

ELECTRIONIC BOOK

By Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami

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Every Day, Just Write

Volume 3

Our Sojourn in Tapo-bhumi

December 30, 1996 - February 9, 1997

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

Prabhupada Nectar v. 1-5

Japa Reform Notebook

Qualities of Sri Krishna

The word *tapo-bhumi* refers to India and it means the land of austerity. I experienced a particular kind of suffering during my visit to India in 1997 that is recorded here. I hope it was purifying. I know that I committed many offenses when I was in the holy *dhamas*, to the *dhama* and to the devotees. My reporting of the same is also unredeemed. I can only ask forgiveness from the devotees for my transgressions and a prayer that I can cease them in the future.

Foreword

December 30, 1996

Aniruddha dasa has left Inis rath and I'm about to leave tomorrow. My persona and I are feeling sad to leave this peaceful scene overlooking the lake. Yeah, so sad I could die. That's it, I'm sad I'll have to die and everyone else will too.

Well, brother, hitch up your *dhoti* and don't worry about it. We're starting out. Onward to London and the friendly faces there.

Aindra singing on tape as I write this. Conches blowing, echoing through the *mandira* Prabhupada built. Yes, I will die, and I hope that's where "Vrndavana-dhama "but I have thousands of miles "and pages "to go. And many days with my head filling up with pressure and stealing my time. But don't worry, I'll get my licks in.

Someone is down at the quay waiting for the rowboat. Clear sky clouding over. Slow flowing days

and nights "pink clouds, blue

Krishna's peaceful

harbor.

Facing the island across the lake I

see boats pushing off to cross

the strait and a two-week-long guest,

a spiritual seeker, finally leaving, his
pack on his back.

Water shimmering now as the blackness

moves in over

the Kerry cows in the grass.

December 31, 1996

12:05 a.m.

During the night I had one dream after another about *babajis* chanting. I experienced how it felt from the inside "they weren't eating but were sustaining themselves simply on

the chanting. In one dream I joined them, but I felt the challenge of convincing myself that I was pleasing Prabhupada. I reasoned in the dream that although he may not have explicitly taught *babaji* life (and even seemed to teach against it), it was something that I had to follow with confidence, surrender, and trust that it was my unique calling. I thought if I accepted my life totally and sincerely, Prabhupada would accept me.

As I woke, it occurred to me that these dreams are what are called "compensatory" dreams. That is, dreams that fulfill something we are unable to have in waking life. My dreams contained good detail, such as how people tried to take advantage of the *babajis* and how they were examined to see whether they were actually performing austerity. As I practiced this *bhajana*, one disciple found out about it and wanted to join me. This was a test for me because I knew devotees would complain that I was influencing others to give up their regular service.

It's interesting that I should have dreams like this the night before beginning the process of going to India. Today we will go by car to Dublin, then board a plane to England, and in a few days, go to Jagannatha Puri. I am not going on a solitary tour but on a preaching tour; I am not going to emphasize *babaji* life but *gosthyanandi* life. The dreams provide a contrast to my upcoming reality.

* * *

Dear Lord, I'm reading *Krishna* book and desire to enter with faith and taste. I read the prayers made by the sages who saw Lord Krishna at Kuruksetra during the solar eclipse. This particular prayer reflects my own thoughts:

Having concluded that Krishna was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the sages addressed Him thus: "Dear Lord, we, the leaders of human society, are supposed to possess the proper philosophy of life, yet we are bewildered by the spell of Your external energy. We are surprised to see Your behavior, which is just like that of an ordinary human being and which conceals Your real identity as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and we therefore consider Your pastimes to be all wonderful."

"*Krishna*, Chapter 84, p.

Please grant me the vision to worship Your pastimes as all-wonderful, as the factual science of Godhead. They are not mythological. I am a tiny, bewildered creature. Unlike the sages in *Krishna* book or the *babajis* in my dreams last night, I am unable to perform *vairagya*. I live in comfort with amenities, and I seek to be insulated from stress to avoid the pain of headaches. Still, You are available to me in an easy-to-take form if I hear and chant. And You have provided me with the opportunity to preach and to help others understand the true mission of human life.

* * *

10:45 a.m.

Scheduled to leave the house in forty-five minutes in Manu's car bound for the Dublin airport. Everything is packed and I am now facing Srila Prabhupada's empty *vyasana* on the equally empty altar. Prabhupada is in the "On Tour" luggage

and ready to roll. I asked him to enter *samadhi* until we can worship his form again, which should be tonight at Guru-daksina's house in London. Until then, let me recall him and chant or do *something* to maintain my connection.

* * *

1:45 p.m.

Approaching Dublin. Live for the moment and feel your cold *toes*. Manu said there's a debate Friday in London between ISKCON and the *rtvik* proponents. That's the day we fly to India, but now it's on my mind. My debate will be with my inner critics and I hope it will be short.

Before leaving Manu's house I read a few random pages in *Shack Notes* "lively, good writing. Talked about death, *Krishna* book, poems.

Snow on the ground and flurries in the air. Hope it doesn't delay the flight. Was playing the nervous game of noticing cars ahead of us slowing, which means possible delay to the forward movement of *this* car. And the clock "its tedious marking of time.

Hare Krishna, O Krishna.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

Gate 27, Aer Lingus. Heavy snow falling and overcast. To get to the gate we had to pass through shops "a bewildering number of them. In some parts of the airport you're surrounded by open shops. You don't even have to enter them through a door. They're all around you and you can hardly find the trail that leads to the departure gates.

Sign describing Seamus Heaney as the winner of the Nobel Prize for poetry, then the names and pictures of other Irishmen who have won it. Yeats looking young and self-consciously handsome, Shaw looking old (he lived to be a hundred), Beckett, haggard and haunted, and Heaney himself.

No words for Manu other than an embrace and, "I'll be back in April."

* * *

A woman just approached me and asked questions for a tourist questionnaire. I didn't mind answering them, but it wasn't preaching. I said "Krishna" and "Hare Krishna" a number of times and she said I didn't look fifty-seven. She asked if I was happy in my religion. "Yes, I feel secure and fulfilled." She asked when I joined. "1966." "You must have been one of the first to join." She figured that the Hare Krishna movement was thirty years old. Yes, I'm now old and feeble. Or better, fragile. I told her I wrote a hundred letters while I was in Ireland.

On board plane. Christmas music. "O Christmas Tree!" I have to focus. Take a risk that reading will bring on a headache and open the *Krishna* book. Otherwise, I'll be stuck mildly coasting, spacing out, skipping along the surface of the *maha-mantra* while the carols play in the background.

January 1, 1997

7:30 a.m.

After surviving the trip to England as well as arrival chat in the living room of Gurudaksina's house, I went upstairs and promptly got a headache, the last one of the old year and first of the new. The room was uncomfortably cold. I endured the night, but could not get up at midnight. With my earplugs in I heard revellers' fireworks and police sirens, but it was muffled and not so disturbing.

Well, here we are where we expected to be on this day. We have again managed to stumble into the New Year with no radical change for the better, but steadily holding onto Prabhupada's lotus feet.

* * *

Free-Write '97

Another first for the year. Accuse me of loop-de-loop, loop dela. Bank holiday "can't get a typewriter. Anyway, they don't sell them anymore; only laptop computers available now.

Accuse me
of not taking care of a mother with Alzheimer's,
of Mickey Mantle
twelve zones
GBC man
not fighting hard for
ISKCON
in ISKCON
of past-life infamy
of avoiding the truth.
You mean?
Yes.

I mean, no bad words need enter my prose. I can avoid them easily. I can write like a devotee, even though I'm not one.

Harry James and Betty Grable jokes,
and Wa Wa "Sugar Blues"
my man laughs and I say, "Oh,
the truth."

Krishna book, I read Vasudeva praising the Lord according to what he'd heard the sages say "that Krishna and Balarama are everything. Vasudeva repeated it out of love for his boys. They smiled and said, "We are your sons, but what you say about Us, that We are everything, We agree in toto. However," They said, "Everyone is everything. All is spirit. *Advaya jnana*."

Cone with whip cream for dessert, and me, a persona greedy for sweaters, goods, hats, candy canes, praise, no bad news, stretch socks, easy journey to India and met and escorted by police from Bhub to Jag and put in a hotel there where you can do these f.w. each day of the remainder of your life.

Krishna, Krishna, the Truth. Don't go to Gambhira if rough-necked, ruffian rip-off priests there will hound you for money, and you can only peek anyway into the sacred

room. Ready for a fight? We've got our Narayana-kavaca, Rupa-Raghunatha and others to watch out for the *pandas*.

* * *

* * *

3:55 p.m.

They just bought me a good, loud-playing portable tape recorder, and now I'm using a borrowed typewriter. Well, what do I have to say? That Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and to serve Him is the perfection of life. The truth is in the *Vedas*. It is as simple as that. You work at it and say what you can to the people of the world. Don't stay away from hard preaching.

But sirs, I do get headaches, you see. Therefore, I can't attend your meetings, preach several lectures a day, or go into the streets. I have done that in the past, but now I have to slow down as I approach old age. Face it. I advise the younger ones who also feel ill that they needn't push themselves beyond their capacity. Do what you can.

Hell, I'm producing thick books. Srila Prabhupada says everyone has to be active. If you want to go to the spiritual world, you must act. If you want to go to hell, you have to act. Even if you want to stay in this world you have to act. Action brings realization.

* * *

Night of first day of year
ended,
I am here still,
still heart-beating
'tho everyone from long ago has
passed on,
gone from here but the souls
leave and then come back.
Hayagriva dasa gone and returned?
Or where is he? Is he *there*?
with the Swami?
In Goloka where
night and day are perpetual
and there is no fear
or death
or unhappiness.

* * *

Night notes on earth, cold this
first day of year, London 1997.

* * *

O time you are arbitrary
and we track you by calendars.
You are Krishna and can't be changed,.
Krishna and Radha dance
beyond time "a night of *rasa*
for a day of
Brahma.
Night notes,
prayer,
Hare Krishna
and then you go.

January 2, 1997

1:05 a.m.

Alarm didn't go off. I am well prepared with my topic and references. This little space to say hello and keep the hand moving.

It's January 2nd and I have a shopping list. I feel like I'm trying to arrange my life into paper bags or well-organized suitcases these days. Of course, I have my protected and sealed inner compartments, and I have enough money. Visa and face intact, back to India.

I am Prabhupada's *Sisya*. Do I fight hard in ISKCON for ISKCON? Do I remind people not of Prabhupada but only of myself? So I've been accused.

I don't now the answer to that one. I only know that this traveller tries not to hurt others. He listens to Prabhupada and hopes things will get better. But I don't know "going back to Godhead requires rare qualifications. That's my big question: how can I make more progress? I mean, me, with all my limits? Can I even *wish* to go back to Godhead? Please help me, Lord. I'm so fragile and tender footed, afraid of austerities, wanting life to be painless. I know everything is there in the chanting and hearing. And in carrying the burden for the spiritual master. He said, "You have to do *something* for Srila Prabhupada." It's a rocky path, but I have faith that it is made easier by hearing the transcendental message and the holy name.

* * *

A Dream: I asked Srila Prabhupada about the changes in his movement

I was walking with Prabhupada and asked, "Prabhupada, are you aware of the changes our movement is going through, that there is basic conflict in the approach or attitude toward Krishna consciousness?" Prabhupada said he had heard about this. "They were discussing it yesterday," he said.

I said, "I think there is something healthy about a movement going through such basic changes."

Then he went to his room to lie down. He indicated the floor. I was his servant, so I asked, "Should I take the mat from the bed?"

"No, go and get it from the other room." He said it with a little anger in his voice. I was afraid I had disturbed him with my earlier question, but I asked more.

"Some devotees feel that you aren't present in the movement anymore. I mean, they have been saying this since your disappearance. They also say that the managers are trying to take control."

Prabhupada didn't say anything. I hoped he wasn't annoyed with me.

In the meantime, I was busy botching up my service "I was supposed to be taking the blankets off the bed. I couldn't seem to remember which way he wanted things done; I was too absorbed in asking troublesome questions.

While asking Prabhupada my questions, he looked worried, but his general attitude seemed to be that we have to live in the present. Whether Prabhupada knew the future after his disappearance, he knew that we have our free will to follow his movement or not. In 1974 there was no such thing as a split in Prabhupada's movement. He said there was only sincerity and insincerity.

* * *

This dream may have come because I've been thinking about the controversies here in England "the *rtvik* debate and the other ones. It's so odd to be thinking of those things when today I have to speak my bit to a roomful of devotees who consider me their spiritual master. They may have faith in me, but I can never consider myself qualified. rather, I simply endeavour to point them to Prabhupada and Krishna. rupa Gosvami says even a low-class man can light the wood in a *yajna* which will purify the heart. I try to act without pretense. Time would see through it eventually if I tried to bluff, and that would mean disaster.

* * *

* * *

12:30 noon

The disciples' meeting went well, although I felt the audience was a little stiff. There weren't that many "maybe a dozen "devotees. Or perhaps it was me who was stiff. I was too well-prepared, too structured or even formal. It was an officially important topic, a typical Satsvarupa talk stressing *sadhana*. What else is there to talk about? I simply have to deliver the goods and I feel I did that. If they would only listen carefully to what I said, they would benefit. They all know what I'm talking about. As I spoke about Vrndavana I thought of Parasurama dasa (who was present) and who knows Vrndavana better than I do in terms of living in the *dhama*, going on *parikrama*, and so on. Anyway, I did what I could.

* * *

4:45 p.m.

Second day of the year. reading the opening pages to "Prayers of the *Vedas* Personified." I love how the topic is passed from higher to higher authorities. Maharaja Pariksit asks Sukadeva how the material mind and words can know the Absolute Truth, which is beyond matter. Sukadeva replies by saying that Narada once

asked this same question of Narayana Rsi at Badarikasrama. At that time, Narayana Rsi replied by saying that the exact same question had been discussed by the four Kumaras on Janaloka and that Sananda-kumara was chosen to answer the question. When Sananda began his reply, he referred the topic to an even earlier and higher discussion: when the personified *Vedas* prayed to Garbhodakasayi Visnu.

I love it. It's better than a spiritual fiction. We climb the increasingly cold and snowy mountain to where the ascetics live and meditate. Up we travel on yogic air currents to Janaloka where four eternal *brahmacari* boys tell us how the *Vedas* Personified approached the great form of Visnu on the Causal Ocean at the time of creation. No fiction can match that, no dream, nothing. And no truth is more solid than that passed down in *parampara*. If we are lucky, we receive it even here, sitting under a skylight in a London attic. Beams from outer space unfold as *Krishna* book. As Srutadeva prayed in the previous chapter, "You are always with each one of us in our hearts. It's up to us to realize it, by Your grace, but factually You never leave us."

* * *

Shopping items in London before we go off: sturdy rubber-covered Duracell flashlight, two Sony dictaphones, a new portable tape recorder so I can hear Srila Prabhupada's lectures as long as I live. All packed in my Delsey and Samsonite suitcases. Oh, and a new saffron sweatshirt to use carefully in His service. O master, I desire to serve you, although my service is not yet unalloyed.

* * *

January 3, 1997

12:55 a.m.

Beginning of a long day for me. Stayed in bed until 12:30, then got up and read "Syamantaka Jewel." Lord Krishna in Dvaraka was addressed by the residents as Yadunandana, Narayana, Yashodamata, and Damodara. They know Him to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead and they are proud that they can see Him every day. They told Him the sun god had come to visit Him. He smiled and said, "That is not the sun god, it's Satrajit." Later in this chapter Lord Krishna fights with Jambavan who, covered by attachment to his child and his anger, could not recognize his master. When Jambavan rendered service by fighting, however, Krishna revealed Himself.

I'm feeling an auspicious wave lately of exclusive interest in Krishna conscious topics. That gives me a non-hypocritical position for preaching. Yesterday when a devotee told me she liked to read *Time* magazine for its occasional topics relevant to Krishna consciousness, I said to myself, "Why? It's not necessary." Fulfill your interests in Krishna conscious reading and hearing.

This same devotee went to India at Karttika. While there she saw a body being cremated on the bank of the Yamuna. She mentioned it in a letter to me. She was moved when the relatives were crying for the departed husband and friend. But the brown body

went up in flames and the skull appeared in white ashes. Nearby a pack of dogs fought over the intestines of a recently cremated human.

* * *

5:50 a.m.

I have been keeping a separate notebook which I've labeled "What to write in India '97." On December 22nd I was saying that I should try directed free-writing because that would be compatible with a pilgrimage to India. I wrote this:

"One goes on pilgrimage to India with some kind of focus, usually how to be more Krishna conscious. You beg and pray for insight in the *dhama*. You can start by asking yourself what do you want to achieve from the visit to Jagannatha Puri and Vrndavana? It may not be what you expect. *It's not something you already know.*

"But be open to and willing for Krishna to reveal that purpose to you in His *dhama*. "*Dhama*" also means the place where Krishna resides. At Krishna's birth, the *dhama* was in Vasudeva's heart (see *Krishna* book p. 28). Do you dare ask Krishna to appear and direct you? I think you should."

