

ELECTRIONIC BOOK

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Every Day, Just Write

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The Lord reigneth

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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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December 3, 1997, 12:08 a.m.

"Besides these two, there is the greatest living personality, the Supreme Soul, the imperishable Lord Himself, who has entered the three worlds and is maintaining them."
(Bg. 15.17)

"Oh yeah?" the skeptic scoffs. "You expect me to believe that?"

I expect you to sit in the back seat of the car during the drive to Dublin. That's all. Four of us are going. Ask the front seat passenger, Syamananda, to keep the driver, Arjuna, awake while I fall asleep in the back seat. We expect to make good time, but you never know. As for disbelief in God "you, whoever you are who said that, "Oh yeah?," why don't you put your intelligence to a better use?

O Krishna, may we always hear your words and insist upon their truth with faith and intelligence.

I have discovered over the last few years "and this is not a terrible thing "that my work in this life is not to gather extensive knowledge of Sastric details but to learn and preach faith. We should pray to Krishna to reveal Himself to us. We should pray to Prabhupada to reveal himself to us in his books. We should face the challenge of doubt and live with whatever unresolved problems exist in us, but at every moment we should approach Krishna with whatever faith we have and surrender. "Whoever knows Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead without doubting, is the knower of everything. He therefore engages himself in full devotional service to Me, O son of Bharata."

(Bg. 18.19) Prabhupada: "But if anyone, after speculating for hundreds of thousands of lives, does not come to the point that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and that one has to surrender there, all his speculation for so many years and lives is a useless waste of time."

* * *

God and The river
& There's a way we all know "
hey, don't tell. Be alone and
listen. Woodshed.

* * *

If you are alive among people in
crowded houses, be secret
live inner, private, write and send the message
this way.

* * *

Old man river keeps rolling past
the tragedy of wasted lives, and
he don't do nothin' about it.
He jes' keeps rolling along.
Indifferent nature of the mighty

waterways
like Time itself
simply witnessing
speaking not.
O Lord in the heart You
are not quite indifferent or why
would you sit in each one of us?

* * *

They say we shouldn't protest
man's inhumanity to man, but I
protest, I speak by being a devotee
of Krishna and preaching among the ignorant
starting with myself.

* * *

O Krishna, I know nothing, but please
give me the right
to know You.
I'm tired of these doubts and want
blessed space "peace, to be
one-pointed
centered on You
in all I do
despite pains and limits
the body no good
and finally dead. "

* * *

Down By The riverside
& Let's go down to the river
and sing religious "see
God in all things
in the company of His sincere
devotees.

* * *

I pray to be allowed
another day to be His like that
to be true in the world of false "
that's His world too, I know and Lord,
I don't mock it as Nothing.

* * *

I pray to know that other world that
sanatana, the millions of them
and I wish to go there
when I kick off all that clings to me
here. O Krishna, will You help?

* * *

Down by the river we'll
hold *kirtana*, honor *prasadam*
the Indian way "in Slovenia,
Narada's transcendental way in Ohio
feel the triumph.

* * *

Down by the river of the
self I'll cry and play my horn
and do the dance
I've known for years
learned by His protection
His love, my dance of
gratitude.
Please take me home. "

* * *

9:10 a.m.

You don't know what to write? I'm no Merton oppressed, cornered in a monastery and vowed to follow an abbot who doesn't understand me. I am removed from all that. Or am I?

I follow the GBC's resolutions and viewpoints; I'm part of a system that has made me a guru. I must live up to that. I follow my spiritual master as absolutely as possible by conscience and social custom. No other force is necessary to keep me in line. If I step out of line, it will be obvious.

In a more private sense, I am freer. I could say I conform outwardly while maintaining a private life, although I publish from my private life. What would I do if I had no one to answer to? Absurd. If I had no one to answer to, I would be God.

Okay, what if you had no *earthly* person to answer to? Everything could be measured by you and your responses to God. Also absurd. Too much speculation. We are all followers in any case.

As I write this, M. is at the American Embassy in Dublin. We left Inis rath at 4 a.m.; twenty minutes later he said he forgot his medical papers and we had to go back. Somehow we remained cool (*cold*, in the car), and I didn't complain once. Arjuna and

Syamananda were particularly saintly "no complaints. When we returned to the house and M. went inside, I tried warming my feet and said to Arjuna, "The conditioned souls make mistakes" (referring to M.'s forgetting). Arjuna replied, "Yes, I make so many myself."

When we were again underway, I started a conversation to deflect my silent resentment for the delay. The mental disturbance was silly, I know, and the conversation was interesting "we spoke of *Bhagavad-gita*, of Inis rath, even of my attitude toward my health. We arrived forty minutes late. So what?

It's no big deal whether or not M. gets his green card. He has no intention of residing in the U.S., but he wants to be able to come and go as we do every year in peace. His applying for residence almost seems a provision for the future "in case I ever decide to stay in America.

* * *

Looking Out A Frost-Melting Window

(In Dublin at a desk, facing a frost-melting window . . . a busy town instead of the quiet lake)

& An angry man is nevertheless an artist
I don't know what you mean.

* * *

Well it's like this "everyone has to go
to work.
Except me.

* * *

Sign boards "a guy who could kill
you, a dissolute young beauty "a
woman. They flash by so
fast I can't see, and don't try to see
anyway, from the back seat.

* * *

Millions of offices and schools and
people on the streets, dreamers and
hard workers, those who curse and
the priests who bless, people on the dole "
plenty of them "and even more
in the pubs even this early.

* * *

O priest and your congregation,
Are you an angel of mercy? Is your heart
sacred? Yes, I
sit apart.

* * *

I am an ancient one, a rune, an act
of digestion, a pancake *muni* and
critic of lectures, a shorthand clerk
short-order cook-poet.

* * *

Wry master, posing
novelist, but shivering
in my boots.
What I do is
matter of fact.

* * *

It's cold and I am definitely in
this body. Hey Hari Hare
Krishna. No lion here just
a toothless hyena a
baby polecat, both
skinny and fat like the actor
poorly cast
who
played Gaurakishor dasa Babaji
in the film.

* * *

Am I self-centered? It's because
I can't see out the window and
I know no one else.

* * *

Except in dreams, and there
I'm not safe, ever, but running,
praying that they don't become

flesh and blood reality.
Alfred E. Neuman, Prufrock,
Milquetoast, Mr. Magoo
Mr. Peepers, an angry
Archie Shepp, James Dean,
Sonny rollins, Tommy Oakland, me
treading on snow with my own
four hundred in the bank
circa 1964. Dreams. Now in
solitary confinement.
(At least they bring lunch.)

* * *

O readers who face bitter trials,
any heavy storm could knock
out the lines.
Pray to God just
pray to God.

* * *

I mean it.
And that's it from this
wounded lion, from
the influence of my soul
the child's cry as
frost clears and I see
a row of houses. "

* * *

10:55 a.m.

"This is the most confidential part of the Vedic scriptures, O sinless one, and it is disclosed now by Me. Whoever understands this will become wise, and his endeavors will know perfection." (Bg. 15.20) The knowledge referred to here is that Sri Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Do I call the inner world inner knowledge? It's transcendental. It's in the *sastra* and I accept it.

11 a.m., but no Prabhupada *puja*. I left him in "*samadhi*" in that cold, dark room at Manu's house, locked up. I dressed him warmly first, of course. I'll continue to offer food to him wherever I am. Same with Radha-Govinda. Think of Them; the photos will help. Hare Krishna.

* * *

"Devotional service to the Lord and the Lord Himself are one and the same because they are spiritual; devotional service takes place within the internal energy of the Supreme Lord." (Bg. 15.20, purport) Did I used to be able to feel statements like that better than now? Merton says, regarding his compilation of the Desert Fathers' sayings, "It would be futile to skip through these pages and lightly take note of the fact that Fathers said this and this. What good will it do us to know merely that such things were once *said*? The important thing is that they were lived, that they flow from an experience of the deeper levels of life."

I want to live what I read too, with hope and faith. Maybe I once had a more naive faith in what "the Swami said," to the degree that I either misunderstood him or misunderstood myself. And my faith was extremely simple in the beginning. When I would read, edited by the early editors of *Bhagavad-gita*, that was a planet of trees (*pitrs*), I thought, "Why not? It's *all* inconceivable, right?" I believed such things on the understanding that Krishna consciousness was way beyond my experience. If any doubted, I was prepared to smash them. It seemed so much easier that way than what I feel now.

* * *

3:02 p.m.

Srila Prabhupada writes that once you come to devotional service, you automatically arrive at the stage of sinlessness. We are ushered into such purity by following the four rules.

But there are other sins. For example, isn't it a sin not to attain love of God? To remain attached to self and body? These are sins of omission. How does Krishna count it all up? What about weakness of heart? Prabhupada defined weakness of heart as coming under the influence of *maya's* throwing and covering potencies. Just another form of material attachment. O spirit soul, rise above it all and become transcendental to the modes.

Chilly in this room despite the heater, and chilly in my heart too, despite the fact that I spent the afternoon reading. There was so much noise in the house "the children in the bathroom calling, "Daddy!" Cheerful, they were, and Madhu cheerful too, playing his melodeon and talking on the telephone. He is to pick up his green card at 4. Now it's quiet "everyone seems to have gone. Chant and hear, and keep alive.

* * *

Swing Low

(Alone at last, I hear a train horn, but otherwise, a lonely spiritual in my head and blood. remember "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot"?)

& Swing low, sweet chariot.

A simple rescue at the end?

Sweet Jesus "I don't know.

All I know is that I have been taught
to cling to the mother like a baby
monkey.

* * *

But seriously. You know, you gotta work in
this life and be a man, accept what comes.
You gotta cry to God almighty
God sweet Krishna
the central secret of existence
no matter what the material
world deals up.

* * *

It'll be Hare Krishna through an
empty room a
empty heart
chanting mantras and not knowing
where I lost
myself "*somewhere*" oh,
old man
you gotta laugh.

* * *

I looked over yonder and
what did I see? Not much "
just the sun so bright I couldn't
look again
going down over Dublin's row
houses and
coming for to carry me home.
I am grateful no matter what
form that chariot that
Remembrance
appears. "

* * *

Listening Alone
& I'm on my way wild Irish
Rose, I'm taking you to where I'll go
across the world to listen in

* * *

Roaming rooms everywhere
saying God God

quiet
God
I didn't have to decide anything it
was all decided for me.

* * *

O Krishna, I'm not courageous
but if I could know why you told how
the *gopis*, cows
everyone
Your flute "
Krishna's flute "I didn't hear
anything.

* * *

O Prabhupada, I typed your
Krishna book with my own hands
and I came alive.

* * *

When Krishna plays His flute
the calves stopped sucking,
the *gopis* and demigods' wives
felt conjugal attraction
and I listen to *that*
oh my. "

* * *

* * *

Pukka Pad Shorty, Active Imagination, Episode 1

"Krishna is God, you see? It says so in the preface to the *Krishna* book."

"But I don't believe that," said Henry Grimes.

Well Sats did, and he was joined by a Godbrother and a spiritual son who wanted to believe too, all believers in the Vedic *sastras*.

Syamananda's uncle is a Catholic priest. I met him on Inis rath two years ago at the open house they held. He and a friend walked through the wooded path and saw the unusual species a previous owner had worked hard to gather, a dog full of teeth barking outside.

Are you getting sleepy yet?

I hear a factory whistle, or is it a train. It's twenty minutes to 5.

You were saying?

Krishna is the Godhead because He is, and no one could equal Him. Atheists don't accept. I beg for mercy.

Police siren. We're a long way from the ambiance of Geaglum. Oh, 'twas nice there. I'm letting it reach me here.

The perennial question: Am I worse off than ever before? Or is this normal? Still honest. What little I can embrace of my spiritual life is sweet, real. Krishna is the Supreme Person, beyond the fallible and the infallible, and this is the most confidential part of all Vedic literature, and I already know it. Imagine that.

Adolf Eichmann admitted belief in God just before he was hanged. Did he lie?

O *Krishna* book, I put you down and pick you up again. Your characters don't sit in stiff fold-up chairs to wait for someone to come back to the house. Your characters are active, imaginative servants, happy.

Six fairies, two poor boys "get Wisdom of the Heart (*sophia*). Krishna consciousness was around long before Constantinople.

Kids out playing in this housing development until the last light. Their voices sound Irish. It gets dark early. The same dog yapping everywhere I go "Bombay, Geaglum, Second Avenue during the Swami's lectures. We are a United Nations of barking dogs.

* * *

5:45 p.m.

I have been noting down whenever I read Srila Prabhupada stating superlatives about Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And sometimes I (or my sub-persons) have been voicing doubts. I don't seem to have such fully faithful, single-minded love of Krishna. I seem to need to wrestle with God, or at least with my mind *about* God. I guess that's all right. I don't want anything else in life. I admit I lack desire (*laulyam*) to love Krishna, but I keep asking myself (and Krishna) why this is so "why I can't enter the loving network, why that loving network can't enter me.

I think constantly about how I fall short. I talk constantly about my lack of Krishna consciousness. As soon as I get started, the words just keep coming: then, "Krishna Krishna" "love of Krishna.

Reading the preface of *Krishna* book, I find so many sentences upon which to ruminate, each pregnant with meaning:

"Since Krishna is all-attractive, one should know that all his desires should be focused on Krishna."

"The art of focusing one's attention on the Supreme and giving one's love to Him is called Krishna consciousness."

"But the real fact is that people can be happy only by loving Krishna."

"One can love Krishna as the Supreme unknown, . . . "

"Whatever percentage of Krishna consciousness we can perform will become an eternal asset to our life, for it is imperishable in all circumstances."

Do these statements sound dogmatic to me? Yes, sometimes. I feel frustrated that they're not real enough to me, even though I do accept them theoretically. So many possible responses. I know eventually my resistance will be worn down. " . . . and ultimately, by reading this one book, *Krishna*, love of Godhead will fructify."

* * *

6:05 p.m.

I was flicking ink from the pen to the page to get an "artistic" effect. A small drop stained my new sweatshirt. "Oh!" I exclaimed, and hurried to remove it with soap and water. I can still see a trace of a stain. Ink also on my forefinger. Might as well live with it. Did I want to present a stain-free image to the people I meet on my travels? "Look at that neat Hare Krishna man." As if anyone would notice. It's my emblem as an ink splasher, and that's nothing to be ashamed of. Even if I die ink-stained, Krishna will accept me if I used it in His service.

This is the travel book. It's not a neat novel starting off with drama and a fast pace. Not that kind of book at all. I could write a hundred pages about just sitting in Dublin for two days.

December 4, 12:10 a.m.

The effect of the dream I had last night was strong. It was the first time I remember my devotee identity in a dream being so strong. I felt that I was being given a clear indication of what I should do with my remaining years. In the dream, demons were being reborn and no one could be saved from them. In one scene, they turned on me and I ran away. I fell exhausted and stripped of strength, but my last remaining power was that I could choose not to be part of it. I began to chant with my breath: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

When I was dreaming, I saw my life as not concentrated or potent compared to what it could be. Of course, I am aware of my lack of focus, and I lament that often. I seem to have no choice right now. But the dream offered a possible breakthrough. I *can* change my life and make it more concentrated by chanting as I did in the dream "on the exhalation and inhalation of each breath. My writing is not going to help people as much as I can help them if I was more Krishna conscious "and the dream showed me how to attain that by constant chanting "chanting to save my life. Such chanting can save me, and it can save others.

This reminds me of what I read in Merton's journal, where he repeatedly thought his writing might be a distraction from his attaining deep contemplation and disappearance of the self into God's love.

Thinking practically, it occurred to me that not only would it be good for me to take on more than sixteen rounds, but I could speak from *Namamrta* while in the Caribbean. Perhaps I should give up my writing and concentrate only on chanting. It's not that I got a strong feeling that I *should* give up my writing, but it was an undeniable fact (in the dream) that only when I chanted did I discover the most important deterrent to the reality of the demons. By chanting, I escaped them and escaped annihilation. Chanting has that power, and the dream hinted to me how to break through the impasse where I have no taste or real experience of Krishna consciousness.

I don't usually like to increase my *japa* quota because it puts more pressure on my day, and thus becomes another thing that could cause headaches. That's why I thought of

possibly considering reducing my writing, because *that* is so time-consuming and requires so much energy. The little energy I have left after headaches and near-headaches could be used to chant and read prayerfully.

Actually, there is no need for me to stop writing, but I should use it more to help myself in spiritual life. Don't write for popularity or think the published books will bring immortality. I have already written so much. Why not try now to experience chanting?

* * *

3:35 a.m.

Chanted sixteen rounds, but felt no sign of that urgency like in the dream or during my reflections on it. I think I will chant extra rounds today. I would like to honor the mood of the dream message.

* * *

Nobody Knows

& Nobody knows the troubles I've seen
just because I'm one and you each are too.

That's just the way it is.

Well, brother, I don't mean to say
I've had it so hard "my yoke as heavy as
a pure devotee's

but I have my own pathos "a personal
threshold of pain and
sorrow

that no one else
can feel.

Although the doctor or
shrink or priest or Hare Krishna confessor assures us
that we just got a little hepatitis, lad,

a little karma in
your row to hoe,

that we don't need to bother about it
and don't forget

to pay at the desk,
we frown, wear baggy pants
a *sannyasi* with a silly grin,
wanting breakfast on time.

Tragedy. "

* * *

Pukka Pad Shorty, Active Imagination, Episode 2
Sitting by a cold window, feeling the outdoor freeze.

"Turn up the heat, Henry!" he called to his roommate, tousle-haired Henry Grimes, who was still in bed.

"Can I wash my pants and have them dry by tomorrow?"

After serious deliberation, the secretary said, "No promises."

To talk of many things "shoes and ships and
sealing wax
of cabbages
and kings.

It sure is cold. I wouldn't want to be out there, homeless.

Ah, but do you care for others? To love another you have to become that person, to some degree. A Christian writer said that.

We Hare Krishnas love others by selling books.

Love is for Krishna. "Pick a girl," Prabhupada said, pointing out his window to the street below, but love is for Krishna.

He's outliving Chet Baker. Don't know about Lieutenant Commander Richardson.

No, no, this
has to be made
clearer.

Oh, boy, we're each so different, especially in our opinions, but the captain insists we chant our rounds, all except for Junior, since he's only three years old. Bob-Narayana was ordered to give Junior his bath and not to make the water too cold or too hot.

As usual, the captain has his way, at least externally, but there sure is a lot of grumbling around here and people living in secret worlds, doing subversive things that affect the whole family.

I'm just reporting in. As you know, everyone talks about dreams that end with us chanting Hare Krishna on *prana*.

"Oh, that'll be the day," Henry joked, singing in imitation of Buddy Holly, "Yeah, that'll be the day that I die!"

We're a loving family after all.

* * *

5:33 a.m.

I appreciate that you are grasping for faith. It is both good and bad when you read words like "GarbodakaSayi Visnu" and you ask if they're true, whether there really is such a form as Maha-Visnu from whom all the universes come. It's good you want to verify it in yourself, actually feel the truth of it, and not accept it merely in a conventional way as if it's "our religion." It's not good, however, that you still entertain doubt that the Visnus, the creation, and the spiritual world are possibly mythical. You have no choice but to read and grasp for *Sraddha*. Giving up is not an option.

I appropriated two books I found here: a handy but decently printed edition of *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, and the first volume of *Krishna* book. I have already put transparent plastic covers on them. I will read them all the way to the Caribbean. Nothing left to do before we go but to rearrange our packing items, sleep, eat, meet with one devotee, and then another.

* * *

11:08 a.m.

I answered a batch of Vyasa-puja letters from Wicklow. Now I'm too scattered to do anything concentrated, including reading.

This morning after my dream, I thought I could stop writing and give my time to chanting and reading. Now I realize that for me to do that would be the same as becoming a *babaji*. Writing is my main preaching. A devotee wrote me a letter stating that my personal example is more important than the books I write. That may be true. The comment reminds me of the Japanese poet-priest Gensei, who called morality the root trunk of the tree, and writing-literature the branches and fruit. If I weren't a practicing disciple and aspiring Krishnaite, my writing would be in vain, even if I could be very honest. I know I sometimes write like a jack-in-the-box, suddenly springing out with, "Hare Krishna! I want to follow my master! Everybody be a devotee!" That's better than being on my own in the unknown, I suppose. There is enough unknown even for one who tries to follow the *sastra*. For example, one doesn't know if he is doing right, doesn't know where he's going in his next life, and his worshipable Lord remains Unknown, never fully knowable.

* * *

Thoughts Coming Together Before Lunch
& Things and people are favorable but
the astrologer says
if you go South it'll be a disaster,
There'll be no
mint tea.

* * *

Go east instead
to that secret place
where Krishna is
the treasure
buried. Don't look
to the north, unless you're going
to see Radha-Govinda, alone in Their alcove
in a house near a lake strait.

* * *

My voice is hoarse and
the kids in this house have chickenpox.
I once yearned to be free
of Navy life to
drink liquor

to be
sentimental.

* * *

2
A devotee's life is busy but
they call us a cult. We don't care.
They have nothing like what
the Swami gave
in his own sweet voice. A contributor-
poet said she sent three
poems but they printed only
two and
was disturbed.
But you know, two out of three ain't bad.
Keep your wig on.

* * *

O my Krishna my
Radha "I want out
screamed the man and
I took it well; I knew just what he meant
and tried to remember
it myself.

* * *

III
Honest "surrender is a thorny path
especially for those
who seek ease, love, nourishment
but selfishly
like when she told me something important
that a guru should hear
I didn't hear it. Later she was more
polite, as if I cared "so
selfish,
non-lover.

* * *

It's unusual that this lion
Roars from his bush.
Doc, I'm moved when I hear *your* anger

your hurt. I know
you are running out of time
and I can only limp along
in this bad neighborhood
no money
a naked sixty years old
aware
in my dreams.

* * *

IV
All right, be calm
you too, and speak what
Krishna says "the
qualification of a speaker
Really. He's just got to say
what it says in the books,
has to have the guts for that.
As for *feeling* the truth . . .

* * *

What hurts is when he
doesn't believe or is bored
out of joint and
passes that on
to us "but worse
is the blind autocrat the
dictator who rams it down
our throat.

* * *

Sweet Krishna speaking
I am no longer afraid
to hear You. "

* * *

Dreamt I was back in the Navy PIO office. As things developed, the office was crowded with workers, but I had no engagement at all. I was bluffing, picking up papers and cleaning, talking to people. I didn't even know who my supervisor was. I thought of telling someone I had nothing to do, but I didn't want him to give me *too* much. It was insane the way I was just there, feeling sorry for myself that I had no engagement, and

being stuck back in the Navy against my will. I kept wondering if I should confess my lack of engagement, or wait until they discovered it and discharged me themselves.

* * *

4:24 p.m.

All the Visnus appear within the body of original Krishna when He appears. I would love to accept such statements the way the cobbler did, the one who spoke with Narada. He had faith that everything was possible for God, and he saw, even in the simple example of the oak tree appearing from an acorn, how God can do the inconceivable. Why not? Why *can't* all the Visnus be within Krishna? It's not a matter of Krishna following material physical laws. *Get that prejudice out of your head.* Krishna has been kind to me in this life because I know almost nothing about actual physics. I wouldn't know a quark from a black hole. I only know that the Visnus come when Krishna appears because that's what Prabhupada says in his introduction to *Krishna* book.

When Krishna kills demons in Vrndavana, it is not original Krishna who does that work "original Krishna doesn't work "but Vasudeva Krishna, an expansion of the original Krishna. Vasudeva Krishna also speaks on the battlefield of Kuruksetra and performs other activities outside of Vrndavana. "Krishna actually appears in order to demonstrate His Vrndavana pastimes and in this way attract the fortunate conditions souls and invite them back home, back to Godhead." (*Krishna*, Introduction, p. 3)

Peter Pan flew in the sky with Wendy and the kids (in their pajamas), but that's make-believe. Are U.S. and Russian spacecraft real? I don't actually know. What about the *Bhagavad-gita* description that "there is another, eternal nature, the spiritual sky, which is transcendental to this manifested and non-manifested nature"? Do we listen to Krishna or to such pundits as Carl Sagan and Stephen Hawking.? *They* think there is nothing out there but star dust. O faith, please come to me.

I got a big stain on my beadbag. It's because this room is so small that I don't know where to put stuff. I put my beadbag on the writing desk next to the pens. A Pilot V7 pen was open and a blue circle of ink soaked into the cloth. I discovered it only when I noticed the blue stain on my *dhoti*, which had soaked in from my beadbag. My beads were also stained blue. I took time to wash off my beads with soap and water, but the other stains are permanent.

* * *

An Early Evening Prayer

(A romantic mood . . . for a person about to travel, he knows not what will happen. He has to put his trust in airlines, but it really means he trusts God within. If one could only love.)

& Inner way with guru
is scary sometimes
but I'm never the controller,
only a weeper a whimper
can't even reach up to
hold his hand.

* * *

But no blues "I won't allow it "this
universe is meant to be happy.

* * *

As they look at me, either smiling or
frowning, I tell them
that every Sanskrit word bears
meaning is
truth
and we must believe "
and here's why (briefly) "
what Swamiji
says.

* * *

They want to know how that tallies
with what they feel. Is that not
Required? O dark night
when dreams come and
I am helpless, and bright day,
those doubts "I'm more aware
that I have to fight
those bastards.

* * *

This is the way for a heart
to beat one more of countless
times.

* * *

I pray for attention and surrender to
Krishna's sweet will, sweet names
the Radha-Krishna festival
on a faraway star
that comes so close when
I fold my hands and
pray to
nama heaven. "

* * *

Pukka Pad Shorty, Episode3, An Inner Interview

"Do you want to go over last night's dream again?"

Not really. The main point was the strong aftermath, the feeling that I really could change my life, that I really could concentrate my breath and chant with the awareness, that it really is the only thing that can save me. Could I do it for a whole lifetime? After all, I'm an aspiring devotee, a servant of Krishna. I remembered the chanting only when I ran for my life. And now?

When I awoke, I went about my business, not sure if I had been changed deeply. The single-minded resolution seemed unrealistic. There was no need to renounce everything else, I told myself.

That's the let-down "such a stark revelation, an answer to my prayers and strivings, and actually, I rejected its import.

But I did gain *something*. Today I feel more aware that I am struggling with every sentence when I read. I'm not glossing over doubts and pretending I'm attracted. I'm facing it, and learning to be real.

It all seems so slow. The dream promised heightened awareness of a devotee's bare reality. How much longer do I have to live? In the meantime, big plans for a man who doesn't know when he will die. Wee Willy Wilkins will write on until he dies. He'll tell them to give his boots to someone who can use them.

Art produced, future reduced, his birthday on the way.

December 5, 1 a.m.

In a dream I was living next to the Philadelphia temple, but it was a combination of being in the Navy and being a temple devotee. On my way to the temple one morning, I purchased an inexpensive, manual, portable typewriter. Then I worried how I would defend the purchase when I entered the ship-temple. The dream was permeated by legalities and bureaucracy.

* * *

1:10 a.m.

