the book.

It's all right with me if he wants to skip around, but I wasn't sure why he wanted to give me his opinion that the writing sessions should have been spread throughout. I actually felt he foisted his opinion on me, because he said it while laughing, as if this was just an innocent response. It seemed to me he was avoiding the responsibility of saying what he meant, that so many writing sessions in a row made the section unreadable.

Good. Now that's off my chest. It just shows me again that an author has to write without worrying too much what others think. He simply has to write according to his best creative intelligence. Maybe this is one reason why Madhu suggests I write "purely," meaning, without concern for the audience.

Beyond that, it shows me how important silence is. I mean, you express yourself, but you don't have to crave caresses and proper treatment because of it. You have to get beyond all such motivations in writing. Even when it comes, it soon becomes wearying. But go inside to your silent shed and write what you can. Be alone with yourself and stick with your own integrity. Then you can live free of expectation, and free to give everything. Publishing is a separate issue.

Let's talk about Krishna. This morning I read the *Caitanya-caritamrta* to prepare myself for the temple reading tomorrow morning (if I don't have a headache). Gopinatha Acarya and Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya and his disciples argue about Lord Caitanya's divinity. I wrote notes in pencil so I'll be able to pause and say something interesting. I want to both praise Lord Caitanya and keep the audience awake. There may also be some extra devotees at the class, because today there is a National Council meeting and tomorrow night a big festival in Sligo or Gaulway, I forget which.

It occurred to me that there are so many things I don't know. For example, I still don't know what county my grandmother comes from in Ireland. I may never know. I also don't know where my attraction for Krishna is. If someone were to tell me my *rasa* today, I don't even think it would help much. All I could say is, "Oh really?"

That's very interesting." But it wouldn't change me because obviously, I haven't done all the routine work of *vaidhi-bhakti* yet.

In the meantime, Madhu has lined up yet another doctor for me to see. It's a joke, actually. This doctor has a machine he hooks up to you to tell you where all your blocks are. He said something about looking for heavy metal. Someone once told me I should get rid of all the metals in my body. I have metal in my dentures, but don't plan to get rid of them. Sorry.

Where are you? I am on the primrose path. I notice new blossoms, then stop to chant with Kuveri. She moans quietly. There doesn't seem to be much I can do for her. The black skin is worn off her knees, exposing old, dark-colored flesh. Poor old-timer. She's on her last. We can't say her last legs, because she's already down. Making that sound. I leave her alone. The other cows and oxen roam freely. They don't care. Even her daughters are out there grazing, but they have no concept that their mother is dying. Neither do I.

My mother is the *Vedas*. The connection is obvious.

* * *

8:45 a.m.

I noticed the whites of your eyes are cloudy. What's the matter? And your new eyeglasses magnify the wrinkles around your eyes. What are you feeling?

Relieved if I can remain free from pain. Midnight to 6 a.m. is my best time. After that I can't expect much. That's why I try to read, write, and chant at that time.

Death. Jane Kenyon, the American poet, died in 1995. Her husband wrote about her, "Jane wrote many poems about her father's illness and death . . . When Jane was dying . . . then music was her passion, as it was her father's; at the end she could not bear to hear it, because it tied her to what she had to leave."

Proof that a devotee should not be listening to Chopin at the time of death "but for a different reason. It's not because he has to leave a passionate love "music and his life on earth "but because he wants to keep his hearing clear and open for the music of the eternal spiritual world, if it's possible he might hear it. We shouldn't wait until the time of death to give up our "heavenly" or "worldly" tunes. Be prepared for death at any moment. Stay with those who also know these open secrets of existence.

In Jane Kenyon's "At The Town Dump," she tells of bringing the "bug-riddled remains of my garden" to the dump. She notices a single ripe, immaculate tomato that, "Evading harvest, and dangles/ from a vine. I offer it to oblivion/ with the rest of what was mine." Offered to oblivion? O Krishna.

But I'm not criticizing. I have my own version of oblivion into which I offer things. It's called my lack of moment to moment Krishna consciousness. Will I too feel attachment to the world as I'm dragged away from it at death? I rehearse the scene, but can never get far with that. I imagine myself too sorry that I didn't make more advancement, didn't serve better, and that I missed the boat again "more than I can ever realize now. I'm no hero now; not anymore. There's nothing I can do to make up for lost time or to quickly cover the miles to Goloka. I'll be needing to be picked up. I don't see any other solution.

April 15, 1997

1:18 a.m.

Just wanted to say that this book and a *Poor Man* seem to be co-existing peacefully so far. May they be happy together.

* * *

5:02 a.m.

When you start out writing, you don't know where you will go with it. If you stop to judge along the way, you may cross something out that might have been the link to something better. It's like that in the few minutes before I get up and put on the light at midnight. And sometimes before I start to lecture. Cold feet have to be overcome if you want to really go somewhere with your expression. Otherwise, you're standing on the edge of a pool, afraid to dive in. A Krishna conscious writer has to write. He doesn't necessarily have to rewrite if he doesn't believe everything he does is immortal. Only Krishna is immortal.

So I'm gathering myself together "and my stuff. Here's a list:

(1) The man in the comb "I mean, the man who is writing the PMrB.

(2) The photo of the tiny person from outer space surrounded by two men in trench coats in Mexico, and two women "strange, strange. The little being is wearing only a *kaupin*. His spaceship is in the background.

(3) Loch Ness monster hoax. The scientists are glad.

(4) The low-level spirits "goblins and ghosts.

(5) I don't need any of the above, but points 1 - 4 emerged and I dutifully wrote them down. What I do want is the highest conformation . But I have to take it as it comes.

For example, today on my sixteenth round I was hearing. It was an external thing, but good for me since I usually allow my thoughts to come and I cannot stop them. On round sixteen I was paying attention to the roll of thirty-two syllables on my tongue, chanting the mantra. Later thought, "Yes, this is the form of meditation we choose, not any other. Just Hare Krishna. Therefore, invest your faith."

(6) Pocket watches. Words, things that come in words from thoughts springing on the page.

(7) Typewriter keys lead to other keys, like the one that opens the door to this house. Also, keys are symbolical "how a guru provides a key to the mystery of love of God for the disciple.

(8) Another key is Key West. Baladeva and Hemingway, and Baladeva's sister and I remember the time I spent there.

There are infinite associations and mental reminiscences and pleasures "beyond count. Be careful you're not so enthusiastic to remember them all or you'll be on the forever list and miss the direct route to Krishna consciousness.

(9) Tell things from Krishna conscious sources. Imagine you are in a concentration camp, like that Swedish person who met the Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's German disciple. He was imprisoned during World War II in India. He learned about Gaudiya

Vaisnava philosophy, a little each day "learned that Radha and Krishna are topmost, heard submissively, then returned to his own country.

(10) The library party, me in the Amsterdam temple with MandaleSvara Prabhu. Write a fictional story of how someone like me came to Krishna consciousness. Why bother?

(11) The lunch box. No, don't go back there. *Mad* magazine, the early ones where they spoofed the films "Ping Pong" and "The raven."

(12) Now let us praise famous men. On your death bed, all these images rolling over you like waves from the sea overtaking the beach, carrying tons of filthy garbage and seaweed. But you can't tell anyone. Then comes the stories of Dhruva Maharaja and the saint who blessed the prince, the *sadhu* and the butcher "all told in different ways. Hear it distilled by remembering your master's speech.

O Krishna, the memories. Spring in Boston. More waves carrying seaweed. It's Sunday. You're cooking the Sunday feast. You started last night by cooking the *gulabjamuns*. The kitchen is separated only by a thin partition from the Glenville Avenue temple room. The room will fill up at feast time as we sing Hare Krishna, me leading them, me wearing myself out. I am young and have all the energy in the world. No sign in those days of today's chronic illness. And the confidence I feel in Swamiji and the hope for the Krishna consciousness movement.

* * *

Left behind while the devotees are in Sligo for a festival. Reading *Bhagavatam* and answering mail.

Reading parts of *reform of renewal*, which urges Catholics to repent, reform, surrender to Jesus, and to act on his behalf, sent tremors into my own life as a devotee in this ISKCON institution. What am *I* doing to repent and reform? After running a quick check on the possibilities, I'm back here quiet at the desk, unable to go forward, planning no big changes.

* * *

Cows. "The Lord's pastimes out of Vrndavana" "encapsulated pastimes related by Uddhava. Yudhisthira reigned, DvarakadhiSa played a subordinate king . . . my mind drifts off to the boy named Yudhisthira and his older sister. Earlier I thought of what I could do that would change my present status. I could become a hero. No, I can't. Maybe I have done nothing for too long. I can't do anything artificially anymore. ISKCON is in a particular state, and I am in a particular state too. What does Krishna actually want of me? I have to be prepared to hear that, and to follow His order. The one thing I know for sure is that he wants me to listen to Srila Prabhupada.

* * *

6:15 p.m.

I can't stop the clock, and in this case, that means I can't stop the light from fading or the layers of clouds from darkening the sky. A bird with a swallow's wings zooms by.

Everything calm. Sometimes I hear the new refrigerator in our adjoining kitchen and it reminds me of a helicopter. I anticipate the early morning hours spent in silence with the holy name. I'm like Sukadeva Gosvami in the photo on my bulletin board, where there's a marble *murti* of Sukadeva making prostrated obeisances at Vyasadeva's feet. The sage is sitting on a platform, bearded, his hand in his beadbag. Yeah, I'm like that, prostrated as I write, a poor man. If Srila Prabhupada will allow me. I can't reform or renew myself. I mean I can't think of anything I could do that would really make a lasting change, some new sacrifice.

* * *

Short Notes File, April 10 - 13

Outdoors. I stay in. The Swami often wrote in his '66 diary, "I stayed in all day today." That was on the Bowery. I reread three chapters of *Progresso*, thinking it could be published. I also stood beside myself and wondered what will become of me. Flash a serious look at my friend.

Just go to bed and fall asleep. In the morning you can speak and write on *atmarama*. It's all right to desire to print and publish.

Now where is your Krishna consciousness?

Goodnight.

* * *

Health dipping as a sensation behind the right eye turned to pain. Let it invite me to stop feeling productive and instead feel helpless to control it. I can't do anything on my own, but Krishna is always near. I can't chant His names vigorously or read the print in His book "I can write only this short note "but I can look for Him. Maybe I can even find Him. Hare Krishna.

* * *

Ask M. if someone rows over in the dark with *mangala-arati* sweets for my breakfast. What if they drowned? Tell them not to come like that. I wouldn't want to be responsible.

Anton Boissen, he's telling us how he divinized the girl who wouldn't love him back. As Dante did with Beatrice. I want to say stuff outright, but it should be Krishna conscious. And if that's not possible? Then I should trust that the truth will take me to the explicit Krishna conscious message, and hope my readers have the same faith.

* * *

Sinking fast into pain. See you at midnight, I hope. Hope springs eternal. That's the point.

* * *

Everest. Pain. I didn't read enough immersed in *cit-samadhi*.

Today I said I have a life's work in PMrB (and EJW) and life is interesting and fulfilling without the need to travel, which interrupts important work. This life reward comes by inner confirmation and conviction.

Motorboats, but I'll rest soon. Close sunlight out behind heavy velvet curtains. Go alone, to dreams, to spilt personalities. God is one. I'm one too, so I'll sink below to rise and write and read tomorrow.

April 14
4:50 a.m.

Read about Cardinal Terrance Cooke, who had a painful, terminal disease, but still went out to a program. Then he got stuck in an elevator for two hours with a group of retarded children. He behaved manfully, like a tolerant saint. Will I have to face such a test? O Stevie, draw your free-expression drawings and go on.

* * *

"Art" is smart
I like to do it "a
Red man with black-
stained eyes, leaky
currants, and foot loose
entrance into the depths of the
unconscious. As last-minute
thought I attach *tilaka*
beads. Express yourself.

* * *

But repression is not *always* bad
said Father Groeschel
in his pointy white beard
and Capuchin robes.
Are you listening to him?
Yes, because knowledge is free
and comes from Krishna; he might have
some too. For conclusions, though, I
go to the Krishna conscious people.

* * *

8:30 a.m.

The descendants of the Yadus gathered at Prabhasa, Uddhava said. Pure devotees don't have to go on pilgrimage because they're always engaged in devotional service.

Caste *brahmanas*" gradually became easy-going, being fed by the society though they had no brahminical qualities . . . "

* * *

When Srila Prabhupada criticized bookworms, he was referring to those who read for the sake of reading and not to acquire devotion. Faithless reading. To read the *Bhagavatam* and be rightly situated is glorious. I recall some popular guru calling the Hare Krishna members bookworms. Srila Prabhupada retorted, something about that guru and his followers being stool worms. Anyway, Prabhupada like his disciples to read his books.

By the way, the Yadus did not actually get drunk and kill each other under the spell of Maha-maya. It just looked that way, as in a magical performance.

Then Uddhava says, ". . . it was impossible for me to bear separation from the lotus feet of my master."