Since writing that I've decided to go on with the format of *Every Day, Just Write*, but the idea of focus, of looking forward to Krishna directing me in the *dhama*, is good. Don't just go there thoughtlessly, but hope to improve your Krishna consciousness. Writing should be for that.

* * *

11:25 a.m.

Very gray sky, sparse snowflakes floating. It looks like we're in for a heavy downfall. I'll try not to worry that our plane won't get off the ground today. Better to sit here and be Krishna conscious.

Madhu and Bhakti-rasa were watching *Mahabharata* TV episodes, so I went and joined them. Hindi voices and English subtitles. The special effects on the battlefield were well done "the arrows meeting in mid-air and splitting each other, the sword play, the elephants, club fights, blood, death. . . But I don't much like all the gore and sport. Madhu loves it.

* * *

Heathrow, British Airways gate, 2:50 p.m.

We met Jnanagamyia in the airport. He's on the same plane as us, scheduled to depart at 4 p.m. to Delhi. Then a few moments later we met Rtatvaja Maharaja, who was ahead of us on the line.

As we were standing in line, one of the Indian British Airways employees suddenly came up to me and ordered that I put my Prabhupada *murti* luggage with the check-in baggage. I tried reasoning with her, but she wouldn't budge. I put Srila Prabhupada in his wooden box into Madhu's knapsack and I quickly emptied out reading and drawing materials from my shoulder bag so it would pass inspection. It was upsetting, but not so bad.

Now we're onboard. Said hello to Jnanagamyia and had a more extended chat with Rtatvaja Swami. We'll take off at 9:30 p.m. Delhi time, so I probably won't need the reading material. Can chant January 4 *japa* in flight and maybe get a little rest.

* * *

Shelter

Shelter in Krishna is what I want and
to remember Him.

How? By chanting you
end the day and start the next,
long day's journey
to India. Again I'm going
to end one life and start another.

We are really seriously past the gate; nobody goes through free. They catch you. They are playing English classical tunes on violins and showing film shots of merry royal England "all you can see in fifteen minutes.

Jnanagamyia came down the aisle. I didn't look up at him, but Madhu did. I ought to be more friendly. I put my dictaphones into the luggage, but I don't know if I'll get them back. No lock on it.

January 4, 1997

So far so good. Another thing happened at immigration on leaving England. The man looked through my passport and asked if I lived in Ireland. When I said yes, he had me fill out a form for the Irish government. This may cause trouble the next time I go to Ireland. More on that later.

* * *

7:40

Arrived. Now a three-hour wait in the cramped domestic waiting area for India Airlines.

Things in this country work or they don't work. A big sign over the TV set: "Entertainment." It's not turned on, thank God. I go into the Gents toilet room. About six men standing around as janitors. "No tips. Suggestions please." Moth balls in sink. "Hare rama, Hare Krishna."

Sitting on suitcase. Madhu pacing, chanting. Might as well relax if I can. Jnanagamyia and Rtatvaja Swami have gone their way. I ought to get into some spiritual focus. One piece of cabin luggage only. These things occupy the mind, at least while you travel. Fog on ground, drove in free bus from International terminal to domestic one. Along the way I saw a cheap housing development under construction and ads: "Win a trip to Hollywood!" Daydreamed of the poor Hindu who won the trip to Hollywood and what he would see there. This kind of gently ironic "American in India" again. When several lackeys outside the airport doors called out, "Hare Rama, Hare Krishna!" I said, "Hare Krishna" back and some men wanted to take us to Vrndavana.

* * *

India
India land of tiger and odor special
a faceless Visnu painting in air terminal.

* * *

Never forget India is the land of Krishna
the immigration man is slow but
gentle.

* * *

Don't know those young Britishers,
boy and girl, venturing to India "
to find a true guru?

* * *

I am here again seeking time to
write my mission, my ministry.

* * *

Prabhupada is rolling in the
trolley luggage. I think of him and
ease him over the bumps.

* * *

Can't help but indulge in sarcasm toward Indian inefficiency. They are consumer non-friendly. I'm the customer, a passenger on Indian Airlines, so I boil away with the others because of the way they treat us. Now our luggage is checked, but there's a big sign that says only a certain size cabin luggage will be allowed. We're trying to sneak through, so who is the nonsense, us or them? I may have to do what I did yesterday "take Srila Prabhupada out of the trolley luggage and put him in Madhu's backpack. That will be harder to do here than with British Airlines. We'd have to go back to the main ticket desk and boldly cut the line to check our one bag "they won't do it for you. This is on my mind instead of Lord Caitanya and King Prataparudra.

I've been finding it too taxing to read. Luckily I don't have a headache even though we didn't sleep much during our eight-hour overnight flight. I sit and finger my beads and watch all the stuff going on here. The poor employees. They're in illusion, but I'm entangled in it too as their passenger. We should live more simply. Why all this unnecessary air travel?

One kind of lowly employee here wears a sleeveless pullover with lettering on his chest: "Trolley retriever." At least he's got a job. The bigger shots strut around giving

orders to their lessers. As I write this, Madhu is talking with the old, uniformed policeman who was at the security check point. He's been sitting with him for awhile, preaching. That's the good side of India, but I'm in the mundane part, and it's chaotic, draining and filled with delays. Estimated departure time now 11 a.m.

* * *

11:50 a.m.

Obviously the plane is not going to leave at noon. They haven't called it yet. For awhile I walked back and forth reading *Gita* verses aloud. Guards looked at me oddly, but I didn't care. It felt good "sixth chapter on yoga. I thought of rama-raya dasa's enthusiasm for book distribution. He's living compassion by giving people books.

Don't feel much of anything right now, so I pray to Krishna to request connection with Him. Sixth chapter verses made me feel transcendental to the plane delay situation. Be detached, be situated in the self. It worked for a while. Now I'm back to grinding, waiting.

This is the bad luck flight, #877. Varanasi left, Mumbai left, Patna left "all are leaving but us. Now it's noon. Paying a batch of India factor "dues" right away. How different from staying in my room at Geaglum. But to travel to the *dhama* costs.

* * *

Pray

Pray fellow, don't be enamored by the
young woman in leather booties
sitting opposite you.

Really pray to God, Krishna, as you sit
in noisy places "airport seats
are hard and your mind
always wanders. Someone left a
Times of India on a seat. You
ought to pray, say Hare Krishna, Hare
Krishna, I want to spend my time in India
serving and seeking Krishna.

Each day is special, each hour
another chance to

Really pray.

* * *

Flight delayed twice. We are invited to free coffee or tea. The radio volume has been increased. We're being bombarded by Indian pop rock. Many Japanese here, and assorted Westerners . . .

Rama-Raya joined us. He's coming straight from the book distribution marathon in Japan. Says he wants to always continue book distribution; no reason to stop. I talk with him, but it gets too intense hour after hour waiting for the plane. What will we do in

Jagannatha Puri? Live for the moment? Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna
Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare.

* * *

[artwork]

* * *

We were finally allowed to board the plane at 12:30. It was difficult squeezing everything in and I had to sit cross-legged in my seat with Prabhupada beneath me. I began sketching nervously and then heard Madhu sankirtana and we caught a free garland in the process. Now at Hotel Prachi, Bhubhaneshwar, ready to leave tomorrow for Puri. Prabhupada was bathed by some of his servants and offered lunch.

January 5, 1997

Hotel Prachi, Bhubaneshwar, 3:30 a.m.

Fortunately I was able to stay in bed, sleeping on and off from 6 p.m. to past 2 a.m. I was tired enough, and my earplugs helped block out the continual chatter of people in the courtyard and the hall. Indian factors galore. We're scheduled to leave at 5 a.m. for Jagannatha Puri. No place is fixed for your group yet, and we'll have to stay in one hotel for two days and then move to another. My writing here tells of that.

* * *

A disciple is qualified: a dream

I was sitting with a Godbrother friend. He was showing me different things about his spiritual life. He also showed me a list of all the books that have been distributed under his jurisdiction. He was making the point that this list proved a devotee's qualification. I said, "Yes, I have heard devotees say that first you have to directly carry out the order of the spiritual master, then you can take care of your spiritual life."

I felt I gained a lot by this exchange with my Godbrother. I had used other words to praise devotees and he added, "Yes, but first he must be *qualified*." That qualification comes by preaching, as he was demonstrating by the list of books he had arranged to have distributed. I felt grateful when he said this, and felt as if some important instruction had come through him. I think I even embraced him to show my gratitude.

* * *

I have to write what's actually happening rather than a pretension of a "pilgrim's journal." I hope a true pilgrim's journal will come out of this, but I can't wait and just put in rare gems of Gaudiya Vaisnava philosophy as if that's all that's passing through my mind. Neither is it a fact that so-called superficial events are all *maya*. rather, the things that are happening moment to moment are genuine struggles to remain on the spiritual platform.

One of the first challenges is to figure out who will cook for us. We're going to spend two weeks with a party of eleven in Puri. When I asked the devotees who were supposed to set everything up how it was going, they said, "Pretty good." It turns out, though, that we can't get into one hotel together until two days after we arrive. They arranged to have a "*brahmana*" cook. They were so satisfied with their arrangements "the *brahmana* in question cooks for the Hotel Birla, the only purely vegetarian hotel in Puri "that I didn't say anything at first. Then I read a purport in the *Caitanya-caritamrta* where Prabhupada first says that it's all right to take food from nondevotees if we offer it to the Deity, then makes repeated statements that an *avaisnava* cannot cook food suitable for offerings. "Even if an *avaisnava* cooks food without fault, he cannot offer it to Lord Visnu and it cannot be accepted as *maha-prasadam* . . . an *avaisnava* may be a vegetarian and even a very clean cook, but because he cannot offer the foodstuffs to Visnu, the food he cooks cannot be accepted as *maha-prasadam*. It is better that a Vaisnava abandon such food as untouchable." (Cc. *Madhya* 9.53, purport) Prabhupada said devotees shouldn't accept food cooked by *karmis*.

When I mentioned this, the devotees who had organized the cooking brought up the various standards devotees use while in India. One of them said that he had heard that not only is everyone in the *dhama* already a devotee, but everything is already offered. Prabhupada didn't teach us that. We have been trained to live by a strict ISKCON temple standard. That's what I want to follow while we're in Puri.

But I realized I was talking big and yet asking the devotees to make the sacrifice to do our own cooking. Therefore, I suggested that perhaps we could get *prasadam* from a nearby Gaudiya Math temple. I was told that they too often hired cooks. Okay, then we'll cook for ourselves.

* * *

7:45 a.m., Samudra Hotel

Recording waking experience is similar in some ways to recording dreams. Unless you do it soon after it happens, you may lose the essence of the experience. Also, waking and dreaming life are both difficult to understand.

I'm back in India after a year. Poverty and inefficiency. Rama-Raya dasa straight from Japan speaks of its super-efficiency. Is it a national karma that one Oriental nation is rich and another so poor? Jesus said the poor we will always have with us; they live in all countries. Me and my friends "our present karma is high on the ladder because we're humans. Of course, by misbehavior we could become one of these street dogs. On the way to Puri, I saw a skinny bitch with a belly bloated in pregnancy. Saw a new three-wheeled rickshaw scooter with a sign, VANDE PURUSHOTTAM. And a billboard that read: "The heart and soul of the computer industry introduced to Sakshi Gopal."

Because our Puri visit was not well-planned, we are moving from one hotel to another. This morning we'll spend an hour at the Samudra, then the Vijaya, then in two days the Birla. It occurs to me that Americans become spontaneously cynical in India as a defense mechanism. Our sensibilities are shocked by the inefficiency and the poverty. Wisecracks are a way to make light of the experience. Yesterday while standing at the Indian Airlines counter delay after delay, we made jokes with the British fellows who had travelled with us all the way on British Airways from London. Our jokes were at the

expense of Air India, but not malicious. Just a way to pass the time. We're not so pure (and neither are we naive) that we can just see spiritual *cintamani* dust every where we turn in India.

This dump, the Samudra, is a good place to read *Krishna* book by the sunlight coming in the window.

* * *

* * *

Vijaya Hotel, 12:20 p.m.

Four stories up, facing the ocean. Surf sound at Puri. The beach area in front of us is now forested with small evergreens and fenced in. No dogs allowed. The fishing boats are out to sea and I see families playing on the beach. Awaiting our party, most of whom will arrive tomorrow.

Fruit for breakfast and lunch "fresh pomegranates, plump bananas. In this room, an Orissan-style painting of a large Mother Yashoda "very curvy. She's making a face at Krishna, who is cradled in her right arm, while a diminutive Balarama is grasping at her left hand, begging for attention. Her attention in this painting is all on Krishna. The artist has depicted her as gigantic compared to her boys. A Westerner who didn't know the pastime might think it's a painting depicting worship of the mother goddess and that the boys are insignificant.

The fishing boats have dropped their nets and now they appear to be waiting for the catch to fill them. I see one small canoe with two men standing in it, paddling their oars violently down into the water. Are they trying to smash the poor fish to death? I see something protruding out of the water where they are smashing.

* * *

3 p.m.

Dream

I was holding a baby. I carried him to the floor and accidentally banged his head. I said, "I'm sorry," and then the baby said, "You were supposed to take care of me, but instead you banged my head." Then the baby's mother said, "Once when he banged your head, he performed a ceremony to ask forgiveness. He forgot this time, but that was the right thing to do. This is information from the second order."

I awoke thinking I had caused someone pain through neglect. Or perhaps, since they say the people in dreams are really parts of yourself, I have neglected some part of my own self and caused myself pain. Anyway, I should do the forgiveness "ceremony," make a sincere gesture of regret and beg forgiveness from those I hurt.

January 6 and 7, 1997

A headache built up in the afternoon and I had to get under the mosquito net and take rest at 5 p.m. At 6:30 p.m. I heard a knock on the door. They continued knocking, so I got out and went to the door without my dentures or eyeglasses. A hotel employee

handed me something and said, "Goodnight . . . mosquitoes." I looked at my hand and saw the small blue object he had given me. Since the man had disappeared, I closed the door. Looking closely at it I realized it was a "Good Knight" mosquito killer. I put it aside and got back under the mosquito net.

* * *

A square audience can't evoke my confessions: a dream

Disciples of another guru were pleased to hear me praise their guru. Later, Madhu said the audience was "square" and therefore didn't evoke my confessions. Then some women came forward and tried to help me confess.

This is a dream fragment, but there is a potentially powerful image in Madhu saying the audience is "square," meaning they didn't reciprocate with me. Therefore I couldn't bring out my confessions. It had something to do with writing.

When I think of it now, awake, I think that on the superficial level I have to say that I don't write for an audience. It's not that I'm an entertainer who needs an audience's participation. Still, on another level, I do need a good audience to reciprocate with me. Otherwise, the "women" will come forward to evoke my confessions.

* * *

6:10 a.m.

Went back to bed for an hour hoping it would clear my right eye, but it didn't. Now I'm up and the dark night is gone. Look out at gray sky and sea. Hear the crows "those big black ones on the roofs below. If I get better, I'll write. This is a good place for it "new adventures. But basically I have to cope moment to moment.

* * *

12 noon

Sri Krishna Caitanya. I want to write creatively and honestly, leave a record, a true record. Do it in words and pictures. You'd like it to be as Krishna conscious as possible. But to the degree you fall short of pure Krishna consciousness, you want to tell it, that record. When you learn to write honestly (you can also play with it) you'll be up for the times when you *do* feel genuine Krishna conscious emotions and thoughts and then it can come down on paper.

* * *

The faces. Orpheus (in Cocteau's film) told the artist, "Don't you know all you artists are capable of are self-portraits?"

Is that so?

* * *

I was talking with Madhu about a devotee I know who is facing a crossroads in his life. He sold his business and signed a contract that he wouldn't start a competitive business for the next five years. He likes to give donations to ISKCON, but he'd also like to get free of the material entanglement involved in making money.

Madhu said that people can't expect to do what they want in life. Life means you have to earn money even when you would rather not. He said the guy digging the ditch doesn't want to dig ditches, and the guy supervising him has got someone over him to make his life miserable. His point was that we simply have to accept the crunch if we have taken birth in the material world.

I replied that I just heard Prabhupada lecturing about the threefold miseries (*adhyatmika*, *adhibautika*, and *adhidhaivika*). My headaches are *adhyatmika*, the dogs barking and the mosquitoes are *adhibautika*, and when it's either too hot or too cold, that's *adhidhaivika*.

A little later our conversation drifted to my reading. I've been reading *Krishna* book "the Lord's Dvaraka pastimes. Now I'm turning to *Caitanya-caritamrta* because I'll be speaking to the devotees every day. I mentioned this to Madhu and he said, "You have a wonderful life."

Something clicked when he said that, not in an emotional way, but intellectually. Although people have to work at things they don't want to do, I have an easy life. People give me money, a place to stay, and food. I have many places in the world where I can go and stay as a mendicant, places where I can write my books and lecture. I have a wonderful life, by Krishna's grace.

At the same time, I'm still striving to have a better creative life. I want to be a better devotee. It isn't easy. I endeavor, I think it over, I use what energy I have left as I get older. It's a wonderful life, striving for Krishna. I should be cheerful and emanate that to others.