Starting reading Bg. 18.53. I'll take that book with me on the plane. Krishna is describing the good qualities of a transcendentalist, including that he lives in a secluded place. He doesn't become angry when his senses aren't satisfied. Then 18.54 describes how he's above the material modes and eligible for devotional service. As I read, I remembered Sivarama Swami's explanation of this verse "that it does not apply to "us." We are still under the modes. In one sense, we are not performing pure devotional service. He made a good argument. Srila Prabhupada sometimes was generous in how he allowed us to think we were performing pure devotional service, although he also said that *bhakti* comes after liberation.

My mind then drifted off to a book by an English priest a devotee gave me unsolicited. It's called *Honest To God*, and supposedly contains painful admissions by an insider as to how Christianity has failed. Should I carry it with me? Another burden? Look at it when I return? Why not just stay with what Krishna says? He's the *param-tattva*. Be true to Him and you'll be honest to God. I want to find a *Bhagavad-gita* verse to comfort me, just as Gandhi said the verses comforted him: "Those who meditate on

the *Gita* will derive fresh joy and new meanings from it everyday." It is not an ordinary book by an ordinary *jiva*, but it is divine revelation, and divinely spoken.

I write for myself. As one draws comfort from the *Gita* in times of doubt, disappointment, and sorrow, I draw solace from my personal expressions. My ability to express how I feel is a gift Krishna has given me. I want to use it to reciprocate with Him. I can't write scripture; I am too imperfect. I can't see past, present, and future unless I see *through* the scripture, and I can't even always do that. If I had complete faith and realization of scripture, my vision could be one with the scripture, one with God.

Honest to God, honest to self. When we practice self-examination, we dig a little and try to remain true to what the body and mind say. Eventually, self-examination has to be given up in order to give ourselves fully to Krishna for the answers. I don't like to turn entirely away from doubts, or to pretend I don't have any. Neither do I want to reject the Vedic direction in the name of self-examination and the discovery of doubts. I make the deliberate choice to admit where I'm at in my gut and with my wavering mind, and to refer myself for direction to the absolute source.

Turning to *japa*, I have to whisper. Better to get sixteen done now rather than trying to chant in the crowded *sanga* of the Aer Lingus economy section. When I'm there, I will try to chant within. "May Krishna protect you from calamities. You are very pure [spirit soul]."

* * *

Swing Low (take two)

(Don't want our chariot to swing *too* low over the Atlantic, but when it's time to go, it's time to go "as Krishna likes. May I hold onto His names on the sweet chariot ride.)

* * *

& Swinging sweet Lord

I pray "a fool I be "

that You come and a-carry me home.

You've sent Your trumpet calls, You've sent

Your messengers, sometimes

Your kick to

wake us up "like Indra, when he

became a pig.

* * *

December cold but I look yonder and see

with eyes not anointed with love

Your kindness still visible

in all You've given

especially the guidance of my

spiritual master.

* * *

O sweet Lord, You have already done it
as You told Arjuna
before he fought.

* * *

Your name is the carrier
of souls like me "may I one day
become a ripe harvest
of words and thoughts
and prayerful days spent watching
the sun rise over another dirty town
while chest and head and blood
flow on, confusion and congestion
temper the yearning spirit
my Lord. "

* * *

5:54 a.m.

Clock hands move slowly, but around and around they go. The plane will leave on time, they say. Cramped room "too warm. All bags packed except for last items I'm using. Listened to Srila Prabhupada while I ate breakfast. Offered the porridge, apple, and hot milk to his picture on the cover of *Science of Self-realization*.

* * *

Pukka Pad Shorty, Episode 4, An Imaginary Tour

Oh, I imagined we went from New York to the Caribbean and back and it was all lovely and I didn't get much older (in fact or in imagination). rather, I became physically stronger and had a permanent breakthrough to attraction "even addiction "to chanting the holy names.

But it's not true, is it?

No, it's

not so

easy.

Then what's the point of activating your imagination like that? Why get all worked up for an illusion?

Hmm. I *did* write an essay, "Follow Your Dream," where I advised devotees to pursue their personal vision to do something wonderful for Krishna. Some dreams, however, are fulfilled over time and not immediately. The real point is that we shouldn't give up on them.

My short-term goal right now is to get through this tour with as little wear and tear as possible, few delays, no problems, no disasters "not even any worries. Hey, that means I have to go Vaikuntha. See? It's all connected.

The truth is, this isn't Vaikuntha, and here I have to endure minute-by-minute weakening and pain that even Esgic cannot allay.

Did you know that Bhaktin Sile wants to go back to acting on stage, and Syamananda wants to dance? Madhu is already swinging with his melodeon and bouzouki, singing Irish traditional music, and Radhanatha is building a glass-blowing studio. Manu and others are discovering their voices in writing. Hare Krishna dasi is in *samadhi* in her backyard garden. Her husband is in his heaven when he's preaching.

So follow *your* dream. Even if there are no free tickets or flying carpets to carry you over the world's many bumps ("the shocks that flesh is heir to").

Imagine . . . we

all make it to pure devotional service.

We learn to encourage each other.

At least we die trying.

It's not a matter of imagining, but Sastric truth: we really are eternal spirit souls. realization is possible when Krishna desires. Until then, keep pushing on in faith.

So spoke Hari-kirtana dasanudasa just before leaving for the Dublin airport for the first leg of his journey.

* * *

9:45 a.m.

We had to drive through rush-hour traffic to get to the airport on time. Bhaktin Sile was in such a hurry that she didn't give way to an ambulance. Now we are here, filling out U.S. customs forms. Country of residence? Ireland "a house where Hare Krishna devotees live in Dublin.

Irish Diaspora "a photo display at the airport: forty-two million Americans claim Irish descent; since 1841, half of the people born in Ireland have emigrated; this is unique for any European country. They have been driven out by famines. Most who have emigrated have been Catholic; all have been poor. My mother's family was among them.

Now I'm an "Indian"? No, not Indian, but a follower of the *Vedas*. I'm a "cultist" cut off from all nations while maintaining citizenship in all of them. We devotees are both exiles and givers, and even though we live far from the world's troubled heart, we live close to the troubled heart of ISKCON.

I'm writing this in the empty U.S. Immigration pre-inspection hall. No workers here yet "not even any travellers. Just me and Madhu and the Christmas tree. A nearby sign reads, "refresh the Christmas spirit "drink Coca-Cola."

Diaspora. My hands are cold. I can't always stay in the room at Manu's house. O body, just relax.

* * *

M. has just gone off for another green card interview. Maybe he'll actually get the prized card. It doesn't seem to mean much. He could travel to America without it. It

doesn't give him a "back to Godhead" passport. What if I could get the equivalent in Ireland, permanent residence? Yes, I'd be glad for it. I'd settle into that house in Wicklow. But it too would not guarantee my going back to the spiritual world. Would my karma drive me somewhere else eventually? O Krishna.

* * *

11:50 a.m.

Onboard Aer Lingus flight 105. Madhu was told they'd mail the green card to him in Baltimore. Noticing his return ticket to Ireland, the man told him he must live in the U.S.A. "that's what the green card is for. He said they might want to see him, and if he's not living in the U.S.A., they'll revoke the green card.

I told M. it would be whimsical of me to consider living in America just because he has a green card. The situation in Ireland is too good. But I admit I have started putting out feelers to see if I would even want to stay in America. It's not imperative that I return to Ireland immediately after completing this tour.

But Radha-Govinda. And Srila Prabhupada. They are waiting in *samadhi* for me to return. It wouldn't seem right for me to stay indefinitely in the U.S.A. while they sit in a room in North Ireland.

* * *

2:09 p.m. Irish time

Distracted.

"Would you like chicken or beef?"

"Nothing, thank you."

Can't read *Bhagavad-gita* through the mealtime. Can't sit back comfortably either. So much noise on this flight, and closeness of bodies and movie screens, sound leaking from Madhu's earphones "Irish music. I put in an earplug, and it doesn't feel good. Vise pressure in head, but it hasn't moved behind the right eye yet. Sorry about all this.

Beef or chicken? Again? I already said no, thanks. Chicken "think of it. They cut its head off so someone could eat it. And beef, a cow.

* * *

I just read the introduction to *Wisdom of Teresa of Avila*. I would like to have such a vocation "I mean, to feel God in me giving me the strength to trust Him fully. Teresa had miraculous favors from God. The fruit of her prayer was her ability to found Carmelite convents and write books. Could my books be a fruit of devotional service? Could they be useful to Krishna? I hope so. I don't want to write only for myself.

Images on the "sky screen" "movie, men, and beautiful girls, pop music stars . . . O Krishna. Teresa of Avila, and Satsvarupa dasa from the Lower East Side.

* * *

We passed through U.S. Immigration in Ireland, so we won't have to go through it again on this side. Both M. and I will get our luggage and go straight to customs. Sounds easy enough. On the other side we should meet Rasaraja dasa.

Teresa gave up the world. She says a religious person should maintain his or her humanness and not be uptight. She said he or she should see God in all things and in all people and should carry out His mission.

* * *

The "sky screen" flaunts the world's glamour. They do a spot about a young movie director making a film. Beautiful women play the parts in movies "and this one too, a movie about a movie ("All we see or seem/ is but a dream within a dream"). They make it very difficult to avoid seeing the movie while flying.

Bhagavad-gita "read and meditate on Krishna's promise that we can pass over all difficulties and, despite everything, go to Him.

Changed my watch to New York time: 9:55 a.m.

* * *

11:50 a.m. New York time

Tight pressure on top of head. I took an Esgic and hope it will prevent the pain from going further. They showed a silly Walt Disney movie, "George of the Jungle." The usual good guys and bad guys "corny stuff along the lines of Tarzan, suitable for children and retarded adults. Family fare.

Soon we will be over Canada. Three and a half more hours to New York. Maine is mainly a state of mind. Oh, to return to my quiet house in Wicklow or to Manu's room. Beloved solitude "it's real and I like it. I'm grateful for it. I could live there for the rest of my life, but what does Krishna want?

I feel I can't lecture well now. I mean, I'll do my bit, but I'm going deeper within myself, and too much is churning. Lecturing seems boring to me right now, and therefore my lectures are probably not so interesting to my audiences either. I can only repeat the same examples. I can't put my whole heart into it because my heart is taken up with other things.

But life is for sacrifice. O Krishna, what do You want of me?

During this plane trip I have been doing nothing but sitting in space. I keep the *Bhagavad-gita* on the food tray and hold my beads, but I'm not really chanting on them. I tried closing my eyes to say mantras, or even just to feel them, and that was nice.

The beautiful girl will probably leave the beautiful Tarzan in the jungle, right? She can't live there and he can't leave. A perverted reflection of Radha and Krishna in Vrndavana. *Very* perverted.

Krishna, thank You for everything.

* * *

1:00 p.m.

My head is not as bad, but I still feel the wise. I'm chanting, but it's difficult to concentrate because of the environment. After "George of the Jungle," they showed a film called "Show Me New York, " with footage of restaurants and the sites and none of the actual misery of New York City. Then a film by Aer Lingus showing what will happen as we go through JFK. Then some kind of New York City love story. Kept on chanting. I held in my mind the ingredients of the *Bhagavad-gita* verse, *bhaktya mam abhijanati*: Only by devotional service can Krishna be known as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and when you are in full consciousness of Him you can enter into the kingdom of God.

* * *

1:26 p.m.

Stupid movies "they're endless. Now one called "Taxi." I wish I could stop glancing up at them, even for a few moments, but the screen is positioned in such a way that they're unavoidable. This one has more of the savagery of life, the anger and violence and lust. It goes around and around "this must be America. I'm sure I'll see these images flashing in my mind tonight when I try to sleep. Polluted mind.

"We have started our initial descent to JFK . . . Cape Cod is on your left." Weather. Twenty-five minutes early. Thirty minutes to arrival. Hare Krishna. Guy in white turtleneck sweater and dark blazer drinking a stein of beer in a restaurant "in "Taxi" "posing, living, pretending to be real. Get me out of here.

December 6, 2 a.m.

Rasaraja's baby boy, *rasa-parayana*, is cute. Oh me, oh my. To be in Jackson Heights at last and sorting out the mail. I'm too tired to answer it right now. Jet lag.

* * *

Something Sweet, Something Tender
& A man in my mind said
something sweet and
tender
should be offered
to God.

* * *

"Oh, why do you always talk of
Bhagavan?"
I said I'm a
Prabhupada man, didn't I?

* * *

He said, "You are, true enough,
but I'm sad to see you in New York
City. You'll regret it "that East
Side river, the old roads, the Greenpoint blacks.

* * *

A young woman conducted traffic
in a yellow raincoat "told the
kids when they could cross safely and
waved down cars "did they stop because of her
frail gesture?
Another person I don't envy.

* * *

Tender doesn't mean
soupy or
soapy like on
Dr. Bronner's soap bottles.
That's just the body meaning.
Lord, a tender soul came down with
hepatitis, then gangrene, then cancer, and
he actually died "he was only
fifty-three years old. Did you know
him? He's gone now. He
went to Vrndavana and left from there.

* * *

I said, "Take me to Krishna-Balaram
Mandir at my end." Something
sweet and tender even in death there.

* * *

This eight-week-old baby
sleeping peacefully in bed, he
sighed and heaved a little, took
one breath after another while
Madhu played his melodeon.
May this child not have a sister who
beats him up or a father
who abuses him. Life is too
tough on us here in this world.
Today is my birthday and

I'm feeling tender. "

* * *

Daytime in Jackson Heights

1

& Here we are in New York
and at least
there's no subway in this
Room, or under it.

* * *

But Mickey Mouse and Donald
were taking photos in
the "sky screen" theater
yesterday.
I won't be going
to all those restaurants
they showed.

* * *

Shaven-headed girl writes
that she's happy in the temple, she
wants me to initiate her but I should know
that on some days
the cookies burn.

* * *

Madhu's going busking at the 42nd Street subway!
With his melodeon! He's
got guts ""You mad bastard!" someone yells.
"Hare Krishna!"

* * *

And I'm not able to open the window
my pinafore stuck with safety pins and
I see the baby smile
through no TV
no football no eggs.

* * *

II

"How can we be blissful but
not lovey-dovey?" Another
letter.
Having come to this
miserable and temporary
office
don't get
Robbed.

* * *

There's no way Krishna can
be attained but by a
direct attack
direct action
a military assault
of love
in *vaidhi* steps.

* * *

The New York night has a thousand
eyes, I hear.
"It's Nancy," said
the ugliest girl of three sisters.
My mom was
pretty, but now
she's dead.
Not me.
No skeleton can dance.

* * *

III

Alone monk alone
joy
stick with Krishna
it's just funny
old music with a sad wind-up
toy
best
quality.

* * *

The night sees a gold
cat die against golder
leaves in
Jack's Heights "a fenced-in
yard and no flower pot on
the sill.

* * *

Epiphany moment: a black guy
wearing a beret hiring a Skycap to
carry his electric guitar "his dyed blond
girl with dark glasses "
I saw that
yesterday. "

* * *

12:04 noon

I decided not to carry my fountain pens to the Caribbean. It'll save space. I'll miss the friendly scratching.

Grip your teeth. Your faded old face. Your hairy chest has long white hairs mixed in with the darker ones. You make deadly punches toward your mirror image. Try on the turtleneck jersey "see if it fits. I'm ready for winter at Gita-Nagari, after the tropical Caribbean.

Heavens, the aspect I want is to be loving, caring, empowered, healing "purge the line of all those worn-out words. Inspect, art, showcase, downline, crabapple, Henry, fool, peppermint, word play.

Bhagavad-gita for children, *Our Most Dear Friend* "yeah, that's the essence of it even more (for me) than, "Surrender to Me." Krishna is our friend; He spoke to Arjuna because Arjuna was *His* dearest friend.

The one who is perfect in all disciplines, including detachment, is very, very dear to the Lord. The book distributor and other types of proactive preachers are very, very dear "the most dear "servants. What about those who are fallen, the enjoyers, those who wink at oppression, and the oppressed? What about the sufferers, the social workers, the body's caretakers, and the backyard cats? All are dear to Him, although they don't know it. Our job is to awaken ourselves and such other souls to the awareness that Krishna is our best friend.

Oh me, oh my.

I had better read more scripture. Although today I need to finish the mail. O Krishna, the shoes fit, and the new long underwear too, both top and bottoms. The label shows a guy, like Robert Kennedy, out hiking "and an attractive woman with a knapsack walking with him. Stylish clothes, chic-y "even the underwear.

"ISKCON ripped me off."

"Can I help you in any way? Please tell me how."

"You can give me *maha-prasadam*."

"Anything else?"

"No, just keep doing what you are doing."

"I was glad to see you cut loose."

"Krishna consciousness has made me miserable" (from someone with a one-sided view of things).

"I'm working on the Vedic planetarium."

"Shoot him down."

"Lady Diana and Mother Teresa met briefly with ISKCON devotees. Therefore we should pray for them."

"Who is this? Is it Philip Sydney or Sir Walter (kill-the-Irish) Raleigh?"

"Who is this Stefan? We will meet, I will be hired, and I am a beggar."

"If in my house I put the bed in the wrong way or the door hinged in the wrong direction, I will have legal problems and lose supporters."

Friends, calm down. Let us pray. Then let us be ourselves constructively "like that school-crossing lady. Let's really be devotees and can the trash.

* * *

4:55 p.m.

A good day for recovery, meeting, receiving gifts, but not for reading or writing. More reason to go back to the "old sod." I'm at a stage where I can write-harvest from my lifetime of Krishna conscious practices, and I want to go for it.

They throw out the master's papers "heave-ho the archives. It all ends anyway. We chatted together, sitting on the floor, me and my old buddy, Baladeva.

December 7, 1:05 a.m.

I tend to develop the mentality that I can't read *sastra* unless I'm in a special state of mind. rather, I should know that even when distracted I need to hear from Krishna. Distraction means I am "out of station." When I'm traveling I have more of a tendency to medicate my headache pain at an early stage because people expect something of me. right now I'm in someone's house. Soon I'll have to catch another plane and meet a new set of expectations. Anyway, I'm up, so let me chant.

"Though engaged in all kinds of activities, My pure devotee, under My protection, reaches the eternal and supreme abode by My grace." (Bg. 18.56)

If the devotee is *mad vyapasraya*, under the Supreme Lord's protection, he is free of material contamination. This means he's engaged twenty-four hours a day in activities under the direction of the Supreme Lord or His representative. To that devotee the Lord is "very, very kind." In spite of all difficulty, "he is eventually placed in the transcendental abode, or Krishnaloka."

That's it: twenty-four hours a day, no rest. Don't be a part-time devotee. Devotional service requires that we give our entire selves while begging Krishna to accept us. Giving our whole selves includes our warts, not just our official presentation of who we wish we were. On the other hand, we don't want to give Krishna less than the best. We can trust He will accept us if we make a sincere move in His direction. We can accept

our smallness among the other devotees. We don't have to compete with anyone. We are simply one small servant of the servant of the servant.

A devotee doesn't act as master but as servant. He has no individual independence. Such phrases always sound terrible to me, but I balance them with other statements, such as how individual initiative is never lost. What it means in the deeper sense is that a devotee acts always according to Krishna's will because he has become one in interest with the Lord (*tad-atmika*). We can't do something whimsically and offer the results to the Supreme Lord. In ISKCON, using this purport, we would sometimes enforce narrow definitions of "whimsical" and "independent". Our judgment as temple president or ISKCON authority was itself sometimes whimsical or independent of Srila Prabhupada's deepest compassionate teachings. Spiritual life is a razor's edge. We have to think things over carefully to understand them properly.

* * *

Early-Morning room
& There's no way to step into it
stars twinkling
there's no way I can conceive.
I'm looking for Krishna
in many places "crips
and licks and
all
an exciting
prospect.

* * *

But your dear-friend-most
is Krishna pointing to His heart
wearing garland and *dhoti*
His form cannot be contained
and I can only recite
the truth.

* * *

They bought me boots and I will soon
go to Trinidad on Guyanese
Election Day "I hope there'll be
no trouble.
But I can't expect smooth sailing.
Just see what Prema went through
to deliver her child. She
Relaxed when she heard
her prayer had reached me.

* * *

Life or death it doesn't matter
as long as my guru knows me
and I find a wild way out
now that I have agreed
to sit on the floor
and tell where
it hurts.

* * *

In NYC style, someone asked
me to tell him how
our religion fixed my hurts
and I used to drink
only orange juice from *bodegas*
taking pills for energy "no love
no food no
trusted friend
not even any
sex
no
fun.
And now.

* * *

Now it's getting late
indeed but I
am merry, prepared to
go home
and on the way
to beg God to please protect us even
at the hour of death
and beyond "our
Remembrance of
Him. "

* * *

5:24 a.m.

Krishna says despite difficulties the devotee will come to Him. But how soon? One answer: How bad do you want to go back to Him? And: How hard will you work for it? *Are you convinced?* That was Srila Prabhupada's challenge to us at a 1972 GBC meeting. Are you convinced that Lord Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead?

Lord Brahma saw Krishna standing like a small village boy holding fruit and yogurt in His left hand and carrying His flute in His belt "yet Lord Brahma had just witnessed Lord Krishna's mystic potency as all gods and entities emanated from His original form.

You are not *ready* to go back to Godhead? You have something left to do here? Don't you know the whole world is void without Govinda?

Govinda is everywhere. "He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, to Him I'm never lost and he is never lost to Me."

Krishna, Krishna, Krishna.

* * *

9:51 a.m.

Pause before going forward once in a while. It's Sunday morning. He told me he was suffering and asked why. We discussed going with the flow of it and what that meant "no longer resisting or wishing for something else, no longer trying to control our lives. It *is* happening, so pray to Krishna for protection. We suffer and can learn a lot. While telling this, I hope I haven't trivialized it.

* * *

Glanced at Coltrane's biography today. He was quiet, yet friendly, searching to make his best creative music. The biographer writes from the viewpoint of a black person in a white society.

* * *

10:55 a.m.

Too cold (thirty degrees) to open the window for fresh air. Too crowded in the city to take a walk. Besides, we wear *dhotis* and we'll get cold. I'll stay indoors. It will be different in Trinidad.

We can't only play it safe in spiritual life. That is not setting a good enough example. We have to be prepared to be actual people, to take that risk. Not to live a concept of ourselves, whether it's a self-created concept or a concept imposed upon us. Live as a person, with some restraint and some release, living with risk, but exercising caution. That's how we mold our lives into servants of Krishna, not by cardboard service.

* * *

Don't Put Down This Music
(Hurry get it in)
& Simple he was
a lyrical and consummate player
a lyric a
flower
a distracted man in a shirt
listening when words

collide.

* * *

Alpine tree ain't direct in
bird pad
oh, it's pumpkin
Inis Free
despair.

* * *

A man from comfrey to
interrupt the genius
and Coleridge
an integer, a non-scientist
me
a *burfi*-maker
a thin lad from
Shopshire
I can't spell with
ink on my fingers
but I know Krishna consciousness is a joyfest
on the river Swanee
transcendental to any other
and I can't reach out
and carry us above.

* * *

Don't put down white men
black
yellow
this dissonance
is body
skin disease.

* * *

My words are yours.
on the sonorous ridge.
Be real. "

* * *

2:50 p.m.

Packing. Daylight through venetian blinds. Hum of traffic. People live this way, obliged to one another, all the time. Heard on tape Bhurijana Prabhu speaking from the *Sandarbha* about the *Bhagavatam's* "emperor" verse, *ete camsa . . .* Then I put on my sweatshirt.

A typewriter will meet us in Trinidad, and I've decided to take my fountain pen after all. As if I have something important to say.

Actually, I do have something important to say: God is the source of all. And I am obligated to say it, not only to reciprocate with Krishna, but to give something to those who have washed my clothes, prepared my lunch, paid for the house where I'm taking shelter, and who will drive me to the airport tomorrow. I owe something in return. Give Krishna.

* * *

4:58 p.m.

People approach the Absolute Truth in many ways, usually through one form of speculation or another, until they find the spiritual master. Even then, their research into the nature of the Absolute Truth may be different from another's research. In the end, we are all dependent on God to reveal Himself. And even then, not everyone will understand the form such individual revelation takes. Whenever I read of other paths, I am left with the impression that the Vedic path is the most solid and scientific. In Coltrane's biography I saw a section about Sun ra, another jazz musician, and his relationship with the Universe. What can he actually know without a bona fide guru? Yet he has written music for his God. Still, it's not quite *bhakti*. If we are going to give up the path of materialism and seek out God, best to find a guru who will teach the essentials of *bhakti* to Govinda. Best to learn to chant the holy name and to learn how to offer our service through whatever we do in life.

It's a shame that our institution (and its offshoots) becomes so distracted by lesser issues. It's also a shame the larger society rejects Krishna consciousness. But such obstacles need not stop a sincere person from contacting Krishna and engaging in devotional service.

"There is no need of strenuous effort to free oneself from sinful reactions. One should unhesitatingly accept Krishna as the supreme savior of all living entities. With faith and love, one should surrender unto Him." (Bg. 18.66, purport)

December 8, 12:12 a.m.

In a dream I was walking with a long staff made of iron encased in wood. It was my weapon. I was always afraid "there were many tough young guys out. One person stopped me and asked to look at the rod. I didn't want to surrender it, so he had to look at it without me loosening my grip upon it. I told him I had just walked from Florida. He decided to let me go. A little further along a policeman grabbed me by the skin above

and between my eyes and forced me to follow him, no questions asked. Eventually, he opened the door to his truck and wanted to throw me in. I was helpless. I wanted to demand, "What are the charges? Why are you doing this to me?" but the dream ended.

When I awoke, I thought of how the modes of nature can pull us along. We do something and reach a certain point in our lives, then the "cop" comes in. At that time we can't speak nicely to him because we have already fallen into karmic reaction. The cop will just pull us cruelly and we have no choice but to follow.

* * *

12:25 a.m.

After that dream I felt like drifting into a more simple life with more attention given to *sastra* and prayer during the day.

* * *

Ramblin'
& Yes, I know you
Remember you
you who
have no malice
and for whom
I feel no malice
let's have peace.
We may have warred
we may have wronged
me and you
but I know Krishna for
example.
I know Krishna and you
Remind me
rambling is
permissible it
can be
helpful
especially in dreams.
You got beat up
once by mean dudes and
you went to cops who
said, "Get out of town by tonight
or we'll kill you."
I wandered, he caused
trouble for others
but forgive us, God, we will
tell the truth and
beauty of it despite

our woes.

* * *

I go to primitive lands at risk of pain
to deliver Krishna consciousness
although I sometimes doubt
the reality of it all "the travel
my place
what I know and
what I feel
the way
but for old-times sake and because of gray-
haired, paunches and eyes lined
my dear disciples and dear
me with upper and
lower bridges still
chomping
I go.

* * *

The language of Krishna consciousness is
so nice, isn't it?
To be in synch, to rise, to be there
to advocate the Swami in
'66
in
'96
and say he taught us how
to smile "only Krishna/ no
Mayavadis
and fight your
Rasslin' mind. "

* * *

6:45 a.m.

So far so good. Heavy traffic jam at JFK and a long line at the BIWA counter, but they moved us along. Madhu, Bhakta Kevin, and I flying together. Rasaraja brought breakfast "muffins with butter and jam, a banana, milk sweets, and hot tea. There was no place to sit, so we sat on the floor. Small, gentle talk. Madhu's hand luggage was ten pounds overweight, but when he showed them he was carrying "a melodeon, a delicate instrument," the woman let him take it.