It was, "by some fortunate accident," that Maitreya Muni arrived at the spot where Lord Krishna was sitting on the bank of the Sarasvati with his back against a young banyan tree. Uddhava was also there, and the Lord glanced upon him with love and began to speak, allowing Maitreya to remain.

* * *

I won't walk by my primrose path today because M. told me, "Kuveri is now lying on her side and breathing fast." I don't want to feel it. Will they cart her away before the birds come?

April 15, 1997

1 a.m.

I am up an hour late, so I have postponed my PMrB session. I think the bike trip in my dream was analogous to my daily struggle. I encouraged myself, "You can make it!" I can make it. I can waken the self and finish the journey. I didn't chant Hare Krishna in my dream, but I'm doing it now, using the higher wisdom of the conscious self.

I went to bed at 6 last night with pain. Couldn't sleep. I called Madhu and we spoke with the lights out. I told him of my experience with that Catholic book, *reform of renewal*. It's an insider's book, and in it the author was urging his fellow Catholics to repent and to throw off complacency. He wanted them to be daring and sacrificing in order to find their true commitment to Christ. I told M. how I related his words to ISKCON and to myself, although all of it wasn't applicable. But I did feel a prodding to do more "much more. I faced the fact that I'm far below what I'm supposed to be doing, and maybe even further below than I had assumed. I suppose it's not wrong to check yourself like that periodically. At least it's good for developing humility.

But when I thought of some areas I might change, it began to seem impossible to reform myself. I thought, for example, that I might get back into regular temple life, even take up management again, or some other big sacrifice like that. But these ideas are not really coming from my heart. They are objective ways we have come to define

surrender in ISKCON. I also thought that maybe I should turn to a senior Godbrother and ask him to suggest how I can rectify. That too seemed impossible. How could anyone understand? Or maybe I could just take a different attitude toward my headaches. I could ignore them and remain active despite them. But I know that's impossible because I've tried it more than once. Actually, this idea seemed the craziest of all. Not even realistic.

The conclusion I came to last night was that if my headaches were to stop "and that won't happen by my following yet another health regimen, but only by Krishna's will" then I could consider some major changes in the way I live. For the present, however, I have to live within my limits.

Even as I spoke with M., the pain built up so much that I had to stop. I visualized myself as living in a prison. There's not much space in which to maneuver. At least I have learned to accept that, and to be cheerful about it, and especially not to berate myself for not broadening my activities. I have to live with my present situation because I have no choice. It made me think of some disciples who just became parents. They can't suddenly decide they don't want the child. They have to shape their lives around his existence. They have no other choice.

I know I discuss this a lot. It's because I'm trying to build up the confidence to accept it. In other words, the desire to reform can be carried through within my present life. I don't have to make drastic changes in what I'm doing now.

The little experience with the book on reform has resulted in a kind of self-analysis and acceptance that I'm on the right course for myself.

* * *

9:15 a.m.

Krishna awarded Uddhava His personal association because long ago, in his life as a Vasu, he had desired it. Ask and ye shall receive. Can I ask too? Do I want it enough to really ask for it? That would be a real change if I could find that single-pointed determination to ask for Krishna's association. It seems now I'm just trying to get through my days with a little dignity and self-respect, and to remain a member of ISKCON.

O Vasu, Krishna says, "I know from within your mind what you desired."

". . . the personal association of the Lord is the highest perfection of life." (*Bhag.* 3.4.11, purport)

I'm writing this down under a gray sky day, near the perfectly calm lake. Just now a boat is crossing from Inis rath. Sing on, song birds, I hear you. I'm rowing through the morning too. So far so good.

When Krishna told Uddhava He'd fulfill his desire, Maitreya "finally became aware of the importance of entering into the association of the Lord."

Boy, you think, almost in a childish way (you, an ex-reader of *Mad* magazine and DC comic books, hearer of Tom Mix cowboy radio shows) "boy, I'd like to go too." "A pure devotee wants simply to engage in the service to the Lord, and does not consider his own personal benefit." (*Bhag.* 3.4.15, purport)

* * *

12:20 noon

Uddhava is speaking directly to Krishna. He says he wants only to serve Him. He says learned sages become disturbed by the apparently contradictory activities of the Lord. When I said to Prabhupada in 1966 that I was disturbed and couldn't understand how Lord Krishna, the respected mystical speaker of *Bhagavad-gita*, married sixteen thousand wives, Srila Prabhupada shot back, "You cannot understand! Even the greatest scholars cannot understand!"

So now I understand? Is my illusion removed?

In the mail I hear of old grudges between respectable Gaudiya Math leaders. Young, naive ISKCONites mix with them, not knowing what they're getting into. Oh, go on reading and writing.

"Whatever little knowledge they have about the Lord is sufficient for them because devotees are simply satisfied in hearing and chanting about the transcendental pastimes of the Lord. This gives them all transcendental bliss."

* * *

3:15 p.m.

Suited up, ready to go for a short walk. Dandelions "don't lie, and don't be cute. I'm hearing other people's ideas, but that won't give me solace. M.'s song "On My Own," resolved that he listens to the Lord in the heart. Don't expect it to cover the entire *Bhagavad-gita*.

What I wrote and published wasn't always the best. "Even Homer nods." If you want to be a critic you can find a fault in every line.

Let's take a brief walk. A man could run from place to place and think he's getting a lot done. Not always true.

I'm a guru,
but I'm in a different phase.

* * *

5 p.m.

Lord Krishna spoke of His confidential, transcendental dealings with His devotees in Dvaraka and Vrndavana to Uddhava. "The Lord's activities in confidential love are very rarely disclosed" "not to general devotees whose *bhakti* is mixed with knowledge and mysticism.

As I read I thought of an ISKCON controversy and began to see it from the other side. Then M.'s tune went through my head: "My dear Lord Caitanya . . . just chant Hare Krishna." I still have time, I tell myself. A few months at least. What is this calculation about? Time for *what*? What will I achieve during this time? What will happen afterwards? Time to read, time to read.

Workers building a new roof for the *gurukula*. Will the children be grateful, or will they learn about Krishna and then go away unappreciative?

New wildflowers. A little white one I haven't met, red holly berries and bright green leaves. Primrose still blooming next to small Irish daisies.

M. and I walked up to Kuveri. She appeared calm, but her breath seemed labored. She was silent otherwise. Living on day after day. We chanted a few Hare Krishna mantras, then left her to walk in the forest. The sky dark gray-blue "pleasant outdoors. Wish I'd worn my scarf.

The real point in reading scripture is to awaken feelings of separation from Krishna. If our studies don't ultimately bring this about, then what is their value? Uddhava learned the purport of the *catur-Sloki* directly from Krishna, who taught him more confidentially than He had taught Brahma.

* * *

6:15 p.m.

Peacocks calling. I can't see them from here, but I hear their call over the water.

Uddhava went to BadarikaSrama on the Lord's order. The Lord and His order are identical. "As long as one is engaged in the execution of the Lord's order, there is no factual separation from Him." (*Bhag.* 3.4.21, purport) Same with us and Srila Prabhupada.

* * *

Indradyumna Swami is a bold preacher who really puts his body on the line to care for disciples. He encourages the Hare Krishna troops, goes out on the streets to chant with them, and faces danger at every step. He said he understood that verse about danger more after he was in a car accident.

At every step danger
and at every step
primroses and
my promise
to Lord Krishna
to be a devotee
in springtime
Irish springtime.

April 16

5:20 a.m., Lord Ramacandra's Appearance Day

O Krishna. M. and I will meet to go over our affairs. No breakfast today. Otherwise, there's nothing special going on in remembrance of Lord Rama.

* * *

7:50 a.m.

"The servants of the Lord are actually the servants of society. They have no interest in human society other than to enlighten it in transcendental knowledge." (*Bhag.* 3.4.25, purport) The servants wander over the earth and to all planets in the universe to

distribute this knowledge, "especially to persons like Vidura who are highly advanced in the devotional service of the Lord."

Preach to the qualified "and the unqualified. I'm writing this to you. Don't feel guilty that "

you are not at the temple program,

you're usually alone,

your health is weak,

you are a writer (translate into your own service) and that's your service (translate into preaching).

Don't feel guilty or inferior (in a material, competitive sense) that "

you're not on the GBC,

not meeting with individuals, including disciples,

not like Indradyumna Swami,

or HarikeSa Swami, or Sacinandana Swami.

* * *

Noon

A man in rough farm clothes walks through the pasture. He's got his right hand in a white beadbag. Maybe his wife made it for him. He strides up to the Kerry cows and pets one of them, who grunts. Then he walks on and pets the long-horned ox. One of the cows is lying on her side. These scenes and moments prompt me to think it's peaceful here.

But the fact is, the spring calm doesn't stop death "not for anyone. When I read one devotee's musings, which often turn to death, I feel the melodrama in it, even the pretension. Now here I am doing the same thing, writing about something about which I know very little. It made me realize that a sober note, even made from the distance between life and death, can stop me from foolish excesses.

row, row, row your boat

gently down the stream,

merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily

life is but a dream.

Oh, I was saying we all have to wait our turn to die. Kuveri seems to be next. She's right there, alone, one eye closing. She doesn't have the strength to resist when M. went up to her to remove a straw from her eyelid. Shallow quick breaths, her body a black hill. I chanted next to her this morning for awhile. She looked my way, big eyes, seeing me, aware that I could do nothing for her. Who is she, this *atma*? Where will she go next?

* * *

2:50 p.m.

I lent M. my *Essential Blake*, with favorite poems numbered so he could draw help for his song-writing. "London," "The Tyger," "Introduction to Songs of Innocence" "the poems we learned and recited in school from the Oxford anthology of nineteenth century

romantic poetry. I still remember regurgitating them: "O western wind, thou breath of autumn's being."

O Krishna, I heard Srila Prabhupada reciting Your names while singing Bhaktivinoda Thakura's song.

Krishna, Krishna.

* * *

You are wearing down we
heard the swans are
mute and fly three together
low over water but you
heard them squawk
something. reported
Red berries and holly leaves,
new buttercups,
primroses steady amid their
green leaves
and stems, dandelions, the wave holds
keep walking until the end
of the path where
Kuveri is dying
lying down and facing
her nose out the
open pen, waiting.
I stand with her
and then come back here
to read *Navadvipa*
Bhava Taranga, alert
to the descriptions of the *dhama*,
the Lord's garden.

* * *

4:30 p.m.

The Lord authorized Uddhava to give mercy to the sages at BadarikaSrama. He could tell them more than what Krishna told Arjuna in *Bhagavad-gita*. The secrets of devotional service, and the nature of Krishna and His devotees.

Vishvanath Cakravarti writes, "Uddhava must have told them the mysteries of the departure of the Lord and annihilation of His dynasty. He could explain it. But even the great sages have no information that beyond the material sky is the spiritual sky where Sri Krishna eternally resides with His associates, although at the same time He exhibits his pastimes in the mortal world in all the universes one after another." His appearance and disappearance are going on simultaneously. That in itself is a mystery. Only Uddhava could understand it and explain it to the qualified persons "those who had the perseverance to seek such knowledge.

Raven lands on fence post. "Sought after with great perseverance by the great sages."
Vidura, Maitreya, Uddhava, Prabhupada.

* * *

Rama-navami Blues

1

Listening to my own "Hare Krishna man" songs,
those were good days. Did you know?
Fueled by and springboarded off such an unsavory
pair "JK and AG, who was reading him with
the devotion of a friend years after
his alcoholic death.
Got my medical pass today
so I'm alone
as is best. I'm just a little itchy
because so many are going across the lake to
the island and I'm afraid they may criticize.

* * *

It's as if I'm being forced to behave.
If you don't go into the temple room
and sit down while someone reads
an hour and a half from the *Ramayana*,
then what are you possibly going to do instead?
I'll read Third Canto, Uddhava
telling how he was ordered by the Lord to
tell His last pastimes to sages
even to Nara-Narayana
at BadarikaSrama.

* * *

This isn't much of a poem, I know, but
I wouldn't mind writing a long one.
This *Every Day, Just Write* can be anything
a legend or a hundred and fifty-two esoteric verses.
Or what's more likely is that it'll stay as close as
possible to the bone each day. More of that
like the good bread Mother ISani makes and I
offer to Prabhupada and eat with my *dal* "
I mean, everyday fare "
guilt, shyness, little fits of fierceness,
and the inner flame.

* * *

2

Those early mornings are good for a long poem like Olsen's, but I don't care for it. And *Patterson*. My own squatter's rights, Geaglum bust out, tell something like dandelion's rights, cow's rights, squatter's short odes. If you agree that you are a writer and you're not going to give up reading *Bhagavatam* to be a writer, if you settle on all that, then maybe you could get beyond bankruptcy to the inner source of imagination Krishna's full manifestation.

* * *

I mean no elf fable? No. No ranting against water skiers or fishermen. A long poem "to death of cow? No, but yes too to all these things. If I could just sneak away and be free of guilt and embarrassment and feelings of unworthiness (the material kind) and finally become free of self even then I could praise Krishna in my own words. But that's not what is.