* * *

5:50 p.m., Night Notes

We move out of this Vijaya Hotel at 5:30 a.m. tomorrow. Tonight I read *Vidagdha-madhava*

Krishna's sweetest Vrndavana pastimes and as we read I looked out at the waves.

The sky seemed different.

Hare Krishna. May Prabhupada be pleased.

India is a good place to be alive

despite the crows and loud voices despite never being alone in your own heart "what do you want?"

Krishna consciousness.

* * *

4 a.m.

Get ready for a short move. Then you can chant *gayatri* and eat breakfast after offering it with prayers to your Guru Maharaja.

* * *

* * *

* * *

12:15 noon

Moved to Birla Hotel, supposedly our home for the next two weeks (January 7 - 19). Looks good and feels good. Couch to sit on to speak to devotees. Read to them from *Caitanya-caritamra* starting with the first mention of Jagannatha Puri in *Adi-lila* where His devotees from Nilacala are listed. Give me this, give me that, two pairs of sandals, one for indoors and one for outdoors, more earplugs than I need. Be careful not to ask for too much, such as a limousine or first-class air ticket. And you'll die too. You'll live. You'll write your little life and don't expect people to read through your thousands of pages.

Craft and uncraft.

* * *

Puri Beach

Puri beach sands, life guards wear
cone-shaped hats
they have come for fun
Godhead forgotten.

* * *

In the square a new statue of
Caitanya Mahaprabhu,
He appeared to have gray hair
but nice arms forward as if the
ocean is calling Him, He's running to
cataka-parvaka.

* * *

This is good. We have finally moved, 8 a.m., in a taxi across Puri. On the beach road I saw a saffron-dressed man approaching us from a distance. People were around him, I said, "There's a *sannyasi*" and saw it was a Godbrother.

* * *

4:30 p.m.

We had our first meeting. I read and spoke, straining my voice to rise above the sound of the surf and to keep their attention as they waned from jet lag. Are they interested in hearing the list of names of Lord Caitanya's devotees in Nilacala? After the meeting, Rama-Raya dasa lent me his copy of Gaura-Govinda Swami's *The Embankment of Separation*. I read the account of how Lord Jagannatha appeared in that ecstatic shape and remembered when the story first surfaced in ISKCON in 1974. A devotee asked me to ask Srila Prabhupada if it was authentic. He said, "Maybe." Then he said, "Our business is to worship Him."

* * *

Speaking
Speaking to devotees my brand
of humor and realization.
Prabhupada taught me
I assimilated, I don't know
exactly what I give but
I try
although this kid is still impure
Krishna lets His mercy
come through.
Go on speaking, go on,
the Gambhira's not far away.
(Oh no?)

* * *

5:15 p.m.

I told the devotees, "You go first to Siddha-bakula and report back to me. If it's okay, I'll go out with you."

Oh jeez. You go out and have fun, then come back and tell me. I'll limp into a taxi and go out tomorrow. On the day I visit a *tirtha*, will I also be able to lecture?

Lecture? Are you any smarter than the other devotees in this group? Just a little? A lot? How much? What's the difference between you and them? "Their disciples and granddisciples" form a *sampradaya*, branches of the great tree. Yes, we're part of a tree "guru and disciples and grand disciples and great-grand disciples. That's *sampradaya*."

I hear conch shells "and now see the man selling them, and peas, and pearls, on the beach.

Darker it grows
the soul tight and eternal
can't die. Eating
evening bananas is another
chance to hear your master
lecture on surrender, on
Krishna, that the soul is

eternal, can't slay or
be slain.
Master, you've bound me
in a network of
lotus stems. You
in New York "
you brought me
to truth and gave grapes
as a reward
for my typing.

January 8, 1997
12:51 a.m.

Srila Prabhupada is up with his dictaphone translating *Srimad-Bhagavatam* or maybe the *Padma Purana* or some other work his disciples asked him to work on to satisfy their hankering and curiosities. I'm up too, still wanting to be faithful. Please, world, let me go down as having remained faithful. And for being myself.

Read *Caitanya-caritamrta*. Who is Gauranga? Only His devotees can know Him.

* * *

Gray sky worry rumbles. On veranda he's chanting the release from self in verse. Gray water and sky not like in the West. "Puri doesn't seem like a *dhama*. I'm glad you explained it." They want to connect Lord Caitanya to this place. Soft-hearted *panda* at entrance to main *mandira* didn't beat him with sticks but said, "Jagannatha is everywhere." Tough, kid. You are white and saggy. Come back next lifetime as a Hindu. Caw crow picks at tissue paper from our trash pail and nibbles something in it. I slap my sandaled foot on the stone floor to scare it away.

* * *

10:30 a.m.

Writing this on Indian, paper-like papyrus. *Veda* means "knowledge". It cannot be dated because it was given at creation by Brahma, whose day is so long you can't calculate it. Srila Prabhupada gave such answers to the doubting teacher, David Lawrence, who said the *Vedas* were not as old as the Old Testament or the Egyptian books.

Please nurture me, master, and keep me clean and strict. I don't want to say, "Use a stick on me if you think I need it." but I know you have the right. O master, I am entering your presence. I am also playing the role of a guru with his disciples. It's a happy role and it's not an illusion. This small group of people love me and are dedicated to helping me. I wish to reciprocate with them and give them the teachings of *Caitanya-caritamrta*.

O great grandfather, Bhaktivinoda Thakura, I wish to read your books too, and my master gives permission. But mainly I want to return to his books with relish. That is my

main happiness, although it requires discipline and the proper atmosphere. It requires my heart.

* * *

After lunch and after rest, I was sitting and some important thoughts came, about death, about wanting to advance and about wanting to know the truth of myself, but then I lost track of them. They evaporated like dreams. I was almost sulking and couldn't write or read. I went back to bed to nap and asked for guidance or direction. I drifted off into a light sleep, but didn't dream, or rather, can't remember anything. All this on an overcast and uncomfortably cool day in Nilacala.

* * *

5:15 p.m.

Read *Vidagdha-madhava* with rama-rama and Madhu. I couldn't pay attention during the second half. read about forty minutes. Can't expect to be up for all of it "all the gems of rupa Gosvami's verses and the highest *rasa*. At least I was in good company.

Grayer as night falls. White breaker reminds me of flashing teeth. Some devotees on our party went out to *tirthas*. I'm scheduled to go to Siddha-bakula tomorrow. Would like to have the taste, the *taste*.

Go ahead, tell us. You are not Lalita talking to a swan or Madhumangala joking with Krishna or Purnamasi arranging for a meeting between radha and Krishna. You are not even Kamsa planning to kill Krishna. You are just you, picked up by His Divine Grace and transported to Jagannatha Puri, the latest of your stops. Remember reading that ramanuja was once thrown many miles by Lord Jagannatha? Have I been thrown here too?

* * *

Night

Night, our group together

in Puri now go rest and

God will protect us

never, never forget

the Lord. I do I don't

I am a fool.

I am the *Sisya*

never forget, never disobey

the rules, never go to

people who can't accept

those who love

Visnu and Lord Caitanya

and Prabhupada.

January 9, 1997

12:45 a.m.

A *yogi* cannot go without seeing the Lord within his heart at every moment.

Bhaktivinoda Thakura wrote hundreds of books. My head is fogged over. I dreamt last night, I lay awake. It seemed late when I heard men shouting, but it was only 8:30 p.m. I just wanted quiet so I could think in a peaceful, clear, spiritual way. Perhaps it's like straining to hear the Word, as the Christian monks say.

Ah yes.

Monks reading. Cassian observed them ruminating in the desert.

Raghunatha Gosvami, Rupa Gosvami . . . we want to ingest information and *bhava*. We can't do it all at once. A little at a time? Our attention span is the bottleneck. We have a passing desire to imbibe tons of Krishna conscious messages of sweetness and surrender in order to transform ourselves, but we can't accommodate them all. Our heads are too small. The mind balks. What can we do but rest in between? In the meantime, however, we should be careful not to divert ourselves to too many other subjects. Hare Krishna.

Desires spew out like lava "Krishna conscious desires too, love or at least an eruption of energy prepared to be spent in a Krishna conscious direction. Still the tiny conditioned self creates a bottleneck. Should I draw a diagram of it? The waves desire to pass through the person, but he's unable to see them.

O Krishna, let it flow easily. Let it flow easily and constantly.

Madhu reminds me we have hectic, demanding days ahead, travel and lecturing in India, the Caribbean, and America. I'll have to perform. I have to adjust my attitude toward it. Try not to worry about performance. Or, learn to lecture in a way compatible to an inner life of Sastric reflection.

Our group in Nilacala. We'll get along, share the cooking and cleaning duties, and gather to hear. We'll go to *tirthas*, run errands, and I'll write. I'll also read Bhaktivinoda Thakura, get aches, feel some fear, and then overcome it. (Two women devotees remained in Sarajevo during the war and kept the temple open. Fifteen refugees lived with them. The difference between the devotees and the nondevotees broke down).
Overcome fear.

Flow, O life.

* * *

* * *

Jagannatha is Kind

"Jagannatha is kind to crippled devotees,"

I prayed and wrote it to Swamiji.

All right, he replied, very nice.

God as *daru-brahman* "

full spirit, not little. He

comes to us

nayana patha gami bhava tu me

nayana patha gami "Srila Prabhupada told

Hayagriva to chant at the installation
in San Francisco '67.

* * *

There's an early Bob Dylan song "
"Ten thousand dollars at the drop of a hat,
I'd give it all if I could get it back."
We loved those days, but these days
I am crotchety, faultfinding
aware of schisms! Who ever
thought it would turn out like this?
Or me, an old feeble guy "
but happy and more Krishna conscious than I
was, free to write and read
free as a bird
in the cage of my making.

* * *

Dream: Winn Burgraff forces me to admit I'm afraid of the danger of life
Winn Burgraff is an old friend from school. I saw him and said hello, but I kept
myself aloof. He said, "You have to look closely at everything and you'll see around its
edges."

"I don't see it."

He insisted that I should see it. He compared the act of looking to my religion.
Because I couldn't see what he saw, I must have a different religion. Then he began to
act threatening toward me, and even attacked me.

Finally, I broke down crying. I saw he wasn't vicious; he was just trying to tell me
that this is how life is. I said, "Yes, I can understand that the only dangerous thing about
life is the vicious characters we see in it. They are attacking and killing people at this
very moment."

"Yes, it happened to me recently."

We drew closer as friends because he forced me by his threatening ways to break
through my veneer and admit that I too was afraid, just as he had been. Nothing more
was resolved.

I didn't talk about Krishna or chant Hare Krishna in this dream, but I still received a
message. Life is dangerous and I tend not to face that because my life appears to be safe.
It makes it easy to take on a sophisticated front. But I should be more aware of my fears
and use them as an impetus to turn to Krishna. real religion means to call out God's holy
name. If I can't do it out of love, then I may be forced to do it out of the fear caused by
witnessing the cruelty of one living being toward another.

* * *

Don't wait. Remember that man in London who ran after the devotees carrying Radha-Londonisvara out of his house? "Wait, I'll bring Them to you in the right way."

No, they couldn't wait. In writing, words don't wait either. They are like *gopis* running out in the night to the sound of Krishna's flute. Their brothers and husbands call, "Stop!"

"No, we won't stop. We're going to Krishna. No one can stop me. I'm going to the Lord of the horizon, the darkish one."

And they go.

And my words go
west and east in taxis
not stopping for
Thomas Wolfe
or cleverness or
bounce.

They want to be with Krishna.

How brilliant the rhetoric, the arch enemy, the fault-finding critic who scathes when I don't seem to make sense, when I just keep pressing the harrow down into the earth, hoping the

words will catch me
later.

* * *

Things to Do In Puri

- (1) Scratch yourself.
- (2) Hail your face.
- (3) Say good-bye to Kay Adams.
- (4) Say hello to Christ "can you face implications of his head with crown of thorns?"
- (5) Say hello to free-writing and Peter London.
- (6) File your nails and a report.
- (7) Think seriously about what to do with the remainder of your life "the boldest Krishna consciousness.
- (8) Think of a Godbrother's question about whether to do *bhajana* or constant preaching.
- (9) read Srila Prabhupada's books.
- (10) Check yourself with reference to Gaura-kisora dasa Babaji.
- (11) Order books.
- (12) Write poetry.
- (13) Fly your own plane.
- (14) recall frogs, Basho's.
- (15) Get ready to die.
- (16) Answer letters.
- (17) Pray.
- (18) Say "Krishna, Krishna, Krishna."
- (19) Draw pics of Lord Jagannatha, Baladeva, and Subhadra.
- (20) Draw pics of Radha-Krishna.
- (21) Draw a pic of Lyndon B. Johnson.

- (22) Ha-ha your face in mirror.
- (23) Resolve to read no more books except Srila Prabhupada's.
- (24) Be pure, grave.
- (25) Give up all else.
- (26) Recall WCW's *Imaginations*.
- (27) Drop names.
- (28) Get bitten by tiny gnats.
- (29) Wave incense.
- (30) Try to look good.
- (31) Try to look bad.
- (32) Believe it and recall the name of Army aircraft carriers.
- (33) Be crafty and dumb.
- (34) Control your tongue.
- (35) Behave.
- (36) Be nice.
- (37) Eat rice.
- (38) Go to Siddha-bakula.
- (39) Go to Tota-Gopinatha.
- (40) Go to Gambhira, but watch out for the tough guys.
- (41) Laugh at your own jokes.
- (42) Read your writings to favorable devotees.
- (43) Plan how to print *Songs of a Hare Krishna Man* even if nobody wants to read it.
- (44) Be your own man.
- (45) Behave.
- (46) Count the waves.
- (47) Pray to Krishna, "Please save me."
- (48) Say holy names.
- (49) Chant rounds.
- (50) Keep reading.
- (51) Exchange with devotees who are dear to you.
- (52) Let your heart beat.
- (53) Eat more Jagannatha tongues.
- (54) Think about going back to Godhead, Vraja.
- (55) Plan to live in a log cabin in West Virginia and write a hundred million thousand six hundred and forty-two verses in '97.
- (56) Find out how to hide out.
- (57) Be on guard.
- (58) Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare: you can chant these holy names.

* * *

Compromise

Can you believe it?

Old-timer in Levis, bare chest
man, you wander by waterfront,

warehouses.
People you meet are ex-Hare Krishnas
or buried Hare Krishnas
Real sadness in me for Visnujana
old times of purity gone.

* * *

Man I'm wandering and I too am lost
I talk to a guy who vaguely remembers
me and asks, "Do you expect us,
Sats, to be better? Is that
your trip?"

* * *

Hey, I'm half afraid he'll
beat me if I tell the truth,
or the cops will or the Navy
goons, someone
bound to get me
I keep wandering and
don't sing,
don't chant until I
wake up from this
nightmare
compromised.

* * *

10:10 a.m.

I gave the class. Maybe I carried on too much. I closed my eyes and ran through, like a computer scan, words to answer the questions. I grind axes about loyalty to Prabhupada and yes or no about *gopi-bhava*. I tire myself, *bore* myself, and bore them too to some degree. Is it possible to make it more interesting? Could they participate more? Maybe I should just shut up. Not read so many passages. Talk less. Sing off key.

* * *

Siddha-bakula Going
Siddha-bakula going,
I and my friends
deliver us from commotion
of streets
deliver us from notions
of our inferior status

ha! We are white and black
and not *brahmanas* or
Hindus of Puri.

* * *

Believe we will
go there, Prabhupada our guide
and if I can find a corner
quiet enough, Krishna will speak through
me and to me and
we will understand the holy names,
learn them again,
and chant, chant
chant.

* * *

Impressions while at Siddha-bakula
Back in room, feels like landing
awkwardly on the moon. I've been here before,
haven't I?
Rickshaw rides, heavy Indian voices demanding money and
Rupa-Raghunatha soft and insistent
takes care of the business.
Dirt streets. The entrance? He points ahead toward more confusion and poverty and
dirt to the sign, "Sri Siddha-bakul."

* * *

Bare feet on cold earth, silent man sitting at the altar of Siddha-bakula. Peaceful "you could say he's not preaching "but he's there.

Statue "is it Haridasa? We bow down. A picture of Krishna lying on a peacock feather playing the flute, a Sanskrit "*Aum*" beaming down on Him. There's the wall with English words, history of Siddha-bakula, the framed pictures high on the walls. I thought I remembered them as murals. The tree, petrified, hung with clay or stone slabs "prayers or wishes. Does it pain the tree to hold them all?

We circumambulate three times. It's like walking on the moon "a different atmosphere. Then into the next courtyard and the Deity room "Gauranga with wig, Krishna, etc. and a separate one of bearded Haridasa wearing a crocheted hat and wrapped in a rough wool blanket. Jagannatha, Baladeva, and Subhadra too, wrapped in Their winter blankets. Even the bas relief figure on an outer column has a blanket.

We bow. A Gaudiya-looking *sadhu* in white cloth nods to us. Our group sits. I admit I feel alienated. My voice is slow and measured. Let it come out. I speak from my feelings, but soon move to discuss Haridasa. Haridasa Thakura is similar to us in that he is born outside the Hindu culture. He kept himself humble. I give examples and speak

some of the *lilas* of Siddha-bakula, hoping it will impress us enough to chant attentively, at least while we're here.