Hare Krishna. Sixteen done, but more to go today. On the plane I plan to look at *The Beginning*, a book about Srila Prabhupada in New York City 1966. I hope to lecture on it when I get there.

* * *

Milling, pushing, blocking "the passengers don't cooperate with the boarding agent. He says sarcastically, "It looks like we'll be here all day." Almost everyone flying is black or of India descent. No change in behavior after the sarcastic comment and the agent repeats it. Another agent joins him and makes a similar announcement. "All right, you guys, get back against the wall or this plane isn't going to leave." Bit by bit it happens. First-class and children, then those with seats rows 30 and higher, then 20 and higher. Our seat is row 6, so we stand back and cool it. If I look at what's happening I get agitated, but not too much. The people are relaxed, casually dressed for winter in NYC, but en route to Trinidad.

* * *

10:40 a.m. Trinidad time

I feel somewhat empty of identity or purpose, like a piece of luggage, when I travel. Don't know what I'll speak exactly when I get there. I know that I will do better once I arrive.

Carib beat. O disciples, Krishna consciousness is very important, and we have a relationship. I don't feel I'm special, yet I feel pressure, as if the purpose of my visit is to establish my specialness, or that it is based on that specialness: people think that just by seeing and hearing from me, they are supposed to benefit. But I'm not special; the Sastric message is special. rather than pressure, let's share the inspiration to share that message and to grow with it.

Odor of baked chicken coming down the aisle. I'll avoid looking at it. For every chicken killed and eaten "who listens to the music of these chicken-eaters?"

Yes, that's the point "my purpose. I count on the devotees in Trinidad to like me, to be polite, to be willing to hear from me. Otherwise, why would I go to all this trouble? I'll also expect that when I'm seated on the *vyasasana*, I will be able to deliver something. I'm not special, but I hope to carry a fresh voice of inspiration to them. Let us share the Vedic truth. *Srnavatam sva kathah Krishna*. As we attempt to speak and hear *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, it will happen. Don't worry about anything else.

I think I went to the Caribbean for the first time in 1980. Is there room in my passport for their stamp? If not, I'll have to get a new passport when I get back to Ireland. Oh, that quiet routine. Well, this is good too.

Board flight: three hours and fifty minutes to Barbados. There we will land, then take off again. I'll get through it, Krishna willing. I might have to speak even today at the temple. I will be grateful for the reception. I hope they are all following their vows. Sri Krishna says if they worship and serve Him, they will go to the spiritual world.

* * *

3:05 p.m.

Twenty minutes until landing. I have taken two Esgics for the right-eye pain. Told M. about an improviser's dedication and search for innovation, but otherwise we spoke little. The feature film preached nonviolence toward whales. Gave me hope. I'll mention it in my arrival talk. Similar mood expressed in the inflight magazine: "You Don't Have to Kill Them" "an article about the new sport of fishing for giant marlins, then letting them go. Talk of Srila Prabhupada.

I have decided that in the mornings I will speak on groups of *Bhagavad-gita* verses and how they apply to our lives. We can appreciate the drama of the exchange between Krishna and Arjuna, but we should also take Krishna's words seriously. Krishna is speaking to *us* as much as He is speaking to Arjuna. Thus scripture should be read alone, or at least with one's heart attentive. Kevin is carrying my typewriter. I plan to use it.

December 9, 3:35 a.m.

At ViSvarupa's house. The arrival went all right. Devananda was waiting for me with a new white car. He said it belonged to a Trinidadian *pandita*, who lent it because the devotees had told him the car would be blessed by my riding in it.

I spoke on the "Save the Whale" film and how the airlines could show that but serve chicken for lunch. Still, the devotees should remain hopeful as they try to preach Krishna consciousness. Spoke later with a devotee, who poured out his feelings, mostly positive, about how things are going in Trinidad. He said he wrote me three letters, but received no replies. He hasn't been practicing *sadhana*, but says he no longer feels guilty about it. I didn't know what I could say to that. But I felt relaxed in the tropical climate, even though it took me two Esgics to get through the pain. I wanted to be up for an arrival talk, not to be carted off to bed the moment I arrived.

After my talk I gave everyone a prune stuffed with peanut butter. Arriving at ViSvarupa's house, they served me a fruit plate "papayas, bananas, and an apple. During the night I didn't use earplugs, and heard either a bird or a frog going off over and over like the first note of a burglar alarm. When I awoke at 12:30, I was afraid to put on the light because it would attract mosquitoes. The windows have open slats and no screens. I walked back and forth in the big room in the dark and chanted thirteen inattentive rounds.

The plan is to go to the temple for *mangala-arati*, sing, come back here for awhile, then return to the temple at 7 a.m. for Deity greeting. During class I'll speak on the first three verses of the *Bhagavad-gita's* second chapter. I want to demonstrate that Krishna is demanding and is not pleased when we don't act according to the standard expected of a *ksatriya* (or whatever *we* are).

I don't know . . . I thought about a talk I could give on Vyasa-puja day. I could tell them about things that are important to me "honesty and art. But then I would probably have to explain what I mean by "art". Do I mean these diary reports? Doesn't literary art mean writing a novel? No.

Sri Krishna Caitanya prabhu. I have the typewriter Kevin carried down here. I'll use it in Trinidad, but send it back with him when we go to Guyana. Kevin also brought colored markers; and I hope to find the time to use them.

On the plane I looked through the *Caribbean Beat* magazine. It featured an artist whose work was similar in some ways to mine "primitive forms, and especially the use of key emotional words or sentences with the illustration. I liked it. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. Never any loss if it's done for Krishna.

A little boy dove over the side of the whaler and went under to play with the whale. Incredible story. He didn't like his daddy killing whales, and he tried to prevent it. In the end, his father was converted to nonviolence when the whale saved his life. Prahlada and his father.

All right, fellow. Be a good guru persona, give out fruit and relax and speak about the *sastra*. Come and go. These devotees have been here almost twenty years, some of them, so it's no joke. I have been coming and going all that time. Sri Krishna Caitanya. Tell the men to get up early and chant their rounds. Tell them not to quarrel so much. That sort of thing. Same old. It's true there's no joy in Mudville, but we are not supposed to leave our hearts in Mudville. We have to find a way to allow Krishna to uplift us. I mean, we have to respond to His will. If a whale can uplift a bad man, then all-kind Krishna can uplift a struggling devotee. And the spiritual master has the right to speak strongly and call you all impudent fools, non-Aryans, whatever it takes to break through. After all, the guru's our friend.

And Krishna spoke like that to Arjuna. That's the basis of my whole presentation on how to read the scriptures personally. It's meant for each of us alone, just this one person, ourselves. Get down to it. If you see it as merely objective, what use is it?

Sri Krishna Caitanya. There is a Prabhupada lecture tape on the table here labeled "No More Pains." I'll have to listen to *that* one. Long-range and short-range "we're all equipped to surrender, even though we lack so many qualities.

I told the story of Beech's liniment and how the inventor died happy when he heard he had one customer. A preacher should be that enthusiastic to help others, yet not attached to the results, which are in Krishna's hands. Hare Krishna. That's what I said.

Honesty and art, and what else? Good example. Die without shame.

* * *

4:25 a.m., in the temple room

Dark temple "small, black Gopinatha Deity. Flies. Hard floors. Wild dancing in the old days. People pressed to join. Now slower.

* * *

9:02 a.m.

The class lasted at least an hour. Jaya Lalita asked about performing Krishna consciousness out of social pressure. As she spoke I listened to hear if a Trinidadian accent had mixed in with her native British. I answered her as well as I could. Then I thought how much I operate under such social pressure. M. and I agreed that all I will do today is to give one class, but I'm already worried that that's not enough. I need to make my own decisions and stick to them. I can't live worrying what others will think. If I open myself to public opinion, the public would have me performing and parading all day long, eating at someone's house, meeting with troublemakers somewhere else, and

yeah, lay *off* that stuff. Tomorrow is the Big Day, so better I keep cool. I had to take two pills yesterday, so today I had better rest and get ready for the possibility that I will need more medication tomorrow. My birthday.

Someone else wanted to know what happened to the focus we had when we were young devotees. I told him it wasn't so important. What *is* important is that we go forward from the moment we are living. Maybe we were better then, or maybe we were just more naive. We were certainly idealistic, and perhaps now we have realized how much work lies before us before we can attain our ideals. What to do but continue with our quota of rounds, reading Prabhupada's books, and looking in our hearts for more and more sincerity? We all need reform, real reform. No point living in the past, which has been made greener by our minds.

Bright green leaves on trees and grass "more yellow-infused green than in Ireland. In Ireland the green is rich and deep because they get so much rain. Here it's sunlight brilliant "mango trees, blue sky, and so warm you can't even wear a T-shirt. My *kurta* was stained purple by this morning's garland.

Hey, if the guru calls you a fool, does he still allow you to have potential? Someone asked me that. Sure, why not? He's not like those people who paralyze you when they call you a fool. He doesn't curse his disciple.

Then should we avoid those who call us fools and who mean it to be demeaning? Yes, we don't like to be around such people. We want to be criticized constructively, be encouraged. I don't know if I fell into some local controversy by answering the way I did. I told them I have selected special *Bhagavad-gita* verses, ones in which Krishna speaks directly to us. No one had questions on that.

Temple room full of men, women, and children "our Hare Krishna movement in Trinidad. Some of the young devotees have a tanned complexion that I find pleasing. It reminds me of the impulse to select a tan crayon out of the box. But I also looked away from it. I am not meant to enjoy the hue of people's skin.

Delicious fruits for breakfast again, and nice sweets with them. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna "this day is mine to putter around and to get past the all-pervasive rock beat. Get away from it. Be here, and chant Hare Krishna.

* * *

I want to free-write in the free way we entered through Trinidad immigration yesterday: allowed to enter with no questions asked. Not even a hello or a "Welcome to Trinidad." When *I* said hello, she ignored me. Just stamped me in, bored as hell. Made me feel a little left out. Of course, the immigration people here are not really representative of this country's general mood. They just don't like us Hare Krishna gringos. They have no interest in anything but staying out of trouble. Nothing more human than that.

Free-writer hot iron sweet, gave out fruits after a lecture. Eccentric person talked to me while I was trying to pay attention to each person coming up to exchange. He spoke about the "inner life of a preacher." Might have had something valuable to say, but I couldn't understand his accent well enough to focus on his words through the crowd. I

nodded as if I understood, and that seemed good enough for him. An ex-cop looked at me and I felt apologetic that I won't be visiting his temple. Will they ever understand?

* * *

10:40 a.m.

Dreamt the other night of yearning to produce a literary creation. In waking life, I simply write this.

Then write deeply, individually.

I kept stumbling onto the word "deeply" in my lecture. I wanted them to know that we each go before Krishna as individuals when we perform our service. Also, it's hard to be absolutely alone with the word of God. I spoke with conviction.

We receive our place in life and can't escape. That's karma. A woman, for example. A heavy designation. Most want to get married and have a child. How can you *not* act according to social pressure, Jaya Lalita?

I said, "Imagine wanting to go to Krishnaloka just so you could say, 'If the devotees in my temple could see that I made it to Krishnaloka, that would show them! They always thought I was a fool.'"

How can we act with courage? It may not always be possible; it may *never* be possible. Therefore we shouldn't be proud.

She wrote, "I don't live at Radha-kunda." She wrote a letter purporting to be in the mood of *radha-dasya* and said, "Why not? Do you object?" I object not to *radha-dasya*, but to her (or anyone) talking with me as if we're both servants of Radha just ready to head out to the *kunja* with our brooms and jewelry or whatever. I don't want to be included so easily in that trip, not at least until it's real.

I say that, so they think I must be in Vaikuntha *bhava*. Geez. Listen to these birds chirp. If I had enough energy I'd take a walk. Plenty of hot sunshine beating on this tin roof to wear a body down. Only a strong body can work in de jute field. Dumb old place.

* * *

Free
& Up and down the scales, merry boys
just to free up the adrenaline.

* * *

Happy or not? Free
he sez and we
say
they're laughing at me.
White-haired,
me in field
no shirt
old flames burning
and him with the key.

* * *

Pastiche pasta "
I saw into your kitchen
your noodles
hard and buttony, but
Prabhupada said,
"Mind your own business."
I saw a scar-faced
doodle-haired woman
Trinidad-talkin' to the captain of the ship
got a good view of Long Island.

* * *

Oh, freedom no
freedom
from God but
limitations
toy trumpets for
toy devotees, and
a pet cat.

* * *

On my birthday give me
honors, towels, a
straw ring,
a couch I can't carry
a wooden recorder
the right to preach to
Rest atop a bed with
a fan and an
extra blanket
and I won't be sad.
Better to be wise to
minimize.

* * *

So I ate a big lunch
of boiled-in-*ghee* gobbers
and dipped-in-wax honey
ferns of local radish
and hoarsened chestnuts
then grinned

and was sorry
wanted to run home in safety
to my Father
O Krishna O Prabhupada
you know me better
than this. "

* * *

2:43 p.m., Notes for lecture on my Vyasa-puja day

Reading the Fourth Canto purport stating that if a nonliberated person follows the liberated, he can become a spiritual master. He will have nothing to say on his own. Nothing except that it's hot here in Trinidad.

I want to be honest. I'll say that for myself. I'm no longer "Gurupada," but I'm still their Guru Maharaja. Thus I receive their honor, this comfy rocker.

I met His Divine Grace and gave him my money. That's what I did. He wrote it into his diary, and that proves my story true. He named me and then called me Satsvasvarupa dasa in his diary. It gives me a right to share him with others.

Things I always say on this day: The guru is the servant. He has been ordered to take disciples just as a post-peon is ordered to carry the mail. The guru must set a good example. He must leave his footprints in the mud or on the marshy path so others can follow. He must bring his subordinates over the head of Death and back to Godhead. To do that, he may have to first deliver himself.

Too exhausted to discuss the rest.

Does he have to take part in the campaign to save the whales? How many Rathayatras does he have to attend before we have to listen to him? How many books distributed, how many read, how many carried from room to room? How many does he have to understand? How many roads must a man walk down before you call him a man?

Are your doubts assuaged? Whew.

* * *

3:28 p.m.

Everything I do right now is meant to help me conserve energy to get through the heat of the day. It will cool down later, when it's time for bed. Kevin went to stay at a devotee's home because he couldn't find quiet in the temple and could not write his Vyasa-puja offering. As for me, I already told you. I'm just a castor-tree guru. No question of quitting now. I plan to prove my points with *sastra*. I plan to speak from the philosophy, but also from the heart. I plan to show some prowess and not speak of myself as a disciple but as a master.

And so he stood up, favoring his bad left ankle, and danced a bugaloo by the light of the moon. They could hardly believe it. They now thought he had shown them the authorized stuff. He strummed his geetar and smiled and proved that he was indeed the genuine article. After that he relaxed his joints and they began to read their homages:

"Dear Guru Maharaja," etc. He tried not to judge them, but listened instead to their Caribbean accents and said, "By the light of the moon indeed."

* * *

4:47 p.m.

Thinking of what to say in public is not so deep, is it? What do I *actually* think of being a spiritual master? To be honest, I'd rather be left alone more. However, I'm grateful that my writing career is supported by disciples. My whole life is supported by them "medically "and room and board, an audience, and so on. I can't conceive of living without them. It's almost a moot point to raise the question, "Would you do better without this?" Or, "How could you do without them?" For better or worse, we have each other, and the real question is how to live with them in a way that we all come out Krishna conscious. All my children. I could never leave them. Better to die honorably.

But it's good for me to take into account how much this role molds my life and thinking. It forces me to become a better disciple of Srila Prabhupada, a better devotee of Krishna, and a more honest person "all of which automatically contribute to the kind of spiritual master I can become for those who have chosen to follow me. They say they want to take shelter of me, but what does that mean? We don't always know "them or me "what it means to give such shelter.

Sometimes I wonder how I can possibly function as spiritual master for *anyone*. I see such hesitancy as similar to when I have some doubt about the scriptures. I may have a temporary doubt that Krishna is God, and I may also doubt that it's best for me to mold my life according to my spiritual master's teachings. Similarly, I may doubt whether I should function as spiritual master to others. These are all articles of faith. As I fight for each one, I fight for them all simultaneously. It's possible to be both a disciple of Prabhupada and not be a guru for others, but it's too late for me to back out now. Still, my disciples should know what I actually am, and if they still want to follow me after that, then fine. But their following shouldn't compromise me.

* * *

The worst heat of the day is over. I just took my third shower. They ran out of water, but it's back on. Spoke with M. about tomorrow's schedule. Lying on the bed is pleasant at this point in the day. I hear the pleasing sound of the Trinidadian countryside and drift to that place that Krishna allows us, the place of energy-replenishing sleep.

I try to find quality time in Krishna consciousness, but also seem to want an easy-going life. I can't take on hard work, or I don't want to. Seek God in quiet ways. Hare Krishna. Bursts of energy we use. When they come, write something down to penetrate the coverings of superficiality. See something genuine. Ask Krishna for acceptance and help. May He reveal Himself to me as He pleases. I pray to Him to inspire me and empower me to perform the difficult, to accept the austerity. I just have to reach out and accept His love. It arrives by carrying out the spiritual master's order. O Krishna, I want to take an honest look. May I become more single-minded.

* * *

Bright Trinidad

(Sunset. Cooler. Tanager and sparrow, and dog barking. Can you be true to your own?
To whom do you belong?)

& This way, please, workers
comin' home
to chicken but not in
this house "we're
nonviolent.
But that same bebop music
exists even here
so
this way
please.

* * *

Bright Trinidad

bright sun
Krishna in the cloud "His
mercy "just coming from
behind that jute field
while I sit here alone
in my villa, a book
at hand
etching a prayer
a
paeon
to the Lord
and guru
my Prabhupada.

* * *

Sorry, I already danced, he said.
No reruns. Now listen
to the tanager "his own
beat.

* * *

My man is out there straightening it out with the temple president so that we follow
my plan on the birthday, not his. I'll give the lecture as early as possible. Other than that,
we always emphasize the bright side in
bright T'dad.
Death-bound all
and aspiring for Krishnaloka

through solid *bhakti*.

December 10, 3:56 a.m.

"Happy birthday, although it's a performance . . ." The cock crows and the mosquitoes bite through my socks. Another day. Cat howling outdoors while I chant *japa* in the dark room. At least all these sounds are keeping me awake with the holy name as my companion. Lord knows, no one was watching me while I was chanting. That was His compassion upon me: to give me that space not to be a performer.

I can and must agonize over whether I am qualified to be a spiritual master. Aside from that, there's a job to be done. A necessary job, ordered by Lord Caitanya, and I won't comment on whether or not it was ordered by my spiritual master. I'd rather not get into that. But people need a link to one of Krishna's living representatives.

Looking forward to time at Gita-Nagari. It might even snow. Then Baltimore for an intense four-day gig, then, the flight back to Ireland, that haven for retired sailors. I know that no place is really home in this world, and Krishna reminds me of that from time to time.

I wanted to think of India, of Vrndavana while chanting *japa*. Vrndavana has many *sadhus* and just as many loudspeakers. None of those here. And of course, Vrndavana has the secret, unmanifest presence of Krishna's pastimes. The *lilas* still take place at *rasa-lila* sites (Yoga-pitha, rasa-sthali), they say. There is no place on earth like Radha-kunda. Those who live there usually have enough faith to know.

Fortunately, if we are unable to live in Vrndavana, we can contact Vraja-kiSora wherever we are in the world by chanting, hearing, and remembering His beautiful Vrndavana form. That's another manifestation of faith in the power of Vrndavana.

* * *

That it's my birthday doesn't touch me much. I just want to get through this day.

* * *

I had a dream last night that seems to sum up my mood this morning. In the dream, a man was living in an expensive Manhattan apartment. He was a great drummer, and other people liked to play drums with him. One character came (who later turned out to be me) but left the drumming circle. As I left, I realized I had nothing; I was out on the street with no money. When I awoke I realized I am being maintained in exchange for playing the role of spiritual master. I had to conclude that it's all right that I'm maintained as long as I am giving Krishna consciousness.

* * *

4:52 a.m.

Well, friends, you may not know me, but I am Trinidad Joe. I work in the house next to the devotees. I heard there's a big shindig today. I'm going over there to see what's going on. Heard it's for their guru.

Their loud voices "strangers in that house" echoing above the rooster and chickens. When I say something that draws a laugh from my audience, which usually begins with Ananta-Sesa, I chant in my mind, "Krishna, Krishna." The scriptures say we need a guru. Here's a guru. He's not shiny new, but perhaps that's better. Old men have already gone through most of what they will go through. They're safer. He's not untarnished. I mean, he was one of those original eleven, and although that was once seen as the greatest honor conceivable in ISKCON, it gradually became a source of shame and infamy. Such is the nature of fame and fortune in this world. Best not to be attached to it. A tisket a tasket, a green and yellow basket. "roll over," he said to his dog.

Saw a dog passing stool on the street. Prabhupada walked in a Toronto park one morning and saw the sign intended for dog owners: "Stoop and scoop."

Friends, I tell you, the scriptures say we need a guru. And what are our expectations of the guru? We place him on a seat, ask if he'd like to be fanned. We wave a *camara* with artistic motions. We inquire as to how else we may serve him. Of course, many things are forbidden to him, and he's not supposed to even want them. No sex love, no cigarettes, no alcohol, no meat. When we ask him, "Guru Maharaja, is there anything you want?" we don't really expect him to come up with much. We *hope* he'll say something memorable like, "I don't want anything. I have no material desires." Or more appropriately, "I would like *Krishna-prema*. Can you give *that* to me?" And he smiles in his brilliant-foolish way.

O Guruji, how about apple pie?

No, you fool, it's EkadaSi.

Don't worry, he's got his Esgic and a sparrow on his sleeve. He wrote early this morning.

Guru, is there anything you want?

No, don't ask me, or I may want things you can't deliver. But I appreciate your asking. You know, you have provided many of the comforts to which I have become attached. Therefore, I want a new pillow, a fresher bed, running water that doesn't cut out on me, some soap and toothpaste, paper that I can write on, and . . . should I go on?

But Guru, can you give us an enlightening talk?

Yes, but first, listen to the mockingbird. If winter comes, can spring be far behind? Please accept Krishna as the supreme savior of your life. Chant His holy name. Worship this Deity form. Be serious about devotional service. Be kind to others. Now I will read from a book and make a few comments on it.

The birds whistle; the chickens go on crying, despite their doom. Nobody knows for sure when the ax will fall on their own neck. Hope it doesn't happen to the guru in public. Otherwise, both he and his followers will be embarrassed. Better he leave from Vrndavana so that later they can be solaced that he died there, surrounded by the

chanting of the holy name as he passed away through the tight straits on his way to Goloka.

* * *

His Footsteps In Sand of Juhu
& Please don't interrupt or say this
isn't allowed/ don't ring
my bell.
Beard and hat "don't cross out
anything it's
all allowed
we remember (bite on, mosquitoes)
our guru walking on
the sands of Juhu.

* * *

We were there with him growing tired
not of his but our own
proclamations. I prefer to remember now
how he saved me.

* * *

Any little ditty I accept
these days. Did you know a toad
with horny eyebrows
crawled up my
wall?

* * *

Yes, students, we are gathered here
today to honor SDG's
belly-button birthday. He's
well known for his funny
dissonant words and for
dropping extra steps in the dark.

* * *

But Prabhupada I am here
to honor you,
honest, smart, and
true.

Take me by the hand
my master/ take me
by the hand/ let me walk
in your footsteps
on the Juhu's sand
my words
following yours. "

* * *

12:08 p.m.

I'm on the borderline of pain after three hours of sitting in the temple room. I spoke for about twenty minutes, then allowed the disciples to speak one at a time. *Kirtana* followed, then a song sung by the *gurukula*. The *puspanjali* grew tiresome, and they stacked the garlands higher and higher, photographing and videotaping all. I tolerated all that, felt no particular emotion. The best was when that *gurukula* girl led the singing and played the harmonium. I felt tears come to my eyes and roll down my cheeks with perhaps a little self-pity mixed in with the emotion. But more, I thought of all of us and our small efforts at devotional service. I also thought of Baladeva and his wife, whose child died a few years ago. The tears comforted me.

Now awaiting lunch. At 3 p.m. I'm due back at the temple to read from the diary Srila Prabhupada kept in New York City in 1966. So far, no pill. M. thanked me in his homage for being "vulnerable" (sic).

* * *

2:25 p.m.

Blame it on heat, but my energy here is quite low. Kalachandji dasa ended his homage, "For time is sure slipping away." Don't *wish* it away. Anyway, even if you wish it to stay, it won't. My friend, my dear teary friend, the violet flowers and their creeper look lovely in the day, but . . .

Distant drumbeat. The new, summer-weight *dhoti* and *kurta* stained purple from the flowers "the second new set ruined in two days. I'll go into the temple room and read that diary. I'll tell them that this is "my" day, so I can use it to worship Prabhupada. After all, I am made of his mercy. He told me he was my real father. He gave me my real birth when he gave me initiation. He was already seventy, but he was closer to me than my own dad.

* * *

5:12 p.m.

Read from *The Beginning*, how he often bought just one banana a day, spent very little, sold a few books. Snow came and he couldn't go out to bathe or cook at Dr. Mishra's apartment. Patita asked about austerity. Someone asked me to tell more about how I gave money. I said I got a solid start in Krishna consciousness by giving money to Srila Prabhupada. It's certainly nice to talk of those days and to remember Swamiji.

"Do you still have the three *Bhagavatam* volumes you bought?"

No, I lost them.

"Please tell us about how you bought them."

I told a few stories and spoke for an hour. Nice way to end the day's activities.

Then I dictated replies to letters, mostly standard things: "Thank you, everyone. I can't seem to say much more."

The details of Prabhupada's wonderful activities are not fully known to me. Krishna sent Prabhupada here. India would not help him. He did everything single-handedly. Who can understand? I read from the diary how he tried to start a temple, how he did this, how he did that. Our dear Swami. The cleaning man came to his room and Srila Prabhupada gave him a cold drink "of water, I guess. He said the man was glad to receive it. Srila Prabhupada hosting a cleaning man. Hare Krishna, this is very nice to hear, our spiritual master alone in NYC, depending on Krishna.

I can hear those birds out there amid the greenery. Hare Krishna. Day has ended. I can't squeeze more out of it. Don't forget Krishna.

December 11, 3:40 a.m.

Sleep when noise distances you, thoughts too, motives. I don't want to forget to strive for Krishna consciousness, but sometimes you just have to let yourself be. Float to Krishna and rest in the tropics. The body seems to want extra rest in the tropics.

Finally I had to get up. When I turned on the bathroom light, I saw a frog hanging on the wall with his suction feet. Cool water "no need of hot. A long day ahead "*Bhagavad-gita* lecture, etc. I want to make my talks pertinent because that's all I can give them directly. Yesterday's homages have passed. "You are glorifiable . . ." "I am a stand-in for God, so they praised me, each sincere. We are each sincere, although usually our sincerity is mixed with selfish motivation. Those motivations are material because we think we need matter to cope with our lives, and because we are covered by illusion. A magnanimous person doesn't become angry when he sees selfish, mundane people; rather, he understands they are victims. He sees the larger perspective, how they are functioning by karma. More than anything, he sees how much of this is true of himself. When he is mistreated by fools, he understands that he is suffering due to his own past deeds. When he mistreats others, he feels sorry that he is forced to suffer by causing others to suffer.