* * *

Thus this declaration of independence while they row the boat to and fro and I walk and sit and read by fading light. You never loved me, I wrote the right book it's all going down and devotees know best. It's a shame we're not better not more together socially, and me more willing to meet and shake hands. But it's best as is.

* * *

3

I can drink so much water "eighteen ounces "
from 12 midnight to 3:30 a.m.

You drink that much?

We want to know if you were to
drop the little life of water drinking
and such, leave the author's private life behind
what would you have?

You'd have to think about that a long time,
would you?

I would have my basic needs.

I need to read a lot and then lean over
and use the legal pad. They go
side-by-side, like two rails of a
train track. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* propped up
at an angle so I can read okay and
beside it the open legal pad. With right hand
I write and I read tracing down the page with
a pencil. That's all.

* * *

You mean you would tell the history
of some town? Or some other metaphor?

No, I would probably stick to
actual life. The life of Hare Krishna.

I don't have time for anything else,

I don't have the imagination,

it doesn't seem right.

* * *

My spiritual master told me to preach.

"If the fool would persist
in his folly, he'd become wise."

This is my folly and I'll

Remember that.

April 17

5 a.m.

Dog Violet Poem Continued

Okay I'll talk with Madhu about
how I felt yesterday. I think what I should have
done is gone over to the temple
at 4 p.m. and watched the *arati*,

then returned. People would have seen me and
yet I would have not overdone it for a headache.
Now I feel like a Catholic who missed Sunday Mass.
You used to be condemned to eternal hell for
that mortal sin, but now they've change
the rules. We are different and no one
is criticizing me that I know of.
My internal critics made up for it.

* * *

Here I am on lower Lough Erne,
or between lower and upper.
When Ananda-maya and Prahlada arrive
they will grow roses. "We want it
to be just like Vaikuntha." They will use Geaglum for vegetables.
The householders need social development.
Build a roof for the *gurukula*, "But
where are the teachers?"

* * *

He asked me does Prabhupada want
social development, and how much
does he want it? I said it's important
but I didn't care so much about it.
You mean because you care more for Rupa Gosvami's
intimate thoughts as Rupa-manjari?
No, not that, I'm just not
into it. As a teacher I can teach
that ox plowing is good even though I don't
plow. And I can say *Krishna-prema* is good
even though I don't taste it.

* * *

What kind of a teacher is that?
A general practitioner
can recommend enthusiasm in *bhakti*
for all *rasas*.
But then what is your specialty, sir?
My specialty used to be history but then
when I heard from Dr. A, her fire of
love in quoting Shelley, I told
Dr. Pessen as we walked from the ferry terminal
toward the office building that housed

Staten Island Community College,
"I'm switching because English Lit is more actual life,
you get to read novels." He defended
History and told me
how just that day Nehru and other Eastern leaders
were meeting and this life too, this is the shaping.

* * *

But what is your major *now*?
My major is walks in the woods
and words that come,
writing freely. And the *Poor Man's*
Bhagavatam is my pass into the spiritual world.

* * *

My theme, my specialty is
to be a fellow. I will teach the masses not.
I will write for Krishna's pleasure. But you
see, I have to be honest and say I don't
know Him. But I *do* know Him!
Krishna, save me!
Give me the privilege of saying
Your names.
The mind gets in and pushes around but
still I shall chant on my master's
order.

* * *

I dreamt I was with Prabhupada in a room with Dr. Patel. Prabhupada corrected the doctor, saying, "You keep talking in terms of designations, but devotees are pure souls." We're all eating puffed rice. Then to give evidence to Prabhupada's point, I said, "When I first heard from Prabhupada, I began to say *aham brahmasmi*. Prabhupada and Dr. Patel both laughed. They liked my evidence. I added, "I didn't know what it meant, but I recited it." Prabhupada approved of what I said and it became a sweet moment.

* * *

9 a.m.

I wrote a note to a visiting Godbrother explaining my headaches and apologizing for not attending the Rama-Navami services yesterday at the temple. I also praised him for his work. Social psychologist Boissen says you internalize the values of the people whose approval you desire. They don't have to tell you what they think of you, but your conscience constantly reminds you of the standard. You know how they will feel about

you, or you imagine it, and thus you judge yourself by those standards. This can create a feeling of failure. For this you need to confess and expect forgiveness, then proceed to rectification.

Sin is when you fail to perform on the standard you vowed to follow, and you know your authorities (those whose opinions you value) will disapprove. Again, they don't even have to know you have transgressed; you'll feel the sin within. This sin is against society, or the selected, highest society. I have been fond of philosophies like SK's and Thoreau's, who say that the individual is more important than society, but I must admit I too am socialized. I want to please persons other than myself. I want to please my spiritual master and Lord Krishna and the *acaryas*. I want to join the topmost society of love of Krishna.

But inevitably, I fail. I feel the conflict and face the obstacles. I can only keep striving for success by always controlling my senses and restraining my lower nature.

* * *

O Lord, I kick off in
my boat, not to sea but
a few-minutes crossing to
the temple island where
you can see Radha-Govinda
through the window before
you enter the building.

* * *

You can also see maroon flowers
blooming on trees, and daffodils,
the boot rack,
peacock droppings near
the entrance, Syamananda dasa
welcoming me.

* * *

3 p.m.

Vidura cried when he heard that Lord Krishna remembered him at the last moments of His life in this world. "One who can cry for the Lord in love is certainly successful in the line of devotional service." (*Bhag.* 3.4.35)

* * *

I wanted simplicity, to be alone to write. But I'm not an island. Inis rath is also not an "island" entirely unto itself; it is dependent on constant replenishment from devotees on the mainland. Perhaps simplicity cannot be achieved in solitude.

"The learned sage Maitreya was sitting in a solitary place on the bank of the Ganges at Haradwar . . ." Vidura approached him to inquire, and began with an inquiry of interest to the common man. He didn't ask directly about the Lord.

Okay, I'm ready to hear both. I need it all. I need communion with whatever Vyasa and Maitreya, and especially Srila Prabhupada want to give me.

Sit and read and sometimes close your eyes the way a cat does. I think, "It will be nice to chant *japa* tomorrow morning," yet when it's time to chant tomorrow's *japa*, I'll race through the rounds, always counting, not feel much satisfaction. That means I'm always looking forward to some future act of devotion, one I never really seem to perform.

Well, that future is not illusion. Vidura wants to know about *bhakti*, which will please the Lord in the heart. The Lord will then teach us devotional wisdom. From *vaidhi* to *raga* with *caitya-guru*. The whole success in reading is to feel your faith in Bhagavan Sri Krishna build, and to believe what you're hearing to the point where you can experience it. Transport yourself away from speculative trash. When Maitreya describes Visnu, you can see Krishna.

* * *

6:10 p.m.

I took a last walk. There's no point
deriving
words
that come from this pen tip.
Sigh.

I walked but didn't see the cow. They've placed her under a blue tent now to keep the sun and rain off. She moans from time to time.

I heard children's voices at the end of the forest path, so I turned around and walked the other way. It's a quiet life and I try to keep it that way.

The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* says the pure devotees don't become tired of hearing Krishna's pastimes. Srila Prabhupada says they can read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* repeatedly throughout a lifetime and it remains fresh. I find that's true.

Words string along. reading.

A Godbrother wrote me that he's not one who thinks a devotee has to rush back and forth on the motorway. He says my writings are appreciated by many despite a few critics. That was nice.

Get ready to rest. Hare Krishna.

* * *

Uddhava.

Vidura went to Maitreya, "Please tell me," he asks,
and we inquire about it from Prabhupada.

River bend,
poets dead, the surviving ones
wrote they never
promised anything but brevity.

I promise you eternal life if you can surrender. But not brevity.

"Where's the ecstasy? Or shouldn't I ask?"

It's in the holy names. I'm still trying.

O Krishna, You always care for Your devotees. One day You will take me away from my present body, transfer my life force elsewhere. Am I being held back by old age from more endeavors on Your behalf?

I'm no longer so flexible, and I have lost my evangelistic fervor to go out on the streets and hawk magazines.

I want peace, myself

performing Your

causeless devotional service life after life. I'm just a parrot now,

I know. I can't break through.

But this my true and candid confession

and my prayer petition:

give me *bhakti*,

please give me *bhakti*.

* * *

Short Notes File, April 14 - 17

Woke M. up at 5:15 a.m. (he got in at 1 a.m. from Sligo), and asked him how it went. He said it was a wonderful experience. He smiled as it replayed in his mind. "I'll tell you later." Hurry to make breakfast. What he can give me but a pale reflection of the experience "singing to two hundred people, the whole festival?"

I can't go to a function like that. I'd get a headache in the car on the way. Someone would have to take care of me and then bring me home early. *Accept it*. Embrace the reality of your life, including what feels like your present lack of heroism. Then within those limits "limits of health and courage "plough deep, write well (a lot), read again and again the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, pray, and relax.

* * *

I can go beyond my limitations. Like the Apostle Peter, I can step out of the boat when Prabhupada calls me. I'll do all right for a few steps, but if I lose faith, I'll sink. Prabhupada will save me.

Is it really possible for me to "walk on water"? What limits me and how can I go beyond it? I say I can't defy headache pain. Then what?

* * *

He's writing a poem. I'm glad. reveal Krishna therein.

Swami control thy

instruments.

Be vigilant for eye twinge.

If it comes, just relax

and in the eye of the pain see Krishna,

say His name slowly and pray.
Life is running out.
*Prabhupada, we saw you do
what no one else could do
you live forever in your . . .
and your followers live with you.*

April 18
4:30 a.m., EkadaSi

Always remember Krishna, even in your dreams. Favorable remembrance of Krishna is the essence for which we are striving. Therefore, we should do whatever helps bring this about and avoid anything that promotes forgetfulness. Srila Prabhupada says the "formulas" help us, but they are not the end in themselves. Thinking of Krishna in loving service as the *gopis* did, and as the illiterate *brahmana* in South India did, that's the essence.

Even reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is successful only if it leads to *Krishna-smaranam*. ". . . to a person like Vidura . . . only *Krishna-katha* and that which is dovetailed with *Krishna-katha* is interesting . . . As fire is never satisfied in its consumption of firewood, so a pure devotee of the Lord never hears enough about Krishna." (*Bhag.* 3.5.10, purport)

* * *

5:05 a.m.

Looking at photos of Prabhupada helps me to gradually increase my identification with him. Staying in his movement also helps. Sometimes we have idealistic hopes that ISKCON will rule the world and Prabhupada will be glorified everywhere. I suppose it can happen if Krishna desires, but I heard Srila Prabhupada say that our status in the world is not the point. We can't expect everyone in this age to accept Krishna consciousness. When Krishna consciousness takes hold in even a few countries, it does spread and its roots are deep.

What I do know is that I don't have to make sense out of any of that. All I can do at this point is to hear. I can't even demand ecstasy, or even more advancement. I can't demand a world revolution in ISKCON or outside of it. All I can do is try to stick to the process as Prabhupada gave it and be as honest about that as I can.

Because the main point of my life right now is to remember Krishna. And whatever helps me do that is what I should do. Pain can be good for that. It is a cure for forgetfulness, and it's also a cure for attachment to matter. This, then, is my field for surrender. Krishna is kind to give me such an opportunity and I should be more grateful.

* * *

8:30 a.m.

On stepping out of the house I met two young men who are part of Tribhuvanatha's festival party. Bhakta Vince introduced me to a new man, Bhakta Kevin. Trying to say something light and positive, I said that the festival program was "intense."

Kevin said, "Not so intense. We have a nice rest in between."

Okay, so it's not so intense. What do I know? Just let me go to the shed.

The devotee who is *Sraddhana-pumsah*, "one engaged anxiously in bona fide hearing of *Krishna-katha*," achieves transcendental bliss that vanquishes all his miseries without delay.

For the pure devotees, "Hearing of the topics of Krishna is equal to meeting Him face to face."

* * *

Just saw a swan and some dark ducks land together on the water. The ducks were quacking and I guess the swan was mute. After a few moments the swan started flapping and rose from the water in the direction of the ducks. The ducks squawked and took off and the swan landed again. It appears the swan chased them away because he didn't like their company. Srila Prabhupada speaks in favor of swans, or at least uses them as a symbol for those who prefer transcendental literature over the garbage heap of sense gratification.

This swan was aggressive. Maybe, if you want peace, you have to chase away intruders.

"O Maitreya, O friend of the distressed, the glories of the Supreme Lord can alone do good for people all over the world. Therefore, just as bees collect honey from flowers, kindly describe the essence of all topics "the topics of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 3.5.15)

* * *

4:10 p.m.

Ending my fourth day in a row without pain. Hoist the flag! reading the edited manuscript of *Passing Places, Eternal Truths*. It contains the Slovenia blues. He was sure hopping in the back of that van, this author. But he was happy.