Preaching and *sadhana* come together in good *japa*. One who has enthusiasm, taste, and steadiness in chanting will progress beyond offensive chanting and will also become a potent preacher. Yes, it's true.

Then I ended, picked up leaves from the ground, got on the rickshaw, and left, elated.

* * *

6:30 p.m.

Good night. I'd go out onto the veranda, but what would I say if I met them in the dark "the members of our group? Eight-year-old Kalindi said the priest at Tota-Gopinatha promised them if they come back at 7 a.m., he'll show them a golden line where Lord Caitanya entered the Deity.

Bala got me Jagannatha "stamps" for my collages at my request.

Solitude and good night. I pray for guidance. One attains the higher stages only by the mercy of guru and Krishna. Srila Prabhupada can confer on me all I need. All I deserve.

* * *

Leaves

Leaves from Siddha-bakula, he said
it's easy to get them laminated but
they can't last forever "
will they help me chant?
V-shaped ducks flying "I miss them "
over Geaglum. How many lives
can I live at once?
Krishna Krishna Krishna.

January 10, 1997

12:30 a.m.

Don't be selfish. That's what the *Bhagavad-gita* teaches. A true *yogi* acts to please the Supreme (see opening verses of sixth chapter and eighteenth chapter where renunciation is taught. One should not avoid duty; that is false renunciation.) These topics were wrongly taught or pushed in the painting *sankirtana* sales days because we denied devotees, in some cases, their basic spiritual programs. We didn't show sufficient care that they were following the principles. The leaders mismanaged funds dearly gained. Now we have to return to the basic principles of faith in Krishna and guru. We have to decide carefully what is best for one's own self "with the help of the spiritual master.

* * *

Dreams

Dreams lead nowhere

I want to go.
Really a maze, through
buildings, sex offers,
lost identity.
I'm a *sannyasi*, not a
Senoi warrior,
my destination is Great Kills in
the dream
a distraction. When
I wake I ask,
"What *is* this Great Kills stuff? I want Krishna!"
I go to Prabhupada and
bow down, he
seems concerned and
he understands.
One of these days . . .

* * *

10:15 a.m.

I'm typing on the porch, but it's hard because the chair arms prevent movement. We talked of Lord Caitanya at Jagannatha Puri "the first time He entered the temple and fell unconscious. I said, "Yeah," and they said, "Yeah." I'm writing what comes now since I have done my duty.

Sunshine coming through clouds. Several times I said, "The people of India are innocent and religious," but what do I know? I mostly stay indoors and only know what I read in books or what someone else tells me. Secondhand reports. That's even how I wrote the *Lilamrta*. Others did the interviews and I examined the accounts. By the power of visualization and imagination, I could enter it and know what others thought of Srila Prabhupada.

Yeah, I'm quite a guy. And yeah, it's quite an experience being a devotee of Lord Caitanya. Even living in Puri is quite a trip, although I'm quite an indoors man even here. I have chronics and as I write this, I hear two Indians laughing as they pass by on a burping-coughing motor scooter on the paved road just in front of the beach.

O holy place, this is better than Los Angeles, but the temple there is an okay place too because you can distribute books and see the Deities. Yes, as I was telling this guy, it sure is a happy picnic, and, it's a hard rain that's gonna fall. The worst is yet to come. *Karmi* pickles are going to fall. The Clinton administration is okay, they are trying real hard because they are liberal Democrats and we don't want to put them down. But they are *doomed*. Come now, you have to call a spade a spade. The leaders are foolish.

Clap hands! Chase those gray and black Indian crows off the balcony. They keep cawing and I keep clawing at the page with my ink marks.

All glories to the Lord of the Universe and to the temple-like structure on the roof of the guest house here. All glories to Prabhupada. Thank you, master, for allowing me to serve you and to speak of Krishna. The devotees in our group are well experienced. I

may not be teaching them anything new, but I go ahead anyway and speak what I have read.

* * *

* * *

3:45 p.m.

I'd like to write, I'd like to read, I'd like to talk about myself to those who will listen. But I'm afraid I'll worsen the head pain that has developed. I had to cancel the afternoon's activities. I . . . I am putting down another layer, like paint, whenever I write. Clean lines and sentences that create by-products, art-products to be left in the world even after I leave. Illusion? I wouldn't want to do anything that would slow my spiritual progress. I do it to please Krishna and I pray never to misuse my tiny free will.

Bored of the old presentations of Krishna consciousness. We say all our preaching is for newcomers. I want to hear someone speak from the heart and soul, but not if he or she is obnoxious or sentimental. Often we say, "Go ahead, speak," and we get an earload of complaining, politics, or grief. Grief is okay, and complaining too, but we want universal grief, blues music that touches everyone's sadness or evokes the Krishna conscious element in it, the yearning and appreciation we all want to feel despite the obstacles. I'm not saying that I'm the singer, just stating what I would like to hear.

So I give off by-products while I try to reach it. Then I will dwindle and die. At least I won't become a twig that snaps off the Caitanya tree in the wind. Bend and be flexible, headaches and all.

* * *

Indoors Man

Indoors I spend my time but
I'm free to go out
although I never hardly do.
Dat's me, he said, lookin'
in the mirror of
lonely pasts when he
was a kid on a sandlot baseball
field in Queens.
That's me indoors, happy
when the energy flows
well.

January 11, 1996

12:10 a.m., Jiva Gosvami's appearance day

I wake up humming, "It would take, I know/ a Michelangelo . . ." and feel my head clearing after an all-night headache. Got one dream recorded, but refused to record the

second one, now gone forever unless the unconscious wants to send it again. What messages?

Told M. last night that I doubt there's something wrong with me. He met a man yesterday who asked, "How is your Guru Maharaja? Does he still get headaches?" They speak as if I'm supposed to get rid of something bad and become a better person. I live with my conditions and limits at this point.

Now is my chance to read Srila Prabhupada's books. What about *Bhagavad-gita*? You have clear consciousness, it's quiet, and the predominate sound is the heavy surf washing and thudding for miles along the dark beach. The time is yours, and the free will to move in Krishna's direction with faith.

* * *

I feel satisfaction whenever I engage in any act of devotion such as offering food or praying to Srila Prabhupada, chanting Hare Krishna mantra or reading, but I also feel my lack of advancement. These two factors may always be with me, just as at the beach we will always hear the ocean's surf. "Hearing of the transcendental activities of Lord Krishna is therefore expert treatment for the mad mind . . ." (Bg. 6.36, purport)

* * *

Bhaktivinoda Thakura prays (in his last stanzas before his seclusion) that he may always live in his modest *bhajana-kutir* at Navadvipa and remember the pastimes of radha-Krishna. I'd also like to live somewhere and pursue my Krishna consciousness in reading and writing. But I need to go out and preach too. Therefore, I've come to India with this select group. I'm here for them. I wish to give the reading and talk of *Caitanya-caritamrta* today and every day, and then travel on to speak in other places as is my duty. My writing and reading enhance this. I find topics to discuss and feel omre prepared to try to help those who are entangled in worldly duties but who want to pursue Krishna consciousness and find the peace and bliss therein, who want to actually achieve it.

* * *

10:15 a.m.

Very nice meeting today with devotees asking questions about the affectionate dealings of Lord Caitanya with His devotees. I told of Jagadananda and Gadadhara Pandita, how they were different, stories of Prabhupada criticizing devotees, Sanatana Gosvami's intimate desires to be close to the Lord as Jagai was. All nice.

This afternoon we plan to walk to Tota-Gopinatha temple. We will go to these places and hope to arouse sentiment in our hearts for Lord Caitanya's pastimes. I will ask the devotees to tell me of their experiences in the different places they visit.

The ocean is never exhausted. When I tell stories I think I will soon exhaust my stock, but it is never exhausted. It will go on and on and it will always find new connections, one to another. Today I connected Jambavan's fighting with Lord Krishna with Lord

Caitanya's defeating Sarvabhauma with argument. Both recognized, "This must God." Let it come together. Strain your ear to hear the word of God.

Typing this while Kalindi plays in the backyard sand. She has no truck or shovel or friends, but spends an hour in her world building little mounds and playing with sticks. Who knows what she is thinking as she plays there?

* * *

* * *

Hands on typewriter. Girl playing in the sand, the wall beyond, the surf pounding, the big slide, barefoot walk through sand on this cool gray day, the constant crows.

Evergreens growing in sandy earth, and I haven't seen rodents since I've been in India. Just mangy dogs and an elephant in a *Mahabharata* video. GaneSa rides a rat. In a dream I saw a rat in the water. The mosquitoes I see when I'm awake. They live in the corners, in cloth bags, in any dark place. They come to life at night, and as I turn the pages of the *Bhagavad-gita* in the early morning hours, they bite. Krishna says yoga is hard, but we can practice it with determination and devotion. I try to hear. Try to hear. Dear Lord, please clean me of wrong desires and make me Your devotee.

Now the sun is clear of clouds for the first time in a couple of days. I'm going inside to worship Srila Prabhupada and hear him speak from 1973. May I be blessed, and tested, but successful.

* * *

4:15 p.m., Tota-Gopinatha Mandira Impressions

Pujari with swollen legs let us inside Deity rooms for *darSana*; group of Manipuri ladies arrived while we were there. After *darSana* at the three altars, we sankirtana hall, marble floor, walls painted green-blue. I read from Mahanidhi Swami's book and mine on Tota-Gopinatha Mandira. Then we chanted a round together. I was not so conscious of spiritual emotions, but wary of the possibility of a twinge in the head. rupa-raghunatha gave me a walking stick. It was a leisurely outing, and the air was warm. We strolled. I stopped sometimes and spoke about Srila Prabhupada's stay here in 1977, and told of our past visits to Puri and how we were rejected. I seem to relish the stories of the insults we received. Walked near village where fisher families live. Two children, a girl with a basket of silver fish, boy with a crab and fish dangling from his hand, like toys. Walk and stop and point out buildings "Caitanya Sarasvati Math etc.

* * *

5:45 p.m.

You can use writing to bring yourself closer to Krishna consciousness, as you would in reading or *japa*. *Japa* . . . I felt a little wave to do it, then it passed, almost as if it was an illusion. When I actually begin a round, the mind goes off.

Good sections lined up in *Caitanya-caritamrta*. We are covering a lot of material. Devotees are commenting in the class and that allows me to springboard into other

sections. My reading of the summer and fall has been useful for our discussions here. Always read *Caitanya-caritamrta*.

* * *

* * *

As we walked I turned and hoped that they would gather in close enough to hear me. I said, "You should go to many *tirthas* and write me your impressions." How are you different from the guru act which you are seen as "pompous and too self-important? I'm more low-key. I come back to my room and draw a picture of two brown *sadhus* standing on either side of a *tulasi* pot. Then hear Prabhupada talking to a mathematician in Australia. The man said, "Mine is not a very transcendental occupation, is it?" Srila Prabhupada said it doesn't matter. What matters is whether you do it for Krishna. Come closer to Krishna.

I do live as though I will always be here remembering experiences in India, times with Prabhupada. It's not the case. I'm moving along to death "cold, scary, painful death, white as a sheet, stretched out and all that. "These are my final days," Srila Prabhupada said to a few of us one day "so simply, so unafraid. He engaged in life right up until the end. For him, life was meant for preaching and encouraging us to carry on his mission. Deliver the fools and rascals, give them Krishna consciousness. Maintain what I have set up, he said. Cooperate. Don't ruin it. Maybe we're not doing so well collectively.

January 12, 1997

12:45 a.m.

Reading scriptures. Getting a clearer idea of *bhakti* as the goal. Hearing from Krishna about Himself, or from His pure devotees. Vishvanath Cakravarti Thakura tells us that in Vrndavana, Sri Krishna is worshiped without *aisvarya-jnana*. When Krishna displays His divine potency, the eternal Vrajavasis don't waver in their affection for Him.

The ocean waves are always beating, but I only heard them when I awoke and took out my earplugs. Mosquitoes bit me a few times even under the mosquito net. Now I'm out in the room, but I've covered most of my flesh so they can't get through. I still hear their motors whine and I brush them away.

Better to always dwell on Krishna. He's always present in all things if we will just remember Him. Krishna consciousness: to see Krishna in all beings and all beings in Krishna; to see Krishna in all things and to see everything in Him. The desk, wood grain, varnish; the desk lamp, metal, and blue paint; the clock ticking each second and the minute hand moving each minute "these are Krishna's energies in this world. Things don't work automatically or independent of Him. He is the Supreme controller. For the pure devotees, He is the object of their love. No one else but Krishna and things and persons in relation to Krishna. I work with this principle, but I am not absorbed in it in the highest way. I become disturbed by physical pain or concerned with material comfort and happiness. I don't chant His holy names in *samadhi*. I report (write) from this lesser platform in the name of honesty. I don't want to be a hypocrite.

Hear from *sastra* and the mind-flow and sensual operation will naturally be closer to pure Krishna consciousness.

* * *

6:25 a.m.

Soon cold breakfast, soon take off your long-johns. How long it is long before I can reach perfection. If we worship Radha and Krishna as Deities with veneration in *vaidhi-bhakti*, the perfection we attain is Goloka in Vaikuntha. I read this in *raga-vartma Candrika*. "In Goloka the devotee becomes an eternal associate of Queen Satyabhama in Dvaraka, serving Her and Krishna in *svakiya-bhava* with *madhurya-jnana* mixed with *aisvarya-jnana*. But in *raga-bhakti* the devotee goes to the highest spiritual abode of Vraja where he resides as an eternal associate of Srimati Radhika, serving Her in *parakiya-bhava* and pure *madhurya-jnana*."

I don't understand this and I don't understand how we're going to get to this stage. Recently I told a devotee that Prabhupada's emphasis has to do with more immediate concerns: surrender to guru and Krishna and freeing ourselves from *anarthas*. Then how will we realize the higher stages?

They say it will happen automatically. Well, does that mean you just sit around and wait for it to happen? No, you surrender to Krishna and guru and by their mercy, everything will come about. Krishna indicates something like that in the twelfth chapter of *Bhagavad-gita*, verses 6 and 7, when He says that He is the swift deliver from the ocean of birth and death. Prabhupada writes, "The devotee does not need to wait to become very experienced in order to transfer himself to the spiritual sky . . . The responsibility is taken by the Supreme Lord Himself." Prabhupada is here referring to the fact that we don't need to practice *astanga-yoga*.

Nowadays, devotees are wondering whether it's enough to wait for Krishna. They have heard a different emphasis from other gurus. They have been told that it's not enough to serve Prabhupada's mission; we must also know Prabhupada in his eternal form.

I prefer to think it is enough to wait for Krishna simply because that's what Prabhupada said. Therefore, we can only conclude that if we do what Prabhupada says, we will reach the highest perfection. We have to have that confidence. Prabhupada is not leading us to worship Satyabhama but Radha and Krishna in Vraja. We may be so inexperienced that we don't understand how it will all come about. It's natural for children to have little understanding of the mechanics of life. Neither will we be able to go to Vraja by academic or theoretical understanding anyway. Actually, premature understanding can possibly hinder our progress and delay us. It has been said that if we think ourselves as female servants in our eternal form without becoming free from mundane bodily identification, we could be forced to take a female body next time around "in the material world.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

Rest doesn't always bring

the ease I want. I wake up
foggy. Tag on
Sri Krishna's name, keep
going
toward afternoon as
waves wash on Sunday.

More vacationers than usual today. Partly sunny. They jump into the waves. A big one rolls in and I watch to see whether it will wash them away or rub their faces on the ocean floor as happened to me in Varkala and once at a mountain seashore in Trinidad. They were sports, weren't they? I decided after that to stay like a seashell on the beach.

I call out Sri Krishna's names as if old age doesn't mean death.

Near the tall water tower is a sand elevation, "Cataka-parvata," and across the street from that is Tota-Gopinatha. I told you yesterday about going, but said nothing about the Deities. There is Balarama with His unpolished silver horn, Gaura-Gadadhara who looked almost like dolls, and of course, Tota-Gopinatha.

Clothes hanging out on balconies
of Hotel raj some hundreds
of yards from here and
frisbees have finally made it
to India.

Beep-beep Ambassadors,
waves break standard anywhere
but here you know it's
Ocean at Poori.

* * *

* * *

A crow's conference in the sandy courtyard of Birla guest house. The unsteady whine-cough of the motor scooter rickshaw sailed down the beachside paved road. Our party "men went swimming. Bala made a do-it-yourself dessert where I combined the ingredients myself "a thin custard, toasted crumbs, and an apple mash.

Oh wash
wash your heart.

* * *

Music Box

The words "music box"
drift into mind . . .

Jagannatha Swami calendar . . .
the nature of music.

I just write.

"In case of fire, break glass."

* * *

"Give me a little peace," he said just when he began hearing the *gopis* had anything but peace and Krishna told Arjuna, "If you don't fight then I'd prefer you die."
"He was so dissatisfied with Arjuna's decision," Prabhupada said, strong in lecturing in England, '73.

* * *

Master, where are you? I ask rhetorically, not expecting an answer as the wind rustles the page.

January 13, 1996
12:35 a.m.

Blessed be the meek, the poor, the peacemakers, and those who suffer on behalf of the Son of God. These and other pure devotees with saintly qualities shall enter the Kingdom of God.