In Bg. 2.38, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna to fight for the sake of fighting, "Because [Krishna] desires the battle." Srila Prabhupada underlines the point: Arjuna should fight simply because Krishna wants him to. I have added that verse to my personal prayer collection. Do your duty because Krishna wants you to.

Of course, devotees instantly ask how we can know if a specific task is the one Krishna desires of us. Therefore, the first task is to know the nature of duty and the nature of the self, and to find a bona fide spiritual master.

When we act for Krishna, we get no karma. When we act for ourselves, we suffer the reaction. The materialists usually don't even believe in karma, although they are faced with reactions at every moment of their lives.

Krishna gives a stern order: Act because I want you to and for no other reason. Do not be concerned about happiness or distress, victory or defeat. Free yourself of duality. Try at least to think you are acting for Me. Only this will free you from *samsara's* web. No other scheme will work.

Work for Krishna. How? Tag on the motto, "This is for Him"? Give up "how? I don't seem to be able to grasp it in my life. Something rubs me the wrong way about it "is it false ego? It says, "Why do I have to become Krishna's slave? Why do we translate that into working for the temple under authorities who don't always care for us? And what's wrong with acting according to our own inclination, anyway? Can I give to God from my own self rather than by always being told what to do by others?"

So you see, I'm not grasping it.

Flies and chickens and cats, M. making bathroom sounds. My *Bhagavad-gita* study in preparation for class is not sustained. Three verses "I'll do what I can with them. I can't get it all perfect and ultimate. These devotees know the philosophy as well as I do anyway, yet all of us are equally unable to love and surrender to Krishna. Or we don't even recognize our failure because we're too distracted by other issues. Oh, the external life.

Act for Him and there is no sin. Even a little *bhakti* can save us at death. Usually we relate better to acting to save ourselves at death than to the idea of simply pleasing someone just by our acts. Regardless, it's appealing to think of nonkarmic action because everything we do is subject to destruction except this one thing.

We often have to admit we like one verse better than another; one proposal sounds more appealing. Still, we have to consider the difficult ones and see how to get closer to them, to accept them. Admit we don't even get some of them "how they can be possible. Be "honest to God."

Ideals, absolutes. The devotees act only for Krishna and (2.41) are resolute in purpose.

I talk and talk, trying to consider the audience, but know that ultimately they are like me, sincere but lacking. They are somewhat aware of Krishna consciousness, yet confused too. They don't really know how to improve, how to get beyond their present state, or how to attain the reality of Krishna consciousness. We try to help each other. The three verses I have chosen seem to move from one topic to another: "Fight for Me," "Devotional service doesn't diminish," and "The devotees are resolute in purpose." The first advertises devotional service, the second defines devotional service, and the third describes the devotees. Because Krishna is directly speaking these verses, we should try to understand them. In our lives, how can we fight for Krishna, have faith in the process, and be responsible? We have to hear constantly if we want to learn the answer to that question. The spiritual master will help. Dear Krishna, I'm at the beginning again in my hearing of *Bhagavad-gita*. Please reveal to me what You mean and how we may follow.

* * *

5:40 a.m.

I'll speak on *Bhag.* 10.53, the chapter about Krishna kidnapping Rukmini. She's waiting for Him and thinks He may have found something contemptible in her. We may

also think like that as we wait for Krishna to reveal Himself, but we can also understand that Krishna is *bhava-grahi-janardana*, He accepts the good essence. That is His nature.

We saw several large fat frogs as we walked from this house to the temple for *mangala-arati*. M. led the singing. Krishna's wig didn't seem to fit right, and His white dress and crown were a little strange too. Humble people in attendance.

* * *

Lonesome road

(Hurry. You went to *mangala-arati* and *tulasi-puja* so you're entitled to this . . .)

& The lonesome road is long

and besot with

fat frogs,

"Excuse me, sir," but he would not

budge and I would not

step over him.

* * *

We are entitled to freedom "it's

no whimsy the ISKCON

preacher said and told of Lord Krishna's *lilas*

structured and complex

but full of spontaneity.

* * *

Below the wind the breezes

clacking bamboos, please

tell us how Krishna

kidnapped Rukmini

how She walked

that lonesome road.

* * *

Each has to trod

she said, that self-same road but

isn't association (a big word)

needed and

is it the same

as social pressure?

* * *

I made good sense of that one.
But know that road
is filled with potholes
of doubt, and
dogs and chickens squawk
on all sides.
The mayor and policemen
and the drunken machete-men
will also carp.

* * *

We have nothing to our advantage
but an attempt at speed
and to look at our words
before breakfast.
It seems the same.

* * *

There's only one way
he said
to ride that hometown
Road "to be in good company
good cheer. Know, though, that the last
mile or so will be hard,
even the Pandavas got tired
and fell one by one
a dog left
to accompany Yudhisthira
all having to see hell, then
going back to Godhead
or hoping for that
trying our best
and it's up to Krishna to
Raise us if He chooses.
That road we walk
life after life
while begging the Lord
to give us the blessing
of His pure service. "

* * *

8:52 a.m.

It was fun speaking on the kidnapping of Srimati Rukmini to the devotees in the temple room. They laughed a little too much, and as a result, perhaps I tried harder to make them laugh more. These are beautiful pastimes, and they contain lessons for us on how to be helpless while waiting for Krishna to rescue us. He comes on His own sweet time, but somehow He is never late.

I spoke of the *bhava* of expecting Krishna to appear at any moment, and the *bhava* of feeling unworthy enough that Krishna might reject us. But what do I know of such things?

I also invited us to be good listeners. Again, something I know little of. As the *Bhagavatam* speaker, however, I had no choice but to rise to the occasion and speak the truth, even if I have not fully realized it. I cannot simply make confession after confession while I'm on the *vyasasana*, speaking personally rather than directly from *sastra* the whole time. I have to get on with the narration and tell how the demons who wanted Rukmini to marry SiSupala fell over backwards off their horses and elephants when they saw Her returning from the temple. I can say we all enjoyed the pastimes, even though we are not liberated souls.

Now it's over and I have no other duties for the day. Madhu has gone off to play music with Patita-uddharana. What shall I do after writing this page? Where shall I go? Stay in the house. I could sleep, or I could answer more letters. Or even better, I could chant and think of Govinda.

* * *

Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, stole Rukmini. He exited slowly, unafraid. The demons condemned themselves as they watched Krishna act like a jackal stealing the booty they thought was intended for the lion. In the next chapter we'll hear how Krishna and Balarama smashed them all, and how Rukmi was punished.

They gave me lovely garlands made from local flowers "silky yellows and whites, pink roses and bright orange marigolds. Let the morning slink by in Krishna, Krishna, Krishna.

* * *

Late-Morning T'dad Mind
& Georgia on my mind some musician sang
but now's the day the wind is playing
in Trinidad. I was lying on my bed
but said instead

* * *

there's no way but this
day is goin' by fast.

* * *

An accordion sounds out
the slat windows of the
sun-beating-down temple
and I see a white egret
yellow-orange bill
suddenly walkin'
in the grass "
temple backyard.

* * *

Is the egret looking for a tune?
Seems to be in a trance state or bored
no music and
the only one.

* * *

I have no headache and it's hot,
but I'm answering mail.
First we all sang despite the poorly
dressed Deities and someone said,
"Guru, sir, it was
only twenty-five percent my fault that
that woman and I broke up. I
ask your blessings . . . "

* * *

Another wrote: "I stopped
writing you letters 'cause
your replies were
indirect and impersonal."
Well, here's another and
no offense.

* * *

No fence
broken down or standing
and I'm glad I live elsewhere (the heat!)
but glad for the excellent homegrown
bananas and melons.

* * *

I *could* remember the old days
the tension between us
but why bother?
Remember something nice and
forget the rest "
we're going home. "

* * *

11:10 a.m.

As I write this, M. is pumping away on the melodeon upstairs in the *brahmacari-aSrama*, and Patita is pounding away on a drum. They are not a tailored-made match, but they keep at it. I'll ask him when he returns what he thought of it, and whether people gathered as they played.

Heat. No engagement. I read the chapter, most of it, so far, of Krishna marrying Rukmini. Balarama's speech was philosophical and I got bogged down. It's important to read something like that while you're in peak condition. How can I handle the whole chapter in a *Bhagavatam* class? One verse is enough. It's good to tell much of the story. I'll have to prepare more, and then I can decide. That is my assignment for today, to prepare for tomorrow's class. Today's went well, but I don't know about tomorrow.

Patita asked about Radha's hand of blessing. I replied that She assures us we can serve Her. We are not begging for material things, right? Yes. I don't know a damn thing.

Take a shower. People gather and want to hear about Krishna. I told them if we just listen, that's pious, and it will help us even if we are ignorant of the purport. Balakrishna asked how neophytes can enter Krishna's pastimes. There are three kinds of persons, and each are interested to hear. All right? He said he was thinking more about *sahajiyas*.

Oh. We cannot pretend to enter the pastimes, or try to enter them in a material way. I hope they were all listening. Some of them write to tell me what I said that inspires them. I told how a lady disciple of mine is mentally ill and no longer chants her rounds. Still, I honor that she's trying to reclaim her *japa*, and she's now up to eight rounds. She's open with me about it, and that has become the basis of our exchange. She said she was inspired to hear me say that. They want to know that mercy is available, but sometimes they credit a person like me with more power than I have. Then it becomes awkward. I have agreed to be worshiped and to hear their material troubles. I have agreed to try and help according to my capacity.

The man who can't write made a tape of him speaking. That was his letter to me. Again and again he says, "You know, you know." I listened to his confession, his struggle.

As the hours pass, the sun gets hotter, M. keeps playing that melodeon out in that one-room shanty. I can see from here. No one seems to live there, although there is an electric wire connecting it to the main line. No one in Trinidad uses screens to keep out the mosquitoes. They just don't do it. At night if you're inclined, you can use a net and

burn a coil. Why don't they just use screens? But they don't. If I lived here all the time, I would melt. I would also give more lectures. No hermit life for me here.

O Govinda, You will appear in Your own time. I feel the anxiety of expecting You, but I have to wait upon Your sweet will. I explained that to the devotees, but then rajarsi asked, "Please distinguish for us between believing that Krishna will act in His own time and the need for us to take responsibility." He wanted me to make a policy statement against slack interpretations. I don't like those kinds of questions, which seem to be intended by ISKCON authorities to check laggards. Why should we also caretake other devotees in that way? Better we ask our own questions. Don't ask on behalf of the ne'er-do-wells. Consider your own ne'er-do-well nature and ask something to help yourself. Don't set me up to be as defender of the system you have defined.

The devotees who came from America for Vyasa-puja have already flown back. My birthday was a formal affair, Trinidad style. O Hare Krishna. You are the taste of water, the light of the sun . . .

While eating my meals I'm listening to Prabhupada speaking in Los Angeles in 1973. This series of tapes is nicely recorded. Prabhupada said something and the audience laughed, just as they do here.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

SudarSana dasa warned M. of the dangers in Guyana. We will be arriving on Election Day, and in the past there has been rioting on that day. Also, there are many muggings. Tourists are a target. M. passed that information on to me, adding his own notes of alarm "how the Uitvlugt temple was recently twice the victim of armed robbery, how we stand out as targets because we are white. He suggested we take as little money with us as possible, although that doesn't reduce the threat of being mugged.

SudarSana said that Paramatma dasa doesn't want us to hear about all this stuff. *He* said Election Day was an ideal day to enter. M. says he feels we are committed this time, but we ought to avoid going there in the future without first checking out the climate. So we are slated to go, but we'll worry. Another bubble popped "that you can just eat and sleep and lecture to submissive persons and nothing will go wrong. You can write your poems, read a little, take a pill if a headache comes, and nobody will mug you. Anyway, it's up to Krishna. I have to die sooner or later. Better to die attempting to preach.

* * *

Pukka Pad Shorty: Active Imagination, Episode 5

Imagine you get mugged by bandits in a car that follows you from the airport. They force your car to pull over. They have guns.

No, I don't like to think about that, or force the reader to think about it either. Someone said, "My life is full of disasters, most of which never happen." Don't worry yourself to death. If you are going to Guyana, then simply depend upon Krishna and become more sober, aware that death could come at any moment. That's a fact whether I

am in a country prone to mugging or I'm snug in Wicklow County. The chandelier could fall on my head; I could miss a few breaths and pass out.

Fantasy: I roll in a ditch, just as in a nightmare, then rouse myself to wake from it. But this life is real in the sense that it is happening to body and mind. For example, the pain of a headache.

We can't say exactly what will happen to us when death finally wins. We know generally what Krishna says, but I mean the details. Krishna strongly recommends we think of Him if we wish to cross over the river of birth and death. I will try for that. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna.

Here I am on a hot afternoon in relatively safe (it seems) Trinidad, chanting and writing. No mishaps. Eventually the afternoon will cool and slowly the day will darken into night. As soon as it gets dark I usually crawl under my mosquito net. That proves another day passed peacefully. That's what I wanted, isn't it?

In this room I found yet another guidebook to Vrndavana. Those old places. I caught myself feeling distaste, finding fault with the Vrndavana monkeys, not attracted. I had better check that. Vrndavana is the best place, even with its monkeys. Even a receptive beginner can feel Vrndavana's potency. It's where I hope to die.

But if I am preaching somewhere else and die along the road, that too is glorious. A *sannyasi* may wind up in a ditch with a dacoit's knife in his side, or a few bullets in his head. Will I reach in my pocket to take a pill so it will be less painful? Will I think of Krishna?

Does thinking of mugging make me think of Krishna in fear? We suffer pain of death because of bodily attachment. There is no other reason. We want to live, try to prolong life, and know nothing beyond this endeavor. We don't want to let go.

But that's what we have to do. O Krishna, that we may remember You at death will save us. We want that, although we are presently trapped in bodily consciousness. You promise that You will come to us as Death, at death. You are not only death for the demons, but for Your devotees too. "O my Lord, more powerful than fire," please let me remember You so there will be no obstruction to my progress as I leave this body.

We probably all fantasize about our own deaths. I'm fantasizing now, after hearing the news about Guyana. I don't want to die in Guyana, and will have to wait and see what happens. Best would be if I got a decent amount of notice, perhaps six months or more, so that I had time to get my Indian visa and go to Vrndavana.

Now what is the fantasy? That I live in Vrndavana to die, or that I'm pushed toward death in some place far from the holy abode? Where will my thoughts be in either place? Dear spiritual master, I wish to serve you and to live for you. You know my mind is filled with my creative projects. I hear you speak every day. I trust you to help me. I need your help.

Day by day, hour by hour. I know no more than that. This story ends with us in ViSvarupa's house beside the temple, sweating in the December tropics, and worrying, chanting, thinking about what to speak on next.

* * *

Risk For Krishna
& We will go anyway to that
dangerous land
we will
go with *Krishna-nama* to the place
where they will simply be after our
money.

* * *

Facing danger is the nature of life
and when done for Krishna and
the spiritual master "even
Prabhupada was happy to risk his life
to preach.

* * *

What to speak of Arjuna, who
had to fight.

* * *

O Krishna Hare Krishna,
I am not this body and
Lord, may You protect us
all.

* * *

Melvin knows death in
jail, others chant in cells,
have cancer, AIDS, liver
disease, and accept. Dear
Lord, take me
but it's not easy.

* * *

We who remain say he
passed away and that's it.
We have a feast on the third day
and then rid ourselves
of morbid thoughts.

We, express
chanters. "

* * *

5:47 p.m.

Dark gray clouds moving across the blue sky. This sky is not like Ireland's. It's muggy. Three-note bird calls. Now the frogs are starting and will go all night. Thought more of risk and realized that it includes taking chances to preach in writing by pouring out what wants to come, breaking molds.

I watched the clouds drift by like giant egrets and almost began to miss the clouds, as if I am going to die soon and won't see them anymore. Then I realized that they are beautiful; they are only a spark of His splendor. Krishna, Krishna. Hare Krishna "my transcendental metaphor, semaphore signal to the Lord "I'm here and want to be with You. Mosquito warning in my ear.

December 12, 3:45 a.m.

Could it be that Paramatma dasa and the others want me to come to Guyana so much that they would withhold information from me about the actual hazards? If so, what would that say about their love for me? It means only that they want my body among them for awhile and don't care so much about who I am or how I can best survive. And what is my love for them "or for any of my disciples? Which among them would I live and die for? In one sense, I am already living for all of them, and I will die for them too. But is that my true life, or am I not living from my closest self? I don't want to answer those questions here right now.

O Krishna, why don't I love You enough to sacrifice my life for *You*? What are my *real* concerns? I chant Hare Krishna by the full moon at midnight, but still I don't call out in earnest to my dearest friend, my protector, my beloved.

Concerns: That I don't get bitten by mosquitoes; that I avoid headaches (or when they come, that I can endure them without added suffering); that I can eat and sleep; that I can avoid confrontations, meetings; that I not be seen as a deviant. I went to two *mangala-aratis* here, but today I won't go. What will they think? Will my disciples dare to criticize me for it? How much are my disciples and I living for our mutual interests? And how much do we eneb understand what those interests are? My disciples obey, but of course, only to a limited degree. It takes time to figure out how to follow the spiritual master's order within the details of a life. Some of them don't even chant their rounds, though. Most of them here quarrel. Almost all do as they see fit. I do the same, although I'm supposed to be the best example.

So what exactly is this love between us? And what is my love for Krishna? And for myself? The *sastra* says we love our bodies first. We love our body because the life force, the *atma*, is within it. That *atma* is actually part and parcel of the Supreme Soul, Krishna. Ultimately, whether we know it or not, we love Krishna because He is the soul of all souls.

Whatever love we have, we must try to preserve it. Going to Guyana, that frumpy place, to a community that may love me according to their sense gratification, and me going with mixed motives, partly out of obligation "all this is nevertheless right. It is enough reason to sacrifice my life. What else do I have? Go and make the best of it. Make it a good bargain.

* * *

I'm planning to lecture on Bg. 2.40. There are hard sayings and easy ones. This is an easy one, similar to *susukham kartam avyayam*, that devotional service is joyfully performed. 2.40 is encouraging: even a little devotional service is never lost. Another easy proposal is this one: "Just chant Hare Krishna and your life will be sublime."

Of course, these are *sutra* statements, because when we apply them, we realize the sacrifice that will be required to chant Hare Krishna. In Bg. 2.38 - 39, Krishna asks Arjuna to fight without attachment to fruitive results, simply because He wants him to. We are meant to give up personal desire and sense gratification, and to act according to the Lord's wishes. That's a difficult task, but *that's* the quality of work that never diminishes. "And a little advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear." (Bg. 2.40)

Yes, it's easy, I'll tell them, and "If such a little selfless devotion is so powerful, why not do a lot of it?"

But to whom do we surrender? In Trinidad it quickly boils down to that question and there is inevitable disagreement. The temple president may claim that he is representing the *parampara*; someone else thinks he's not fit to lead. And so it goes. Even when we agree on an authority such as Srila Prabhupada or Lord Krishna, we realize that the higher the authority, the more difficult and demanding the surrender. Prabhupada and Krishna have the power to ask for complete surrender, but we don't always have the strength or the intelligence to deliver. Krishna knows this, so He tries to be encouraging. Just take a little surrender at a time. Even a small amount will be useful. And remember the purport to Bg. 3.31, that if we follow the Lord's injunctions without envy and without resentment, Krishna will help us to improve. A faithful devotee works "without consideration of defeat and hopelessness,." Such a devotee "will surely be promoted to the stage of pure Krishna consciousness."

* * *

Chickens and roosters crowing. *Mangala-arati* is about to begin. I hear humble Ananta-Sesa blowing the conch. The Deities here look somewhat bedraggled and are usually surrounded by flies, but still the devotees attempt to worship Them with love.

I didn't go this morning, but they have to maintain the temple worship out of their own desires, even if I am not there, and even when I come.

* * *

Pukka Pad Shorty, Active Imagination, Episode 6: Mixed Fantasy

Part 1

A rubber-band guru enters the room in the afternoon. It's still hot, just beginning to cool. The room is filled with devotees, the curtains, blue.

"My dear disciples," he says, "I am lord and master of nothing much. Still, I want to tell you that Srila Prabhupada said we should get along with one another. We should chant Hare Krishna. We should live until we die. We should be individuals who live in a devotional community, and we shouldn't listen too closely to the nondevotees. We are not Hindus, but neither are we pure devotees. We are simply striving."

On and on he talks, and old ghosts enter, but no dacoits with machetes, no blues singers in ensemble or parades or Derek Walcotts or schools with their respective flags. No money showers down, so no honey on cake handed out sticky into each waiting palm.

He says, "I will tell the truth." But they have already heard enough, especially as ten thousand mosquitoes, flying in the dim light afforded by the fluorescent bulb, head in and begin to circulate. The fields are dark, the moon behind a cloud.

They dress Radha-Gopinatha and receive credit. Nothing will be lost. Those in the funky kitchen also get credit "and the rubber-band guru, and even you, dear reader, get credit. Sing Hare Krishna first and everything else will follow.

"Any questions?"

"Is it true you are going to Guyana to face real danger?"

"There is no danger in this world. Everywhere is my home in Krishna's shelter. Srila Prabhupada was told not to go to the Bowery, but he saw no danger. Krishna protected him."

"Wow! Are you really that fearless?"

"Timid me? I don't want to be thrown into a ditch like a bloody bag, or even mistreated or delayed. I don't even want to *talk* about it. Any other questions?"

"What about us in Trinidad? Why don't you do something to help us? Many householders feel unwelcome at the temple. The temple is not a place of love or even cleanliness and order."

"Wait a minute," a temple inmate objects. "You householders are no help at all. Therefore, you have no right to find fault. We are the *parampara* and you are an outsider."

"Wait," the rubber-band guru says, sticking his hand into the gooey cake. "Do you see this cake? This is like the devotee community. The gooey covering is cooperation. When we cooperate, the guru will be satisfied. When the guru is satisfied, Krishna will be satisfied. Get it?"

"Is it true there are crocodiles in Guyana?"

"Yes, and the world's longest waterfalls, King Edward VIII Falls, deep in the jungle."

The curtains rustle. It is mosquito time. The disciples' meeting is played out. The guru says they ought to read his books, and they say they will, but they can't get anyone to carry them from North America.

Then the rubber-band guru reaches back into the cake. He says, "You see this cake? This is my books and the gooey stuff is the structure of my teachings. Do you see this cake?"

No, they don't. They don't see any cake. They have already eaten it. Then someone stands and asks, "What's that ItM?" The guru doesn't want to talk about it.

"Why didn't you look at the Bharata-natyam dance that woman performed on your birthday?"

"The truth is flying in the window." And so it is, just at this moment.

* * *

Part 2

It is pretty obvious that the meeting is about to end. He puts on his slippers, grasps his cane, and begins to knead his red hat. They laugh as he juggles the wool, and when he says he will be back next spring, they don't quite believe him. "We think we have met your goodness just to become the captain of the ship to cross over the ocean of Kali, which is so filled with vices."

He says, "It's about time someone gave us a waft of Sastric breeze. Thank you."

"You see this cake?"

The end.

* * *

Two disobedient disciples showed up at the meeting. They looked ragged and called me Gurupada. One has become a professional boxer. The other did not become a rock star.

Finally I left the meeting, and the devotees wandered off. I heard a few cars pull out "those householders, probably.

I went back to the house and soaked my dentures, put in my earplugs, and prayed, "Whatever comes, Lord, I want to go to You. Please accept me." I really do wish only to serve the *sankirtana* movement, and I wish the holy name would utter from my lips and carry my love to Krishna so He will be pleased.

* * *

10:17 a.m.

The morning class went all right. The theme was "Easy and Hard Instructions." M. and I considered holding an initiation tomorrow, but the candidates didn't receive their recommendations. Instead I will speak this afternoon and again tomorrow. The devotees usually have questions. I just have to get the talk off the ground with a speech lasting about twenty minutes, a speech that leaves questions in the air.

Like? Like what it means to be a disciple of SDG "how to please me. Make it personal: how to maintain a relationship with me. These are standard things, but I could personalize the discussion by explaining the limits of my nature and health. Make it a real disciples' meeting rather than emphasizing more general philosophy.

For tomorrow's class I'll look at *Bhagavad-gita*. Maybe the next verse, the one that states that we have to be resolute in purpose. It reminds me of the *Bhagavatam* verse in the Second Canto, *Srotavyadini rajendra*. Those interested in many things are not interested in *atma-tattva*.

There are two ways I could address this point. One is to simplify more, and the other is to convert as much of what we do into genuine Krishna consciousness by dovetailing it.

* * *

Breeze On A Hot Day
& Going with mind and wind
I'll be okay

* * *

a twinge begins, so
a pill while
M. plays his melodeon
like the wind.

* * *

We eat and sleep
look at old faces
Reflected in the glass.
I'm the only one I
know who runs like this "
let's go
let's go
to the open way
open and
clear
looking for Him
but this
way.

* * *

Am I splayed? Smile, man, you're
too
Krishna serious.

* * *

Japa
in this
kutir.

* * *

In this room
the breeze opens the door
sannyasa top-piece hanging over it
lifting in the
breeze.
A man writes, "He's independent" so
won't give
the recommendation. Wants him to return
as congregation.

* * *

Searching my mind for themes. "

* * *

11:47 a.m.

Hasty *gayatri*. Shower. Still don't know what I'll speak on in tomorrow's *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class. I saw a letter-report on ISKCON Guyana. Buddhi-yoga dasa (whom I initiated) goes on TV, talks against Hindus and Christians, then introduces his father, Rsabha (whom I also initiated) as a self-styled guru, ready to take disciples. ISKCON says they get negative response from Buddhi-yoga's talks, because he uses Srila Prabhupada's books. The GBC advises they make a public disclaimer.

Other good news? No rodents in the kitchen, as far as I can see.

O Stephen, do your parents allow you to act like that at home?

No, ma'am.

Then why?

Red-faced apology. You should know that I cut up because I want to be approved by the mob. I want to get through without being singled out as a fruit or sissy or brown-noser. Actually, I am somewhat anti-establishment at heart. After all, we're teenagers.

Back to Krishna, but no splayed intelligence. I can't tell you how I free-write.

I always feel a little crazy here in the tropics "as *they* are crazy. For me it shows in my writing. I start to live a fantasy. For example, I choose mugging scenarios (as if I had a preference).

* * *

12:17 p.m.

If for some reason I was forced to live here all the time, I could write a fantasy along with my diary reports. The fantasy would be a mad-tropics-induced float and tell-it-as-it-is story. Or so I think.

I can't pay attention to the scripture right now, so there's no use trying to come up with a theme for tomorrow's class.

I heard that the temple president here was inspired by a visiting GBC man to develop a strategy to engage the devotees who live outside in temple service. Unfortunately, that strategy doesn't seem to work "because of so much independence and skepticism." I can sympathize with the independent skeptics, but I can also see the other side. I don't think any of the devotees are bad, and I doubt they are deeply skeptical or independent. The *grhasthas* are probably just normal *grhasthas* who are not being accepted for what they are. Temples often call them "negatively independent and skeptical" because they appear to be skeptical about surrendering themselves to the temple president's assignment of "the needful." Who wouldn't be skeptical of that, especially when temple managers cannot afford to define "the needful" in a way that doesn't bring direct results to the temple?