* * *

Oh damn the Freudian unconscious
and to hell with the Jungian bag of tricks.
We have our own way and to hell
with that too? No, no to hell with
you, you rebellious young man. I am a
devotee but the pain comes anyway.
I am the thief catcher, he said. I won't
tell who because you will attack him

in your prose. But he said I am the policeman
to catch the thief. Dr. Patel was outraged
and said if you blaspheme India's saints
we won't walk with you anymore.
Srila Prabhupada said so be it
then we shall read *Krishna* book out loud
and not enter into controversy.
We did it, wet sands, happy days.

* * *

I loved that walking school
felt like a student of Socrates. Now it's harder
but sometimes I come alive when I'm hearing
him again. He said Krishna is to be remembered "
that's the whole thing. It doesn't matter if you can't
argue or read books. Just remember Krishna
in one way or another, love Him and
you attain the essence.

* * *

Kuveri is getting smaller. She'll die alone. How can we show compassion when we
are each in the same boat? Because if you're not dying yet, then you don't want to linger
too close to someone who is. Like the young man who asked the girl to marry him. He's
not thirty years old. He doesn't want to get too close to death. No, he wants to thrive and
start a project and work at it. Me too, I'm a mere fifty-eight, the same age as Colin
Powell. He's more fit than I am, and immensely popular, and he could be the first black
President of America. I guess we're always young enough.

* * *

ASvatthama fixed the double-pronged arrow to his bow after touching water and sent
it skyward. The sky blazed. Arjuna was afraid and naturally turned to Krishna. He began
a longish prayer. Some wonder how he could have had time to pray. Was he speaking
fast, like when we chant a round in under six minutes? No silly, don't ask. He could do
it; he could pray just as he did and there was time. Vishvanath Cakravarti Thakura could
explain it to you if you were to insist. The *brahmastra* was suspended in mid-air,
spreading its effulgence all around, and Arjuna prayed. I'll discuss it tomorrow in PMrB.
The spiritual master puts out the material blaze, and Krishna instructed Arjuna how to do
the same.

April 19
5:55 a.m.

He will serve breakfast by 6:20 which is the earliest you can take it, and EkadaSi will be over. Otherwise, I will have to take an EkadaSi breakfast two days in a row. I see, I see. And what about the churna? Can you eat it, or does it contain grains? We are not absolutely sure, so I don't eat it. But maybe I don't have to be so technical. The sun may be up on the horizon and then churna will be okay for this DvadaSi morning.

"Maharaja, if you drink water, that will be the same as fasting and not fasting," the *brahmanas* advised Maharaja Ambarisa. Durvasa still found fault.

The cow lowered her head as I approached, maybe in pain but perhaps in meekness. Someone had placed a cup of water next to her. She's still breathing small, shallow breaths. Aniruddha dasa was sitting nearby, chanting. I'm worried that the crows will attack her.

"Let me know that she will be disposed of properly," said the aristocratic ne'er-do-well.

What is the other book you're writing, how is that going?

I guess it's okay, I lose my self-consciousness in it and that's good. I don't know where it is and what it's supposed to be. It doesn't cover particular verses as PMrB does. It goes through days and can move backwards and forwards. It can swallow plutonium, the American poem. It says "Krishna, Krishna" and redeems itself. It burps and eats a milk sweet brought from Radha-Govinda's plate.

"Don't let people serve you," said a Godbrother. "It will bring you down. Prove yourself austere by outward and real acts of service to others."

The beauty of a writing life is that you can be inward and outward at the same time. Usually these two moods are mutually exclusive.

* * *

The Soul is Here For It's Own Joy is the name of the book of poems edited by robert Bly. He doesn't know the soul is here for Krishna's joy or that the soul's joy is to serve Krishna. Therefore, let my words ring the bell of truth.

"As I have said many times," Srila Prabhupada says as he begins to retell the story of the Kumara who blessed a prince and a *muni's* son. Then again, "I have told this many times," and tells briefly of Lord Caitanya and the Kazi. He gives the definition of *dhira* from Kalidasa, "A great mundane poet." I listen carefully each time. I can gain something new. I don't want to be a mundane poet like Kalidasa; I want to be a servant of Krishna. "Krishna will see the good in you." You cannot serve Him perfectly, he says, but He will reward you with His intimate service.

I want that, Prabhupada's assurance that Krishna will see the good in our imperfect service. Yes, he has repeated it, but it's new to me. I ring my little bell and bow down. We don't have to please some nondevotee. We are on Krishna's *bhakti-marga*. All glories to the Lord of the universe, the oldest fresh young boy.

* * *

8:30 a.m.

The ache. I sit waiting for it, sensing it will come today, like a weather front moving in. I can't expect to never have another headache just because I've had a few days off.

Still, I don't welcome the pain. Not yet. Because of it, I'm refraining from the hard task of reading the philosophy in the *Bhagavatam*. I'm just not up to it.

In the pain I realized I have forgotten Kuveri. I'm not the *Adi-purusa saksad*; I can't cast the *prakrti* far from me. I'm not God.

I come under the influence of pain.

I can't fly like a crow

or swim like a fish, or fly and

land on water like a swan or a duck.

I come under the influence of the blood pressing too fast and hard in a contracted-expanded-contracted blood vessel in my head.

But my soul is free. If you have transcendental presence of mind, the blood can pack in the artery (the vaso) and still I'll pay no attention. I could turn to Krishna as Arjuna does, Arjuna who teaches us what to do.

* * *

Dark sky, cool air, overgrown grass . . . beaten down path where I walk. Coming back from the shed, I see the new wood to be used on the *gurukula* roof. Geese or ducks winging in from the lake, then veering off like jet planes. Bhakta Randolph has identified a few more wildflowers for me. One is called speedwell, and another coo-coo plant. I asked him to meet me one of these times I'm outdoors and we can look at them together instead of exchanging notes from the same book we both have.

Arjuna says the devotees have miscalculated about Kuveri. He says she's still strong and is not going to die immediately. But when she does, the workmen building the *gurukula* say they'll dig a grave for her with their scooper.

Now there are primroses down by the shed, so the "primrose path" is no longer restricted to one place. It has spread. Blackthorn blossoms all over the place.

In preparing questions for *Poor Man*, one devotee asked, "If Krishna is the center of our understanding, then are we allowed to see things in nature "plants, sky, and so on?" He means, are they apart from Krishna? I'll reply that a devotee doesn't walk around with blinders on, seeing only Krishna like He's a precious jewel and everything else is to be kicked away from Him. We won't become contaminated by looking at a rose. I'll refer to Bg. 9.30 - 31. The pure devotee sees the separate things, but in each case he thinks of Krishna. If you like you can think of Krishna's all-pervading nature which is the rose, the thorn, the bird, the grass, and so on. But a devotee is so much in love with the person that he thinks of the person who created it, the person who is far above this suffering plane. He thinks of Krishna's friends and the place where the birds and trees are all conscious, eternal entities. Whatever he sees in this world eventually springboards him to the other. But yes, if you want to look for a humble primrose or a strawberry bush in this world, in this part of Geaglum, there's no harm. Then chant Hare Krishna.

* * *

Madhu told me that while he was outside walking on our ISKCON land, he met an elderly man walking his dog. This man used to live in one of the buildings on our land

that's now falling apart. He became sentimental while taking the walk around these good old places. (He lives on an adjacent property to ours.)

According to Madhu the talk was friendly, and Madhu said that it was good to keep good relations with the neighbors. At one point, the man said, "We have to follow what's in the scriptures." Then he said that one should be careful of cults because they're dangerous. "In America, cult members commit suicide."

That was just the connection I was afraid people would make "suicide cult members and the Hare Krishna movement.

A little later the man said, "The only way we can be saved is through the son of God." Madhu says he was a born-again Christian, "but friendly." I think being friendly means being able to talk on some subject without getting into a touchy area. Madhu said, "He didn't make any converts on this walk."

My feelings of protectiveness and sensitivity toward ISKCON's reputation are partly personal, even selfish. I don't like to be seen as a nut when I'm in public, and I don't like to be insulted because of my religion. Aside from that, I'm hurt when I hear people link us with fanatical cults, and that pain is a sign of my love for Prabhupada's and his movement. It makes me respect the ISKCON Communications department, who work hard to maintain our good reputation in the outside world.

April 20
4:05 a.m.

All-night headache, started around 9:30 a.m. yesterday. I still have it, although it's at a lower ebb. I'm scheduled to give the 8:10 a.m. *Caitanya-caritamrta* class in the temple. Better save my energy for that, but just wanted to write a little here.

PMrB seems to require a full hour and a half at a sitting. Otherwise, I can't do it. When I can't give it that much time, I tend not to work on it.

A little more than a week left in Geaglum. Things to finish up:
A proofreading of *Passing Places, Eternal Truths*.

Listening to "Cure of Souls in Vaisnava Communities," by Ravindra-Svarupa Prabhu.
Daily dallies "whatever they are, although I hope to continue them when I leave here.

* * *

Hare Krishna. Whispered my rounds because of pain, but not so attentive this morning. O Lord, I sat up in bed last night and at one point, while staring into the dark, I saw the image of Prabhupada in his *murti* form, whom I massage, bathe, and dress every day "that Prabhupada.

Please give me time, Lord,
and give me Your mercy to
improve so in my next life I
can remember You more constantly
and be a braver preacher for a
whole life through, in his
care, in his cause.

Arjuna prays to Krishna, "What is this fiery weapon coming at me, Lord? You are the protector of all souls, so please save me now." Krishna gives him practical military advice of the highest caliber "shoot the *brahmastra* now, Arjuna, and counteract the one thrown by ASvatthama.

* * *

Noon

My headache went down almost completely, so I gave the class. I engaged the devotees in questions and answers almost from the start. "What are the three kinds of *pramana*?" We discussed the argument between Sarvabhauma Bhattacarya and Gopinatha Acarya. Gopinatha Acarya said that Lord Caitanya was God, and Sarvabhauma's disciples wanted proof. Gopinatha replied that the proof was in the *acaryas'* statements. Sarvabhauma's disciples replied, "Our proof is *anumana*, logical hypothesis," to which Gopinatha answered, "You can't know the Absolute in that way. You have to receive the mercy of Krishna."

I made how to receive Krishna's mercy my main theme, and we talked about faith and other related topics.

I continued the discussion even as I left the temple room and walked down to the quay. Usually we discuss mercy in contrast to justice, but sometimes the disciple is not so purely motivated when he begs mercy from guru or Krishna. Sometimes Krishna gives us mercy in ways that we have to suffer materially. The mercy is also available openly, as the book distributors say, through austerity and service. And as the servant receives mercy, so do all others benefit from his dispensation of it.

When I reached the house, I felt surcharged by my preaching. I love to have the philosophy running through me like this. I know when I lecture I am more excited by it than my audience, and I tend to think that if I lectured all the time, I would never become depleted. Still, even while feeling this glow, I was aware that I cannot lead the life of a lecturer, at least not now. I didn't feel let down by that. My life seems to require of me a different kind of sacrifice and I am learning to go with it more willingly.

April 21, 1997

9:36 a.m., Shed

"Every day, she's getting a little worse," M. said of Kuveri. Head down, making a lowing sound. We can't protect her, ease her, except whatever the devotees have already done in keeping other cows away, a bed of hay, fresh water, and a protective tent over her.

Thinking about the sense of personal failure. It's felt even on the highest level of realization. Madhavendra Puri said, "I could not attain Mathura!" Lord Caitanya said, "Why do I live for a moment in separation from Krishna? If I loved Him truly, I would die at once."

Die not. Live while you can to protect your *dharma* underwear, I mean your *dharma* rights, *dharma* blues. His religion is to write and read and leave the wildflowers unpicked.

Always explained because

someone out there needs
it. But it can become
a tedious restraint, as if all I'm meant to do is explain myself, as if life is a plea to the jury,

I'm a good guy. Whatever crimes I have committed were done as innocent mistakes. Pardon me and see the good in me, as Krishna does. He pleads until his last breath, until they are glad he finally shuts up.

Is that the meaning of life?

Talk, talk, talk, the lecturer

dominates with his monologue for an hour before he lets anyone even ask a question. You can cut a writer off whenever you like by closing his book, but he insinuates himself into your mind by clever and cute wiles.

* * *

Krishna mission missing in shed. He accepts his *dharma*. No story for the reporters. "I was hot in my coat and took it off."

What do you mean by that?

I mean the sky is blue with white, rainless clouds.

Krishna comes to world and performs *dharma* to guide the *jivas*, although He's eternally above it all. I've got to hear it again and again, to chant and chant that song.

I ought to rail against injustice, but it's all under His power. *Maya* punishes those who try to enjoy. We can't; it's illusion.

I know I may be bewildering you, dear reader. I shouldn't. I should tell you plain. But I've got to scratch, scratch to find peace for us both without avoiding the truth.