Mosquitoes are more active this morning. Each day they seem worse. I am trying to remain nonviolent, but some will get killed as they come at my flesh. I have to defend myself or be eaten.

* * *

Free-write

The words "music box" popped into my head. Srila Prabhupada lecturing in Sweden, "I do not wish to take much of your time," but they should know the soul is different from the body. No matter how expert a swimmer one may be, he cannot be happy swimming in the vast ocean. He will be happy only when we can take him out of that foreign element. Go to the spiritual world and breathe and be happy there. What is the proof? The proof is that Krishna says so.

You call that proof?!

Yes.

Foreign element. I chant Hare Krishna and bat away roving mosquitoes. One lands in the warm lemon drink in Prabhupada's cup.

Someone may say his *murti* is cumbersome to carry and we don't usually worship the guru in a statue. Why not worship a Govardhana-Sila instead? I could, but not at the

expense of my worship of Prabhupada *murti*. How could I give up massaging him every day?

Srila Prabhupada talking to the Indian ambassador in Sweden who said, "We have a problem in India in that we have many religions and can't favor one because we are secular."

Secular doesn't mean the government lets the people go to hell.

Difficult moments, but Prabhupada is dedicated to Krishna and spreading His glories. I follow him just for that reason.

Narayana-kavaca said this get-together is giving the Gita-nagari Press workers an identity to together. It's a chance to work together at cleaning and cooking and being friends. He hopes we can do it again.

Yes, I said.

Little life, Sastric life. I'm reading Bhaktivinoda Thakura's last twelve verses, which were written in Jagannatha Puri, and sharing them with the devotees.

* * *

Milk Worm

Milk worm I never
heard of but I like it
when
I, me, the servant
draws without caring how
it will
look
to an observer.

* * *

Krishna, I love
to draw Your name and form
whenever I can but
if I don't You're there anyway
in all Your energies.
My truth is yours "
I'm part and parcel of
the one Supreme
color and
form pouring out
of hands like words,
"Krishna" the best of all
to cry out at death
with knowledge and pleading
for devotional service life after life.

January 14, 1997

11 a.m.

Sharp headache all last night and this morning. Couldn't do anything else but tolerate it. Checking in now.

Sitting on the dark balcony, different thoughts going through my mind. As usual when I get a headache like this one, I question whether I can continue my traveling and preaching. I'll talk with Madhu about it later.

I am also recalling a conversankirtana war on behalf of our zone. We each concluded that we wouldn't do it again in this lifetime. One devotee spoke of a deep distrust of authority he now has. He felt he was a victim of the system. Another devotee said that we couldn't condemn the *whole* system. We had to take personal responsibility for our parts in it.

That conversation lingers in my mind. Conversations are themselves acts of conscience and they are binding. Legally, if you discuss murdering someone, you can be convicted as a conspirator in the murder.

Do I really think that we should mistrust ISKCON authorities? My first response is to say that I wouldn't want to trust my *life* with them. I couldn't live subject to all the things that come up on the ISKCON calendar: "Okay, Prabhus, now it's World relief Day and we have to go out and distribute food in such-and-such way." Or, "Okay, Prabhus, now it's the marathon. We have to do this for the next month."

Some devotees tend to think that ISKCON is more suitable or geared for young idealists than older devotees. It's hard to imagine myself going back to live the way I used to live years ago. At the same time, I have disciples who live in temples and I don't think they're in a bad place or wrongly situated. I think of some of my old-timer disciples, and even some newcomers. They basically like where they are and accept the difficulties. In any case, there are difficulties everywhere.

Recently I wrote a letter to a prominent author in the world in response to her book and note she sent me. The typist gave me the letter to sign and asked me whether I wanted it to on ISKCON stationery or plain paper. I said off-hand that it should be on ISKCON stationery. Well, do I actually want to be known as a member of ISKCON? Am I proud of it? Am I willing to stand for all that goes on in the movement and represent it? As I walk in the world catching planes and so on as a Hare Krishna person, I think, "People won't really know *all* of what goes on in ISKCON, so it's okay if they see me as a member." right?

* * *

9:40 a.m.

Oh yeah man, we feel better finally, but don't know what to do with the little bit of energy and time left at our disposal. I think I'll have to revise my schedule so as not to go to the Caribbean. It's too much for me right now. These days of pain are leaving me drained. I hate to disappoint devotees by not traveling to their country, but I don't know . . . I'm weak and can't do much without feeling pain.

In this condition, I'm asking You (Arjuna said) how I should act. Please instruct me. He was weak-hearted. Krishna wanted him to fight. Should I also fight by going to the Caribbean?

M. says I should be realistic "not that I call off all lecturing and traveling after a bad day, but proceed according to what I can do. He says my criteria for action shouldn't be what will please (and not disappoint) the devotees. If that's the standard, there is no end to travel, lecture, and the dance.

Better I travel at a pace I can control, as I do in the van in Europe. If that fails, perhaps I can at last go home and stay in a cabin in America "at Gita-Nagari for a couple of weeks, then to Baltimore.

And then the bigger question: I want to show them the essence of love between guru and disciple, and I don't want to be guilty of hypocrisy. But how does my going there or not actually change their lives? How can I measure it? What's best to do? What's possible to do?

* * *

2:20 p.m.

Tired old pawpaw. Want to go to Krishna. Someone says, "I'm very attached to Prabhupada "more than I am to Krishna. Is that bad?"

No, I say, he will lead you to Krishna.

Krishna dancing with flute. I "saw" him in my mind's eye faintly, momentarily, above the hotel building's pre-dawn while I was sitting on the balcony as a sharp headache was finally going down. Was thinking about what I'd read, and also how a Zen practitioner doesn't strive for enlightenment but realizes it's here always. It's more a matter of tuning in than discovering. That seems similar to the *maha-bhagavata's* vision that everyone and everything is already perfect. Yes, but we want to add Krishna to that, not that we click in to enlightenment while looking at a hotel, sky and ocean at Puri and feel, "This is it. It's perfect now and always was."

Krishna
became superimposed
dancing, what we want,
but He's a long way off "
many lives.

* * *

Many Lives
Many lives both you and I
Arjuna, we've had, but
never can you remember them,
although I do.
Yes, Arjuna knew it too by
His grace.

* * *

Love to be there one day
but so far I struggle

for strength each day "
I want to be a devotee,
make a bee-line to His lotus feet,
but ecstasies must be paid for and
samadhi is no joke.

* * *

Don't miss Prabhupada's special pottery class: a dream

I'm talking to rupanuga and hear that Prabhupada is going to teach a pottery class after school hours. I decide to go, but first have to pick up my coat from a store. rupanuga says to me, "You're not a clay-making man, are you? Even if you're not, though, I know you'll want to take advantage of Prabhupada teaching pottery."

"Yeah, I was thinking of just going home, but now that you mention what a special treat it is, I have decided to stay."

When I awoke I thought, "Pottery class?" More to the point is that I shouldn't miss the opportunity "any opportunity "to be with Prabhupada. We generally, have to practice austerities to receive the guru's special mercy in the form of an extra class. Don't be dull, go to the trouble to get the nectar. Prabhupada's teaching sculpture. Be awake for it.

* * *

4:30, Outing Impressions

Soft pleasant breezes. A young girl banging a can with a stick, her rag of a dress held together with a single button in back. Women carrying bricks on their heads. In the ISKCON *bhakti-kutir* of Bhaktivinoda Thakura, the bricks all have the word PrEM stamped on them. The place is still under construction. We sat in their temple room and read of how the devotees gave Srila Prabhupada an *abhiSekha* at Jagannatha Puri at the ocean's edge. The temple president and others listened. Gave me a mat to sit on. Then we climbed to the roof for beautiful view of the Jagannatha Mandira dome (scaffolding around it) and on the other side, the ocean. On leaving, Narayana-kavaca said, "There was an uproar when ISKCON tore down the original thatched hut to build their brick building." The president said there would be a museum to honor Bhaktivinoda Thakura.

We walked as a group. "It's good to be among the living again," I thought after my hard day yesterday. Kids sankirtana there with Srila Prabhupada in 1977. The Deities were closed today "no one in sight. We circumambulated. Madhu walked ahead of me so I wouldn't trip down the stairs. Then we went to Haridasa Thakura's *samadhi* Mandira. I could not enter an internal mood, just moved through the places, bowing down at altars, circumambulating, seeing paintings of Lord Nityananda, Lord Caitanya, Advaitacarya, all done in bas relief to depict the passing away of Srila Haridasa Thakura.

Walking back. Do you hear the waves? I was thinking of asking the devotees, "Could you write me your impressions of the waves?" Could I ask the temple president, "Do you hear the surf at night?" Of course he does.

Crow on top branch of beach-growing evergreen. It sways in the breeze. It's good to be among the living.

January 15, 1997

12:30 a.m.

First thing I did on rising was read *Caitanya-caritamrta*. As I began, however, other thoughts crept into my mind "notes I might write to Madhu or letters to others, editing and publishing topics, dreams. But I stayed with the book for twenty minutes and read about the cleansing of the Gundica temple. That section contains the long purport about cleansing the heart of *anarthas* before Krishna will be pleased to sit there and reveal Himself. "Krishna Himself will cleanse the heart because He is already seated there. Krishna wants to continue living within the heart, and the Lord wants to give directions, but one has to keep his heart as clean as Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu kept the Gundica temple." (Cc. *Madhya* 12.135, purport)

Some of the faults listed are those committed by outright materialists, but some are committed by neophyte devotees. Srila Prabhupada says, "*Jiva-himsa* (envy of other living entities) actually means to stop the preaching of Krishna consciousness. "If one stops preaching and simply sits down in a solitary place, he is engaging in material activity."

With this in mind I think I ought to persist in trying to travel this year. I should go to the Caribbean and to American, then back to Europe. It may provoke headaches, but I get them regardless. We can only take as much caution as possible, be careful not to push beyond my limits, and hope the devotees will understand that I can only preach when I don't have a headache. My condition seems to be benign. That is, although I'm fragile, I don't have a life-threatening disease. When I stay in one place I can write. The more alone I can be at those times, allowing outer activities to calm themselves, the easier it is for me to turn within and to face *anarthas*, and to sometimes churn out a literary gem.

* * *

Later I had this dream, which seems to related to my thinking about my health and whether or not to continue traveling:

* * *

Death despite all scientific attempts to save oneself

An old man dies. I watched him go. He had a great illness but also extremely sophisticated medicine and treatment. His son knew how to administer it all, and tried to revive him as he approached his end. His son's attempts went to the extreme "fiery potions, flashing lights "but it didn't work. Finally, people brought a pallet to take out the body.

On waking I remember the bas relief paintings of Haridasa Thakura's passing away. Death was depicted much simpler than in the dream. Haridasa Thakura's death was sublime. Lord Caitanya allowed him to give up his body in His presence, and then he was lowered into a simple grave.

Let's recall Prabhupada's own practice, how at the end he didn't want to be put into a hospital and hooked up to tubes and machines. I realized that I have to try to be brave and simple and face not only death but my disease without resorting to contraptions and too much medication. Yes, it takes courage.

* * *

The surf sounds especially close, as if I'm near a dock. It almost sounds threatening, like it might overflow the beach.

* * *

Free-write, 6:15 a.m.

The surf is rolling.

Listen to the waves, listen to the waves
to the permanent waves,

to the joshing joshers, the avoidance of nonsense and sinful bad words. We have been made clean in mind, thoughts, and deeds by our spiritual master. In obedience to him I cut out bad words from my writing, although I leave in a little so you'll know I'm still human "as if that will help you.

Free-write like the hawk harassed by crows. We walked through the narrow dirt streets. rama-rama said, "People are friendly here." Baladeva said this particular walk was through a neighborhood near the Gaudiya temples, so the kids were the offspring of devotees. I saw a group on the beach mocking us though. Did the others see it? rancid piles of fish, two small dogs eating from their borders. No fishermen stop them, so why should I worry?

Don't worry about trying to reform others, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura says. Providence will take care of reform. Here is a quote by him which someone says sums up what I am trying to do:

The world stands in no need of any reformer. The world has a very competent person for guiding its minutest happenings. The person who finds that there is scope for reform of the world himself stands in need of reform. The world goes on its own perfect way. No person can deflect it but the breadth of a hair from the course chalked out for it by Providence. When we perceive any change being affected in the course of events of this world by the agency of any particular individual, we also know very well that the agent possesses no real power at any stage. The agent finds himself driven forward by a force belonging to a different category from himself.

The course of the world does not require to be changed by the activity of any person. What is necessary is to change our outlook to this very world. This was done for the contemporary generations by the mercy of Sri Caitanya. It could be known only to the recipients of His mercy . . .

The scriptures declare that it is only necessary to listen with an open mind to the name of Krishna from the lips of a bona fide devotee. As soon as Krishna enters the listening ear, He clears up the vision of the listener so that he no longer has any ambition of ever acting the part of a reformer of any other person, because he finds that nobody is left without the very highest guidance. It is therefore, his own reform by the grace of God,

whose Supreme necessity and nature he is increasingly able to realize by the eternally continuing mercy of the Supreme Lord.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

I seem to be writing less each day. I'm tired. Tired of meeting with disciples and giving a full class because it causes me physical pain. I don't have the spirit for it now. Neither do I feel comfortable acting as if I'm so much more advanced than they are. Still, there is no other scope for our relationship. I'm also feeling the tensions that exist between them. How many days left here? It was wonderful for awhile . . . probably still would be all right if I didn't feel so weak. Canakya Pandita says that if you don't have money, then everything is lost. Similarly, if you don't have physical strength, you can't do all the things that are demanded "editing, writing letters and books and poems, and on top of that, meeting daily with disciples for class and *parikrama*.

* * *

Yesterday when I felt relieved of the headache I was confident we would go to the Caribbean. This afternoon I'm feeling fed up with having to perform as a guru before disciples in one scene after another. Puri is only the beginning, and I'll have to do it again and again in many other places. I don't want to reach that point where I would actually despise the audience and myself for living out a role. I need to recognize my need for being alone and reforming myself, as Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura says. My children in the Caribbean . . . my children in America . . . my children who will gather to see me in Vrndavana. Me inside feeling that my time is being stolen. I hate myself for allowing it to happen.

I can argue that the *karmis* have to go through this "they have to work every day whether they want to or not. Why not me? But that doesn't seem like a good argument. Why *shouldn't* I try for the best for myself? If I can be really satisfied, then I can give people the best thing. It's not a given that by showing up in their camp and saying, "I love you," that I am giving the best part of myself to my disciples.

* * *

4:30 p.m., Free-write

So many different ideas of what to do. I could take a sixty-four-round *japa-vrata*; I could stay in India longer, alone; I could skip Vrndavana and go straight back to Geaglum to hear and chant and chant and chant; I can skip the Caribbean, go to America, and then return to Geaglum. Which one should I do?

Please see me as sincere. Do something.

Jibberty jibbish. Eight-year-old Kalindi looks up at me vacantly from her coloring work while I lecture on *japa*. Or I did I touch a chord within her? She looks up at this old guy who is the Guru Maharaja of everyone she knows. What's so special about him? Why does he raise his voice and why do they laugh? What's so funny? What's so serious? What's so interesting? She doesn't know, would prefer it her way.

Well, the truth is "

I have a stiff neck and head. Take rest early. I can't do a sixty-four-round *vrata* because of my headaches. It's too strenuous to chant for nine hours a day.

"I thought of practicing meditation to help my chanting."

"Yes," I say and glance at Narayana K, "remember how Mahakrama used to read books on *astanga-yoga* to improve his concentration on *japa*? Someone else says, "The answer is earplugs."

"How do you get around the wall?"

"Associate with good chanters."

"Where do you find them?"

Pay attention to the *japa* genius within you, the *japa* reformer. If you give him room, he will awaken and reciprocate.

* * *

Changing Mind

Change mind twice a day "

are you

going to Vrndavana or the Caribbean?

Oh, go change your diapers

your mind, your seat, your

college major, your girlfriend.

Each year you change your musical

tastes, but not your God

or guru.

* * *

5:45 p.m.

Madhu just came in with revised travel suggestions. Seems all of us are getting itchy feet at the same time, ready to leave our Puri conference. It was nice together, but now it seems the mood has passed. If we can catch a plane, we're going to leave the day after tomorrow for Bhuvaneshvara.

January 16, 1997

12:12 a.m.

Yesterday was warmer and now more small mosquitoes are flying about, eager to bite me. Saw a dog yesterday suddenly flop on its back and roll in the sand in an effort to rub out some bug that was biting it. This world. Flea eat dog.

What's the value of unconscious over conscious writing?

See imprints on the page of handwriting from the previous page . . . ancient, uncoded marks . . . a few paper clips, the desk space limited as my books, papers, and Jagannatha stickers encroach upon it, leaving me a small area for the notepad.

Registering complaints,
aliases, alases,

laments complaints

bitch dog and male dog,

you saw the dogs and were impressed by their behavior. It's typical.

Words comes out, I want something new or enduring.

I want to be left alone. Life is tough. We each have to contribute something. Be a little confident, determined, tolerant, accepting of your limits, doing what you can. I'm just so limited.