But I also empathize with the saintly temple president here who has taken on all the management, and who somehow thinks he has to represent Prabhupada to the world, who does his best at it, serving the lotus feet of the temple Deities, holding ISKCON together in this place.

* * *

4:45 p.m.

Took Esgic an hour ago. It didn't remove the right-eye pain, so I cancelled the disciples' meeting. "It's enough just to survive in the afternoons." I have chosen a verse for the morning lecture, Bg. 4.40. I assume I will be up for it. Tired of lying in bed, restless. Can't write or read. Just be. Hare Krishna. Wait for the dark to come and then expect ease as I lay under the mosquito net. Hope to be clear for my 12:30 a.m. writing. The devotees can see by my cancellation that I am chronically in pain. M. said, "If you stayed here for a few weeks, they'd stop coming to your classes." Push on with this tour "be here for it, yet I look forward to returning to Ireland and Radha-Govinda.

Paramatma dasa spoke with M. about our trip to Guyana. He said it will be nice on Election Day because the roads will be empty when we arrive early in the morning. M. didn't prod him for the actual situation or for a more cogent description of the political unrest. He said it was no use; Paramatma would have said, simply, that it's all right. We will just have to go and see. I won't disappoint them by not coming. Krishna will protect us one way or another. I especially request He allow me to think of Him now and at the hour of my death, Amen.

December 13, Midnight

I had a dream I was threatened by a lion. I had a gun, but it didn't work. A man suggested that the ocean was nearby; I could escape by swimming across it. *Somebody* might even pick me up on the way. It seemed like my only chance, although it was extremely dangerous and beyond my powers. He thought I could alternately float and swim. I dove in, but was soon picked up and brought to the other shore, relieved. Later, I met a devotee and was able to get away from the scene altogether.

The dream reminds me that sometimes we have to take impossible risks to save ourselves, but the real relief is in meeting a devotee.

* * *

2:20 a.m.

Sixteen rounds. Hear, hear the kernel. Easy to do, at least the easy part. Little steps in the right direction. Looking up. Aware of failure, but not admitting defeat or hopelessness, not resenting Krishna's injunctions, a man of faith.

O Krishna, Hare Krishna, Sri Krishna. I am rolling along.

M. was up before me, at midnight. Said he couldn't sleep because of the full moon. Now he is resting. I went to the sink and found a large frog in it. Then a second, smaller frog joined him. Maybe they can appear as characters in an Active Imagination story.

Someone clearing his throat. A car beeps its horn insistently, and all the dogs in the neighborhood bark. You hear dogs in Vrndavana too. That man in Guyana with the Dobermans kept them shut up in a dark doghouse all day, where they whine away, but lets them out at night to prowl around his compound.

* * *

3:42 a.m.

Got Bg. 4.40 lined up for my talk. They may wonder why Krishna speaks on faith. They also wonder how to cooperate, how to organize the preaching, how to solve the conflict between those who maintain the temples and those who live outside. If only they could see that those two parties are not really in conflict. They say the outsiders are not willing or able to participate much, and don't place themselves under the leaders' authority. From the temple's point of view, the problem is "skepticism and independence."

A large frog jumped off my clothes when I pulled them from the hanger. I heard it plop onto the wall and hang there, fat and saggy. What an ugly mess he is. And that brown insect I saw yesterday, the walking stick "I could barely believe it was a living creature. It sat camouflaged as a brown straw, but when I accidentally touched it, it bent its legs.

We can actually acquire such a body. It would take such a long time to come up again.

Sraddhavan attends *param Santim*. *ASraddadhanah* falls down into *samsara*, has happiness neither in this life nor in the next.

* * *

Pukka Pad Shorty, Active Imagination, Episode 7, The Frog Story

My throat felt chilly "I left my scarf behind in New York City. I put my hand up to my throat and found a fat frog hanging there. "Ugh!" I cried aloud, and tried to push it away, revulsion coursing in my blood.

The frog (like Nimai's mouse) spoke. He said, "You hate me, but I could be a prince or a demigod in disguise. If you treat me nicely, even kiss me, I might transform into something wonderful, the curse broken, and you might please Krishna."

"You can talk!" I was surprised. "But give me proof that you are my well-wisher, or a prince or demigod in disguise."

"That I can talk should be enough," the frog said. "You may have to love something you despise to get spiritual enlightenment. St. Francis kissed lepers and gained enlightenment. He was empowered by God to give mercy to others."

I began to trust the frog and I reached out to pick him up. But no, how could I?

"Not a sufficient effort," the frog jeered. "You didn't even touch me without shivering. Your revulsion still shows." And he hopped away into the darkness. Three other ugly frogs appeared at his side. I could see it all because the moon was full.

Perhaps I'll get another chance to conquer.

Then I returned to my own world, the one in which there is no way out. I turned to the *sastra* and saw that without faith in the scripture, I will fall down. I will find no happiness in this life or in the next. Decided to go over and give class. The sun was rising and the frogs were gone, and I felt more determined to live as I am, aware that I will have to take the opportunity to love even the creatures that revolt me. I am not such a beautiful creature myself, and I like *myself*. The frogs were just a fantasy, but the point was one of truth.

Frogs are ugly lumps. Such a lump might swell up on my own body "I might get elephantiasis or some other dreadful disease. Then *I* would be an ugly frog. I'm already ugly "my cheeks sinking, my teeth false. Ugliness and disease is sin manifest in the body. I brace myself for the appearance of such ugliness, but I don't want to be afraid of it. The swellings of inevitable time and reaction are something we must learn to endure, and the expectancy of the unwanted is different than going forward to love what you initially despised. Living with such expectancy can help us love with detachment.

As for the devotees down here, they are not ugly frogs. I try to see only the good in them, whoever they are. I don't want to enter their political world or take part in their quarrels. I would prefer to see the good in each, the sincere effort to love Krishna, and nothing more. I wish they could see it in each other. After all, we are all spirit soul beneath our coverings, all servants of Krishna.

* * *

Equinox At Mangala-arati

1

& *Mangala-arati* "temple sounds
a man singing to God. He says

I was born on the equinox.
I'm sad but worshiping,
trying my best.

* * *

2
They sing to Radha-Gopinatha,
pious, pressured "
they are who they are "
in a group or as single souls,
shuffling feet.

* * *

O Gopinatha, just outside these walls
dark the moon.

* * *

3
A towel wrapped around
my neck, my sweatshirt
hood up under
the cinquefoil, the
fluorescent tube,
under the weather.
Was weak yesterday,
Lord.

* * *

It's equal my being here or
there where Gaura-Nitai
upraise Their arms.

* * *

What adventures will You put
me through, my Lord? Please allow my
love to grow. "

* * *

10:08 a.m.

I strained my back while exercising this morning. Then I gave the class on faith and combating doubts. Afterwards, as I distributed sweets to each devotee, I felt the warmth of our affectionate relationship. They were awake for class, and asked good questions. The nice side of preaching in the Caribbean is the easy and simple nature of the devotees' approach to the guru-disciple relationship.

Now I will have to see if I can make it without a headache until I am due to speak again at 3:30. If I do get pain, I should not allow myself another pill; I have already had three this week. Hare Krishna.

* * *

Notes for Lecturing on "Tac chrnu"

1

& Moving down a
humid soggy page in the tropics
someone "the breeze "is
banging the door
to interrupt my solitude.

* * *

Ups and downs we want the man
to give his best in real feeling
and I am bound to respond to that.

* * *

2

"Are you lecturing on 7.1?"
How did you know?
(read my mind?)
"Saw it at
the top of a page."
My notes "Krishna speaks to
us. He is the *best* speaker
and every scriggle in a musician's
heart of creative energy comes
from Him.

* * *

Musician Madhu touching
people who hear.

Good. I am on
the corner too, blowing
an inspired hymn
with paper and pen, no
idle moment
of sadness.

* * *

3
Yeah, I'm lecturing on 7.1,
probably straight,
that reading books
is required,
hope to get them to feel it
as if
as if *I* read a lot.

* * *

4
Can't tell of my
secret love because I
have none.

* * *

Just the experiment, the
scratching, the knowing there is
better than this, the
expression of self as honest "
is this love?
At least it's my offering. "

* * *

3:05 p.m.

I am on for the disciples' meeting at Indira's house. Tell them my disciples should develop themselves, etc. I need to be sincere and care about what I say. That's more important than the exact words or arguments I use. Convince them, touch them "I know it's another temporary attempt.

They shouldn't think I can come every year. My health and the cost won't allow it. More than that, the travel places too much strain on me. It's better I stay in one place to write and worship Radha-Govinda and Srila Prabhupada.

I'll come when I can, but the separation and *vani* is a fact. My books.
Speak on devotees living inside and outside the temples.

* * *

5:10 p.m.

The disciples' meeting went well. Indira's house is a beautiful little place. She had very clean white tiles on the floor, and white walls, and it reminded me a little of a *kutir*. At the end of the meeting I told her she doesn't have to go to Vrndavana, she can live in Vrndavana here. As I said it I glanced out the window and saw the green jungly surroundings, which also resemble certain seasons in Vrndavana. Of course, I didn't mean that she should never go to Vrndavana, but the fact is, few of us can actually live there full-time. And she is older. Best that she turn her present home into Vrndavana.

At the meeting I felt inspired by the devotees' presence. Although I tend to think of the Trinidadian devotees as "simple," I was able to speak pretty much to the heart of the topics about the guru-disciple relationship. I told them that there are general instructions about how to relate to one another and personal ones having to do with our particular natures. I don't have to repeat it all here. We have been through a lot together already, many of us, for almost twenty years. I hinted to them that I might not come so often.

One devotee asked what I thought of the fact that he couldn't approach my books other than the ones about straight philosophy. Another devotee asked me to speak about the inner life of a preacher. I told him about the plot of *Chota's Way*. Another asked me to speak about how devotees can get along with one another.

After the meeting I returned to ViSvarupa's house. It seemed like a different world. I think it's because I played up the role of guru. I became their spiritual father.

December 14, 12 midnight

Loud music, reggae or whatever. I will chant anyway. Intend to go to *mangala-arati*. Always some noise.

* * *

3:21 a.m.

Head slightly stuffed on top, but I decided to show up at *mangala-arati*. Now let's see.

Last night at the meeting I boasted on a few occasions. I said I am breaking new ground in Vaisnava literature. Also, I indirectly implied that while other ISKCON gurus have fallen, I will not. Pride and boasting. Please forgive me, Lord. I say things sometimes I don't mean or wish I hadn't said. I should proceed with fear and trembling. I don't know if my offering is even acceptable.

* * *

Swami, you're not fearless so
when did you get that name?
In L.A. in '72, when I asked
for it. Prabhupada said only,
"Preach, preach, and don't regret."

* * *

Will you carry paper to Guyana? Got a gun? They pick on the weak, and the white stand out. I am not physically strong, so don't take my passport and don't leave me with broken limbs. I am on a mission for God, Krishna.

Although we know we're not supposed to, I think many of us have a heartfelt prayer for protection, not just of our *bhakti*, but of our bodies and resources. Yet we know Krishna is not our servant. We are meant to please Him. He is *svarat*, and ultimately we will bow to His will. Surely the Lord has our interest in mind. He doesn't give us only general care; He wants to help us enter the internal energy. He will arrange how best to do that "what experiences we must have. If sudden or violent death is one of them, then we shouldn't waste time criticizing devotees. Learn to appreciate the sacrifice of others.

* * *

Manmohan says he can't appreciate books like *Wild Garden* or *Journal and Poems*. He prefers the *Niti-Sastras*. Well, I write something for everyone. We intend to provide education about my books, the way scholars teach us how to appreciate an author. It's easy to understand what I am writing, but first you have to remove preconceptions you may have about what constitutes Vaisnava literature.

Some may not be willing to do that. They may feel their preconceptions are standard, and that they cannot venture into a new field with me.

Honesty, I say, is important. Can't imagine this Hindu-cultured Manmohan entering *Songs of a Hare Krishna Man* or an ItM poem. But *I* have to go there, to where the energy rises in me, and capture it for Krishna. The *cognizetti* will like it, and a new generation will find it accessible.

* * *

5:30 a.m.

Someone is playing one of my lecture tapes at full volume. Sent M. to tell them to stop it. Still stuffy in head, but if it doesn't get worse, I will give the *Bhagavatam* class.

* * *

Cocks crowing. I didn't make it to *mangala-arati*. Slept in due to pain. M. too. The nature of the tropics "how they work on the body.

What else? Don't exalt me or demean me. Let me go off to my corner of the world to read and write.

In today's class I will speak on the need to read Srila Prabhupada's books. I will probably read from my own book, *Obstacles on the Path of Devotional Service*. Subheadings ask, "What's wrong?" "Where is the nectar?" And I say, "Be willing to change," "What's the best way to read?"

What's wrong is that we don't worship Krishna. That's not a slight oversight, either. We don't taste nectar because we are jaundiced. If we read, the sweetness will come. Manage your time better, those of you who say you don't have time to read.

I like to read in small amounts during peak times in the day. I like to mix writing with reading. I like to read in an unmotivated way, not preparing for a class.

* * *

11:20 a.m.

Things on my mind: I took an Esgic twenty minute ago and am still waiting for it to take effect. Pain in the right eye. At least I have a fan here. I can hear Madhu playing the melodeon on the second floor of the temple; Patita-uddharana is on cardboard box drums.

We will be going south, and have definitely fallen into the Caribbean mode in terms of stripping ourselves of unnecessary supplies. It's not easy to replenish what we use up as we travel. We're short of batteries, and my small travel container of shaving cream cracked. Although I taped it together, I don't know how long it will hold up. Madhu borrowed the batteries from my dictaphone to copy EJW tapes. I can't do much work here without them.

Bhakta Kevin, who is here with us, will leave for New York City tomorrow. We are loading him up with things we aren't bringing to Guyana. We'll pick them all up later at rasaraja's. We also decided to give him most of our traveling money so it won't be stolen from us in Guyana.

After my lecture this morning the temple president made an announcement, thanking me for coming to Trinidad. Then they made me stand by Prabhupada's *vyasasana* while they took photos. Some devotees trailed with me out of the room, and I heard girls squealing, hoping I would throw them a garland. I gave it to a man standing near me. As we entered our host's house, I said to Madhu, "It's time for us to leave."

Madhu's musicianship is irrepressible. I see him like a teenage son with whom I share a life. Our tastes are different, but I appreciate his enthusiasm.

* * *

2:50 p.m.

Devotees gather by the car for the send-off. They pelt me with hard-cored flowers, which feel like rice hitting my skin. The flowers rattle against the car. Smiles, nods, waves good-bye "they don't know I have a headache. Patita (Madhu's new friend) hands me a tiny marigold and says something humorous, then "Bon voyage!" Writing this on extremely bumpy "Prabhupada road" just as heavy rain begins to fall.

At lunch Srila Prabhupada was speaking on *Bhag. 2.1.1, variyan esa te praSna*. He said we may die at any moment, so we should be like Maharaja Pariksit and prepare seriously for that moment. Big worldly men think they are secure, but Maharaja Pariksit, although world emperor, wanted to know his duty now that he was about to die. He accepted the curse and utilized his last seven days for perfecting his spiritual life. A devotee is never afraid.

December 15, 2:10 a.m.

We are at Baladeva's house, five minutes from Piarco airport, Port of Spain, Trinidad.

We are planning to leave the house at 2:45 a.m. I have been up since midnight and have chanted twelve rounds. My night was peaceful, thanks to the electric fan that

drowned out any other noise. The mosquito net and the pain go down together. M. spent a "terrible" night with no net, and was bitten despite the coil. He took a few showers and applied baking powder to the bites.

Here we go. The airport queue will already be long by the time we get there. I'll try to meditate on the *Gita* verses that I might share when I get to Guyana.

M. said as we drive off from the airport in Guyana, I can lie down in the back "so they (muggers) will only see one white head." Do they block the roads or pull up beside you and shoot you, as crooks did to the German tourist leaving the Miami airport?

"We're doing all we can to avoid being robbed," M. said. We sent most of our belongings and money up north with Kevin. What else can we do outside of hiring armed guards? Post *achaukidar* at our house in Guyana? No, that's ridiculous. I'm sure I will think about this all the way there until I see the situation for myself, but let me chant and read.

* * *

A young Mormon "white shirt and tie" looking at us and us at him. He was clever enough to go up to the empty agent's desk and get himself an immigration form. We followed suit. I think the Mormons have a two-year compulsory preaching tour. My tour is still on after thirty-one years. It's better this way.

"Is ISKCON becoming an ethnic church?" the sociologist asked. He hoped not. He said when the anti-cult movement hit hard in the late 1970s, ISKCON turned to support from Hindus. Yes. But we shouldn't abandon our thrust to reach Americans, Europeans, or people of any other nationality. He also said ISKCON purists have a right to be concerned about the fact that many devotees no longer live in temples. These are outer, important issues about ISKCON's future. He said ISKCON will survive, but we don't know in what form.

Travel anxiety. I looked at Bg. 7.3. That seemed a good one for a lecture. I don't have the purport here. Thank you, Srila Prabhupada, who created our good fortune. I cannot assume to be *Krishna-tattva-vit*, but I am trying for that. Maybe one day, one lifetime.

Writing this under the sick fluorescent light in the airport. A radio announcement said that passengers to New York and Guyana should arrive three hours before flight time because of the Christmas rush. We are here, but there no agents to attend us.

* * *

4:17 a.m.

TV on in the distance. I can hear the tone of the voices and the canned laughter, but can't make out the words, except a few: "I dream all right." "Talk to me in dreams . . ." "Oh, what's the difference?" "Dream or no dream . . ."

Baladeva chanting insistent *japa* beside me. He is wearing a black T-shirt with bright purple letters ""Matchless Gifts" "on the chest. In the entire departure lounge (the shops are closed), there are only three of us and the young Mormon. At this rate, I doubt we will be leaving by 5 a.m.

* * *

4:45 a.m.

"I just want to sleep I am so tired," says M. The TV perks and boings and laughs in the distance. Cheap Christmas displays hang on the wall "low budget. A plane offloading. Probably ours. Still sitting around.

The devotees will be glad to see me. So as not to disappoint them, I have to play the role. The one thing I can do in earnest is to give lectures from scripture. Then we ascend to transcendental subject matter. That's my act of faith.

* * *

Always unafraid the great
bhagavatas (that's not me)
know the spiritual world
know eternity
are not afraid of the body
or what may happen to it
are simply
not fearful.

* * *

5:05 a.m.

Our sitting places on plane were trashed by previous passengers. Dinner plates and food strewn on floor and seats, and smashed into the upholstery. M. put the garbage in the aisle. The stewardess asked, "What's this?"

M. told her, "It was on the floor."

"Oh, all right," she said, as if she expected us to live with it. We insisted she take it away.

We are stray whites in a black nation. Poland Spring water from Maine. Reality is always different than what we imagine it will be. I feel solace from that fact, and always thank Krishna and pray to Him to help me.

One way for me to be Krishna conscious is to reach out to devotees. I am here for them, and to act as spiritual master doesn't mean only to receive honors, an elevated seat, a garland, and to give a lecture "also means expressing my real concern.

* * *

6:10 a.m.

Descent into Guyana. The river. Mist. Dawn. Soft tropic vision. Prepare for the formal, unfriendly immigration confrontation, but they never seem to stop us. A quick stop at customs, a few snide remarks from the taxi drivers and hangers- around, and enter the affectionate reception of the "Hindu" Hari Bols, who are oblivious to snide remarks as they garland me with flowers. They see only their guru. And that's who I'll have to be, only their guru. Flying low over the forked, muddy river, over the jungle, to

Timeheri Airport. I have been here many times. Whatever happens, I chalk it up to Providence. I used to think in the 1980s, "If they refuse me entry, I'll just go back to America," but they never have. It was in these thick jungles that Jim Jones and his followers committed mass suicide.

* * *

11:35 a.m.

I am at Paramatma's house, or rather a house he built for me. It's a small white "mansion" (by Guyanese standards), built with devotion. I told him I was relieved to have finally come here; they're probably relieved too. "relieved" is probably not the right word, but "glad" stuck in my throat. I read to them from *Krishna* book, the same section I was reading in Trinidad about the kidnapping of Rukmini. In today's installment, we heard how Krishna received the *brahmana* messenger. I spoke about how we honor *brahmanas* by washing their feet, and they reciprocate by giving instructions.

After the lecture, a headache developed. I took an Esgic, the second in two days, then took rest.

Nice facilities here.

* * *

1 p.m.

We're way out in the country where people live in shanties instead of houses. People keep goats and cows in their yards, and of course, chickens. Herons roam among the cows, picking off the flies. A ribbon of road runs straight through the center of this scene, frequented by speeding cars. It's not quiet. Our house is right near the road.

Today is Election Day. I saw flags all along the road, and signs for only one candidate, the black man, Hoyte. We asked Paramatma if there was rioting in the cities. He said, "Oh, that was long ago."

Parked in the yard across the street is a truck with a hand-lettered sign: "The Lord reigneth". Of course, their yard is also full of chickens, which they slaughter. A boy there lazily throws a stone at a cow to chase her from their front yard. Their dog also harasses the cow, who swings her head with her long horns toward the cur. The stone doesn't chase her far, and she stops to eat grass from the roadside. On our way here from the airport, we saw a dead cow lying near the road. Also saw a caged bird. Was it for sale?

* * *

Memories Of You
& That girl was so
young, just a child really,
hair drawn back tight, rings on
her fingers, she sniffled as if she had
a little cold,
yet she was the Government of Guyana

and let me into her country.

* * *

I've been here before "same
slats on the windows, same
fears, same teachings to deliver
from Prabhupada from
me
from the GBC.

* * *

Can't hope to capture it "the big
River of events. Do I think when I return
to New York, I'll be the
homecoming hero?

* * *

Memories of Krishna conscious "
ethics, *lila* "of
temple receptions, lunches
at airports.

* * *

But Prabhupada, your memories
flow in a river through my mind
sometimes muddy, forested
a wonderful tide. "

* * *

Krishna protects His devotees
& I'm from NYC.
What's all
this race stuff? Aren't we all
souls and the music free?

* * *

God, people of Guyana
are religious.
"The Lord reigneth."

* * *

The clown,
the shepherd's crown,
poor goats and birds "
"meat bird for sale" "
me not doing much to
save them.
O Krishna, please protect Your devotees.

* * *

3:35 p.m.

Happiness is when a headache goes away, or when you eat lunch and it disappears somewhere into your body, digested, during the post-lunch nap.

A nice thing about a preaching tour of the Caribbean is that they don't expect you to do much more than give a lecture each day. Since your energies are stolen by the tropical heat, you are satisfied to spend the afternoon selecting verses and preparing outlines. Thus the day becomes a simple round of lecturing and preparing to lecture.

An outline for a lecture on Bg. 7.3:

How fortunate we are to be among the rare group of devotees. We can't claim we climbed through karma, *jnana*, and yoga perfection before arriving at the *bhakti* process, but 18.54 states that *bhakti* comes after liberation. The quality of a person experiencing *brahma-bhuta* is that he neither laments nor hankers. rather, he is equal to all. Practice and aspire for such joy.

What mercy "*brahmande brahmite kona bhagyavan jiva*" water the seed.

Bhakti, they say, is easy to perform, but real *bhakti* according to rules and regulations is not so easy if we attempt it in unauthorized ways.

We can't claim we are *Krishna-tattva-vit* or that we act as if we believed "Vasudeva is everything" in life, but Srila Prabhupada has pointed us to the goal. We *are* better situated even than an advanced *yogi* or *jnani*.

* * *

4:00 p.m.

Moments: When we came through customs and the devotees approached, Paramatma came right up to me and bowed at my feet. He didn't even hit the ground before I gave him a strong tug upwards. No bowing in public!

It was a good, no-nonsense exit from the airport. Aside from that one *dandavat*, everyone was subdued and efficient. They directed Madhu and me immediately to the waiting car. Paramatma was driving. Although he is tall, he seemed slouched low in the seat. But he knew what he was doing as he maneuvered the car to this house.

In the parking lot, there were quite a few maxi-taxis. They were parked within yards of one another, each booming rock music with the bass amplified and creating a wall of sound. It's a way for these drivers to show off their opulence. Some of the cars were

painted and waxed. Even though we moved quickly, the taxi drivers had time to take a good, long look at us. I wondered if we looked like good targets. They could follow us down the road and pick us off. Whatever they thought, Paramatma soon outdistanced brought us safely onto the strange roads that make up travel into Guyana. The roads here are long and narrow, banked not with sidewalks but with dirt, and with plenty of people hanging around outside like they do in India (with nothing to do). They stare vacantly as the car zooms by. Although it's the blacks who are supposed to be rioting, I saw only a Hindu man, young and bare-chested, striding along and swinging his machete the way an American would brandish a baseball bat.

* * *

5:28 p.m.

Try to get comfortable. Cow grunting. They tied a small log to the male goat's foot so he can't wander off. I've seen them do the same in Vrndavana, in that field by the Oriental Institute.

I don't know who is winning the presidential election here today, and I don't know what it will mean to this country. I saw a large man riding a small bicycle with purple-covered wheels. He didn't seem to care about the election, except perhaps that it provided him a holiday "no work.

Small ants crawling all over me. I ignore them until I suddenly feel their bite. You can't blow them off "they hang on for dear life.

The list of disciples I initiated in Guyana stops at thirty-seven. Some are gone. One (Bir Krishna dasa) died in a car accident.

A *brahmana* shouldn't be disturbed; he should be peaceful. Krishna said that to Rukmini's messenger. I agree, of course. He shouldn't get stirred up by controversy or debate. If that happens, he will lose his ability to be equipoised, and then won't be able to deliver the pure nectar. I told them that today. Wash his feet, then let him speak. Listen to the depth of meaning that comes despite any surface botheration.

If I sleep peacefully tonight, it will be Krishna's mercy. He takes care of me. *Sri Krishna caitanya*. Dark already.

* * *

6:10 p.m.

Paramatma dasa often wrote me that he was building me a house. I got the impression he had his own house, and next to it was this "guru's house." Just now I put my foot in my mouth when I asked him, "Where is *your* house?" He told me that *this* is his house, and the other house, his rented house, he no longer keeps. In other words, there is no separate guru's house, I am staying in *his* house. Even when I arrived I somehow had this misunderstanding and thanked him for the house. I have no desire to own a house in Guyana, but I was going along with the impression he gave me "an impression he *wanted* to give me "a euphemism.

But what he has built is very, very nice, and I have full facility here. So there is no problem; it was just a surprise. The only drawback is that all the disciples and their children must also stay here "there's nowhere else available "and it's noisy.

December 16, 12:10 a.m.

Frequent creative dreams. The last one was filled with anecdotes of funny things people do. Several books had just been published on it and it was a fad to collect them.

It was noisy in the house when I took rest at 6 p.m. The earplugs helped. Now I have another chance to hear the holy name.

* * *

Dreamt that Madhu challenged Madhava to a fight. Madhava didn't want to fight, and he said he had a headache. Madhu beat him up anyway. Then Madhava made an announcement on his behalf: "I had a headache. I didn't think Madhu would insist on fighting with me. If he tries it again in the future, I will give him a solid blow on his nose."