* * *

As I left the shed, I met Bhakta Randolph, who was sitting nearby. I promised him we could walk together and look at flowers. He found two new wildflowers. One is called, herb robert and the other stitchwort. Aside from the details, they are both modest flowers, delicate blooms made by Lord Krishna as reflections of His eternal beauty. The herb robert will bloom until September, the stitchwort only until June.

Being with Randolph I also saw things I hadn't seen before. I saw the ivy with its black berries. There was another flower that we haven't yet identified. At the end of the short walk, when I wanted to go inside, he pressed me for my opinion about Vedic astrology. I told him it wasn't wrong for me to think it's not so relevant for me as a *sannyasi*, but I wouldn't rule it out for householders. But, I said, sometimes the devotees seem to become too dependent on the astrologer and forget their dependence on Krishna.

* * *

4:40 p.m.

Vidura is asking questions of Maitreya. Maitreya honors him and knows his exalted parentage. Vidura would like to hear about Krishna, but feels overwhelmed because of His recent disappearance. He asks Maitreya to speak of the *purusa-avatars*. Maitreya begins by paraphrasing the *catur-Sloki*: Krishna was the only one existing in the beginning before material creation, even the *purusa-avatars*. I read that much. I felt a kind of mental bramble getting in the way. You have to be concerned, careful, and prayerful when you approach the *Bhagavatam*. I tried pausing and closing my eyes to find my concentration and concern. I prayed to realize both where I was in my advancement and how to come closer to Krishna. I prayed to that Intelligence far greater than myself for the wisdom and perseverance to hear with attention.

* * *

Paused in this free-write and remembered a Zimmer poem. He was good with his special remembered experiences, and could present them poetically. I remembered the poem about when he came upon an old black couple whose dog had just died and he said the wrong thing. The man said to him, "All right, you just go along now. It's our sadness."

Before that I chanted an extra round. I'm doing sixteen at a stretch each morning, but chant little beyond that.

"Radha and Krishna on the swing" picture in this room. M. goes in and out of the kitchen, which is a part of this room, breaking my meditation "what little I have. I think I'll go out for a last walk, try the blackthorn cane the devotees gave me, look at the new flowers, the stitchwort and the herb robert, and relax. I got off easy today. I worked hard in the morning, then felt the beginning of pain. Now the pain has gone down. But I don't want to push too hard this afternoon.

* * *

Deer are a treat to see. Like magic, two bounded up from the shore today, right in front of the window. They seem to know they were dangerously in the open as they ran on, one light colored and the other dark. So much slimmer and smaller than the fat black cows who dumbly watched them run by.

O Krishna, Hare Krishna. I write the words. You are feeling out words and giving us a quick feel. Suddenly remembered walking with Murray on the Lower East Side before I met the Swami. We passed a girl I didn't even notice, but Murray said something obscene about her just to show he was macho, I guess. I recalled it today and thought it would have been nice if we were both monks then, celibates, but that was impossible. I didn't have the guts or purity or guidance for that. Why be a monk when there's no God and no afterlife? If you didn't satisfy your sex drive, you weren't a man.

The Swami rescued me. I can't say that enough. He managed to have a whole generation take to celibacy. They had been through all kinds of experiences, his Hare

Krishna devotees, but they tried to understand that sex attraction causes bondage in this world. This one attempt has set them apart from the rest of the world.

Be not a scandal statistic. If you dream of still wanting it, that means you have some primitive desire in you, but then don't indulge in it. I don't, sir, I don't.

April 22, 1997

9:05 a.m.

Going over questions for a verse in *Poor Man reads the Bhagavatam*. This one's on Arjuna's prayers. Devotees ask how we can pray. Is it pleasing to Krishna if we repeat the same concepts Arjuna did, but without realization? Lord Krishna is above the modes, He is all-pervading, but He is especially kind to His devotees. If we say what we actually realize, a tiny feeling how Lord Krishna is present in our lives, is that important? Enough?

I say . . .

I don't know.

But I'm interested in the topic. If I was on the *vyasasana* or writing a purport here, I might say something different. But even here I have to say that Krishna wants us to express our own realizations, our own level of truth.

My truth is that I'm hesitant to seek Krishna in my life in such direct ways. One devotee reminded me that it's not wrong to take the leap of faith and "imagine" or assert that Krishna is actually acting in our daily affairs. It's difficult for me. I don't like it when people say, "Krishna helped me find my car keys." But perhaps when I too easily dismiss that sort of thing as foolish, I go too far the other way and deny Krishna's presence in devotees' thoughts, feelings, and dreams.

Well, then if I feel empty when I write, "Dear Lord," can I also claim that Krishna is absent from my hollow words, and that's also a kind of presence in separation? I know, for example, that Srila Prabhupada is present in my life through his instructions, but also I feel the emptiness of my feelings. In Krishna's case, my emptiness may be more total. And yet, the overall feeling that *someone* is God and is present in my life is there. Yes, I have to claim at least that much.

So what if I'm sometimes mistaken in my emotions when I don't accept it was Krishna helping to find the car keys. Probably better to err on that side than to make dry, almost agnostic remarks. I know implicit in my dry thinking is the idea that if Krishna were going to act, He would choose to stop abortion or close all the slaughterhouses. Why should He bother Himself with your car keys? But He *could*. And I guess that's the point. He could act in a small way to please His sincere devotee.

I don't want to be a doubting Thomas who asked Jesus, "But *when* did we see you, Lord?" Jesus said they would be saved because they cared for him when he was in need, but the disciple couldn't remember ever taking care of Jesus when he was hungry or in prison. Jesus reminded them that as they did these things for the least of his followers "or for any living being" he was accepting it as service to him.

So, apply that to Krishna consciousness. "When did I see you, Lord?" Were You in the taste of water? In the light of the sun? Were you in my words when I repeated the *Bhagavad-gita*? In the beating of my own heart? You are always there, Lord Krishna, and I'm sorry I did not "do not" come forward more to claim my right to be with You and to sense Your loving presence.

* * *

Thoreau taught simplicity. He wanted a house where he could see the vista of land and sky. He admonished those who live meanly. He walked, enjoyed beauty, and saw heaven in nature. I am attracted to that, but not quite in the same way, of course. Not separate from Krishna, but with Krishna in the center. He is the beauty in nature, and He has a beautiful personal form that all nature reflects.

Where is He?

Where can I seek Him?

Who will tell me and be my guru in each and every instant, the guru who will say that's Krishna when you feel no pain and it's also Krishna at the first sign of a headache. He's there when I feel a rift with a friend and even when I don't. He's there in prayer when I say I want to see Him even in some small way. He's already there.

Be simple and practice constant remembrance,
nothing convoluted,
no methods,
but awareness that He's here or else
there's nothing.
Hare Krishnas, even empty ones,
fill the "void."

* * *

12:15, noon

M. leaving for Dublin. "We've never had an April like this!" No rain, sunny days, daisies peeking. I can't walk into the woods because of my left ankle, but I went close and felt the sylvan seclusion there. Randolph said there were so many primroses that when the breeze blew, he caught their scent.

Jagannatha, Baladeva and Subhadra, a bit faded, several years now in my care.

Stood with Bhakta Kevin by Kuveri. I quoted the verse *ahani ahani*. He said it's "inconceivable" that he and I and everyone will die. "It was a shock," he said when he first walked down the path and saw Kuveri dying.

He spoke over her while she ate at her hay and sipped water. Her knees are cut and festering now, but she's quieter. Kevin said one devotee had placed a tape recorder with the Hare Krishna mantra playing for her. I mentioned it was comforting to know that in ISKCON devotees are passing away in the care and comfort of other devotees. Kevin gave an example of someone he'd heard of like that. I thought of saying more about death, but instead said, "Until then," smiling, "we have to keep active so that . . . we will achieve something before death comes."

Walked away from that scene. Death is not so near, is it? How can it be with the flowers all smiling up at me? And it's lunch time. Prabhupada is waiting for his meal.

* * *

3:45 p.m.

Prabhupada is here
and a vise has
turned in my head "but
not so bad yet. Hare Krishna.

* * *

5:12 p.m.

The red boat with the blue cover stopped at the quay on Inis rath, and six men went in to see the temple and grounds. Later I saw them leave. Decided to sit out the beginnings of pain by playing a tape of me reading the Third Canto. I'm restless, but try to fill my time with increments of transcendental life. Avoiding anything else.

I have begun to notice the year people were born. I noticed someone was born in 1927. That means he'll be seventy this year. How much longer can he expect to stay in this world? At seventy-two Srila Prabhupada gave himself as an example and said, maybe I will live to eighty or a hundred years. He lived to eighty-two. King Katvanga thought it important to know how much longer he had to live. When he heard he had only a moment, he surrendered fully to Krishna. It was possible for him because he had already practiced it. He leapt and landed at Krishna's lotus feet.

Lord, please deliver me from this world. I am prepared to perform any austerity to become situated at Your lotus feet. I say that, but I know I'm not so capable. I'm willing, but not so capable. Is there anything I can do to prove my sincerity? I can only feel humble about my shortcomings.

* * *

A man from the Bay area gave me a soft, saffron Persian wool scarf. He said he didn't like *Shack Notes*, and wrote me a letter saying so, then didn't send it. I replied that I was glad he didn't send it because like anyone, I prefer to be encouraged. He then described a dream in his letter of Krishna playing baseball with Balarama and Radharani. I didn't like to hear it so much. Too mundane appearance of Krishna.

I read my *Passing Places* manuscript wherein I repeated a number of times that I have no teeth. Just imagine someone reading that and then looking at your mouth to see your false teeth. But it's better they know who I am. The truth hurts, they say, but the truth is the soul. We hope we know that at least theoretically. It doesn't matter whether you have teeth or not. The point is the soul. If you want to know it better, you have to find out what went wrong and rectify yourself. You have to begin by feeling remorse. Some prefer to blame others for their problems, or they bluff and say they have no problems, but if you want to be a devotee, you have to be prepared to face the truth.

I listen to my master and I hang in there. I won't write it down, why it's difficult. I want to be a true follower. I am still finding and saving favorite excerpts from his lectures and building a collection of them to use them in classes. Something is bound to happen, but I don't know what.

April 23, 1997

4:50 a.m.

I've made almost four hours of reading tapes so far "reading the Third Canto. I usually play them back in the shed when I'm drawing. It's nice to hear them. They are of those special chapters in the Third Canto discussing Vidura, Uddhava, and Maitreya, and all the discussion about Krishna's pastimes and the devotees' feeling of separation. It's like a mini Tenth Canto.

Spontaneous service is often far away from us. We therefore do our duty plain and simple. Words come out, actions get done, and we wait for more.

M. got in at 10:30 last night. That was a surprise. He was supposed to stay overnight in Dublin. He hasn't gotten up yet to tell me what he's doing. He went into town to run around with forms for his American green card. Down the green path I walk.

Srila Prabhupada said you can't stay forever in this life just because you have a visa or "permanent residency status." Death will come and tell you, "Please get out." If you say you have some business, death will say, "Damn your business." People are foolish not to live with these central facts in mind. Whatever we do here will be taken away.

But there is eternal life. Srila Prabhupada taught us about it as a practical reality, not as metaphysics for speculation. Life ends in death, but within this brief human form you can attain eternal life and go to Krishna's abode after.

Why don't they follow Krishna? Prabhupada asks? We have everything "first-class, art, dance, music, food, dress. They don't take it because they are "first-class rascals."

I am not an Irish poet, a Smithwick employee, or a bartender-pub owner, and I'm not a cart-wheeler or a beamer, a child stealer, of an abuser of myself. Neither am I a camel or a thorn in its mouth. Not even a mealy-mouthed cereal lover. (Well, maybe a little bit a cereal lover.) And that's the point "what am I and what do I love? I love . . .

Maybe I should say I like.

There are plenty of things I like, such as typing and walking and coming back here, and finding relief from pain by lying down.

There are plenty of things I like, but what do I love?

That's harder.

Maybe I don't know what love is. I *say* the *gopis* love Krishna, and Lord Caitanya taught love of God. Love seems so total that I can't claim it. I can't even say I love life. Anyway, that would be more like lust, attachment, and a poor attachment at that. Love can only be reposed in Krishna.

* * *

Ten minutes past five. Yesterday was *vasanta-rasa*, but I did nothing to observe it. It's beyond me how Krishna dances with the *gopis*. Lovers of God, who can understand that? It is difficult thing to understand God at all, but to understand God's intimate pastimes is much harder. You need the association of a pure devotee of Krishna to help you. I have Srila Prabhupada, and I am learning more and more to listen to him. I like to listen now to almost anything in the *Bhagavatam*. I'm starting to appreciate that I can enter anywhere and hear and appreciate. Then that appreciation for Krishna spreads to both the inner and outer layers of my life. It doesn't matter whether it's *madhurya-rasa* or not. For someone like me, any exposure to the *Bhagavatam* is useful.

We're planning to visit Spain. A friend wants to know where I'll be in June. If we meet, I can pretend I'm a quiet, serious person, but not dull. I'll tell him I've been listening to rS's lectures about ISKCON pathologies.