Put things out of your mind (like mosquitoes) that you can't handle right now "decisions, or world's horrors, or solutions or lack of solutions for ISKCON, the unsoled, traumatic past "that stuff.

Also, why you don't have more taste, who can teach you, who can deliver you. My master did all he could. Now I have to carry my weight across the desert.

* * *

Mercy

Mercy of God will come to me

as He desires, as Gadadhara knows.

Each one has a chance.

When it comes

choose to act

Receive the mercy by standing

in the right place.

* * *

On the balcony

I've been sitting out on the balcony since I began chanting *japa* at 12:20 a.m. I usually chant out here for a round or so, go inside, then come out again. When I first came out this morning I looked over to the hotel a few hundred yards from here. On their second floor there were two rooms that had red lights on the porch. One of the lights went out. I also noticed an electric line flashing on and off. It would flash on for a moment, then go off for several minutes, then come on again. I imagined myself as a forest fire watcher "when I saw this electric line I would report it to headquarters as something potentially dangerous. Now that flashing has become a constant burning light. I've seen that in other places in India "the electric line on the telephone pole suddenly blazes.

Out here I also have heard and seen a watchman in another hotel come out of a door and blow a sad whistle. Now it's raining pleasant dripping sounds. rounds out here are "good" "wide awake and once or twice, I caught myself *listening* to the words Hare, Krishna, and rama

* * *

3:45 a.m.

I feel like apologizing to my Boots tape recorder for dropping it in the bathroom. I resolved previously never to do that. It was tucked under my clothes and I didn't notice it

until it slid out and hit the stone floor. I'm grateful it's not broken. I need it to hear Prabhupada. Turning it on I suddenly heard Prabhupada come on loudly and it made me glad to be alive and awake. "Cats and dogs, cats and dogs," he said.

* * *

I'd like to do more things than it's possible for me to do today on this last day in Jagannatha Puri. Here's a partial list:

(1) I'd like to use up all the Jagannatha stickers and images I have in a flurry of drawings "many pages.

(2) I'd like to chant more than sixteen rounds "start it today and continue for a good amount of time. Face the desert and keep going. Be humbled.

(3) I'd like to go to the Gambhira in the afternoon even if you don't say something about Lord Caitanya's experience of the mood of radha in separation.

(4) I'd like to be kind to others, starting with the devotees in our group. Extend yourself to them with intelligence.

(5) I'd like to write here my heart's ache outpouring.

(6) If a headache comes, I like to see it not as defeat but as purification, similar to extra chanting.

(7) I'd like to choose which book by Prabhupada I'm going to read next and get started.

(8) I'd like to start thinking about Vrndavana. I did this this morning and considered staying in Vrndavana for months and not leaving "to increase my chanting and hearing.

* * *

11:35 a.m.

Guruji. They met and discussed my writings. I wasn't there. They said good things, I heard. Now from my room I see fishermen and smell their catch. Two men bring a straw basket to a section of the beach where a cloth is spread out. They dump the fish there (reminds me of the "Jesus of Nazareth" film). A woman then spreads the pile out with her hands. A little ways out in calm water, five men in a boat with four oars, trail a net. The whole group works together and I guess they share the profits, not exactly in a formal way with pay checks as if they were punch-in clock employees with full benefits, but simply and practically in the form of fish and the simple smelly life.

Jagannatha svami nayana patha gami bhava tu me. It's settled: we're leaving tomorrow in a mini bus to Bhubhanesvara. Did what we could here. Devotees decided to work together to edit and print *Cc. ASraya* while we're in India.

* * *

2:15 p.m.

No way to prepare for going to Gambhira. Be grave if you can. What Lord Caitanya felt there no one can really understand. We just dab at it and hope to become purified by it. Let me at least look at *Caitanya-caritamrta* for references.

I decided to meet with the devotees before we go to Gambhira and to read a few passages. I want to tell them what a sacred place it is. Since I'm acting as spiritual master, do it with deep subject matter and pass it on to them. Then when we go, we'll conduct ourselves in an internal way and know that the real meaning of the place is inexplicably deep.

"Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's emotion of transcendental madness in separation from Krishna is very deep and mysterious. Even though one is very advanced and learned he cannot understand it. (Cc. *Antya* 14.5)

I will read the section where Prabhupada said Lord Caitanya was in the mood of Radharani in separation from Krishna, that He taught this method of separation from Krishna for His devotees to follow.

I'll also read little scenes where we see Lord Caitanya in the Gambhira with Ramananda Raya and Svarupa Damodara. Svarupa Damodara would sing a song that would increase the Lord's ecstasy, and Ramananda Raya would also sing or recite verses from their favourite poets about Radha and Krishna. The Lord would speak in madness, expanding on the meaning of the verses in Srimati Radharani's mood. Ramananda Raya would leave for the night and the Lord would stay up chanting loudly in the Gambhira. Then during the night He would suddenly be silent, and when Govinda would enter the room, he would find that the Lord had escaped although the three doors were locked. It was on occasions like this that He went either to the Simha-dvara gate or to some other place and manifested the extreme bodily transformations no one had ever seen before.

We have a right to hear these things because this is our movement and we are servants in this *sampradaya*.

Tell them about the Lord injuring His face and devotees suggesting that Sankara Pandita could stay inside the Gambhira and be the Lord's pillow. They wanted to prevent the Lord from injuring Himself. Finally, give a glimpse of how the Lord, while composing verses or speaking and hearing others, spoke His "*Siksastakam*" to Svarupa Damodara and Ramananda Raya.

* * *

3:45 p.m.

Speaking to the devotees about the Gambhira, I was like a puffed-up college student who gets A's in his major and who likes to drop names and pat himself on the back. "I have read this section many times, and lately I have the following realization . . . "

Yeah man, where's your drop of love for the holy name? Where's your single brick of *prema*?

* * *

You can't live forever.

Don't be afraid of others opinions.

Just act your best for Srila Prabhupada.

* * *

4:35 p.m., Back from Gambhira

They were friendly. As you walk in, there's a Deity of Krishna and the *gopis* on the left "Kasi Misra's Deities. I moved toward Them, but Baladeva said, "No, first go into the Gambhira. The Kasi Misra Deity is where a troublesome *panda* stays." We went right into the Gambhira and the men there waved us in, "Come on, take a look." At first I thought, "Wow! I'm going right into the Gambhira itself!" but then I saw that there was an enclosure with pillars where one *babaji* was sitting and singing. Nearby was a small window where you can look inside to the Gambhira.

Anyway, what would I *do* if I went in? I belong outside.

And I looked to my fill. I no longer cared what they were saying behind me or what we were supposed to pay or say. I knew the other men would take care of it. I just drank in the room with my eyes for a minute or so. I saw an electric lamp pressed down right on top of the place where the Lord's slippers were. I saw an excellent picture of Lord Caitanya with His hand on His heart. That was the main image in the Gambhira. There was also a *murti* in there "but of who?

I was conscious that the ten devotees in our party also wanted to look in the window, so I moved aside.

I was then invited to the open side doorway leading into the inner doorway of the Gambhira. Both doors were open. I took a step into the first room and was told to back out. The *pujari* in there gave me a *tulasi* leaf. Someone else gave me some sweet grains. I stood back while the devotees in our party squeezed up to the window and peered in. I looked at the bas relief over the window of the Gambhira "Lord Caitanya with His two dear friends on either side of Him. When the Gambhira window was clear, I went up and looked in for a second time. How much can you cram in?

Then we left. Took *darsana* of Kasi Misra's beautiful Deities. The priest invited us to step in closer. I said, "Kasi Misra" to show that I knew and to let the others know.

The devotees are going now to various places, shopping and temple visiting on our last night in Jagannatha Puri. Madhu and I came back in our pattering motor rickshaw. I regretted that we didn't go on to see Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's house. Is that where the Gaura-Gopal Swami *murti* is? But then some pressure started in my head and I figured that I'd done enough, although it was so little.

January 17, 1997

12:15 a.m.

I'm carrying a notebook I'm calling, "In favour of staying with *Every Day, Just Write*." I've been keeping it to encourage myself to maintain this format. It also contains some of the doubts. This morning as I complete a volume of *Every Day, Just Write* and consider the next "which will be written in Vrndavana "a question arises:

"Writing is my active service and preaching. Gita-Nagari Press is publishing the books and we will distribute them. People appreciate them. For example, Narayana-kavaca wrote me that I am not futilely trying to tell people to become Indians, but I write from the Western mind-set. He said I'm writing a literature as expert as any Western art, I'm delivering Krishna consciousness, I'm presenting myself as naked before the readers, and my books will have an impact on readers, especially of the future, etc.

"I have a responsibility. I want to deliver the goods. Therefore, my question today is whether the 'effortless' true-to-self, true-to-day's-flow touch I've developed in *Every Day, Just Write* is any way a relinquishing of the responsibility to work at making literature? "

When I rise at midnight I give Srila Prabhupada *murti* his dictaphone and I think, "You are writing *Srimad-Bhagavatam's* Bhaktivedanta purports. Now I am going to be writing too." Is *Every Day, Just Write* just for me? Or am I writing *my* equivalent of the Bhaktivedanta purports? That is, is it worth it for others to read what I write? Will it help them in Krishna consciousness?

But the fact is, I don't know what else I can do except be true to myself. For now, I've left *A Poor Man reads the Bhagavatam* behind. It was more on *parampara* teachings than EJW is (whenever I write the initials, I keep thinking of "easy journey," as in *Easy Journey to Other Planets*. Easy Journey to where?). But after 1500 pages of *Poor Man*, I thought, "Enough. This is not my unique contribution." Narayana-kavaca also said "as others do "that he especially likes the free-writing. I *do* have a responsibility to readers, and for now, EJW may be the best and only way I know how to fulfill it. But that doesn't mean I can't improve it, deepen it, make more effort to bring out the best in it. Natalie Goldberg quoted her guru as saying, "No one is asking us to open our hearts, but we must do it every day. Make a great effort for the truth." Yes, that's what I want to do. And I want to write it down, my secret report on the adventures of a *sadhaka* or whatever it is I am. I will probably never be completely certain of the value of what I'm doing "I tremble with uncertainty "because in a sense, Prabhupada's mission is in my hands, as it is in the hands of each and every one of his followers.

* * *

A dream

I'm chanting Hare Krishna and playing with a kite. Just before this I saw a film depicting God in His holy name. Even large animals were bowing down before Him. Then this scene: as God's names are being chanted, the person chanting is flying a kite and feeling the pull of the wind. That pull, if you're daring enough to allow it, will lift you off the earth and into the sky. But you have to be willing to go. I was. But each kite had two strings, and a woman grabbed hold of the other string. I immediately think, "She shouldn't be doing this!" She's an unreliable, unregulated person, and the kite immediately starts to dip lower and finally come down by her interference. She says, "I should be allowed to do it too."

Some hours later, out of the twilight zone of the dream and faced with its contents, I have come to see it as an intriguing metaphor for chanting. The mantra can pull me into the sky if I'm daring enough to go with it, but I have to be careful of others who also want the facility of the kite, but who have a different purpose in flying it. I mean, mixed motives in chanting, impurities. I have to chant in pure consciousness. That woman was like my mind or the world. I have to get beyond it, chant free of it, if I really want to be effective. Although that woman made a strong plea for democratic behavior, I realize that I can't give power over my kite to others. I have to fly my kite, and if others want to fly theirs and follow, that's better. I could go so far as to say also that if I get involved in

too much *teaching* on the ground *about* how to chant, then where's the potency? Where's the high flight?

Oh, for the day when I will feel that pull in my hands as the kite begins to take me off the ground and I will go with it. When, Oh when will that day be mine? Until then, I have to be determined to keep running along the ground, trying to get it going as we see the poor Indian kids do with their flimsy kites. Prabhupada says he and his sister also used to fly kites when they were young. They would run together and pray, "Bhagavan, please let our kite fly."

* * *

3:45 a.m.

God is Krishna, God is God. There is God. He's a person. Srila Prabhupada tells 'emat Upsala University in Stockholm, 1973. It's preserved on tape.

"But it's inexplicable," the professor pleads and insists.

"God is a person," Srila Prabhupada insists. God is a person and we are persons eternally.

They can't accept it and Srila Prabhupada can't compromise. That's why he's so great. I hear him as I shave my face. I hear him faithfully, my master.

* * *

Took a group photo yesterday. I'll get a last chance to speak at 9 a.m. if my head is okay. I'll read them the letter I wrote to my Godbrother about how to surrender the whole self, all the limbs, the toes, the head, the lock, stock, and barrel active person in the Lord's mission.

We'll all going to Vrndavana to Srila Prabhupada's rooms and Samadhi Mandira, to see Radha-Syamasundara, Krishna-Balarama and the sands of Raman Reti.

* * *

Leaving this place in a few hours. I got under the mosquito net after breakfast with the intention to take a nap. The sun was already up and the room bright. Once inside the net with all the sides tucked in, I noticed a mosquito inside. It flashed through my mind that I could push the net open again at the bottom and let him out, but before I could act on that compassionate thought, my hasty hands moved over and slapped. My first slap missed him. I slapped again, this time pushing against the net while clapping. After that I didn't see him and presumed he was dead.

Then came the regret. With just a little trouble I could have pushed the net open and let him out. I wanted to blame Madhu, who I know kills mosquitoes once they get inside the net. He says he takes all care not to kill them when they're outside "doesn't use a Good Knight killer, etc. "but once they're *inside* the net, he says that's his territory. But why blame Madhu? I'm supposed to be his teacher and set a good example.

Then I thought how it's likely I'll received a karmic reaction for this killing. Didn't Prabhupada once say an astrologer told him that he had been a doctor in his past life and was sinless except that he had once killed an animal "was it a snake? We know about the

Rsi who was almost speared through the anus because he once speared an ant when he was a child. With that selfish fear of my own skin, I lay back to take rest and pray to be forgiven, as we will, by constant engagement in Krishna's service. Still, it's not right to kill. I have to make more of an effort to be nonviolent.

* * *

12:20 noon

Crows caw. "In your country I do not see so many crows, but in India there are many crows. They gather wherever garbage is thrown." What was his point? That we are like crows if we don't take to self-realization? Something like that. Newspaper readers and Indians in the West, new crows. Hogs, cats, and dogs Prabhupada told them at Upsala University. I listen today, and it's not always easy to do. It's a workout to hear him urge them to take to Krishna consciousness. He recommends the Krishna consciousness movement, his ISKCON which gets the LSD-addicted hippies free of intoxicants. He advises his audience to observe the boys and girls who dance in *brahma-bhuta*. "If you are not jubilant you cannot dance like this. It is not dog's dancing. And we have no anxiety over expenditures. We chant Hare Krishna and Krishna meets all our needs."

I particularly liked it when Prabhupada spoke strongly in favor of nonviolence, of kindness to *all* creatures, not just humans. An Animal Liberation spokesperson couldn't have done better. He proved that the animal has a soul and shouldn't be slaughtered. Not even a plant should be killed, he said. He told the story of Narada and the hunter. When converted, the ex-hunter wouldn't even step on an ant.

* * *

My head is clean-shaven. We are due to leave in two hours. It's over here.

* * *

In our last meeting I read a statement about full surrender to Krishna. I was responding to a Godbrother's analysis of pure devotion in the *Bhagavad-gita*. He said that when we serve Krishna spontaneously according to our propensity, that's a less than ultimate stage. The final stage is when we do whatever Krishna wants us to do, beyond our personal propensity.

While accepting this conclusion, I argued in favor of the existential reality whereby we have to surrender the "whole person" to the Lord. My propensity to write and read and avoid management may be considered "impure," but it is the way for me to purify myself. Furthermore, although we should do whatever Krishna wants, it's not easy to understand what Krishna actually wants, specifically, in our lives. We have to agonize over that, and then go ahead with our best intelligence, guided by guru, *sastra*, and *sadhu*.

The devotees present made encouraging contributions to this discussion, and I'll note them here briefly.

Lalitamrta referred to a story about Srila Prabhupada where a frustrated disciple had pleaded with him to make a solution, "Prabhupada, you know Krishna. What does He want us to do?" Prabhupada replied, "Krishna wants to know what *you* want to do."

Rama-Raya referred to Prabhupada's purport where he says freedom is the pivot in devotional service. We don't give up our initiative to serve Krishna when we surrender.

I had mentioned that Saint Francis of Assisi was praised for being able to give up not only many material things, but to conquer himself. Narayana-kavaca said that sounded a bit impersonal. We have to *use* our self to surrender.

Although I read my defense of surrendering to Krishna with one's own will and propensity, I went on to say that now we are going to Vrndavana and should pray to Krishna there to tell us what He wants us to do. I said that maybe Krishna doesn't want me to be a writer and to be away from ISKCON management, so I have to be open to that possibility. Kaisori remarked that it didn't sound right that I should think of renouncing the very means of my surrender. I agreed, just as I agreed to the other remarks which were all in favor of using the self and not thinking that it can be annihilated in the name of doing what Krishna wants us to do.

Madhurya-lila quoted *The Nectar of Devotion* where it states that particular propensities are not just material but are spiritual tastes.