I came in and asked Madhu, "If you insist on fighting, what will happen to you?" As I spoke, Madhava smiled because he knew street fighting. Just wait until he was ready to fight back! Then I addressed them both. "All right, then both of you, both my sons, will be damaged. *Maya* couldn't have done a better job herself."

* * *

Pukka Pad Shorty, Active Imagination, Episode 8, Talks at the dining table and elsewhere

I was sitting at a dining table with long, tall D. Prabhu and B. rasa. I didn't have my dentures in "I had forgotten them!" and my mother was in the background.

"Thomas Merton asserted that a monastery shouldn't have more than ten or eleven people in it."

B. rasa was impressed. Then I realized I was toothless! In public! I excused myself and went to get my dentures.

Yes, I said to myself, to see Krishna in all things is not easy. We will talk about this important subject later.

Then I met M. "The danger of being mugged in Guyana or the possibility of the country rioting after the elections "they all seem unlikely now. I have a new worry. Will our flight from Guyana to Trinidad get there on time to connect with the flight to New York?"

I speculate on contingencies: will the BWIA early flight from Trinidad to Guyana be late and cause our flight to Trinidad to be late? How easy it is for them to be forty-five minutes late. Then what? I didn't want to spend the day hanging around in the Trinidad airport!

Yeah, M. heard me out, and what he said back was reasonable and solacing.

Then the fantasy moved to new heights as dirigibles flew between the window slats "or so I thought. I then realized they were large flying insects.

You poor fellow.

My sister told me things. Then a girl-woman named . . . I won't name her here. Anyway, she said, "If someone wanted to serve you hand and foot, you would accept it. I can see that about you." She was right, and that opened my eyes. Perhaps that same

false-ego willingness to be served as kings was what allowed us eleven to become zonal gurus. We reigned after Srila Prabhupada.

Gee whiz.

This is too hard to sort out. The vicious ISKCON attackers act as if they're the only ones trying to doing it.

Yes, Oona, you are right. I seem like a quiet guy, humble and all, but if a disciple comes forward and does a little thing for me, I'll accept it all and more and more and never say "Enough."

I think I deserve it.

I heard that Vaisnavas in Bengal won't even let you open a door for them. They are too humble to allow anyone to serve them.

Then what happened?

It's a secret. But at the dining table I hinted at smaller monasteries and didn't encourage preachers to move more people into them. Anyway, it was just talk.

Told the guy last night that I needed a pill to quell the pain: "I can't tolerate it." "I feel for you."

* * *

Listening to my inner voices, which tell me that despite the anxieties and inconveniences here, I should stick it out. To preach in the Caribbean is a responsibility, and I owe something to these devotees. I can show compassion for their struggles by speaking the message of *sastra*.

"Oh, that's another thing I wanted to say," I said to the subpersons who looked at me earnestly yet casually, under the mosquito net, where we rested almost bodiless, considering how we share this one form. "I see myself as a person with various interests. I want to preach, but I also want to write poems. I'm also interested in Vedic philosophy, and I like to read Srila Prabhupada's books. How to integrate into an entire person when I am put into a situation where I can only act on one of these interests?"

"I don't think having varied interests makes me less of a devotee, but I have to be honest about that. When I lecture and tend to disciples, it is, we might say, my religion. But there is more to me than that."

Raining hard and heavy. Doors and windows shut. I'm calm.

* * *

5:30 a.m.

"Single bells, single bells" "he was singing it to amuse me. I kept him in rein, though, as a servant should be kept.

Then Karandhara popped into my life, telling his subordinates that he and I were working together. Where did *he* come from?

* * *

I Can't See Him Everywhere Blues

1

& Don't know. No one knows
the old strains, the
conversation I had
with a friend.

* * *

Then we were kicking back.
I said I can't, can't
work more than this.

* * *

"Go into old Krishna conscious memories
then." Tell us.

Krishna ate the melon what
Krishna did in *Krishna* book.
Paint a picture in guru's
aSrama.

* * *

2

Krishna was king of Dvaraka
and anyone doing anything is a
part of Him "this
philosophy I don't
grasp. Does it mean
if a gruff and lovable
trombone is playing
some human blues
off the levee
it'd be Krishna conscious?

* * *

Yes, he said. Smiled too.
But I don't want a tacked-on
Krishna
but something real, Him
coming.

* * *

3

Caksus-Sastra means put on blinkers
like black shades
and say I dig the world
in Absolute Truth colors now
three modes
four miseries and
Krishna at top in Goloka.

* * *

And *Bhagavad-gita*
says whatever he sees
he sees Krishna
and God likes him
and he is never lost.

* * *

Young Krishna carries a
calf and
I love Him
His aura
Himself. "

* * *

10:04 a.m.

Tired. Hope to survive the day's activity, preferably without getting a headache. So far I haven't prepared the lecture on the disappearance of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati. I want to remind the devotees that we understand him through our Srila Prabhupada. I also want to tell of the exchanges between them, especially the last ones. They have no *Caitanya-caritamrta* volumes here, so I can't read Prabhupada's "Concluding Words." At least I know what he said there and can try to paraphrase it. I think the most important material for my lecture is the letter Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura wrote to him.

It's a struggle to be a devotee, said Haridasa dasa. I didn't quite agree with him. I said a devotee doesn't struggle with the four rules and sixteen rounds; he follows his vows. If not, he is not a high-class devotee, as Srila Prabhupada writes in his purport to the *api cet su-duracarah* verse.

I'm always afraid that I don't care enough about what I say in my lectures, and that it doesn't mean enough to them or to me. Do I say anything practical? What was the best thing I said this morning? I can't remember exactly, but something about the importance of admitting that we are fortunate to have come to Krishna consciousness. Krishna consciousness is the best process, even if we are not great at applying it.

I *could* have praised Prabhupada more, said his name more often to make it clearer. We're here by *his* mercy. *He* created our fortune.

They didn't have many questions. Silent fronts. Is it because they already know what I am saying?

This may not be so important. It reminds me of the Benson & Hedges Gold cigarette billboard ads: "The government advises that cigarette smoking can be hazardous to your health." I considered those words and their careful choice of "can be hazardous." Why not say simply, "Smoking is hazardous"? Because for some it's not? That possibility is carefully allowed.

Similarly, in my talks I have to allow that I may not really care enough about what I am saying. I may not even know what I am talking about. Also, what I write in EJW may actually be more important than what I say in a lecture. It may be the best I can offer.

Srila Prabhupada wrote his letter and received a reply just a few weeks before Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's disappearance. That's the point. Then he followed the *vani*, and that's why he is so great, why he received so much of his guru's blessing. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, the missionary, the great devotee "my words may be bloated ("can be dangerous"), forced rhetoric for the audience. I am a lecturer, but a bit reluctant.

* * *

10:56 a.m.

I did the outline for tomorrow morning's talk. You can get by with a simple presentation here. They know the philosophy, although perhaps they don't read much. They receive my words quietly whenever I speak. I am not sure "I can't read their minds "what they think and feel, but it seems they are satisfied.

* * *

Message To Dear Ones

1

& Don't forbid me, don't watch me
I am in Guyana and the breeze
moves the sheer curtains.

* * *

The men outside dig holes.
I am weak "pain in head "
but not sorry.

* * *

Day before another lecture
I made my outline
on soggy paper.

* * *

2

What can I do for these people who
hear me simply?

Blankly?

They live their duty "small houses
countrified, almost backward,
Hindus and blacks and tension and
tamas "although we are trained
to rise above it.

* * *

3

Saw one man bathing his naked four-year-
old son, one bucket and another smaller
pouring water over his little brown body, a
cloth to dry offered, a few
instructions.

I watched from above.

* * *

No, I didn't tell these people to
make a charge of the Light Brigade
on World Enlightenment Day.

I tell them to do
as they are able.

* * *

Crawling along, these ants
on my flesh, mottled and head
weak, a whitey.

Don't follow *me*

but read my books

what Prabhupada said

serve devotees

preach Lord Caitanya's message

as much as you can.

* * *

Dear ones, dear words,
expressions, can you

find something strong and live by it.
Silent
keep struggling,
as I do. "

* * *

3:30 p.m.

Chanting Hare Krishna, pacing the wooden floor to the strains of the accordion wafting up to me. Hey, it's Joey grinding out those polkas.

Here comes a maxivan down the road, carrying news that Hoyte won the election. No bad news for us because we are Krishna's devotees.

We are preparing for an initiation. I selected names. I'll reuse EkeSvara, since the first person I gave it to isn't living up to it.

Microphone encased in cement. Man across the street building a house. Goats with artistic patterns, black on sides and tan on top. They all freeze alert whenever a dog approaches. The cur's a bitch and looks pregnant and harried. Her teeth are bared, but she walks past the goats and they (defenseless) go back to eating grass.

* * *

4:08 p.m.

M. has been playing for forty minutes and is still going strong. I wish he would stop. My head has no control. Where am I going? Fog coming in. Just lie down and let time go along as I do when I have to wait for a plane. Waiting in pain. Gives me time to consider the nature of time's passage and how my whole life is passing away. I once thought I had forever at my disposal. Now I know better. M. will eventually call it quits and I'll be able to ask him help me put up the mosquito net on my bed. Another day played out.

Lord Govinda promises eternal play, variety, no boredom or fear or death, when we go to His abode.

* * *

6:18 p.m.

Taking rest early, although the house is noisy with devotees. A *loud*, one-note birdsong right outside my window. Maybe it's a frog, but whatever kind of animal it is, it has a queer whistle. That creature is not self-conscious. That's what makes it beautiful, that the creature will go on with its one note, unabashed, all night. Never bored.

December 17, 2:10 a.m.

Fourteen rounds done. M. said that when I get to America, I should give my attention to the Press workers, because they are the ones who are working hard to produce my books. But we are already in close contact through our mutual service; our thoughts come together over that. What more can I give by being physically present?

Art "the purpose is to break through for better Krishna conscious expressions. The unconscious, the creative drive "ultimately, Krishna is the source. If I can't write as a pure devotee, I can only admit struggle. Breakthrough then means confession, truthfulness, and prayer "seeing who I am, what I want, and expressing it to Krishna from my own personal heart. And through that, to help others.

Art . . . music. Straightforward presentation scheduled for 7:30 a.m., when I'll discuss what Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura means to us. He is the grandfather of ISKCON. He wanted us to preach, to be truthful and genuine, and to cooperate with others. Fulfill Lord Caitanya's instructions to the *brahmana*, *yare dekhe tare kaha Krishna upadesa*. Let us encourage one another.

* * *

Very Early Morning Jog
Alternative: *Predawn jog in ISKCON house*
& Now this light forsooth
is art on stage.
Please pray for me.

* * *

Danced, mimed
for folks
audience "Please
listen this man
prays feeling.

* * *

There's a special
wail; a little boy
presents.

* * *

Lime juice for sale
two cents each on stand
in front of father's
house.

* * *

Then we met our guru.
Remember? Same thing.
Look at slats in ceiling
and die then, in some

Room
somewhere.

* * *

Has the cloud of grief passed?
Yes, much better. They decided their
son wasn't meant to live
here long. Astrologer said
he didn't mind dying, but
it was pain for *you*.

* * *

A pineapple
smashed into jam and put
into three-sided triangular
baked
samosa.

* * *

Dance lessons and music so
when she grows up and
leaves ISKCON she
won't say she was ripped
off by her parents' religion.

* * *

Don't ask me. I am giving
all I can. Got a ticket, got
Room in my passport
for a few more stamps.

* * *

Run out of ideas?
No, never. We gave
no veto on imagination.
The train
that said
"I think I can, I think I can."

* * *

Krishna muscled in
on me as Time and
pain and bugs
until the gig is over
and I go back
alone
or with others
to dream and dance
forever. "

* * *

4:17 a.m.

I reason that I play the role of guru and that's why I have to speak Vedic *parampara* lectures. I want to do them right, even though I am not a pure devotee. I don't have to spend time describing my unworthiness. Just give the teachings.

Here, it's different.

Today I will not ride on a pony or go out and feed the semi-wild (at least not penned in) ducks of black and red. I won't flirt with the black girl across the street, and I won't pinch pennies or loaves of sugar. *Neti, neti*. Won't dig with a shovel. Will write with pen and ink and stain my fingers. Hope to be well enough to speak on Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's contribution, and on his relationship with our Srila Prabhupada. Same as I've done for thirty years.

* * *

5:05 a.m.

I plan to give initiation to a man named Vishram Narine. He came here last night with my disciple, Nityananda dasa, who has been training him. Vishram presented the collection of letters I have written to him since 1993, in which I said I was reluctant to initiate him. But I will do it. I am, after all, the soft white guru. I am the one who sits up high on the *vyasasana*.

I asked them to submit questions for a disciple's meeting. So far, only one has been turned in. This is it: "Suggest discussions about our relationship with you as disciples and each other as Godbrothers and sisters, and how to improve them."

That question again. It's a little dull. I guess I can't expect their questions to come with a new twist. They are still in the "Gurupada" mood. Well, if they can't come up with new questions, then I needn't come up with new answers.

* * *

Wonder how that Mormon is making out in Guyana. Is he getting his white shirt laundered? Preaching to the natives as I am? We have the *Vedas*, *Upanisads*, the *Gita*, and the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, all as old as time.

* * *

6:47 a.m.

Do you want to be a pure devotee, or is that too "Indian" for you? Do you want to be an artist who expresses himself in the Krishna conscious milieu but whose main aim (and satisfaction) is honesty and self-expression, or do you want to live an idealized Krishna consciousness? Whew. What questions. No one else can answer them for me.

* * *

I dreamt I was going on an journey and wanted to take a big dog. The dog was friendly, but old. It didn't seem like he was going to be much of a protector.

The dream lingered even after I awoke. Is that dog a symbol for something?

* * *

My dear Lord Krishna, I am foolish, timid, and crouched in this body, identifying solidly with it. Being in Guyana makes me more aware that I am attached to my psycho-physical persona. I am aware that the persona is played up as ISKCON guru, especially in a place like Guyana, where all the disciples are of Hindu-Indian descent. A sociologist wanted to know if we had become an ethnic church. If he saw the movement in Guyana, it might look true.

But then who am I, and what am I doing in this movement? Am I the *brahmana* guru leading the ethnic church forward in this country? I say that is not me, but I don't know where else to turn. Am I an American ISKCON devotee who belongs with other American devotees? Do I belong with the disciples of Prabhupada? If I want more association, I could always get onto e-mail. That's not really what I want. I definitely belong to the insular ISKCON world where I go from temple to temple and don't really visit any countries. What I see of Guyana is what I see from these windows. When I go to America it's pretty much the same. I'll stay for one day in Jackson Heights with disciples, and I won't venture out onto the streets. Later, I'll go to Gita-nagari.

All this would be all right if I could use my aloofness from the real world as a form of freedom and then turn my attention to the *Bhagavatam* and my *japa*. Supposedly the great benefit of living in the holy *dhama* is that the environment is as spiritual as we want our practice to be. That doesn't work for me "I can't live there. I will continue living in Ireland in my inner world.

Anyway, I have few choices. I titled a volume of EJW *Accepting My Limits*. I have come to accept my boundaries.

* * *

9:15 a.m.

Lectured before a packed house. Devotees came from various places, and not just my disciples, but Godbrother Bhutadi Prabhu. I felt relaxed, no head pain, and I spoke with enthusiasm.

Afterwards, there were two different agitating questions about the fact that one of my disciples is initiating his own disciples in Guyana. I was clear that his activities weren't authorized, but the temple president wanted "blood." I stopped there.

Later Bhutadi Prabhu and I spoke in my room. Our exchange was pleasankirtana at the airport when I left. Would I mind? I guess I would. I have heard too many stories about Hindus and whites being attacked.

Bhutadi Prabhu also said that there was certainly racial tension in Guyana right now. He said there was rioting during the last election too. Just yesterday he and some devotees went by car to Georgetown, but they were stopped by some blacks on the road. The blacks told them, "You are wearing *dhotis* and *saris*? It's just a matter of time before we get around to beating you up." Bhutadi and his party immediately turned around and left. He said that sort of thing would happen in Georgetown because most people there are black, but there's not much threat out here where we're staying.

Of course, this news didn't cheer me up. My mind went immediately to the alert. I asked him who won the election. He said it would be announced today or tomorrow, and if the Indian party wins, then there is a greater likelihood that the fighting and rioting will increase. He said the real motive is not even racial; the blacks here have a tendency to loot and rob those of other races who are above them economically. The election will provide them with an excuse.

We hope to get through safely by leaving at 3:00 Monday morning for the airport. Bhutadi broke through my illusion that everything I had heard was exaggeration.

* * *

9:23 a.m.

Mistuh, pull over. We gonna rob ya.

Tension. riots. Who won the election? Paramatma dasa didn't tell us the truth. He kept it covered so it would seem peaceful and I wouldn't cancel my visit.

So, Mistuh white scum, we gonna beat on yo face and body now.

No, please. Nrsimhadeva! (In a slightly raised voice.) Don't worry. It won't happen like that. And if it does . . . at least you've got some of EJW 17 sent up north. The world won't be deprived of your ramblin'.

* * *

Jayanti dasi writes me that because her husband feels this is the best place for him to preach and live, they have moved back to Guyana. "It is a challenge being here. It seems like each day brings a new test to pass. Therefore we have to depend fully on Krishna . . . I am mostly engaged in Deity worship and cooking at the temple. I feel happy and blissful in my new service despite the difficulties. My realization is that if I just assist my husband in any way, my position is safe. It is so dangerous here that I am praying to you to give me strength and courage to continue. It takes all of your saintly qualities to make it, especially humility and tolerance."

* * *

10:58 a.m.

Initiation tomorrow. I don't want to emphasize the guru in my lecture. Better to speak on Krishna or the holy name. Initiation means the disciple will promise to follow the

Lord's instructions, give up sinful life, and always chant Hare Krishna. How about *yesam tv anta-gatam papam* (Bg. 7.28)? It's a good verse, and the purport refers to the need to follow the regulative principles of religion. "Only those who have passed their lives . . . and who have conquered sinful reactions . . ." regulated principles of freedom. If we can't think spontaneously of Krishna, follow *viddhi*(12.9). Speak on initiation in terms of following *viddhi*. That will lead to love of God. Especially mention the holy name in that context. Chant and have faith.

I noticed in one purport how a devotee is not troubled by reverses. That's a deep quality. I probably have dormant reserves of it, but on the surface I am nervous and attentive to hear even rumors of rioting and trouble.

* * *

12:02 p.m.

Madhu is setting me up well and giving me support on how to respond to the controversies among the devotees here. I make my statements, but don't get dragged into it unnecessarily. He also reassured me that our passage from here to the airport, and our time at the airport itself, will probably be straightforward. My anxieties have faded. Getting all the way to New York in one day would be great.

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura both braved opposition and used things in Krishna's service. I have to do my little bit sometimes. The world is not a safe place. Hare Krishna. I can hear something boiling.

* * *

2:41 p.m.

Got a title for this volume yet? *The Lord reigneth*. Because it's painted on the side of the neighbor's truck.

Is there a deeper meaning?

God is in control, even here, even when the chicken-killers proclaim Him, even though none of us are aware of His full and mysterious reign. Some say the Lord is the God of Christianity or Islam, but the Lord reigneth despite our petty designations.

Actually, I liked that sign on the neighbor's truck. It reminded me every time I saw it that I can remember Krishna, and I can take Him personally into my life. I trust Him to protect me in whatever way He sees fit "protect my remembrance of Him "while I'm in Guyana. I'm no fearless preacher, so I took solace from that sign.

That the Lord reigneth means that even if some mishap occurs here or elsewhere, Krishna is in control, and I can worship Him through the mishap: *tat te 'nukampam*. A devotee finds Krishna even in material reverses, and because he continues his submissive worship, accepting the token karma he receives, he earns the right to go back to Godhead.

It seems to be a large family who own and operate that truck. They definitely use the truck for their livelihood. Just now another large truck, painted army brown, has pulled in alongside the "Lord reigneth" truck. They are loading up white bags, which seem filled with seed or sand or something, from the family truck onto this other truck. At least half a dozen men and a few women are helping. I'm not sure what their business is.

They have a big yard around their ramshackle house, and it appears to have pens in it, and I have seen chickens. Maybe they live by selling whatever it is that goes into those white bags. All the family members are strongly built and full of confidence.

Anyway, as far as I am concerned, regardless of what politicians or crazy people do, God's will is in control of every situation, and He has promised to protect His devotees. Ordinary humans think their president or the modes of nature rule, but the Lord reigneth over all, and His justice prevails, both in this world and the next. And blessed are the devotees who suffer persecution for the Lord's sake.

* * *

3:15 p.m.

You wanted the news, so you got it. The *Stabræk News* states that the PPP presidential candidate, Janet Jagan, is leading the election by five percent over the PNC candidate, Mr. Hoyte. The U.S. observers said that the elections were fair; there had been no cheating. But there is considerable concern about the long delay in reaching a final count. The PNC is particularly unhappy about this, and has started rumors that there may be foul play involved.

The newspaper said that the voting fell almost entirely along ethnic lines. Blacks voted for the black candidate and Indians for the Indian. A lot of candidates fell away with few votes. In other words, there was no platform except race. I somehow thought it would be safer for us if Hoyte won, because it's the blacks who are liable to riot if they lose.

Even in this backyard, one cow with horns pushes around the cows with no horns, and a truck passes, packed with live cows standing side by side in a row.

It's not Guyana, but the whole crazy world. Chant Hare Krishna. The Lord reigneth.

* * *

Five minutes to 5:00 p.m.

The disciples' meeting went well. At least I didn't get a headache. We talked a lot about using intelligence in approaching the relationship between us. Don't read my books and use them to push your own cause. Don't make me a collection of quotes. If you read widely and catch the *siddhanta*, you will learn intelligence. Intelligence is a spiritual quality "at least the kind we want. Such intelligence should lead to humility and cooperation, not aggression and quarreling.

While lecturing I forgot my fear of the inevitable post-election riots, the airport delays, and so on. I sailed over it all and spoke in *parampara*. After I distributed *prasadam*, I returned to this tight little room to face the same issues, looking out the same window, looking at the same canal with the same cracked clay on the same banks. And I can still see that truck: "The Lord reigneth." It's odd how much environment shapes our consciousness.

* * *

5:18 p.m.

Lots of goats and kids running along the canal bank. They come to the macadam road and hesitate. A car rushes by and the goats freeze, some falling back. As soon as the car passes, however, they dart across the road and continue along the canal bank. A boy thinks the goats are too near his yard, so he throws stones at them. They bleat and keep moving. Another boy runs down the road to retrieve an escaping cow.

Initiation is next. What name to give to someone whose name since birth is Manmohan Persaud? *Man-mana bhava mad-bhakto. Mad bhakta. Mam. Mamata. Mamaivamso.* Can't be Madana-mohana because I have already given that name. I've also given Maha-mantra, Maha-yajna, Maha-prasada, Maha-purusa.

* * *

Night Coming On In Guyana
& This way pleeze/ night action
not NYC this is
guy-anna
this mud-baked canal bank
this sweated body
the melodeon player next door
and the kazoo player too
my head
careens to
His lotus feet.

* * *

Now this way go down the same
aisle walked by Guru Maharaja
they laugh and
laugh "see?
He's on the high seat this
do-goody
writer of many
homespun books.

* * *

Forgetting his self he meeks
and the meeks shall inherit
what? Hear that bang-bang stick
against the tree?

* * *

The night imprints
the ink imprints on
previous page and the man said
even if he wasn't a Negro he'd
make music. He tried hard to hate
white men but then one
good one would come along
and ruin everything. "

December 18, midnight

Dear Lord Krishna, You are always with me and with all souls. I ask you to bring me close to You through prayer and revelation. You know how I am afraid of material suffering, especially when it is meted out by cruel demons. Does this mean that I am not willing to pay the price for *Krishna-prema*?

Please, please, I petition You like an unworthy, sentimental disciple begging his guru for mercy.

You are kind and I am slow. Please grant me the power to improve. Let us all improve. And please let me chant.

* * *

In a dream I was challenged with the reality of Krishna's pastimes. Somebody left us. I shouted to Lalitamrta and my sister, "Look, now we're left alone with Krishna's pastimes. Do you think Krishna is going to come walking in the door the way His *lila* describes? How can we believe this? Now all we're left with is this, our lack of faith." I was hoping that by saying that, someone would come to help us understand the transcendental reality.

* * *

4:24 a.m.

Most of my disciples here live outside the temples, so I encourage them to practice Krishna consciousness at home yet maintain a connection with the organized ISKCON preaching. Yesterday we discussed how my books can instruct them, but they have to be read and acted upon with discretion and intelligence. Paramatma dasa asked how to find such intelligence. It's not material but spiritual. If they read a lot, they will grasp the *siddhanta*. They can also learn from experience, both mistakes and successes.

Counting the days until we leave. Four days left. Seems like we scheduled too long a stay. The election aftermath and racial tension still make me nervous. I'll be relieved to get out. Why can't I just live here for a few more days in the ever-present moment? There's no difference between Guyana and America except in externals. I will have a heart there as well as I have one here, and my mind will accompany me through both places. I will experience the same challenges, the same faith, the same taste, read the same books. I will also do the same writing. Take advantage of wherever you are to remember Krishna. May Krishna protect me from calamities.

* * *

Body And Soul

1

& Body and soul this man
I like.

He wants me to be happy and
from his suffering comes
a light that fears no
darkness.

* * *

The saintly person must
suffer "just between him
and God.

His way isn't ours
But we've got to
find one "
a way, I mean.

* * *

2

Warm weather and cold
nice people and not nice
the indifferent money-
makers.

Engines, inane TV
the art soul
and body
he's trying . . .

* * *

our burden of God consciousness
topmost
heavy.

* * *

Smile with me, brothers,
sisters, daughters, sons
as I make light
asides
in Krishna conscious
books
Krishna conscious

looks.

* * *

I'm no angel
but I'm telling it
through the rhythms I was am born with
born of Swamiji
learning to love
at all costs
and it
costs.

* * *

3
Dawn not far away will
turn to tropic heat, to more trucks
and angry shouts and goats
and ducks
the baked riverbank
the plethora
beyond my grasp/ I
eat and rest
and hope

* * *

and sing my hymn to God
beyond all hearing to
Krishna in all things
Krishna in the heat.

* * *

Build a fire for *yajna*
give spiritual names
your soul's in heart
they say
and body you know
is here, your sweet
and burdensome
flesh and body
and blood
given by God
'cause you wanted it.

* * *

4

My Lord I bow to
You. You are my
body and soul.

* * *

You are my preferred
sweet slow chariot
may You see me at death
and me see You in Your holy name,
holy name, holy name
what else
can I do even
at best? "

* * *

Pukka Pad Shorty, Active Imagination, Episode 9, Pre-yajna Fantasia.

The *sastra*-man said, "We hereby give out these spiritual names: Gopinatha dasa, etc."

"Wait," interjected another from the fireside. "What right have you to do this? Do you care enough? Can you give them freedom from death? I know what's on your mind "it's petty material stuff, fears and desires."