"It is not enough?" I ask that again and again. Maybe I'll ask him too, although I won't ask him to lead me forward. Just be a friend and hear my questions. He may also have things to say that are sensitive to himself. We would like to be with each other as simple, unaffected people who can directly go to "heart issues." We each know, however, that we are not better than we are.

Swami, we love you
when you tell us of Krishna.

You allow me to continue living my familiar life, and when I get out on the road, to not be afraid. You help me remember Krishna.

* * *

8:55 a.m.

Before creation, the Supreme Lord was the only seer. He felt "like a husband feeling lonely in the absence of his wife." (*Bhag.* 3.5.24, purport) This is a poetic simile. The Lord wanted to create the cosmos to give the *jivas* another chance to come out of their forgetfulness of Him. That forgetfulness was the cause of the Lord's feeling that something was wanting, and it's why He creates the worlds. It's His compassion, actually. Srila Prabhupada says Krishna wants every part and parcel to take part in blissful *rasa*.

It's a little cool in the shed. I put the heat on for awhile and have now prepared the outline for the next PMrB verse and comment. On my way out here, I came upon Arjuna dasa pacing and chanting his *japa*. I said, "*Jaya*," and kept walking. There are times when everyone wants to be alone. I don't feel lonely out here, but filled with a gentle purposefulness.

The creation takes place. We've been put into this situation because of our mistaken idea of who we are and what will make us happy (I'm this body, sense grat is my goal). In the human form of life, we can receive the mercy of guru and Krishna. Yes.

RS says that the sense of personal failure is not our biggest problem. Our biggest problem is how to deal with it. We should candidly admit our failure to ourselves and to a trusted guide, then try to rectify ourselves. Instead, we tend to cover up our problems with diversions, including "organic" ones such as psychosomatic illness. That's what Boissen says. We also bluff or cast the blame on others, withdraw, or allow ourselves to become degraded at an attempt to release the pressure on the conscience.

Cows don't do any of that. They just eat grass and move around in search of more grass. And they chase away flies, stand and face the breezes, chew cud, digest, pass stool, urinate . . . A simple life. Humans have more hang ups, but they also have the potential for enlightenment. *Guru Krishna prasade pai bhakti-lata-bija*.

* * *

Close your eyes, as cows do. Things may drift into their consciousness, I don't know. It's probably quite limited. Some people romanticize that animals have a deep consciousness and are perfectly at one with nature. Dumb beasts.

* * *

This Krishnaite boy senses
the little first flicker of the
daily pain he lives with.
It's not so great;
it's all he's got.
It keeps him out of the military.
He's heard that people become ill
this just to avoid the serious
work of finding themselves.
They feel a personal failure at
becoming a pure devotee.
Maybe that's true. Or
it's just a vein or
vaso gone spastic as it
might happen to any
old car.

* * *

I live with it as it lives with
me. It signals, "Time to
shut down," and I quickly
write a few lines which
could be my last.

* * *

Krishna, Krishna
Caitanya "then listen
again to the signal call.
Kuveri's death is
not psychosomatic, and
we chant Hare Krishna
in her hearing.
Her black face looks
back, pleading?
No, my imagination.
She's dying, dying ,and
I still walk the
primrose path.

* * *

Leaving the shed I walked past the workers hammering on the new roof. Then I saw Jayananda (six years old) coming toward me on his bicycle. I thought he might follow me all the way and talk, but he got off his bike and offered obeisances, as his father taught him to do. Then he said something to me about the cow, which I couldn't hear. When I walked further, I saw his mother sitting beside the cow inside the pen, chanting loud Hare Krishna mantras on her beads. A little further off was her daughter, two-year-old Sita. As I approached, I saw that Kuveri was lying down her head down. Hare Krishna. She's near the end.

ISani said, "Yes, it's amazing she's still hanging on, with so much suffering." Then we both chanted. I guessed that the kids knew the cow was dying. Kuveri is hanging on despite the suffering. What else can she do? I think of those lines from Therese of Lisieux. The atheist doctor says, "Pain is hideous," and the convent prioress snaps, "Not here." Not here. Therese was offering up her pain to Jesus, her lover, her Lord.

April 24, 1997

5:30 a.m.

Thought to take a walk in the fresh air, but I haven't given myself time to write yet, so let's do that. Yes, instead of the other. It's nice outside with the sky just starting to lighten and the clouds true to Irish weather.

* * *

Reading the *Bhagavatam* takes concentration. Someone gave me a copy of *Healing the Body Betrayed*. It starts out with a warning to readers that this book will increase their denial. Denial means you don't face things in your life because they're too painful. Denial is sometimes a necessary part of coping, but too much of it and you're living with falsehood.

I have been facing that I'm an invalid. I haven't faced things which might be causing the headaches psychosomatically. I *seem* to have thought it out as much as I can, but perhaps I'm missing something. I freely admit that the headaches have freed me in ways that living without pain wouldn't have done. They have allowed me to explore my nature more, and to live more according to my tendencies. But I don't want to keep the pain just to reinforce that. I think I'm ready to assert my way of life without the headaches.

Anyway, I can't figure it all out. Some people say I must have suffered some trauma in my childhood or in some past life; I don't know. I know I have suffered some trauma in ISKCON with the loss of integrity I felt when there was the greatest pressure on me. My failure to come to the standard in so many ways, and the pressure to maintain something that didn't make sense to me, wasn't true to me, and the counterattacks both within ISKCON from its loyal dissenters and those who have left and who viciously attack "all this has left me bewildered as to what I was actually guilty of and what I should defend. I haven't been able to sort it all out. When I hear rS speaking about these things in a psychological way, it makes me wonder if I would benefit by discussing it more.

Self-examination might help free me from headaches, but I think I also would have to assert myself as a person. So many people in ISKCON have their own versions of what went on. Nowadays I stay free of controversies. Of course, I also question my aloofness. What is right for me? Each day I have to ask myself that question. What do Krishna and Srila Prabhupada want of me? And I assess my sense of personal failure and what I can do about it. Srila Prabhupada said it's good to think you are mistaken and in need of improvement. Try to become a better devotee, more pleasing to Krishna. He compared this to a father who is so attached to his son that if he hears that his son is even a little ill, he worries his son may die. His fear is exaggerated by his love. We can apply that same sense of exaggerated concern to our service. We haven't done things perfectly, and we want to improve. We have to always be striving. I'm aware that my days are dwindling.

* * *

This room is filling up with pictures
I've drawn. The latest a man with stout
arms and a skinny torso fingering his
brahmana thread and saying the *sannyasa mantra*.
I wrote the words in color, "*Gopi-bhavaSrayaya*.
Another shows a bird man with three legs.
He's ready to fight or to
flap his wings as he walks to the left.
He's a powerful fighting ally,
poet-duck-man-devotee,
he distracts the eye from looking to
the Vrajavasi painting of Radha and Krishna
and that's not good. But on the duck-man's page there's
the word "Krishna" carefully lettered.

* * *

Quiet April drawing to a close.
I have liked the silences here, and the view
of the lake, and how they leave me alone.
I've had headaches or near headaches every day,
but that's all right
if that's the way.

* * *

9:15 a.m.

Reading again. The *mahatattva* introduced. I'm usually not so interested in the technicalities of creation, but this is *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and every word is valuable. I stop and look in the purport to something relevant that I can apply. There's this: "Under the pressure of the false ego, the conditioned souls, although parts and parcels of the

Supreme Personality of Godhead, claim to be enjoyers." We are bound by false ego. The *pressure* of false ego.

The material creation is another chance for the *jivas* to meet a pure devotee and to begin chanting and serving Krishna. I've been doing that, but I still don't know when I will perfect myself a hundred percent. This process does not deliver cheap rewards. So what if I've been serving in ISKCON for forty years? All it means is that I should be eligible for a pension and retirement.

"The false ego is transformed into mind interacting with the modes of goodness." Although I'm repeating the words, the meaning is theoretical to me. I can't really grasp what it means. That's why I worry when I show up at a temple where they are reading this section of the *Bhagavatam*. How can I give a lecture on it? Someone will inevitably ask, "How come the false ego is a product of interaction with the modes of goodness?" I won't know what to say.

As I read, my mind drifted to an ex-disciple who has gone to study *bhakti* with another guru. He is studying the esoteric terminology in four languages. I imagine him looking at Prabhupada's purports and saying, "There's not enough here to hold my interest." He presents a challenge, because I really do have to find my own interest in these sections of the *Bhagavatam*.

One lesson I draw from thinking about this is that we have to give up trying to know the Absolute Truth by speculation. "The absolute truth or the Supreme Personality of Godhead is realized by hearing about Him *in all submission and love from a bona fide authority* who is a representative of the twelve great authorities." (*Bhag.* 3.5.31, purport). That's all. No scholarship or false ego can help.

False ego "mixed with the modes and time, under the Lord's direction, produces sound. Then sky, then touch, "from which the air was developed." Form developed into fire, taste into water, and smell into earth. I can't picture it all. At least I can remember that Krishna is God and the primary creator. Nothing exists without the Lord's glance over it.

* * *

2:55 p.m.

Madhu has gone to Dublin again, so I am alone for the day. A spring bird, maybe a robin, is singing outside. I can hear it through the open window.

Words are sometimes awkward when you try to share between two people. How do you explain the ache that can only really be felt in solitude? Discover Krishna, chant His holy names, and read the scripture to fill the ache. Look for your own heart. Loneliness "aleness" is meant to be filled by God. He's the One and more than any other, and when you open to Him, you open to the world. Sounds good.

What a relief to take the time for this kind of searching, and then when people seek me out, you can share the fullness of your life. Often, their lives are full of activity and yours is not, so much so that your life actually seems empty, but when they come you can teach them what you have learned about chanting, about how to bring the mind back to the holy name, and how to discover that Krishna is talking to you in scripture.

I'd like to think my life has *that* purpose and that my choice to be alone is meant to serve that purpose, not simply that I'm secluded because I have pain. I'm not a warrior

who can endure pain and work around it to give lectures, hold meetings, manage temples. I just can't do it. But I'm not living alone to make health the most important thing in my life. I'm living alone to make Krishna the most important thing in my life. I just have to do it in this way, because my health limits me from other expressions.

* * *

I heard about chanting in rS's talk and it sparked something in me.

* * *

I think I will go out for a walk, but I don't really want to meet anyone. Anyway, the devotees here are gentle and respectful, and they have given me a free pass to wander around if I need to. Five more days here, then we move back into the van.

* * *

Sweat out one more page for me.

Okay.

The gray water, the sky in two layers, the upper light blue, but grayish, the lower whitish-blue. My words can't really give you the sight itself.

Don't complain. It rhymes with window pane. Don't play that game forever. Krishna, Krishna,

Krishna, Krishna, Krishna,
the all-attractive Lord.

O holy name, please give me the ability to pay attention to while I chant.

Dear holy names, please give me the ability to bring the mind back again and again to hear the Hare Krishna mantra: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/
Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare.

O Krishna, You are fully present in Your name. If I could only regret my bad chanting enough, I could move into shadow chanting and then there would be hope.

April 25, 1997

4 a.m.

"The improvement in knowledge and detachment can be perceived by devotees as an actual experience." (*Bhag.* 3.5.42, purport)

Tired. I already worked an hour and a half on PMrB and chanted sixteen rounds.

* * *

5:25 a.m.

The first *gayatri-mantra* is to the sun-god, but it's actually to Lord Narayana who is in the sun (Surya-Narayana). We do worship the beautiful sun, knowing that it comes from the all-beautiful Creator, who can make many suns and who reigns in Vaikuntha as the sun of His devotees.

The next is a small, formal prayer to the spiritual master. But don't pronounce it formally. Dive for your feelings of gratitude and pray to him for mercy. He is the representative of all the demigods. That three-word mantra is even more important than the one to the sun-god.

Then the second one to guru. I meditate on the guru, on the mystery of him being blissful in Krishna consciousness, and one his enthusing me as he is enthused. We learn to desire to serve the spiritual master even at the cost of serving our own bodies, our poor bodies which will have to go. And don't misunderstand the spiritual master by seeing only his outward appearance. *The Nectar of Instruction* warns against this *aparadha*. The spiritual master is always worshipable and the relationship between guru and disciple always sacred.

The next one is to Gaura. Lord Caitanya is known as ViSvambhara because He upholds the universe as well as His devotees. He is always kind to us, and He enthuses us, wants us in *Hiskirtana*, allows us to praise Him. All glories to Gaura.

Then comes the heavy nectar "*gayatri* to Govinda, the cowherd boy, who is dear to *gopis*. Then a *kama-gayatri* addressed to Krishna, who carries flower arrows and is a transcendental cupid, He stuns the *gopis* with His attractive features. Then the *sannyasa-mantra* Prabhupada gave me in the Boston storefront, that tiny, hard-times place where I was able to endure because I was young and surrendered to whatever happened there. That's the *gayatri-mantra* and I'm a *brahmana* because Prabhupada gave me a thread. Own up to it and chant the mantras with attention.