"Oh, no," said the man of *sastra*. "You don't know how Krishna sees and accepts me. I intuit the same, have faith, although I am a man of part-time *sastra* only." He was not actually fully absorbed in *sastra*, but anyway, he sat on a pillow and gave them enduring names, an assignment for life.

Filled the *yajna*
made the peace pipe
and joined the mantras one to another.

Got his *Sri visnu* prayer? Got *gayatris*? Will his eye hold out? Will he take a pill if he needs to so he doesn't have to cancel this event?

The head asked these questions, and good questions there were. The doctor went to church but not to temple and the cocks crowed endlessly outside. The *yajna* hour drew nearer.

Before the *yajna* he lay down in peace and his neck and head and entire body relaxed. There was a chance he'd make it through.

ribus and ghosts
can't stop him, he is
working for the Lord
even if he expires or
cancels he'll get
through somehow on behalf

of Swami our
master.

* * *

Please, disciples
in my charge "Lord knows
these people try and have
a natural pious tendency.
But please, disciples,
four rules, sixteen rounds "
I order you from
the mast of this
ship, the forecastle.
I give the command:
no mutiny
watch out for P-boats
our ship is Safe Wake
worship the Lord of sacrifice,
and Goloka is yours.

* * *

10:35 a.m.

The Lord reigneth. I did the initiation *yajna* with many photo-takers in attendance, and at least two video cameras. It went all right, but by the time it was over, the pain in my right eye had flared up. I took an Esgic about forty-five minutes ago, but the pain is still going strong. I'm trying to recover so that I can give the two *brahmanas* their *gayatris* and meet with the three initiates.

Really playing up the role of guru. Spoke about the four rules and sixteen rounds. It's good for me to do that, but it's heavy. I'm looking forward to being free of it and relaxing with more intimate friends. Madhu is a real right- and left-hand man in the way he helps me get through these days. The songbook I used to read the *mangalacarana* prayers was literally falling apart, and Madhu held the pieces while I read the words. Then we all went for the "*Svaha!*"

I just asked for a second pillow to prop me up. Next thing to plan is for tomorrow morning when they want to have a *guru-puja*. Maybe I could sing *bhajan*s and explain their meanings. A guru should speak *Krishna-lila*, *Krishna-katha*.

I find I have a healthy sense of duty. I don't always like everything I am expected to do, partly because I doubt much of what I do carries as much weight as people make out, but I do have a strong sense of duty. I don't want to neglect anything that might help.

* * *

1:00 p.m.

Martin Carter is Guyana's greatest poet, they say. He died last week at age seventy. We told the cooks here to stop serving me deep-fried preparations. My headache took a few hours to go down. I suppose I should try to see the *brahmanas* this afternoon.

I am privileged, having been born in the richest nation, but I am not rich. I'm a guru for a poor ethnic church. I'm a pestiferous usurper, some say. Or a slouch, an invalid now, a semi. I'm also a quiet madman and a recluse. Alas.

I chose three *bhajanas* to sing and explain tomorrow morning: *Parama koruna* because they have such lovely Gaura-Nitai Deities here, *Sri Tulasi-pranama* so we can talk of the eternal residents of Vrndavana, and *gauranga bolite habe*.

Overeat? Hot stuff in gut. Too many spices. I'll need to rest if I am to see the *brahmanas* this afternoon.

* * *

3:30 p.m.

Just met with the three new initiates, ViSvambhara dasa, Gopinatha dasa, and EkeSvara dasa. All three are sweet men. ViSvambhara told me how he heard that I wasn't initiating, but he had decided to accept me and follow through on his determination. EkeSvara told a similar story. He has been keeping my picture for seven or eight years. He heard I wasn't initiating, but his wife and mother, who are both my disciples, told him to remain sincere. I told them that Krishna had answered their prayers and overcome my resistance. In their presence I am forced to speak the *parampara* in a straightforward way. I don't know what I am going to say, but things come out and they sound right.

ViSvambhara also told me how years ago, he saw pictures of me in an album one of my disciples owned, and stole one. He asked if it was all right to steal like that. I told the story of how a devotee stole Prabhupada's *maha* sweet ball from Tamal Krishna Maharaja's plate and how Prabhupada had laughingly approved.

The initiates are all householders, and they all have outside jobs, so I encouraged them to think of Krishna at work and to give the fruits of their money to Krishna.

When EkeSvara spoke, I had difficulty understanding his Guyanese accent. He kept saying "me" instead of speaking of himself as "I". Once I got used to it, I understood him better.

Now I have to meet with the *brahmanas*. They forgot to have the *brahmana* threads ready for the ceremony, so they have just made them. They only have enough string for one thread to have three strands and the other to have six. I can laugh, but I'm equally unprepared spiritually. I chanted on their threads regardless, but I told Radha-kanta, who received the three-strand string, that he would have to replace his thread with a proper one.

Radha-kanta said he couldn't do that immediately because there is rioting in the town. "In Georgetown or the local town?" I asked

"Georgetown. Maybe it will quiet down tomorrow or the next day."

He also said that this thread is rare in Guyana, and is only available in one store, which is now closed. I told him not to worry about it.

* * *

4:02 p.m.

Calm out here. Breezes. Pretty canal, a duck floating in it. Madhu on the porch playing melodeon. The rioting seems far away, but it's on my mind. They still haven't announced the election results. M. assures me that we'll bypass all the trouble Monday because we will be leaving so early. "They'll have returned home with whatever they've looted." We'll go with Krishna and pray for no roadblocks or flat tires.

These days passing slowly. I keep functioning with my lectures, resting in between to overcome the eye ache. It doesn't seem good for meditation, this schedule down here, but it will soon be done. I speak of duty, *viddhi*. Hare Krishna.

Newspapers of the last two days have expressed a kind of fingers-crossed hope that calm will prevail, but both sides have claimed victory and that has only aggravated the problem. Give us peace.

Swami spoke on subjects basic
I wanted to hear better but
at least I heard the *Sastric* truth
methinks me better run the booth
instead of post-election fears,
be sense-controlled
be fearless (duty-bound).

* * *

Staying Calm
& There's calm, he says, and I don't
know if his nervous talk
Refers to reality.

* * *

I mean, if this man can
keep the worst elements
calm

* * *

he's a peacemaker but
others are not.

* * *

So I sit it out and hear him

and think of profound and soft
moods of God conscious
poets.

* * *

Will he run out of patience "
hear the siren plow down
this road. It's an ambulance!

* * *

Could be a man lost a limb
but we keep on praying
there's a way
to get to Krishna

* * *

and it doesn't seem
to be through peace
in *this* world, Peace,
param-Santim, is with
the soul and his God and God
and His beloveds.
Please Lord
Let us remember You.

* * *

O Krishna, my soul can't die
and You will protect what's important
my remembrance
of You.
You reigneth over me,
a tiny
part
of You.

* * *

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna.
Hare Krishna.
Soft tones of the
strong one do well
each moment

of breath
until end. "

* * *

4:46 p.m.

A very dark brown cow and her young calf walked by. There's a knee-high barbed wire fence, and at first she couldn't get past it and was bellowing. She spent some time eating greenery, then tried again to step over the wire. This time she succeeded. Her calf walked under it. Then another cow came. This one seemed more experienced, and she ducked smoothly under the wire with surprising agility.

Maxi-taxis roar by, dropping people off at local stops. Are they coming from town? I wonder what's going on there.

Two ducks loiter on the hard banks of the canal. One folds its wings and nestles into a crevice in the sun-baked mud. In this house it sounds as if someone is playing the radio. I hear a newscaster. Oh, it's my lecture tape.

* * *

5:53 p.m.

I get under the net around 6:00 p.m. each night. There seems to be nothing else to do. I like to settle down early so I can get up at midnight. While under the net, I pray to Krishna to reveal to me how to act in Krishna consciousness. I read in Srila Prabhupada's 1966 New York journal and highlighted sections earlier today, and I plan to read some of them tomorrow afternoon. Each day I come out of this room, bow down to the devotees and the Deities, take a seat, and lecture. Then I return. I haven't left the house since I've been here. Neither has M. There is nowhere to go. Today devotees tried shopping in Georgetown, but were forced to return without being allowed entrance. Don't exaggerate. There is rioting, and the shops are closed.

Read that Srila Prabhupada's room was broken into. Then he got a letter from Bon Maharaja stating that there was a precarious situation in Bengal with the loss of property and life. Srila Prabhupada took an offer to move into a Bowery loft, even though he was warned by a friend. It's dangerous everywhere.

Srila Prabhupada, please accept my activities as service to you. They are obviously flawed. My desire to preach is not strong, and I have lost conviction for a certain kind of preaching. I want to reach people through my writing and to care for those who have come to me for that.

Prabhupada, you see what a worrywart I am, so self-absorbed, distracted, and physically afflicted. Still, I beg you to accept me. I have no other hope. Please give me the inspiration to cross over the inevitable troubles life hands me and to finally step on the head of Death "and mount "if not the chariot back to Godhead, at least a rung up on the devotional ladder.

December 19, 1:05 a.m.

Nine rounds done so far. That's not bad for me, since I'm under more pressure here to lecture and I've had some pain. As I read past volumes of EJW, I see the undeniable boredom that occasionally creeps into my quiet routine. That's another challenge I face "to live in the quietness and to go within. Of course, as we read Prabhupada's books, we see continual references to the preachers and how they take risks. I think of my Godbrothers crossing dangerous borders or meeting with so many obstacles in their preaching. Now it's the Prabhupada marathon, and devotees in the U.S. cities or wherever are going out, sometimes being arrested or beaten, but are accepting the voluntary austerity of distributing Prabhupada's books.

Thus it's probably good for me to be down here with this pressure and even anxiety. I too have taken a risk to come here to preach to my disciples.

Also, I have been regularly making fun of the fact that I am offered an elevated seat, and it's true that especially in places like this, such honors can tend to get exaggerated. But sitting on that seat is also my duty, as well as giving the kind of classes I have been giving. I shouldn't think of my service here as useless just because every time I come, the devotees are experiencing the exact same problems. I don't seem to be advancing very quickly either. But that is no reason to become hopeless.

Whenever I'm in the tropics, I think of my innards as melting. Instead of thinking of the guru as being a puffed-up false persona, I melt until I feel like a functionary preacher. Let me function as guru if that's what this body is for. Choose the text on which to lecture, and deliver it with all the rhetoric and earnestness you have.

* * *

3:30 a.m.

Fear. I'm trying to examine it. Excessive attachment for material things puts one into bewilderment: ". . . such fearfulness and loss of mental equilibrium take place in persons who are too affected by material conditions." (*Bhag.* 11.2.37, quoted in *Bg.* 1.30, purport)

We can't be fearless unless we are completely Krishna conscious. "A conditioned soul is fearful due to his perverted memory, his forgetfulness of his eternal relationship with Krishna." (*Bg.* 6.13 - 14, purport)

"Fear is due to worrying about the future. A person in Krishna consciousness has no fear because by his activities he is sure to go . . . back to Godhead." ()

Others are in constant anxiety about the next life. Be free of fear in Krishna consciousness.

Sounds simple. Fear is due to material absorption. A Krishna conscious person knows he cannot be killed, and in his next life he will be with Krishna.

How to be free of fear: "One who takes shelter of the Supreme Lord has nothing to fear, even in the midst of the greatest calamity." (*Bg.* 1.19, purport)

"There is no fear in transcendental realization," because even loss of life is only a material consideration. (*Bg.* 1.29, purport)

"This is the secret of Krishna consciousness "realization that there is no existence besides Krishna is the platform of peace and fearlessness." ()

A devotee knows that even danger is part of Krishna, and He is our protector. Srila Prabhupada was not afraid when Calcutta was being bombed. He knew that if Krishna wanted to come in the form of a bomb or rioter to kill him, he would accept such a death. Whomever Krishna wants to kill, no one can protect, and whomever Krishna wants to protect, no one can kill (*mare Krishna rakhe ke, rakhe Krishna mare ke*). Bhaktivinoda Thakura prays, "Kill me or protect me as You like, I surrender unto You (*marobi rakhobi jata car, Krishna dasa prata tua adhikara*)."

* * *

Body And Soul (Take Two)

1

& We are with Krishna and have
music to accompany us "
no drum and bugle for war

* * *

'cept war on fear
of being a body that must
die.
Sweet love attachment
to day and night and
heat within but
let it go.

* * *

Soul is real person
learn *Gita* lessons
from masters
and see Krishna in sacred in
everything.

* * *

No sentimental slush
I improvise and speak
of the sweetest thing and
I want to be with
You, dear Lord Krishna.

* * *

2

Let go even this

charming melody 'cause body
and soul got to part
again and again until
the spiritual body enters
Vrndavana, Goloka.

* * *

Be safe with Krishna.
Group your *abhaya*
mottos
like *japa*
Be with
us, Lord.

* * *

Sharp intake of breath
adrenaline fear
flee or fight,
anger and hate
all bunched up
you can't know
pure peace.

* * *

O Prabhupada, you came
in light
to this unworthy son.
Told me, "Do something practical." Yes,
I will. "

* * *

Pukka Pad Shorty, Active Imagination, Episode 10, Worst-case Scenarios

Suppose as the cock crows and we're on our way to the airport, we get stopped and beat on the back of the head and we die. Maybe I die thinking, "Hey, I'm an American. This isn't supposed to happen to me." Or, "I didn't get a chance to send the last dictation tapes of my writing up north." Then I might have to come back to live again as an American or as a writer in ISKCON.

That might not be so pleasant. I could be born in a family of Hare Krishna devotees who might be in good-standing, but who might not be expert parents. Or perhaps my parents will be great, but I might grow up in a bad or nonexistent *gurukula* system. Or the *gurukula* system is first-class, but I don't like it, and when I turn sixteen I run away from home and join the circus or the Mormons.

Yeah, maybe I'd meet that strong-shouldered, strong-necked Mormon with the white shirt we saw on the plane. He'd convince me to follow his path and I would have to live in Salt Lake City, Utah. While out there, I meet some descendants of Caru Prabhu, and they reconvert me to Krishna consciousness. I become a happy manager on their open farm, take care of the llamas and collect a lot of money. I really like reading Srila Prabhupada's books, and I start to preach what they say. It's all so natural to me that when I read the *Bhagavad-gita* statement that I must have been a *yoga-bhrasta* in my past life, I know that this is true.

Well, the problem with this scenario is that it's all speculation, fantasy, fiction, and I want to hear of a successful ending, how I lived happily ever after.

All right. I graduate from taking care of llamas and go to work in Salt Lake City's Govinda's. While there, I read more seriously in Prabhupada's books. I decide I want to move to Vrndavana, and when I arrive, I fall in love with the *dhama*. I decide to live near the temple, which is still operating as Prabhupada's ISKCON. I then begin to preach by emphasizing chanting and hearing. I die in the holy *dhama* when I'm about fifty-nine and go back to Godhead. right?

And *then*?

No, that I can't reveal until you're liberated. If I told you now, you would become a *sahajiya*.

Do you mean our hero gave up every last attachment to this world? You mean to say that he was no longer in love with the beautiful Guyanese sunrises or the Irish sky dramas? You mean he stopped looking forward to breakfast to please his stomach and started honoring *prasadam*? You mean he gave up feasting his eyes on tones of green and brown in the canal and enjoying the reflections of palm trees in the water?

Well, no, it's not that you have to be blind and deaf to be a pure devotee. I mean, when our hero saw such things, they drew his mind to Krishna. Yes, that's what I mean. Did you know that the sun-god has some connection to radharani? So what do you think he was thinking about when he saw those sunrises? And doesn't that canal just remind you of the Yamuna?

The one thing our hero would have done is survive those Guyanese riots way back in 1997, back in a previous life.

* * *

6:15 a.m.

Yesterday I gave the *gayatri-mantras* to two devotees simultaneously. I did it because I had pain. I asked Prabhupada to forgive me.

After I pronounced the words for them and presented them with the translation, Radha-kanta dasa asked, "What is the purpose of this?"

"What?" His question caught me off guard. "The purpose? It's to . . . say prayers. These are prayers. You might as well ask what is the purpose of the Hare Krishna mantra, or what is the purpose of *sastra*. It's to help us think of Krishna. The Muslims pray five times a day, and we stop at three of the day's junctures to remember Krishna."

I fielded the question all right, I guess, but somehow it remains in my mind with its almost dumb innocence. It's actually a profound question, and one to live with rather than to answer glibly.

* * *

In the Sixth Canto, Chapter 17, where Mother Parvati curses Citraketu, there are interesting instructions about a devotee's suffering. King Citraketu accepted Parvati's curse without complaint. Even if he is offenseless, a devotee accepts whatever happens as ordained. "A devotee is naturally so humble and meek that he accepts any condition of life as a blessing from the Lord. *Tat te 'nukampam susumiksumana* (*Bhag.* 10.14.8). A devotee always accepts punishment from anyone as the mercy of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 6.17.17, purport)

"A devotee is always eager to return home, back to Godhead, and remain there as the Lord's associate. This ambition becomes increasingly fervent in his heart, and therefore he does not care about material changes in life . . . The Lord wanted Citraketu to return to Godhead as soon as possible, and therefore He terminated all the reactions of his past deeds."

If I get a dose of suffering, it can be Krishna's mercy finishing up my last material attachments or reactions. It would purify me and make me more attracted to Krishna. I may be praying not to be disturbed in the material world, not to have a rough ride, but a rough ride might be more for my ultimate good. I am not brave enough to pray for calamities.

* * *

10:32 a.m.

The morning *bhajana* and commentary with the devotees went well. Then I sat and endured a *guru-puja*. Back in this room, trying to keep cool so that I can do a 3:30 p.m. lecture.

Right now I am looking out the window. I see some brown goats butting heads with some white ones. Neither have horns, and they are a little hesitant to bang their heads from such a distance, but they are definitely unfriendly with one another.

Today's newspaper has pictures and a story on mob action in downtown Georgetown. The perpetrators were mostly thugs and supporters of the PNC. Together they formed a crowd of 1,500. The police were able to repulse them with their Black Beret forces. The final results of the election have still not been announced. They keep reaffirming the votes, whatever that means. The delay is causing more and more agitation, and nerves are getting more and more frayed as the days go by. The opposition calls the whole procedure irregular.

* * *

11:31 a.m.

Speculations. Worries. Sitting it out. Pressure to give lectures. But don't complain. Newspaper, one per day. Pills, how many? None today. I have a head vise. If I don't feel free of it by 3:30, I'll cancel my talk.

* * *

12:05 p.m.

I just spoke with Madhumangala about the position of my disciples here. Some of the senior ones don't want to be involved in ISKCON management. I think they have a right to live the way they want, but I have to be careful how I advise them. As we spoke, I said we have stayed here too long. I have been getting too many headaches, and they are becoming difficult to endure. When headaches come, it's not only the pain that disturbs me, but the fact that if I have to cancel, people get disappointed. When I'm alone, there's no role to play. Here it's different. A group of devotees are living here just to hear my classes.

At first M. and I thought about possibly changing our departure, but I think we have solid bookings for Monday, and I don't want to play around with that given the political situation here. I'll wait it out.

The immediate result of our talk was that I decided to cancel all my classes except the one tomorrow morning. That means today I can try to ease up, and on Sunday I will have no engagement at all. That will give me a day to rest before we leave.

* * *

Stick it out

& Janet Jagan is Hindu "she won "and blacks in town are *angry*.

* * *

Don't foment on me, guy-Anna.

Let me out, me and M. and our
hand luggage and our plan for up north in
the prosperous good karma.

We want to see that ten-week-
old baby rasa, the snow the
lay back

the the the
what?

* * *

Freedom illusion, new books

Records I can't enjoy and don't want

anyway
the big meals I can't eat
but at least I can look.

* * *

This free mix of lines, M. pumping away
on that melodeon his
good cheer, near
Christmas. Guyana, don't blow up or
burn down the Election Hall or even
the Freedom House
guard them, that
"vicious bunch"
while this semi-invalid
flies out with his blues-filled
toes. "

* * *

4:17 p.m.

Ladies lounging in spacious yard under the palm trees. Maxis and cars zoom by, beeping horns to clear the road of children, chickens, goats, and cows.

The guru canceled his remaining afternoon engagements. I don't know if they understand why. He expects to be escorted out of the country by a guardian angel. This isn't Vietnam, the roof of the embassy at Saigon. This is civilized Guyana. You can expect . . .

I got through the wars and the Cuban blockade. Our ship was in dry dock, or I was too young or too old. I caught the last ferry home the night the lights went out. But sometimes I got it too "attacks, glass, bad deals, etc. It was a bad deal, for example, to put eleven gurus on top.

Just now another pen has run out. I have enough left, Captain Scott, to last me awhile longer. And a song. He decided he's a poet. Can't sustain.

Two more days. Just relax and don't look out the window much. Boy hacking with machete. Young woman in shorts. Truck passing, crowded with live cows. Waiting for my daily copy of *Starbock News* so I can see what happened in the incredibly, unforgivably delayed election.

The Lord reigneth truck is parked for the night, and it looks quiet over there. Letters come in and I reply: "Do as you think best. Serve voluntarily. I respect you."

As the sky darkens, I expect to hear that frog's one-note "Wheet wheet!" I'll be grateful to rest.

This is eternity. Or a day in eternity. I will not be sorry later that I lived here and didn't run away. Gave me a chance to look within. Hare Krishna.

* * *

5:12 p.m.

Buster, you calmed down. De roughest people is also spirit soul, and so is de goat and de lizard and de horse. But dose animals cannot receive Krishna consciousness. De humans can, although some are like two-legged *paSus*.

I'm not much better myself, pretentious fellow with a pen and a B.A. degree. Do I have a *bhakti-Sastri* degree? Am I listed in the Book Distributors Hall of Fame? Am I a GBC member or did I quit? Am I Krishna-centered or self-centered?

Read about the Lord in His many incarnations. Understand they all come from the original Krishna in Vrndavana. Even from Guyana you can tune in on Him via the spiritual television in the heart. You can receive the sound vibration of *nama-sankirtana* coming straight from Krishnaloka. You can, despite the humid climate and fears and distractions.

Oh, Hare Krishna. As this day cools down, I pray to chant with attention.

Trucks and tractors, bare-chested boys, everyone a shade of brown. The houses on stilts, lightly built. O Krishna, I see a little.

I will like to read of Citraketu's tolerance and Lord Siva's praise for him as *narayana-parah*. Maybe it will give me a drop of tolerance and fearlessness. *Abhaya caranaravindu re*. Prabhupada was also fearless.

All glories to the Supreme Lord. Two more days. read to devotees. Tell them Srila Prabhupada was a great and humble soul. Savor his life story. remember his days in NYC before the movement began? He was looking for an audience, some followers, help to spread Lord Caitanya's cause, but never certain what would develop. He depended on Krishna, and the Lord sent money and men. Srila Prabhupada had to wait patiently for awhile with very little. No one seemed interested. In his room in Mishra's yoga studio, he followed up on leads, but little happened. He thought of returning to India, but went to the Bowery instead where he began to meet interested young people.

December 20, 1:47 a.m.

Last night I took rest at about 6:15. I woke at 7:30 feeling closed in. I was inside the mosquito net, and it was too hot. As I lay awake, I began to feel the anxiety of being at Guyana at a time of political unrest. Just before taking rest, I had received a letter from a devotee here who has been searching for thread to make himself a better *brahmana* thread. His note said that all the stores in town were closed. When I woke up, I again felt the uncertainty and threat. This country could boil over into revolution at any moment. No one has been able to assure me that that's not a possibility. That would mean Madhu and I wouldn't be able to get out.

As I sweated under the mosquito net and listened to the sounds of passing cars and beeping horns and an occasional voice, I imagined that every sound was connected to the political and ethnic tension. Then I remembered Madhu's last words before I took rest. He was saying that we're uncomfortably hot down here, but when we get to New York, we will probably be uncomfortably cold. He added, "We have no idea what to expect in New York." Trying to use my intelligence, I thought how New York could be full of another kind of anxiety. I can't count on New York being an improvement in security. I knew the anxiety was emotional, so I tried to take a hold of myself by using my intelligence. Intelligence not only means seeing through the eyes of *sastra*; it also means not allowing yourself to expect anything other than the mercy of Krishna. It seems to be

a prerequisite for thinking of Krishna to acknowledge that we have no safety in this material world. Krishna is our only protector. This is one of the symptoms of *Saranagati*, and we have to make it real for ourselves.

* * *

2:50 a.m.

"Mistuh Kurtz, he dead." A bullet in his head. Mr. Smith he alive, a bee bite in a hive. Mrs. Jagan, she won, a person with a mom. John T., he recalled, an artist in a fog. Bobby Jones, a name, a golfer of past fame. The lists were weighted, the flight was nervous-rated, and he climbed the skies. Was Stevie onboard? Does it matter in the end, in the front, in the words?

Get down and pray no matter what they say. Your rounds are your ticket to Krishna meditation. Krishna is in your life as well as in His *lila*. The *lila* and *upadesa* are in the *sastra* and in the spiritual energy "for those who qualify. I am a student of the same.

O Govinda, You are the Krishna in my life. I know I often start with impure prayer, but please help me to actually reach You. I worry about my safety. Then go on, as Gajendra did, to pray for pure Krishna consciousness.

* * *

Bye Ya
& Merry men squeak
we want home, We
want our pres!
Recount!
Not now, I'm from New
Yawk
Yeah bye Ya
to this place.

* * *

I can say bye at any time
'cause I'm a sold-out
servant to my master.
The sound of mantras leaking
through police barricades
while pellets shoot
man's eye lost
save it and
his sight.

* * *

Mr. Philadelphia Q
and Bob rains and
Reebey Good is
all in Georgetown hospital but not me
I'm for Kyber Pass
no rifle among
my goods.

* * *

These riffs fit me and I'll
make peace with
Rioters in my heart
from a more distant place.

* * *

"This material world resembles the waves of a constantly flowing river. Therefore, what is a curse and what is a favor. What are the heavenly planets and what are the hellish planets? What is actually happiness, and what is actually distress? Because the waves flow constantly, none of them has an eternal Effect." (*Bhag.* 6.17.20)

So prayed Citraketu to goddess Parvati after she had cursed him. In his purport Srila Prabhupada quotes Bhaktivinoda Thakura: "If the living entity tries to understand that he is an eternal servant of Krishna, there will no longer be misery for him." If we surrender to Krishna, we're no longer under the category of sufferers (or enjoyers) of cause and effect in the material world.

I am therefore making too great a distinction these days between the unrest I feel in this country and the supposedly better condition I'll find in another country. I should be more like a true devotee who preaches in one place or another, who doesn't see the material situation as a cause of misery. "The so-called temporary happiness of the world is also misery, but in ignorance we cannot understand this." I cannot imitate the higher platform, but I definitely want to attain it. Why allow my heart to burn with attachment for a better material situation? Don't be afraid here, and don't try to rest anywhere. Every place is simply a pit stop on the road of service.

Narayana parah sarve, na katascha na vidyate/ svarga apavarga narakesu abhitiyu adarSana (*Bhag.* 6.17.28): "Devotees solely engaged in the devotional service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Narayana, never fear any condition of life. For them the heavenly planets, liberation and the hellish planets are all the same, for such devotees are interested only in the service of the Lord."

From Srila Prabhupada's purport: "Despite the disturbing dualities of the material world, devotees are not disturbed at all. Because they fix their minds on the lotus feet of the Lord and concentrate on the holy name of the Lord, they do not feel the so-called pains and pleasures caused by the dualities of this material world."

To feel such anxiety is a mistake, like when you think a flower garland is a snake. Why be in anxiety about something that is not actually real, but which is more like a dream? When we distinguish between happiness and distress in this world, considering one good and the other bad, that's illusion. "A devotee accepts the distress of this material world as happiness only due to the causeless mercy of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu . . . He was never distressed, but always happy and chanting the Hare Krishna mantra. One should follow in the footsteps of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and engage constantly in chanting the *maha-mantra* . . . Then he will never feel the distresses of the world of duality. In any condition of life one will be happy if he chants the holy name of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 6.17.30, purport)

* * *

As if in follow-up to these thoughts, I took a nap and dreamt I was in a combined Navy-devotee office with Dravida and Yamaraja Prabhus. I was putting on *tilaka*. Then someone broke into a song that sounded like a Broadway musical, which was related to something we were discussing.

When I awoke, I felt a sudden anxiety that I may not be able to leave Guyana when I want to go. Because of the song in the dream, I remembered the Broadway musical "Gypsy," and the song the man sings as a duet with Gypsy's mother: "You'll never get away from me/ even if you try." It actually made me sad. Then I realized how much I have to use my intelligence and not allow myself to give in to anxiety. It appears that my Krishna consciousness is not so much an easy or natural feeling as it is a correction of the mind by the intelligence. It's discipline, and a strained, stiff upper lip.

* * *

5:25 a.m.

I could call M. in to talk, but maybe there is nothing we really need to discuss. We know we have to wait two more days. We want to be philosophical. We "especially me" have limited energy, so no point wasting what little we have on an early-morning talk that can't change the situation. I am scheduled to speak at 7:30 this morning. I plan to speak on Citraketu tolerating Parvati's curse and Lord Siva's praise of devotees. Today if I can, I will read a little about Gajendra.

* * *

Don't look out the window
or look
down
look down, that lonesome
Road before you travel
on "

* * *

do you think you can see a supposed future?
Only imagination.
Active imagination
even
over-active, hypertension "
the milestones being birth and death then
Rebirth and
not so much in between
but the Krishna conscious tests.

* * *

O Krishna I hope to meet You
down that road
we people of the world are
crazy, I know, and
wild, so wild the police can't
contain us all. But when I look
down the Krishna conscious way,
I remember the matted grass walkway
near the entrance to that shed
the sweet shed where I
mix my
mix.

Although I'm often pinched with pain there, I float lightly on top of it and refuse to sink deep into the present. The light hearts of Hare Krishna devotees even in heavy times "be transcendental.

* * *

6:50 a.m.

I speak of my anxieties in Guyana as if there's some specific danger. There are some wild people here in Georgetown. But as I read of Gajendra's crisis, I see reference to "the great serpent of time which brings death." This serpent makes people fearful, and chases everyone endlessly, ready to swallow them up. The snake is an image that allows us to understand time and the inevitability of death. Our death. I am being chased by that demon here in Guyana. Why worry about it, then? Now that I have readily admitted my fears, I should take recourse by accepting Krishna's shelter. "If one who fears this serpent seeks shelter of the Lord, the Lord gives him protection, for even death runs away in fear of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 8.2.32)

* * *

"We are always in danger because at any moment death can take place. It is not that only Gajendra is afraid, yet the king of the elephants, was afraid of death. Everyone should fear death because everyone is caught by the crocodile of eternal time and may

die at any moment. The best course, therefore, is to seek shelter of Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and be saved from the struggle of existence in this material world, in which one repeatedly takes birth and dies. To reach this understanding is the ultimate goal of life." (*Bhag.* 8.2.33, purport)

Prabhupada states that a devotee also has to die, but a devotee's death is his last one; he goes back to Godhead.

* * *

11:30 p.m.

Latest news: The doctor came immediately after the lecture. I already had the beginnings of a headache, and as I spoke to the doctor, the pain began to increase. He told me to drink six glasses of water a day, and gave other naturopathic advice. He's against medicine, even Ayurvedic medicine, and I listened agreeably.

After he left, the headache sharpened and I took my fourth Esgic this week. To hell with just sitting around in pain. It's harder to endure down here under these circumstances.

Madhu brought the newspaper, and despite my pain, I read it. Janet Jagan has been inaugurated as the new president, but right up until the last minute they were still quarreling about her legitimacy. The person in charge of declaring the elections made a surprise announcement that she should be installed. They were still counting the votes! The newspaper says it's a complete farce the way the whole thing was conducted, and it would remind the reporter of a Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera if it weren't such a serious event. Anyway, my main worry was that rioting would prevent us from leaving the country. There doesn't seem to be that kind of threat now.

Lying down, hoping the Esgic will work, although I took it rather late in the pain stage. I did the opposite of what the doctor advised. He said let the headache continue, and rather than do something artificial like blocking the pain with allopathic medicine, find the root. *He* can talk like that, but I'm the one who suffers from the pain.

The doctor was about thirty-three years old. He was a likable person. After he insisted I drink so much water, I told him that Krishna says, "I am the taste of water." He smiled and said I could associate with Krishna all day long by drinking water. He then added that he liked the devotees very much.

But from the medical point of view, he is clearly of the "heroic" school, which insists that the body is sick because we have polluted it, and now we have to take our medicine in the form of tolerating pain while the body makes its repairs. I'm too far gone for that.

* * *

4:40 p.m.

Low point of the Caribbean tour. Sharp pain all day since 8:30 this morning. The talk with the doctor pushed it. If only I had taken the pill at the start, I might be free of the pain now. But I am always reluctant to try another pill at this late stage. It's hot, humid, noisy. Cars zoom by, beeping horns. The cow moans just outside. Why are the cars beeping so insistently? Is there some reverse in the election proceedings? A protest? I lie down awhile, then sit up again.

December 21, 3:20 a.m.

Last day in hell? No, our leaving won't be so easy. Last night I couldn't take the pain, so I became restless. Took a second Esgic and finally slept.

* * *

Camptown races
& Good morning, we are shaking
our little crew
we are in Camptown
going to the races
somebody bet on the
bay.

* * *

I bet Sats will make it
awright to the Bee Wee
counter. But I can't
say it will be a painfree
as-per-in.

* * *

Then will he eat pine
jam crushed
then will Krishna
be in my life "it's up
to me.

* * *

Down the narrow pass
the band swinging
in America the great. "

* * *

Camptown races (Take 2)
& Let's try that one again.
Same tune? Well, a little different.
We held up a banner
took a urine bottle in
back

Swami said take two
we took all
Krishna consciousness
waitin' waitin'

* * *

Remembering "pains
joys, perks, the tunes and luck
my travel mate
who loves music and therefore
he's happy.

* * *

We wait. Careful slices of
papaya and mango
a lush banana and
then the sounds
begin: goats and cars just one
more time.
Abide in His name even here. "

* * *

4:12 a.m.

While in Trinidad I wrote a letter to Madhumati and said something like, "I hope you have good adventures ahead." She wrote back and told me about some of the wild adventures they had upon arriving in Trinidad. She also mentioned that it was a "fun adventure" to be traveling with just one other *mataji* without their husbands. Since then I have been thinking about the word "adventure". It seems on the one hand that I have had my fill of adventures in this lifetime, and even this past while in the Caribbean. Nowadays I prefer to be free of them. I remember reading a letter that an Englishman wrote to a friend after they had spent a day together. The friend had travelled home, then written a note back to tell his companion that his return journey had been uneventful. The word "uneventful" seemed very British to me. It was used to point out a virtue of the travel, a blessing. I empathized with it.

Yet without adventure, what could an author write about? Well, I'll tell you what. With an uneventful life, an author can write plenty. He or she could take time to find inner adventures, adventures that appear only through routine and not through hair-raising events.

* * *

Objectively speaking, I know my anxieties about being safe in Guyana and my mental difficulties in trying to leave the country are probably exaggerated. Still, I think it has

been good for me to write them out and examine them. If I am more objective with myself, I can conquer such anxieties easily, but that's not who I am. My imagination flies off from whatever facts I hear. Anyway, sorry to have said it all, dear reader.

* * *

5:17 a.m.

"Every devotee should practice in order to chant some mantra perfectly so that even though he may be imperfect in spiritual consciousness in this life, in his next life he will not forget Krishna consciousness, even if he becomes an animal . . . Therefore, we should not forget the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra under any circumstance. It will help us in the greatest danger, as we find in the life of Gajendra." (*Bhag.* 8.3.1, purport)

Om ajnana timirandhasya. The spiritual master insists that we face the truth: "Although one may struggle for existence in this material world, to live forever is impossible." We should therefore desire liberation from the cycle of birth and death, because that's our only safety. We are meant to be safe in eternal existence. "We are making so many plans to live happily, but there cannot be any happiness in this material world however we may try to make a permanent settlement in this life or that." (*Bhag.* 8.3.25, purport)

Maya covers us with the contamination of forgetting God, in which we then make our own plans to enjoy the material world. "As long as this contamination continues, the conditioned soul will be unable to understand his real identity and will perpetually continue under illusion, life after life." (*Bhag.* 8.3.29, purport)

* * *

"Gajendra had been forcefully captured by the crocodile in the water and was feeling acute pain, but when he saw that Narayana, wielding His disc, was coming in the sky on the back of Garuda, he immediately took a lotus flower in his trunk, and with great difficulty due to his painful condition, he added the following words: 'O my Lord, Narayana, master of the universe, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, I offer my respectful obeisances unto You.'" (*Bhag.* 8.3.32)

Srila Prabhupada writes that a devotee does not see danger as dangerous, because in that position he can fervently pray to the Lord in great ecstasy. "He does not accuse the Supreme Personality of Godhead for having let His devotee fall into such a dangerous condition." There is a thin line between Gajendra's praying for release from the crocodile and from repeated birth and death, and his approaching pure submission to the will of God and to worshipping the Lord. Prabhupada admits in an earlier purport, "Sometimes, when there is no alternative, a pure devotee, being fully dependent on the mercy of the Supreme Lord, prays for some benediction. But in such a prayer there is also a regret." (*Bhag.* 8.3.23, purport)

It is important to remember that Krishna is always trying to deliver us. "He is within our hearts and is not at all inattentive. His only aim is to deliver us from material life. It is not that He becomes attentive to us only when we offer prayers to Him . . . He is never negligent in regard to our deliverance."

* * *

From the Collins College dictionary:

Adventure: (1) noun. risky undertaking, the ending of which is uncertain; (2) exciting or unexpected events. An *adventurer* is a person who seeks *adventure*.

Eventful: *adj.* full of exciting or important incidents.

Uneventful: *adj.* ordinary, routine, or quiet.

* * *

Prayer For Safe Passage

1

& A country's got to be free
and the black man the
white man the Hindu "they
gotta stand up for what's right
and all that.

* * *

I'm just one soul
with a small circle of friends.

* * *

Srila Prabhupada put us in this circle
of devotees and
doesn't encourage us
to go the nondevotees
except to
preach.

* * *

We live alone, insular, a time table
the days spent ranting
out to Krishna
the sweat pouring down our sides.

* * *

2

Oh, you gremlins, I will continue
to pray for those
vitamins to be released,
and the endorphins

into my bloodstream.

* * *

I pray for safe passage
to airport over potholes and
oceans "Carib, Atlantic
the river Styx
and the Plutonion
regions.
Please take me back to Godhead
although I don't deserve it.
One man's rant
and he leaves a trail
for others to find the way
back.

* * *

3
We will go/ we will go
a smart ride
a passport (good)
Right look on face
pills for back-up
money, phone card
appropriate friends,
the Supreme Lord to
lift us up.

* * *

But if Death jangles them bones
a skeleton dance and we can't
save our lives "the ticket's up
Cheddi went
Forbes went
Janet too
Abe Lincoln, everyone
had to die or will
as Hemingway agreed "

* * *

then we devotees will know
the paradise

of self in Lord "no more
war against madness
no more search for peace no
righteousness
that rough ride held us up.

* * *

O Krishna, to be Your soldier-monk-
poet with no disgrace
to pray those Hare Krishna mantras
to bubble out our love
O Prabhupada. "

* * *

9:50 a.m.

M. playing melodeon on the porch. He brings me another cup of coconut juice. I promised the local doctor I'd drink six cups of water and some dobs every day. M. says he plans to join the Wicklow branch of the Irish Music Society so he can enter competitions. He is excited that his playing is getting better. "This is a good place to practice," he says, meaning the front porch. While he was playing, I was lying down. I haven't been able to recall dreams. Things are fuzzy. Last day. At least no headaches right now.

Janet Jagan was born in the United States, but she renounced her citizenship in 1947 in order to live as a citizen of Guyana with her late husband, Cheddi Jagan, after whom the national airport is named.

Paramatma's daughters are named Revati and Gaura-priya. I gave Gaura-priya a ballpoint pen. revati already has a pen.

Paramatma said it would be great if I came here for a writing retreat. I mentioned the country's political unrest. He said out here where he lives, it's always peaceful. The black neighbors are good Christians and would rather protect him than give him trouble as some other blacks might. Who knows, maybe I'll renounce my citizenship and come down here. The atmosphere in Guyana is healthy, and the fruit is good. Did they think I was seriously considering it? One talks like that.

* * *

I admitted to Paramatma that down here, I am cut off from ISKCON communication. No one can reach me until I get back. Then they hit me with their latest demands and news. There are benefits to living here. P. said the ocean breeze comes straight from the Atlantic and is "very pure." Pure water, fresh air, coconuts, papayas, and no snow or ice on the roads. And as I said earlier, no e-mail, no faxes, and no phones.

So folks, it has quieted down to normal in Georgetown, or so we hear. We'll be getting out on time with reliable-unreliable BWIA. Looks good. The last I heard, the

U.S. dollar was tolerably strong, and the cold war was over with Russia. The fanatics?
Well, you never know. Better chant an extra round.

* * *

Last day fragments:

- (1) Goat on rope tethered, bleating.
- (2) Shooting and racial tension in Georgetown. When?
- (3) Madhu, while reading *My Search Through Books*, liked the definition of "free-thinker." We discussed it for forty minutes, starting with how to develop art and expression and how to steer to Krishna. "Friendly" as preaching, etc.
- (4) Radha-kanta dasa asked Madhu, "Why are you doing this (playing the melodeon)?" M. replied, "I'm going to make a record." Said he did not want to, and could not, relate to the question.
- (5) M. chanted a round after lunch thanking Krishna for the nice meal His devotees had prepared for us.
- (6) Chickens clucking . . . clothes, mostly white "looks like diapers "on neighbor's backyard clothesline. Billowing in breeze.
- (7) No chimneys here.
- (8) M. suggested I take rest by 6 so I can be ready to leave at 3:00 a.m. We are getting down to that. The ever-present moment "the present "until the end.
- (9) See Krishna in all things? See what you see. Steer to Him.
- (10) read *sastra* as free-thinkers *within* Krishna consciousness; get deeper appreciation in your own mood.

* * *

Now's the time
& (Last day?)

* * *

Now is the time sweatin'
for fathers
we hope you enjoy it and
thanks.

* * *

We heard in '66 and they
say he's a genius
the bird of many notes,
playing that way those
Riffs "O Krishna
I don't want no interference.

* * *

Madhu sees me looking down through bifocals.
Now's the time "he brings the dob juice early.
Well, I'm not dizzy
not like this "
not in Guyana. Janet promised
the government would be inclusive.

* * *

In the meantime, Krishna consciousness
Revolves.
We want to be with our
master now not
later "sweatin' no jive just
eternal service.

* * *

In the old days
when *devas* visited here "one
flag under Yudhisthira "
Krishna consciousness flourished.

* * *

I can't condemn or judge
the state of it now, but as our master said,
I try to "encourage them more and more."

* * *

When I play Madhu picks up his own horn
and the cow bellows most unhappy.

* * *

Krishna, Krishna in trance of dull
Routine sweating sticky bare
feet on wooden floor.
Prabhupada was preaching back
in 1944. "

* * *

3:27 p.m.

Whiling away the hours on our last day here. The wind is up, and it knocked over the vase of artificial daisies. I pace my *japa* around the main room before Gaura-Nitai. A delicate *tulasis* ways on her stem. Trucks go by and I imagine things. The goats won't leave here by tomorrow. Paramatma's wife is making us travel snacks. Madhu says we will eat a fruit breakfast at the airport "you know the scene as you wait for the plane's arrival from Trinidad. It's usually late, and we need to make the connection from Trinidad to New York City. I will be trying to solace myself that getting to Trinidad will be itself enough to accomplish in a day. If we go all the way, great. There is no rush for me to be at Gita-Nagari by Christmas. I can arrive whenever I arrive. The main thing is to keep my stress levels down and to keep on living.

The *main* thing is *Sravanam kirtanam* followed by *Krishna-smaranam*. For that I can be in Trinidad, New York, Pennsylvania, or even Guyana. Anyway, just let me make a quiet, efficient, safe exit, and move on.

* * *

It gets dark here by 6 p.m. I'm simultaneously relaxed and tense, on hold. As if I'm not really living while here. But I am. It is time spent, devotional life, and these are sweet, pious people.

* * *

4:56 p.m.

Satyavrata prayed to Matsya-avatara, addressing Him as the supreme spiritual master. God is the original spiritual master, and the guru is His representative. Yes, He is the original spiritual master of my heart.

Goats cry like sad humans. The kid follows its mother at every step; it won't let her go anywhere without following her shadow. That's a stage of life. I'll see something similar in that little baby tomorrow in New York City. His mother told me he's colicky and suffers. He's helpless, his mother said. She sees the suffering of a newborn and says she is in no illusion about it, although she loves her child. Father goes to work to earn for them.

Through all that, this guru comes flying in from the tropics with tales of his adventures. Then he'll want to be left alone in a room to sort out his mail.

I already have six or so pieces of mail, but I don't want to read them now. I am tired of advising people, pumping out rhetoric. I'll do it when I get to the next place.

* * *

M. talking with the little girls here. They are becoming less shy. Madhu is a daddy too. They like hearing him play his melodeon.

Swami, you wear a turban?

Will you sit on nails?

Ah, he's not that kind of Swami.

"My master told me preach

in Krishna consciousness."

December 22, 1:40 a.m.

Dog barking constantly for the past hour. I wonder if the barking woke others. I've been up since 12. I have already chanted fifteen rounds. Before that, I thought clearly that I should aspire for writing more "formidable" or structured literature. Then I decided against that. Whatever I write will never be equal to Krishna Himself. I am aiming only to please Him, and to do that I have to write honestly.

Bringing people to Krishna consciousness is the best thing we can do, yet a person comes of his or her own accord. Maybe I can help maintain people. Maintain myself.

Thinking of lectures I'll give from January 8 - 11. The guru in his more sophisticated, more demanding performance in America. First get through the upcoming travel.

* * *

2:52 a.m.

May there be no brigands on the road. May "but how much should I pray for? May I learn my lessons. May I chant inner, vital Hare Krishna mantras. May such mantras become a nonstop prayer. May I endure pain without so much distraction from the center. May I pray in faith that the self-soul does not perish. May he go to Krishna and Prabhupada when he leaves this body.

Remember Gajendra, Prabhupada, the *gopis* "at least their names "in love and while seeking protection. Like Gajendra, I start by seeking physical safety from the only One who can protect us, and my prayer goes all the way to hopes for devotional service.

* * *

4:38 a.m.

The ride was okay. Now on airport queue. I was alone in back of car, eyes closed or looking up at sky. Calm. restless. A long drive. Now nervous amid people passionate even though it's *brahma-muhurta*. In the car I thought of my Radha-Govinda. I hear someone say "canceled" and I get nervous. Let them say "crash" and I'll say Hare Krishna, my all-encompassing prayer. We're on flight 484. There is a shorter queue, so people get into line for other BWIA flights thinking to convince the agent to take them. Sign mentions limited size for cabin luggage. Some people "merge" toward the front of line. Don't exaggerate, and don't hypertense or flip out.

* * *

New image airport. Oh! There is that Mormon we met in Trinidad. He is with three other Mormons, each wearing a white shirt and tie, each a beefy guy. He looks happier in the company of others of his kind. I heard men talking behind me, saying the election was a rip-off "or why did they swear her in in secrecy? Waiting for breakfast. I said some nonsense to M. about Mormons. I should shut up unless I can speak properly.

O Krishna. So far so good. We now have our boarding passes. The BWIA agent, a young black man, kept furrowing his brow at us. BWIA makes its agents wear tasteless, tropical-print neckties. Our saffron is definitely a more pleasant color. But that doesn't make me a *sadhu* just because I wear it! remember that.

Can't write absolute, ecstatic revelations. Can't pay that price. As I said, I was thinking of my Radha-Krishna *murtis* and knew I wanted to live with Them. Can't see myself running around a lot, giving lectures and seeing people in various places, not at this point in my life. Time runs out on guys like me. So where's breakfast?

* * *

I didn't like how the Hindu-looking guy inspected my passport to see if it were bona fide. This was *after* immigration. He looked at it, pressed it, turned it around. Anyway, it's real.

When devotees came into the hall, I thought, "Oh, boy." Was I ashamed of them with their *dhotis* and big shoes, the ladies in "old-fashioned" Indian *saris*? I was seeing them from the worldly stand point. And what about me? What do *I* look like from that point of view? Then I realized that these are my people. I went and spoke some last words with them. Paramatma told me that the country is becoming better developed (but he always says that). Krishnacandra wanted to take a photo, and I agreed. They liked that. We ate fruit, and I left a lot behind. I said to one devotee, "Be a good devotee," and to another, "Be a good example." Someone asked when I was coming back. I have no plans right now. Then we walked outside, a light rain sprinkling, into another building where the terminal is. The devotees couldn't come with us. I turned and waved farewell. I shouldn't be so uptight in public, but I'm usually not so ostentatious with good-bye scenes.

Now M. and I are dumped off into the departure lounge. The check-in area is new and air conditioned, but this place hasn't changed in all the years that I have been coming here. Fans overhead. The man behind us is speaking with a loud Guyanese accent, making his pronouncements about politics, Indians, racism, and other topics. First light in the sky, although the sky is filled with dark clouds. They are talking of Janet Jagan "don't like her.

The guy behind me is bragging. He seems to be the kind of person who talks not only to his companion, but loud enough that others can hear and appreciate him. He says he knows some ambassador and that he got a contract to write a book on African-American trade unions or something. Now he's talking about the mismanaged election. Srila Prabhupada told us we shouldn't be interested.

* * *

* * *

6:20 a.m.

The plane is here and appears it will leave on time. The sun is up. A captain went out to a plane; maybe it's ours. read verses in the eighth chapter of *Bhagavad-gita*. Krishna is clear: whatever we think of at death, we attain as our next destination. I liked reading it, and I tuned out the guy behind me, although the harsh loudspeaker announcements

threatened to break my absorption. Hare Krishna. When I went into the bathroom, I thought I heard Madhu chanting *japa*. It was some other sound that I had identified as the Hare Krishna mantra. You could say it was an auditory hallucination. I'd like more of that! In the car coming here, Paramatma dasa sang Hare Krishna for a little while, and I liked that too. At the end of life, people sometimes chant for the one who is departing. At death, we may not be able to do it for ourselves.

* * *

6:40 a.m.

Here it is again, the Guyana squeeze. Waiting in the departure lounge through a delay. It's hot.

The Liat Airlines flight is now queuing up, so we won't be able to queue up until they get out. Only one line, one agent, one squeeze.

Guy behind me talking away with a man who sounds like a Hindu "friendly village talk. I wonder if I will make the New York connection since the plane from Guyana won't leave on time.

* * *

7:03 a.m.

Sitting in the plane finally, but we still haven't left, although the departure announcements were made some time ago. What's the delay *now*? Windows covered with beads of water from the humidity. I see a guy standing outside with a paddle to wave us off. A cool Trinidadian guy sings snatches of songs from his seat. Another passenger fans herself. No air conditioning here.

Sign: "Welcome to Guyana. We you."

Finally the man raises two red paddles, and we start to move. A good-looking and very young steward does the safety and emergency features demonstration. I'm writing out of nervous energy, alternating this notepad with a drawing pad. Hare Krishna.

* * *

7:35 a.m.

Madhu struck up conversation with a young white man sitting across the aisle from us. He's a musician too, and he and Madhu are talking about that. A devotee is friendly. Before that, he was listening to Irish music on earphones. A little of it was leaking out, and I thought of Jimmy Duncan and what a wild, undomesticated Irishman he was.

O Krishna, this material energy is "wonderful" and strange, but ultimately, it annihilates everyone and everything. At the end of Lord Brahma's day, everything is wound up.

You get old. You . . . die . . .

* * *

Saw over a man's shoulder this magazine headline:

¡Frank Sinatra ha muerto!

81 Anos

Mujeres cran su pasionsu fortuna era de million.

Back in Trinidad. One and a half hours before our scheduled flight to New York.

There are birds inside, wild swallows!

* * *

Frank Sinatra "death finally got him.

The young musician Madhu met on the plane was from England, but his girlfriend lives in Guyana. He likes it there and says he may move there. It's a simple place, but I wouldn't want to live there myself. I'd prefer to go back to Ireland and to my little Radha-Govinda and Srila Prabhupada and my solitude. In the meantime, I can serve in Northeast U.S., trying to enliven my friends and disciples in Gita-Nagari and Baltimore.

* * *

It's very crowded here. We found a seat, but they just announced an "assembly call" for our flight to gather at Gate One. A baby wailing. I wonder how that baby will endure the flight. Faces interesting "karmic twists of age, race, clothing, and style. It bewilders, threatens, lures, repels. First-class and others getting on the American Airlines flight. Don't take too many bags on. It's a controlled pandemonium, but I am grateful we are here, and not late out of Guyana. The Lord reigneth and allowed me to do my Caribbean *yajna*.

* * *

11:15 a.m.

On plane, five hour plus, from Trinidad to New York. Thank God everything went smoothly. "Uneventful," they say. I got a right-eye twinge and took Esgic an hour ago. But that's expected.

Movie on. Guy walks in cemetery . . . I thought again about writing fiction or my own version of Kierkegaard's spiritual books . . . but . . .

I keep coming back to EJW.

With plenty of poems.

I don't want to do something too daring. Keep close to Krishna.

* * *

One hour and twenty minutes to go. Spoke with M. about what we will do during this next month in America. I hope it will be relatively uneventful. They just put on some movie called *Conspiracy Theory*. It's a mad, action-packed crime thriller, "too exciting" for my senses. It reminds me that if you want to give a reader a riveting experience, you

have to make up a story, and when it's over, make up another. Or, like Chekov, you have to invent characters. I am not inclined to either fictive plot or fictive characters "I don't have the talent for it, or the capacity to maintain it. It takes too much energy, that kind of writing. I am more committed to giving my prime time, physical and mental, to *japa* and reading *sastra*.

* * *

One-and-a-half-hour car drive
two-and-a-half-hour wait
fifty-minute plane ride
two-hour wait
five-and-a-half hour plane ride
waiting at the baggage claim and for M. to get through immigration
Ride to Jackson Heights "
about fourteen hours of journeying.

One Esgic so far. Tomorrow I want to simply stay indoors and putter around, write a little poetry, answer a few letters, and depend on Krishna: the Lord reigneth.