* * *

Heigh ho, Silver! M. is up making breakfast. It's been awhile since I've eaten, and I'm looking forward to it. After that we'll have our business meeting, me and my secretary, and go over the list. The first item is his getting the van ready for travel. My side of the work will be to decide what needs to be packed and to pack it.

Second, I want to tell M. about rS's points about *japa* and how they affected me.

Then the usual about book production, writing, and publishing.

Health.

Heigh ho, this is April 25 and the daisies are coming up, the cow is still dying, and I am too, and it's still only 1 p.m. in Lord Brahma's day.

April 26, 1997

4:20 a.m.

I'm a writer, my friend tells me in his letter. He says I'm a writer who moves forward by writing and "like a sailboat captain, tack the wind of your nature towards Krishna's service. We are forced to dovetail matter to spirit. But what is the limit that that can bring?"

Going through changes and making them happen.

Hare Krishna. The latest batch of letters are here. Took time yesterday to answer when I could have been doing my own writing, but a letter to LB was as important as my diary. Keeping working on the stack.

My friend also noted after reading a little in *Shack Notes* that my gremlin is never quiet. "I see, with your internal narrator/ commentator often at full blast, that he doesn't go away. The answers springing from the intellectual platform don't seem to satisfy him into submission. Why? What will it take? On what level must the realizations hit before he'll cut his antics? Does he exist due to trauma, a survival level of consciousness? Does our realization have to hit the heart of our existence to silence him? How to get it there? Obviously time and the process and we must be patient. But that's not really satisfying to me. Is there a part I can play to hurry the process along? Is there anything I can do to elicit Krishna's descending kindness?"

What does he expect me to say? I don't know.

* * *

Received a letter from an old-timer serving a long prison sentence. He begins his letter of April 8th, "So Allen Ginsberg is out of his old, time-worn coat. Just thinking of him bringing a harmonium to 'Matchless Gifts' temple . . . Well that death closes it for me!"

* * *

4:10 p.m.

RS sounds like a stand-up comic before the Hare Krishna audience. He's been through it all "the antics and dreadful, appalling things we have done in ISKCON, and he tells it. He proves that a cult member can discriminate and admit that the sect has made mistakes. I really ought to bow down sincerely to devotees who work to help the movement improve.

* * *

Hare Krishna. I didn't get a chance to read the *Bhagavatam* today because the late morning was taken away by my giving a presentation, and it will be tomorrow too. That's okay. I read *Caitanya-caritamrta* "what Gopinatha Acarya said to Sarvabhauma, who smiled and replied, "Hold on, we are just having a talk among friends. Don't get so hot." Sarvabhauma said that because he realized he was being defeated. He didn't know the scriptures.

* * *

Letters: "It sounds like you have a vocation to work with the terminal patients. I hope . . ." And, "Yes, I got your letter, but don't know what happened to the money order you sent last year."

"I didn't know that TP was violent and that this is why he was replaced." And, a temple president doesn't know whether to recommend an eccentric person for initiation and he wants me to decide. No, you decide.

I'm trying to understand what someone meant when he wrote that there's an upside to being a hypocrite. He also said young people tend to be harsh in their judgments, and idealistic. They don't know how hard life is.

I try to gather the voices like a poet, and hear the lives, the pain, the struggle with the ordinary, and to help these special people who are dedicated to Krishna consciousness. Some of them have been through it all. I went through it too, but don't have so many funny stories to tell.

* * *

5:30 p.m.

Kuveri passed away late this morning. We walked down the path to her pen this afternoon. Someone covered her body with the blue tarp that was her tent. The workers are going to bury her.

I saw new blossoms on the trees. The primroses have been beaten down from the heavy rains. At least I *hope* that's what's making them look so bedraggled and not that they're dying from old age. I'll expect them to spring back when the rain stops. They grow dangerously near the side of the road, where a truck could run them over. Such lowly, ground-hugging plants.

April 27, 1997

1:24 a.m.

I just wrote in PMrB that God is always in control (*Bhag.* 1.7.32). The demons cannot destroy the world. Drew pictures for world peace. Allowed suffering to enter the picture even though I'm not a tested, brave soul. I'm still entitled to sing the devotees' song, although I try not to sing beyond my realization.

Now to *japa*. Krishna's will in all things, even in this headache threatening its appearance. May I gain tolerance.

* * *

5:25 a.m.

Keep it simple. That has been the heart of this writing.

Prabhupada taught me not to be a speculator. I have no new theology, and I don't have to. That's part of my learning simplicity. I can simply repeat what Prabhupada has said. The complication is that he wanted me to repeat it flavored with my own understanding and realization. He wanted me to adapt myself to the changing times while remaining true to his message. We all struggle with this, and therefore, we hear of so many challenges being raised in this movement. Some say that they find it hard to accept what Prabhupada says about women. Some focus on other social issues. The conservatives don't like to hear the slightest attempt to assuage the feelings of offended groups who want to see Prabhupada in a different light.

But I'm looking for simplicity. I just want to open the window and see the light before dawn, and to improve my chanting. I want to feel sorry when I discover that I am of something else and not hearing the holy names.

Part of my attempt at simplicity is to find more time in the day to chant. I chant only for two hours a day. What about the rest of the day? I should be praying then. I have to learn to pray while reading, pray while eating, and pray while sleeping. Pray while in pain.

Devotees have other language for ceaseless prayer. We say we want to be "fully absorbed in Krishna consciousness," or that we want to "serve Krishna twenty-four hours a day. Phrases like that. We never want to find ourselves outside the concentration on how to spread Krishna consciousness. It is not enough to only follow the rules. We want to make guru and Krishna obliged by our love. We have to learn how to feel. That's part of simplicity too.

Hare Krishna.

Hare Krishna to you too, my friend.

I will have been a *sannyasi* for twenty-five years this year on Lord Nrsimha's appearance day. I will observe it with a pipe and gown, a bow and sauerkraut on the head of the toadstool.

You mean . . . ?

Yes, I will be walking with my bent blackthorn walking stick after having made a heroic effort to travel.

* * *

Noon

The worker who buried Kuveri is impressed that the devotees gathered to hold *kirtana*, which he commented was "a good send-off." Arjuna dasankirtana, whereas he was sad when his father died. He said Irish wakes are usually occasions to get drunk. The devotees said they're going to collect stories about Kuveri and assemble a little booklet.

In my mind I'm gearing up for travel. Belfast first. We'll be staying at a house in a Protestant neighborhood, where there's a Union Jack flying across the street and a red hand, the symbol of a pro-British extremist group. That means we won't leave our van with its Irish license plates in the street overnight. Also . . . oh well, you'll hear about that in the next book.

M.'s rehearsing to sing in the next Hare Krishna festival. I'm hearing the last tape in rS's series "discussing the history of the zonal *acaryas*. I flinch, but he tells it fair.

* * *

In the temple room this morning as I sat on the little *vyasasana* with the lectern, I felt myself sliding into the role of being a senior devotee, an advanced person. It occurred to me that I'm not necessarily more advanced than these devotees, but we've all taken up a particular relationship and we're remaining committed to it. It will go on like this for the rest of my days, it seems, at least with this little group, my "spiritual children." Is there truth in it? My humility is to accept it and live with it honestly.

After the lecture they walked me down to the quay. I got into the boat while one devotee filmed me with a video camera and another took snapshots. Look back to them

for one last smile? Or turn the other way, slightly aloof? Either way, you're caught in the picture "in the picture in your mind.

* * *

4:20 p.m.

"Harrys Out!" They shouted as they smashed the windows on his van. That's Michael's van, parked outside the building where he rents. They did this after they saw so many devotees coming and going to his flat, where I stayed last time I was in Belfast. The same hooligans smashed windows in the temple building. The temple is enclosed in walls, but recently they broke the front gate, entered, and smashed car windows. We're not going to park our van on the temple grounds, and we've decided to stay at another devotee's flat. He agreed, but only on the condition that no devotees come over during the three days we'll be there. Welcome to Belfast.

It makes me nervous to go from this quiet, peaceful land into the city, but I have to. The Belfast devotees live with that danger all the time, and I can and should be with them for awhile. Who will protect us anyway, but Krishna?

* * *

Offenders kill their internal vision. Thus they cannot see the Lord's lotus feet within themselves, and neither can they see the Lord's devotees. "The Lord's devotees, however, do not mind the offenses of the foolish in their many gross and subtle endeavors. The Lord's devotees continue to bestow the blessings of devotion upon all such offenders without hesitation. That is the way of devotees." (*Bhag.* 3.5.46, purport)

April 28, 1997

1:14 a.m.

Nervous man, chant on beads, then write through your anxiety.

* * *

5:04 a.m.

It seems so hard to control our moods. Why is the mind the way it is? It is one of the three kinds of miseries. You can't get free of the miseries except by Krishna consciousness. But how does Krishna consciousness free us of miseries? I still feel them, these enemies that live within.

Sometimes when devotees ask this question, they suspect that they have been cheated by the *Vedas*. We haven't. We simply have to enter deeply into their essence. There are many examples of persons who transcended the mind. A Godbrother commented that the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is mostly about heroes way beyond our experiences. We don't see many struggling mortals. I didn't completely agree. There is Ajamila for one, and King Nabhi's priests. Dhruva was powerful, but materially motivated at first. We can also learn from those among us who are struggling and becoming successful.

It's hard to write more on that right now because the mail is still bouncing around inside my head. Someone is going back to school, someone has to drive to work, someone is on the GBC, someone tells me he chants his rounds before the *tulasi* plant in the temple, someone has not written me in a long time, and someone . . . is just plain loco.

I need to land and dig in. You can't just fly with your mouth open, you know, so that you take in everything. Sometimes you have to land. Can I feel enough hope to share it with others without pontificating?

It rained yesterday, but today if it's clear, or even if it's not, I'll continue to carry our stuff to the van. Almost time to leave.

You can improvise he said

Rising from his bed.

I saw you doing your *Poor Man's* stint.

What was it you wanted to see in print?

Something about born *brahmanas* today
and holy wars and the price to pay.

You preach straight then go for it,
but sometimes there's nothing but wit

and not much of that. Grinding
the way cows chew cud. The day is gray

and this Yank is worried

that he might get mussed

by some Brits in Belfast.

He'll have to

write it down if he does, because

blood and tears are rare.

* * *

10:10 a.m.

Cleaned out the shed. Piled up the dead winged insects to sweep out the door. I'll be back.

Song of bird in rain. Wet, high grass. Wearing M's Wellies (mine are ripped). The cow is dead. Simplicity in Irish spring.

April 29

4:10 a.m.

Hoping to get a fresh start tomorrow on a new volume. Some ideas forming for it, but I won't mention them here.

Sometimes I think I should stop everything and concentrate on prayerful reading. Somehow, however, that feels too much like a last stage. I'm only fifty-eight years old. It's not the end yet. If I can continue to preach through writing, that's better.

Good-bye April. You were a dry month. Now it has decided to rain this thin rain. I walked in it yesterday and barely got wet. But it has dashed the primroses by the edge of the footpath.

Hare Krishna. Did my work on PMrB today. It had a long commentary section from the points in the verse. I wrote only four and a half pages of free-writing afterwards, but it was apologetic and even defensive. I hope PMrB will become more rich and free-flowing.

On and on we go. Sixteen rounds at a sitting. I realize that Krishna is already here in my chanting, but that realization is not enough. I have to crave His association above all else. Everything is complete in the chanting, so I beg for nectar. Krishna, You so kind, but because I commit offenses, I cannot attain the sweetness. I am covered by *avidya*. The only cure to this disease is Your holy name. Please help me.

* * *

Hari-nama, You are the angel
of mercy and I am in need
of regular installments of the nourishing
Retreat from *maya*. I grasp Your
lotus feet, holy names.
10:30 a.m.

I'm holding my own, but weakly.

Hey, I thought you wanted to write intensely?

It seems my "intense" days are over if it means any kind of physical push. I've had four days in a row without headache, but each of them has been on the edge of pain. I'm riding along all right now. I did manage to pack the van over the past three days. I'm almost finished "the books, tapes, typewriter, etc. are all secured. Soon a short trip to Belfast, give some classes and my simple presentation, and move on.

The lecturer quoted Srila Prabhupada as saying there's an ISKCON in the spiritual world. The lecturer added that he's aware there's also an ISKCON in the higher material planets. I definitely would hate to go there. Anyway, I'll try not to be disappointed wherever I wind up. I won't remember this life anyway. Imagine that, all my written words wiped out of my consciousness. The subtle body will carry me forward to a new body and a new identity. I only hope my work endures.

Ravindra-svarupa Prabhu said that if you're trying to improve, then you're situated in the transcendental society of devotees as earnest. It's called "socialization among the best". But we may find we are the least among the best. That's better than dropping out to join a lower type of society. We can't demand transference to Vraja. Both Brahma and Uddhava prayed to be born as blades of grass outside Vrndavana so the residents of Vraja would step on their heads.

I don't want to whine or even plead too loudly. Best I say outright what I want. I want what the Lord will give me. I would like to be more pleasing to Him. I don't know exactly *what* to ask for. I could say I want to be a *manjari* in Rupa-manjari's service, but at this point, that would be a little pretentious. Better I first become pure, as Srila Prabhupada said I should. The problem is, I'm running out of physical energy, and that's affecting my mental energy. I thought being a Hare Krishna devotee meant you are a "Hare Krishna kid," and you have lots of energy. I need more energy for *laulyam* and all those higher stages described in *The Nectar of Devotion*.

Hare Krishna.

* * *

Teeth falling out, liver defective, coughing mucus "Vidura told Dhrtarastra to take warning and get out. If he didn't make spiritual advancement now, he would never get the chance. Nondevotees refer to these years as the "sunset" years. Don't spend them avoiding pain while letting your eyes mist over in reminiscence. Be detached and follow the Vaisnava principles.

I'm sure glad I have the right to give a few more classes and writings and advice to others, then say, "That's all, I'm closing up shop for this lifetime. Moving to anew location. See you around "maybe."

He was going to say
Krishna, Krishna "I'll get to know Him
through the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and
Caitanya-caritamrta, that book of
intimate pastimes, exceptional.
O Maya, be at bay.
I want to serve the Lord as
in my best and last days better
than ever "paying attention
to *hari-nama* and hearing the Lord's
lila, maybe accepting some new
austerity, new duties, new
humility, new freedom from envy,
as my master calls me.

* * *

3:45 p.m.

He comes to Me, Krishna says. He means the *mahatmas*. They don't come back to this world of three-fold miseries. I was glad to read that. Opening the book randomly, I turned to *Bhagavad-gita* 8.15. It was just what I wanted. Then 8.13 and 8.14. Chant Hare Krishna and always be with Krishna. Don't desire any other worship (service) or destination. Just try to please Him. He's *aksara* and *acintya*, yet He reveals Himself to His devotees.

Last afternoon at Geaglum. M.'s on the run with messages and packing. I'm mostly packed, so I have time for one last walk down my woods path. It's a small area, but I like it. I could "retire" here if I had to.

Oh,

he's rehearsing his new song, "One Evening Fair." Interrupted me twice while writing this, but that's okay, I'm geared for interruptions, travel, new pace. I'm saying a fond *adieu* to the routine here and being sure to record it. I can't live here forever. "Time steals all time/ and we're left with no life."

* * *

Bhakta Randolph mailed off my last three weeks of drawings, but to the wrong post office box. When I heard it I cried out, "Oh no!" But does it really matter so much? They're pretty much the same as the drawings I did before, and like the ones I plan to do. Anyway . . .

Black and yellow bee in the pink plant. The collie, Tilaka, walks beside me and looks up for me to pet him.

On the woods path I examine my primroses as if they were patients in a hospital. I'm the visiting doctor. They've definitely been dashed by the rains and lost their sprightliness.

The forest is chock full of song birds this sunny afternoon.

I think the best thing that happened to me in the last three weeks is my learning to pay attention to my *japa*. I say "learning" although I supposedly knew how to do it all along. I guess what I should say is that I just received Krishna's grace. I pray to be able to keep it up. It's important to me.

* * *

Coming back to the house, Draupadi was standing right in my path, bellowing. I stopped and patted her broad forehead until she quieted. I wish it was that easy to quiet my own bellowing and the bellowing of the world. Even as I write this, I hear Draupadi starting up again. Prabhupada says the pure devotees constantly engage in transcendental loving service to the Supreme Lord; they cannot forget the Lord at any time. Neither can the Lord forget His pure devotee. "This is the great blessing of the Krishna conscious process of chanting the *maha-mantra* "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare."

Appendix One

Quotes on The Creative Life

I read to Madhu some quotes from *The Natural Artistry of Dreams: Creative Ways to Bring the Wisdom of Dreams to Waking Life*, by Jo Mellick. This is in connection with a discussion about my writing, my seeking the continual flame or desire to do it despite the increasing limitations of physical illness. The discussion also went on to the possible conflicts between the writing life and the seeking of results as in publishing, recognition, etc., from the writing life. Madhu has his opinions on this and he expressed them again. He was also pleased to hear the mood of the material I read from the Mellick book.

Here are some quotes:

"Most children have no unconscious doubt about their creativity, no barrier between impulse and expression. Children don't naturally wonder whether they have talent; they don't naturally do things based on successful outcome. Outcome is not an issue. They embrace these activities with confidence, trust, and delight. They don't ask themselves, *Am I creative?* They just have fun and *are* creative. What happened between childhood and adulthood? When did we lose our unfettered creativity?"

Mellick goes on to say that as adults, we harness our creative urge and try to use it in practical ways. "But what happened to the creativity that didn't need to produce anything except its own delight, the creativity whose sole purpose was to express and delight us?"

Mellick gives the example of a man who had a successful money-making career but who felt dissatisfied and wanted to take up sculpting. He saw a conflict in it because "when Ian reflected more on *why* he sculpted, he saw that he had competing goals; to nourish his soul and to be recognized. He believed his goals could co-exist, but that only one could take priority . . . Ian eventually decided that recognition would have to be a side benefit if he were to engage in this work with spiritual integrity."

In Mellick's work, I also found valuable remarks regarding the non-judgmental attitude that is best to take toward artwork. I think this is applicable not only to my colorings and drawings, but to the writing in *Every Day, Just Write*:

"In this kind of personal artwork, jettison any idea that you can help yourself or others by interpreting, praising, or criticizing. These have no more place in this work than telling a mother that her child will look better with different colored eyes. These kinds of creative pieces and experiences are only for *being with*. . . interpretation too often preserves the piece in intellectual formaldehyde when it could have led to a long and vibrant life. Even positive comments (your own or others) contaminate this kind of creative experience. Why not praise? Because one end of the praise continuum evokes the other. When we receive praise or criticism for a personal expression that was never meant to be a performance, we unconsciously use self-deprecation to try to restore a state of equilibrium by which we are neither too impressed nor depressed by our performance. In trying to re-balance, we forget that we should not be evaluating at all. [Note to proofreading: these quotes have to be checked "I'm adding words to make sense, but they may not be correct.]

"Ellen was painting a dream in a simple way when her neighbor, who was passing by her open door, commented, 'What a beautiful painting.' Ellen felt momentarily pleased, and then immediately experienced silent, painful self-criticism that negated the neighbor's comment. Her mind repeated its old songs: She's saying it to be nice. It's awful . . . no one tells you the truth. You're a fake. . . . What Ellen did with these painful feelings was wise, however. She painted them "big black circles and red Xs " "until her divided focus re-unified and she could return to the original work."

Appendix Two

Comments on Thoreau's Journals

When I was in Baltimore, Rasaraja dasa gave me, unsolicited, a copy of *Henry David Thoreau, An American Landscape: Selected Writings From His Journals*, edited and illustrated by Robert L. Rothwell. The introduction to this book, written by Robert Finch, set off a number of sparks for me. I expressed them in a letter to my editor.

From Finch's introduction:

"Thoreau's journal has often been referred to as the 'quarry' from which he mined much of his published writings. True as this is, the journal was what Thoreau saw himself not so much as a quarry than as a laboratory of the mind."

I was intrigued by the whole endeavor of Thoreau's journal and how it wasn't intended for publishing, but now as the decades and centuries unfold, editors continue to go through and produce so many separate volumes of Thoreau's journal selections, emphasizing different things, such as Thoreau as a writer, Thoreau as a landscape man, as a conservationist, as this and that. This inspired me to think that my writing doesn't

have to produce specific literary or artistic pieces as much as to just flow in the life I lead.

I was also inspired by the comment that Thoreau worked within a limited context. That is, he lived always in Concord. This set off an echo in me of my own limitations. Although he wrote about the same places again and again, Finch claimed that "Thoreau never stagnated as a thinker or an observer, never fell into the trap of constantly repeating old truths or reflex descriptions." By daily writing about the same things, with detachment for whether it fit into a neat concept or a particular book, Thoreau was able to naturally develop and improve his expression. "This recognition of Thoreau's long attachment to his native landscape culminates in the entry for November 1, 1858, surely one of the most remarkable passages in the entire journal, and as moving an attribute to one's hometown as can be found in literature . . . It takes a lifetime of devotion to a place to produce a passage as good as this."

"When Thoreau died in 1862, the bulk of the journal's manuscript was left unprepared for publication. Nonetheless its achievements, represented in the following pages, are impressive by any measure."

My editor replied with the following points:

(1) "That the experience of writing the journal (or whatever) is a 'laboratory' for the author but a 'quarry' for editor and reader. That is, that the experience is different for both. The writer has his reasons for writing, which may include, but should not be overshadowed by, the desire to publish. The act of publishing from his writings doesn't have to steal from the integrity of the writing act.

(2) "That dedication to writing, even within a limited sphere of one's life (limits being geographical as they were with Thoreau, or otherwise as they are with you), produces depth of expression. When the author turns inward for the freshness of expression rather than remains dependent on the novelty of changing externals, his writing can become the material that broadens the reader more than other writing would, even if it was filled with details and information . . . It reminds me of that fear you used to voice from time to time that you didn't want to live to feed your writing. Writing within boundaries of a routine life can make your writing a simple partner in life "part of your holistic process.

(3) "Although at the time of Thoreau's death, the bulk of his journals had not been prepared for publication, his purposes were achieved and his influence spread. He wrote as much as he could within his lifetime, for whatever purposes he had both public and private, and the weight of the writing itself ensured that his journals were mined and the best writing published.

(4) "I do think this power comes from the dedication to daily writing, from the acceptance of your life as it is, and from the willingness to live a life of which writing is an integral part of a process, but not really the product. Krishna consciousness is the product. For Thoreau, it seems that despite the voluminous writings, writing wasn't his product either, but simply part of the process of his life. Writing was a by-product that came from a life lived as fully and holistically as he knew how.

"I think that was your original premise in EJW "the facing up to the fact that writing wasn't your only purpose in life, but that you wanted to give major concentration to *japa* and reading Prabhupada's books. . . . EJW will be mined because, by its nature, it will contain the essence of your life."

Appendix Three

The following notes and drawings accumulated on my bulletin board while writing *Simplicity in Irish Spring*:

(1) A very precise and technically well-executed drawing of Lord Jagannatha, with "Celtic" designs around it, given to me by Bhakta Matthew.

(2) One of my ink-splash drawings with a man walking. He's hooded, and over his head in big letters it says "Krishna." To the right, "His own words."

(3) A Brijbasi print of the *rasa* dance.

(4) A Brijbasi greeting card print of Radha and Krishna.

(5) A drawing of mine with a tilaked man holding his right hand up in a fist, and on his sweatshirt is the word "resistor."

(6) The calendar running from the twelfth of March to the thirtieth of April.

(7) The following notes:

Ideas:

(a) Use dictaphone even when you have headache.

(b) Name names, get at all issues on your mind: don't omit anything that concerns you.

(c) It's private writing "(not to be published in entirety for many years, but to be mined regularly).

(d) It's your laboratory. Later it can be a quarry for your editor.

(8) A composing method: write and dictate, combine these to "write" a piece. You can start out writing and then switch to dictation. A main reason to do this is your limited energy. Back and forth "some writing, some dictating, again some writing. Express yourself fully. Get the work done one way or another.

(9) *Accept* reduction of time and energy for writing (and reading) because of weak health. But don't accept loss of motive, desire to express. Maintain desire to live in Krishna consciousness.

(10) When you have fog, vise, or more serious headache pain, speak into the dictaphone. Use language: resister's Broadcast; resister's Talk, Underground Little Warrior.

Appendix Four

Quotes From Books I read While

Writing This Volume of EJW

(1) Madhu and I were discussing whether to publish or not. Although neither of us are just one camp that says don't publish or do publish, Madhu tends to favor not publishing, and I tend to favor publishing. One morning I was advocating this to him and I pulled out the following quote from Heschel's *A Passion For Truth*:

"Kierkegaard was an author passionately involved in writing and publishing. Kotzker, we are told, was engaged in writing, but then threw his manuscripts into the fire." I went on to say that publishing is in my blood. I was trained in ISKCON Press, BTG, and so on.

* * *

(2) In connection with the same subject of whether to publish or not to publish, Madhu and I discussed pros and cons. Of course, it's good to write and publish the truth just because it's the truth, but if by publishing I was forced in some way to change my life, then wouldn't it be better not to publish certain things in order to preserve an inner sanctity? This led me to think of a statement from *Henry Miller on Writing*:

"Every day we slaughter our finest impulses. That is why we get heartache when we read those lines written by the hand of a master and recognize them as our own, as the tender shoots which we stifled because we lacked the faith to believe in our own powers, our own criterion of truth and beauty. . . . What happened to me in writing about Joey and Tony was tantamount to revelation. It was revealed to me that I could say what I wanted to say "if I thought of nothing else, if I concentrated upon that exclusively "and if I were willing to bear the consequences which a pure act always involves."