I'm grateful to the devotees for speaking in this way. I agree with this direction and I know that Krishna is fully capable of stepping in and changing our service if He wants. I don't want to think that after thirty years of service I have no idea of how to please Krishna. I want to go on doing what I'm doing, but ask Him to help me improve, deepen, become pure, and so on.

Go to Vrndavana in a humble mood and pray to Krishna. He can do anything and it may not be what you think is going to happen.

* * *

2:30 p.m., Outside hotel

Good Deities, six inches tall or more of Lord Jagannatha, Subhadra and Baladeva on taxi dashboard, each dressed in cloth, Lord Jagannatha's *cakra* beside Him. An auspicious beginning. Flowers in pots throughout front yard of this Birla guest house. Luggage fills up the trunk. Narayana-kavaca gently supervising the operation as the ladies get themselves into the other car. Kalindi plucks the strings of her violin. I breathe and wait.

It will be like this at the end, waiting, but I'll need tremendous reserves "more than today "because pain and fear are likely, are guaranteed, for any conditioned soul.

Good-bye to a nice time.

* * *

Nearing Bhuvaneshvara. Temple on hill. Pleasant breeze around neck. We are traveling in two cars, a third one to come later. They say there is a guest house at ISKCON Bhuvaneshvara. I will be on the alert for suggested etiquette to honor the unique position of His Holiness Gaura-Govinda Swami, who has passed on. I'm still living and he has left. Do I think that gives me an advantage?

Cab driver stopped at roadside Durga temple to offer coins and receive blessings, the same as when we were here in 1993. I lay down with a pillow.

Shree Biswanatha Jewelers. Hawkins Cooking Pots. Tata Steel Cement.

Trees with red and white horizontal stripes as markers for night driving. Frequent speed bumps to protect the villages. Thatched cottages near lake.

OCM Suiting. Dhaula Santi Sup. Amber Saris. A&T Cement. It's all rather friendly, low-key materialism. Doesn't hit me as it would in America where slogans get under your skin and irritate your psyche.

Chant on the old red beads. No love for Govinda, but I stay with His name. This cab has two Hare Krishna mantra stickers on left and right upper sides of windshield. It's the ISKCON classic, "Chant Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare and be happy."

Jagannatha Mastar . . . Bhand . . .

PL Tyre Works. Chariot Cement the Best. Emblem of Konark sun-god wheel.

* * *

In Puri the *panda* who sold us sweets every day (Jagannatha *prasadam*) informed us that there is a *babaji* in Puri who speaks to Radharani. If you go to him, he will tell you your eternal form, but only if you're ready for it.

It won't be long now "Bhuvaneshvara temple.

January 18, 1997

1:30 a.m., ISKCON Bhuvaneshvara

Don't feel obliged to write an objective or even overly descriptive "pilgrim's progress" of what we saw at ISKCON Bhuvaneshvara, but it is overwhelming how Gaura-Govinda Swami's followers have praised him since his disappearance. I respect and honor it. Who was he? Lord Caitanya said, when worshiping Advaita Acarya, "You are who you are." Krishna knows and I can't add to or subtract from any other person.

I've got an accessible *Srimad-Bhagavatam* verse to speak on (3.2.20). Makes me want to revive my *Bhagavatam* studies with this Third Canto. Arjuna's arrows liberated the enemy, and the enemy saw and appreciated (*nayanabirama*) Krishna's beauty. This is the Lord's extraordinary morality. There are degrees of liberation; Goloka Vrndavana is the highest. Pure love is dormant in all souls and is awakened by chanting and hearing. The pure devotee is the agent of the Lord's mercy. I thank Lord Krishna for allowing me to speak this today.

* * *

12:30 noon, V.I.P. Lounge, Bhuvaneshvara Airport

You don't have to be a big politician to get sole possession of this VIP room. You just have to have *rupees*. The room contains two beds and a toilet, and it's away from the maddening crowd. Again, I don't have to tell you, dear reader, what happened at the temple, but I'll say this much. After my lecture, a questioner threw me a challenge. "As you probably know," he began (but I didn't know), "two hostile camps of Gurudeva's

followers exist. Some don't accept ISKCON authority and have spilt and gone to His Holiness Narayana Maharaja, who, as you know, is a pure devotee. What do you think of it?"

I said I didn't know anything about it and that such a thing is best discussed in an *istagoshi* and not in a *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class. Then I spoke in favor of maintaining the temple that their spiritual master worked hard to build, and to keep it within ISKCON as Prabhupada certainly would want.

Later, a devotee drove us to the airport in an Indian-made Mercedes. We were also given tiffins full of nice *prasada* "iddlis, subji, a pasta preparation, and a clay vessel full of Ksira-cora Gopinatha's condensed milk from remuna.

Now to wait for the airplane to Delhi. Devotees in our party are flying together, but at Delhi they'll go on to Vrndavana. We'll stay overnight.

Spare your ink, your pages. This is India. relax and as always, try to drop the pose.

January 19, 1997

3:30 a.m., New Delhi

Sharp headache behind right eye on plane yesterday. Lay down in back of car through the chaotic New Delhi traffic. Our driver said the bus drivers in Delhi cause most of the car accidents. Ninety-nine percent of the bus drivers come from the villages, don't have licenses, and don't know any traffic rules "or even how to drive.

We arrived at Tri-kala-jna Prabhu's flat, and although the room was cold and the street noisy, I lay down under heavy quilt and the sharp ache gradually subsided. Now it's the morning of another day, I'm hoping I'll be able to lecture in the temple this morning and then move on to Vrndavana.

* * *

This morning at the apartment in Delhi I received a phone call from a GBC man. He wanted me to give judgment regarding a controversy. It is not a role I usually like to take. The controversy troubled me all morning, and it was on my mind as I tried to chant on the way to Vrndavana. This ruined my approach to Vrndavana. The day was also cold and rainy. We saw many car and truck wrecks along the road. Our taxi was a new one, not even a year old, but the windshield wipers didn't work. The driver had to keep reaching out his side window with a rag to rub off a small portion of the windshield so he could see. Somehow or other we made it without incident.

Outside the Guesthouse I took a couple of steps out of the taxi and prostrated myself in the sand. I felt the earth touch the different parts of my body, and I rubbed sand between my fingers. I thought, "This is it. This is the place where I'll want to be at the end. Life will be grit then, like this sand."

* * *

* * *

Now we've been here a few hours, but I don't feel like I'm in Vrndavana yet. I don't have anything to say to people, although Madhu wants me to meet with the devotees at 4 p.m. to say hello. I can't honestly say to them that I've come to Vrndavana to try to find what Krishna wants me to do or that I want to enter the Vraja mood, etc. Not yet. Our entry is a flurry of looking for things we'll need while we're here "a desk lamp, etc. I've been struggling to come out of the slough of a headache, and I'm looking for steadiness.

* * *

5 p.m.

Head cleared, then spoke for over an hour to disciples. Told them, "Be truthful." ranged over subjects. Tried my best. Said, "Be happy in Vrndavana." Boasted a little. But head clear of pain.

Got desk lamp, scrounged memories, heard dogs bark, free-wrote in sacred land protected by amenities, prayed, "Krishna, please make me truthful "but not too painfully."

"Does your *abhimana* [mental conception] change?" Maha-mantra dasa asked.

Yes, it becomes (we hope) more genuine.

I'm here.

January 20, 1997

12:40 a.m.

I wake thinking I ought to read of Krishna and the *gopis* since I'm in Vrndavana. That's okay. But don't think other topics are not nourishing or inspiring. reading of Krishna as a baby in Vrndavana is also good and leads you to becoming eligible for appreciating the son of Maharaja Nanda in the *rasa* dance. How can I think I am eligible to hear of Krishna's topmost pastimes? rest assured, that when reading and hearing Srila Prabhupada's lectures, you are preparing yourself for the highest Krishna consciousness, and a stay in Vrndavana will impel this.

If someone takes advantage of hearing the pastimes of the Lord, the material contamination of dust, accumulated in the heart due to long association with the material nature, can be immediately cleansed. Lord Caitanya also instructed that simply by hearing the transcendental name of Lord Krishna one can cleanse the heart of all material contamination. There are different processes for self-realization, but this process of devotional service "of which hearing is the most important function "when adopted by any conditioned soul, will automatically cleanse him of the material contamination and enable him to realize his real constitutional position. Conditional life is due to this contamination only, and as soon as it is cleared off, then naturally the dormant function of the living entity "rendering service to the Lord "awakens . . . this *Krishna* treatise is meant for that purpose, and the reader may take advantage of it to attain the ultimate goal of human life.

(*Krishna*, "The Salvation of Trnavarta" p. 84)

Note the phrase, "The dormant function of rendering service to the Lord . . . awakens." As unconscious material desires are dormant in the self and come out in dreams and other expressions, creating "wholeness" and "balance," even deeper than that is the unconscious (covered) spiritual nature of the self as pure soul. It's uncovered not simply by letting go in drawing or writing, etc., but by hearing from a higher source. That higher source, (*Sastra*, guru) appears to be something outside our self, but actually it touches off the inherent nature of the soul. The constitutional relationship between God and the soul is objective reality but covered. Self-improvement must come to this stage. Working alone with the self in the world is not enough. The ordinary psychologist can only bring you to a certain stage of improvement and awareness, say, from the modes of ignorance and passion up to goodness. Even then it's only God's mercy that keeps us alive. The real mercy descends from the spiritual world to clean us and awaken our spiritual nature "and grant us love of God (*hladini-Sakti*). Don't think it is merely "religious" or blind faith in dogma.

January 21, 1997

Midnight

Yesterday was a bad pain day for me, although everything is good by Krishna's will. I went to *mangala-arati* in Prabhupada's Samadhi bundled up with layers of clothes, including my shiny silver coat. It proved to be too much clothing. The air wasn't as frigid as I had expected it to be. I realize now that my worry about the temperature was partly due to last year's visit when Madhu and I were so depleted after returning from the Naturopath clinic.

Then I confidently led the singing, although after a few moments I became nervous that I might forget the words. So I meditated on my own Prabhupada *murti*, to whom I sing this song every day. Still, my knees shook at the surrender it required to sing the song without worrying about how I was about to forget the words. To those who heard me, I didn't miss a word and the singing was all right, but no one saw what was going on inside. Then Purusatraya Maharaja, who lives in Vrndavana, welcomed me with a few customary words after the *arati*.

Then we went into the temple room for Deities' *arati*. I was astonished and pleased at the new painting over Srila Prabhupada's *vyasasana*. It shows rupa Gosvami and Sanatana Gosvami sitting under a tree. One of them is composing Sanskrit verses with a pen, and the other is glancing at him with a sidelong glance. radha and Krishna and various *gopis* appear in the tree. The artistry of this painting is nice and it held my attention. It makes Prabhupada look extra-appealing in that setting. We went through the usual standing before the three altars. Although it was the first time for me this year and my concentration wasn't so deep, it was sweet to be in Vrndavana.

Yesterday was the day the devotee to whom I'm supposed to talk was to arrive in Vrndavana. I wanted to keep my day clear for him. But he never arrived. By 10 a.m. a headache started to build and it became pain behind the right eye. It increased and I couldn't do any work. By 3:30 p.m. I went to bed and bolted the door. The headache didn't stop until 10 or 10:30 p.m.

* * *

Vrndavana is out there and also
in this room
as much as I can comprehend.

I'm in Vrndavana with body aches and Indian long underwear with no elastic at the ankles or waist, room enough for a big belly and only two straps to make it fit my size. I get annoyed with the constant Indian deficiencies "a bathroom with weak lights so you can't see if your *tilaka* is on straight, cars that overturn, "No Berm available." What the hell is this?

* * *

Another thing about the Indian mentality, they don't shoot straight; they're polite but not cooperative. But they're also pious and know Krishna, and I don't.

They are so poor . . .

You defend them wherever you go because they are the repository of Vedic wisdom. Prabhupada wouldn't let me criticize them. He said, "Mind your own business!"

* * *

I hope I never fall down.

I hope I attain attachment, love for Krishna, but if I don't, I hope I can at least keep exposing the truth of myself.

I hope to keep strong in my commitment not to be manipulated by others. GBC committees, etc., have their work to do and I'm glad they're protecting ISKCON, but I have a different mission. My role is not to judge relative issues. I'm not a politician. Going my way.

* * *

8:30 a.m.

To do in Vrndavana:

- (1) Sit in this room.
- (2) Pride myself on how I was strong not to be manipulated. I call it "aggressively neutral."
- (3) Thank Madhu and all those who take care of me.
- (4) Tell the cooks I want small pieces of ginger, soft *capatis*, not so much cereal. Do I dare ask for papayas with the porridge?
- (5) Think of how this is the land of Radha-rasa.
- (6) Ask for a gossip report.
- (7) Read *Vidagdha-madhava*.
- (8) Write an alpha poem on the word Mug. (Mug would be okay for putting pens in unless you mean "face" mug "god awful wind and fog.)
- (9) Write a alpha poem on Sorry.
Sorry I left you alone didn't
open up, didn't do a dirty-
good turn for a friend and

Really break rules in
your favor. So when it's my
turn I'll
turn to Krishna only and
say, "I did wrong, I admit, I admit.
Now do your worst."

(10) Think about the meaning of cover-up.

(11) Don't cooperate with hanky-panky.

(12) Turn mind away from pornography models that come back specifically from magazines of past.

(13) Fight for my life.

(14) Say, "My disease is not malignant" as if I'll live forever.

(15) Look out window of this room I never leave and see only fog.

(16) Don't attend *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class two days in a row and hope I don't get caught, tarred, and feathered.

(17) I can get thrown out or get in trouble in ISKCON as I could in the Navy.

(18) What about Govardhana-Sila? Or a special little rock to sit beside Srila Prabhupada *murti*. A piece of Vrndavana to take with me. I could do that with some Vraja sand (*cintamani*).

(19) I could sail clear. No storms. He was polite, I was polite "both superficial.

(20) Hey man, what's the latest?

(21) Read it and weep. My eyes can see, but my mind refuses to read *Krishna* book.

Whaddya want? Higher *rasas*?

No, no . . .

(22) No mice, only a few monkeys I saw climbing on Samadhi Mandira dome.

(23) Get out and meet the people.

I will, I will.

* * *

11:30 a.m.

Vrndavana is cold this time of the year. I'm afraid of the next eye twinge developing. Vrndavana is an adventure that I'm not up to. I can hardly venture out of this room to explore. I am . . . less than a grain of sand here, but somehow I'm caught in the tide of those who come from around the world.

Back to thinking of traveling in the van. So many "ifs." If the European Economic Community allows my much-stamped and faded American passport through, and if the van holds up "if Europe holds up, and our travel money and the ISKCON temples' welcome and any excuses I need to get out on the road . . .

A friend and Godbrother asked me to side with him in a controversy. I declined. If I get into a jam of my own doing, I shouldn't ask a friend to take my side either. At least not if I have to make politics. Allow Krishna to judge. Another lesson: I don't appear to be in favor of covering up a wrong, so if I do a wrong I ought to tell it.

Eyes on ISKCON and on me. How will I act? Will I join those who think it's best to cover up a scandal? They may be morally right, but others will criticize their actions. As a *sannyasi* I wish to remain aloof.

* * *

Vrndavana Is
Vrndavana is known by the veterans who
Refuse to leave summer or winter.
I don't know
neither do I want to suffer in
body to stay here.
Don't love the lanes, residents, not
touched by particles of the mercy of
attraction to Radharani's abode.
Ask me. I'll say, "Whatever is
best for headaches."
Ask me, do you love
Radha's *seva*?
I'll say only that I love to hear.

* * *

2:45 p.m.
Pray.
Pray: close your eyes
and right now, what you have just read
ask Krishna to teach you
what it means.

Keep an inner dialogue with Krishna in this place. May Acyuta protect your feet, head, etc. As you go out on the road may He protect you from the front and behind. May the Lord guide you from within and without.

January 22, 1997

Saw the art place of Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhu and the team of forty devotees, mostly Russians, who work with him. Splendid place. Area of several acres, walled in, a temple in Vrndavana near Madana-mohana temple. They work there at art day and night. He is the master of the new devotees coming to paint Krishna and Caitanya-lila, and who work on sculptures, all for the museum at the New Delhi temple. What can I learn from it? Can I ever work like that with artists? I don't think so. I write alone. Give my books out. I don't train others to write diaries, free-write poems, etc. I myself have to agonize whether it's right or wrong, so how can I tell others that *they* should do it? We would be inundated with bad poetry and other outpourings. rather, I see myself as teaching not writing but honesty, self-searching. If some keep a diary, that's their business.

Meetings each day. The little knot of a twinge is always ready to go off behind the right eye. Cat and mouse game. Editor is taking out references to my illness in a book I wrote because people won't be interested in my condition. They want to hear the notes I kept while reading *Caitanya-caritamrta*. But what about the human element that I struggled?

Aches and pains don't belong in a book.

I asked Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhu where he and his artists get their ideas. He said they paint out of their own heads and hearts; they don't use models, and I presume they don't study Western artists. He did mention Rodin in our conversation.

* * *

* * *

Impressions:

Large rat running across Radha-Krishna's altar at Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhu's art compound.

Each day I try to fulfill a schedule, but it all depends on whether I get a headache. Too many references to headache bore readers. I don't mind. What I'm writing is also a medical record as well a record of everything else. Why leave it out?

Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhu got brain malaria, which he said is like having twenty malarias at once. People die from it. Yet while the pain was great, he dragged himself from bed and continued drawing. These drawings are later used as models for sculptures. As soon as he drew one picture, he said the pain went away. He spoke of miraculous results. Artists who have never painted before do their first painting and it comes out beautiful. It's inconceivable. He said there is a group energy which brings out wonderful images in the paintings and sculptures that had never before appeared in his work. It happens automatically by working in Vrndavana on this project. He's positive.

Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhu has been an artist for forty-five years, and now he's writing a book on how to do it. He's writing several other books at the same time. I ask him, "Do you sleep and eat?"

He smiled, "Not much." In a flow of continual creativity. He has worked hard to reach this stage. He showed me two painted panels that formerly took him six months to complete. Now he can do a bunch of them in a week. He has learned how to increase, how to be more in touch with Krishna, and so on.

I come back to my little "scribblings." How can I presume to be an artist? This morning I drew three little doodles of tigers, like the tigers I saw in a dream last night. I was pleased with my doodles. I'm not trying to train myself to become a realistic artist. Rather, I am interested in primitive art, some way to make them come honestly from my hand.

What's the purpose of tapping your unconscious if you're a conditioned soul? Isn't that what the critics ask? They want to know why we should pretend to be spiritual masters if actually we're conditioned. You admit it in your books, don't you? We constantly have to refine and redefine our positions.

* * *

* * *

Mangala-arati impressions:

Today I was properly suited up, no big Western coat, but a *cadar* over my sweatshirt, and I was carrying a *danda*. I met the old devotee who gives out the *tulasi* leaves and *caranamrta* in our temple, who has been here for years. We made obeisances to each other and then I embraced him. One of his legs is a little crooked, and he walks with a stiff gait. We didn't exchange any words, just that greeting. The stone floors are cold at this time of year. I'm still not looking with devotion at the *arca-vigraha* at the main *mangala-arati*, but the Prabhupada *murti* in the Samadhi Mandira evokes a presence I can't ignore. I like the way he looks so somber, almost gaunt, with his long face, warm *cadars*, knit cap, and bony wrinkled hands.

Standing in the ranks, everyone bundled in sweaters, *cadars*, jackets. I timed my participation carefully so that I could make a quick exit into the temple room. I wanted to be there before they blew the conches.

* * *

In Vrndavana the trees on Bhaktivedanta Marg are flourishing. "*Jaya Radhe*" painted on each of them. The new *tamala* tree in the Krishna-Balaram courtyard is also growing nicely. *Gurukulakids* wear sleeveless maroon sweaters these days, yellow *dhotis* "still distinctive. The kids are mostly brown-colored, although some are white from Europe and America.

I saw hogs and monkeys as I walked by. I am the servant of my master, ISKCON's founder-*acarya*.

* * *

Vrnda Free-write #1
Vrnda's song I layway
Radha songs I pronounce
not to speculate
damn the rockets I say
a free-write's got to
make sense.

* * *

Vrnda Free-write #2
Vrnda is Tulasi's favorite is
lore
Radha is yore and new always
but not allowed to speak of Her
unless you're pure.
She's Bhakti-mata.
Follow Prabhupada even when

you're dull, dogmatic, blind,
eyesore, unclean "
clean up this place, this heart!
Clean up crude oil from Yamuna
and all will be well "will you die entranced?
You'll die, period.

* * *

It will be a rainy sad day
sun will shine despite your
death and new baby monkeys
frolic and pick lice and
pilgrims will go to temples as usual
while British Airways runs on time.
Into the sea,
into the Yamuna, ashes.
Don't bury me on the lone prairie
as if I was a *maha-bhag*.

* * *

7:15 a.m.

Sivarama Swami is giving the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* lecture this morning and I plan to attend. Hope I'll be warm enough. Perhaps I need to ignore my bodily pains, or at least tolerate them, and then the headache wouldn't come. Yesterday I met and spoke with a *baba* who is eighty-five years old. He spoke in a lively way, although he had trouble raising himself out of the easy chair. He was certainly doing well for eighty-five. When he spoke he didn't complain of bodily pains, laughed a lot, spoke about Krishna consciousness and other affairs with an alert mind. Here I am, a mere fifty-seven, and I can't take extended discussions. That *baba* gave me and my friends apples, a garland, and a small yellow cloth.

O *babaji*, O summit of
perfection of writing art,
O daily chores and all I try to do.

I asked M. to buy *Prema Pradipa*, a novel by Bhaktivinoda Thakura which I saw in the showcase of the temple bookstore. Two days went by and only when I asked for it again did Madhu bring it in. He told me he had just read it.

"How did you like it?"

"Very much!"

I find it hard to get into. M. breezed through it, the novel form and the primary-to-advanced topics of Krishna consciousness catching his imagination.

Almost time to go to class.

* * *

After Sivarama Swami finished giving the class, I hesitated and almost left without greeting him. Then I turned and we embraced and talked for about three minutes. We were heading out the door and he said, "So now you're going back upstairs?" I said, "Yes." He was gently letting me return to my reclusive situation. I felt a tinge of regret as I left. I suppose my regret is expressed by the part of me that would like to be more social. Or perhaps I don't like to be seen as such a weak person who always has to "go back upstairs." But I can't have everything. If I have chosen loneliness/ aloneness, that's not so bad, if only I can make something out of it.

* * *

Looking out the window I see a huge hornet's nest hanging just a few feet away on the bottom side of the extended flat roof. It's too cold for them right now. The majority of them are huddled around the swollen hive, but many of them are stuck onto the outside of the screen and railing, as if frozen there.

* * *

Madhu just came in and remarked that we have to be careful because we're in Vrndavana. This morning as we walked into the temple to attend the class, I forgot to take my sankirtana hall. Then I noticed, took them off, and Madhu took them away. But when Madhu was leaving the temple, a widow came up to him and asked, "Why did Maharaja wear his shoes in the temple?"

Madhu replied that I didn't do it intentionally.

She muttered bitterly, "It's too much! It's just too much!"

Madhu later found out from other ladies that this widow keeps an eye out for any little thing that goes wrong. I was caught in error, I have to be careful. I can't claim I walked into the temple in transcendental ecstasy and that's why I forgot to remove my shoes.

* * *

Looking down from my fourth-floor window I see into the yard of the Mayapur-Vrndavana Trust homes. They're really splendid. The whole area looks like a high-class neighborhood in poor Vrndavana. When I see the rows of buildings with their penthouses on top, it looks like a painting of the spiritual world. Just inside the wall there's a playground for children with a slide, sand box, and swings. Two healthy-looking American girls about eight years old are playing in the sand. Some of the workers are sitting on the edge, two of them smoking. I could see the puffs of smoke and it seemed so incongruous. The girls must have thought so too because they retreated. You can't completely wall out the world even in a compound. On a distant roof within the compound I see a woman with a stylish coat pacing back and forth, chanting. On another roof I see a poor worker with a trowel spreading cement.

* * *

In his class Sivarama Swami stated the Vedic maxim that one should speak the truth palatably. He said that sometimes the truth is painful, but we can speak it nicely. After the lecture Dadu Prabhu asked, "Can you give an example of how the truth is painful?" Sivarama Maharaja replied that if we are detached, the truth is always sweet, but if we have material attachment (false ego), when it's taken away that truth causes pain.

* * *

Are you sorry, literary man, that you are not an apex master loving and caring for artists and training them in the school of "Satsvarupa art"? Are you garbled and gobble-di-gook? "Are you able to chant *prema-nama*?" A disciple just asked that question. He said that a devotee recommends they always play a tape of Prabhupada chanting *japa* in the temple so that "We'll be assured we're hearing *prema-nama*." My disciple wants to know if it's possible Prabhupada could empower his disciples to chant *prema-nama*? Well, Prabhupada teaches and if the devotees follow, of course it is possible. *Prema-nama* comes from Krishna. Of course, I haven't answered whether I have *prema-nama*. I don't. I can state that frankly. In my chanting you'll only hear someone struggling to achieve it.

The truth may be too painful for a disciple to hear "that his spiritual master doesn't have *prema-nama* and he has to go to Prabhupada for it. We could say that Srila Prabhupada is not the only one who has it, although we don't like to say that. But I mean, aside from him, who has it? And who actually *knows* that Prabhupada has it? It's heresy to consider that he doesn't. But I mean, how do you *know* that he has it?

One response is that he spread the holy name all over the world, so he must be empowered with *Krishna-Sakti*. Is *Krishna-Sakti* the same as *prema-nama*? I don't know. I don't know the answers to all these questions. Leave me alone.

We have to *dig* for the truth, *dig* for it. I was saying that a crow came and did nonsense and then a monkey came and did the same. At this moment they are hammering in a nearby room in the Guesthouse. The guests are disturbed "no peace "just bang! Bang! Blocking out even the normal sounds of Vrndavana.

Yes, the truth is painful both to hear and to admit. I get tired of all the measuring of me and of falling short of expectations. "He walked into the temple with his shoes on! This indicates that he will fall down soon for this offense." Should I apologize to the widow who complained as if she is the caretaker of all etiquette in Vrndavana? But that would just give her a chance to vent her bitterness because she's got her gripes.

* * *

Noon

To avoid depression caused by shame or criticism I often turn to thinking of book production. In the shower (a good place to get ideas "one of the three Bs "the bed, the bus, and the bathroom) "I thought of a mosaic with all the pieces of memory. We could have a picture that is broken into mosaic like a jigsaw puzzle. The picture could depict a person who's half a devotee and half a nondevotee, as in my picture of a sailor with a *dhoti*. It would be something like the transmigration pictures in *Bhagavad-gita* where

someone is changing into a bear because he's sleeping too much. I always feel cheerful when I think of practical service.

* * *

I Could do a Poem
I could do a poem on rice paper or
whatever paper was available in India.
I could get off the self trip
the feel-sorry-for-yourself "
"I'm all alone" trip. He dropped me saying,
"Are you going back up to your room now?"
What should I say instead?
Say, "I want to go with you.
I want to walk beside you and be
very happy as I used to be
with friends in youth."

* * *

But it can't be.
I see from my window the eight-year-old
girls trying to be friends and play together
but they get bored with each other "
they try to invent games
to pass the time,
it doesn't work out,
they quarrel . . .

* * *

What I did last year may not
work this year. "Vrndavana is" "
I wrote and then each line came out.
When *prema-nama* comes
when *prema-lila* comes through
will I be eligible?

* * *

Walk a few blocks around corners in
Vrndavana, come to a one room flat of a
sadhu and ask him what? Ask him
to show me the truth, to press his nose
like Guru Maharaji used to do?
Show the gullible follower The Light?

Is this the Divine Light Society?
I could do a poem on rice paper, he said.
I could do a poem if I were a pure devotee
or imitate Ginsberg and say
I have seen the best devotees
of my generation bloop
back into the strobe lights of *maya*.
I've seen all the strange things
that can be done "devotees
Running off in the snow
with the temple's money in satchel.
I have heard the *rtviks* storm
the castle. I hear
a revolution is about to take place
and they are waiting for a self-effulgent guru
(although he has already come as
this Maharaja or that) and who knows what
in the holy *dhamas* . . .

* * *

I have seen the best minds in ISKCON
blooped and furry, *sannyasis* returning
to householder life, those
who read *Bhagavad-gita* seriously
yet fell down
and I have seen Carl Sandburg's poem "
"The women under the gas lamps
luring the farm boys"
seen innocent ladies luring *sannyasis*
and the other way around "
downfall and uprisings
endless meetings
Resolving nothing
because nothing can be
Resolved, finally.
We're doing our best.

* * *

"No one has a sense of humor anymore," he said.
Our skin is too thin.

* * *

2:10 p.m.

I'm grateful I can wake up in Vrndavana from a post-lunch nap. In dreams I was being attacked by a machine that ate my flesh. I attacked back. Also in the dream, my mother and I went upstairs and she attacked me with pencils. It's *nice* to wake up and to find myself here, ready to chant Hare Krishna and to walk over to Baladeva's house. As I walk over the sands I think, "Vrndavana, Vrndavana."

* * *

5 p.m.

I showed Bhagavata dasa my idea for the cover of *Memories*, the man walking east, his front half a devotee with bead bag, his back half from the 1960s holding one of Coltrane's album. I told him that one devotee suggested the sky be light on the devotee side and dark on the pre-Krishna conscious side, but I said I didn't want to over-exaggerate that effect. Bhagavata dasa said yes, in Russia some of his friends said, "You devotees say everything inside your movement is good and everything outside is bad. We find that hard to take." Bhagavata added, "Coltrane is good."

* * *

Baladeva's house was nice. A sun-warmed breeze was blowing across the veranda as we sat facing the open field of the Oriental Institute. But the cricket match going on was not so good. Still, it was pleasing to be there, and it gave me a lazy, slowed-down feeling as if I could stay there forever, chant slowly, and write. It was such an open space after being in room 42 of the Guesthouse, which is closed in, cold, and noisy.

* * *

On the road, on the path
me with head and feet "
the same feet that wore shoes into the temple,
the same head that dreamed of ramparts
spilling over with spaghetti and
my own mother attacking me
with pencils that broke against me.
I defended myself
wearing Sir Lancelot's armor.
Yes, I defend myself against all attackers.

* * *

Me on the path, the sandy
path, grave, silent,
walking, listening to how

he's gonna turn the place into heaven "
a pond in the backyard
called radha-kunda/ Syama-kunda "
how I can come there and write and
he's feeling the oncoming sadness because
he has to go back to
the States and these days are through.
I add, "We can meet again in America "
Baltimore, Gita-Nagari,"
although everything is changing, changing . . .

* * *

He's built a *japa-kutir* with a little
shelf, authentic, you
sit up there on a thick grass mat
with no back rest. One swami said,
"Book me to use the *kutir*
on Ekadasis. I'll do sixty-four rounds."
Boy, I thought, I can't do that much.
I've got no *prema-nama*, no *ruci* for *nama*,
only offensive chanting?
I'll never live it down.

* * *

Aching ankle, the distractions of cricketeers
with white knee pads and
Tommy Oakland and acorns on
Staten Island, autumn leaves, Edgar Allen
Poe, falling out of Tommy's
car and my new madras shirt ripped
the anger at his wildness.
I lived to tell the tale
in the Krishna consciousness movement
where I live a retired life, hurling
accusations at myself: "Why are you
not thinking constantly of Radha and Krishna in Vrndavana?"
I don't deserve to.

January 23, 1997
Midnight

You're trapped in a narrow passage, like in a ship's watertight passageway, only much tighter. reminds me of Poe's tale of horror, "The Pit and the Pendulum." How evil and criminal of those sectists to trap us like this. We didn't know what we were getting into

in our visits to the various religionists. I admire one of our devotees, a rower, who strongly demonstrates that he doesn't want to be mishandled. He revolts, but I suppose we are all trapped and put in separated compartments by the evil designs of some demons.

If it so happened and I became helpless, then all I could do is chant Hare Krishna and save my soul. You think you'd like to be a reformer and reach other trapped brothers, but the more you think it out realistically, the less advisable that seems. Are you going to go to plead that we break down barriers and become liberated friends? Are you going to go to the GBC with this proposal? "I had a dream we were separated and trapped. We should come together in freedom and love and make ISKCON glorious and happy."

But is there nothing I can do? Yes, I can work to break loose of the fear I have. I think of my fear of breaking the rules and being criticized as happened yesterday when I thoughtlessly entered the temple with my shoes on. A bigger falldown could happen in an unconscious moment like that and my whole life could be ruined.

All right, then turn to Krishna and pray. Pray as you read a book, Krishna in Vrndavana. Pray for *Sraddha*. That seems most important. "The evil witches . . . and the evil spirits . . . are always ready to give trouble to the body, the life air and senses, causing loss of memory, madness and bad dreams. Like the most experienced evil stars, they all create great disturbances, especially for children, but one can vanquish them simply by uttering Lord Visnu's name, for when Lord Visnu's name resounds, all of them become afraid and go away." (*Bhag.* 10.6.29)

* * *

5:30 a.m.

I confessed to Madhu that I felt troubled when we read yesterday about Radha and Krishna's conjugal pastimes. I prefaced my remarks to Madhu by saying that I hoped what I had to say wouldn't hurt his faith in me as his spiritual master. I said that my concept of spiritual master is someone who's sincere, dedicated to Prabhupada, and who is also piercingly honest. He shouldn't have to make a show of being a perfect devotee on the highest level. Too often someone pretends and then later has to back down in embarrassment. Madhumangala has a similar conviction about the nature of the spiritual master, so we proceeded to talk about my discomfort. Perhaps I shouldn't read that type of material "I still need to think about that "but I was relieved to have discussed it with a confidential friend. It also opens up the area of discussion that I lack *any* positive feelings of devotion for Radha and Krishna.

Madhu told me that this morning at *mangala-arati*, he stood before Radha-Syamasundara and prayed to Krishna, "You are very beautiful and I know that You are a debauch." In other words, he wanted to see Krishna not as Narayana, but with an awareness of His sportive nature. Still, the question remains: how far do we investigate Radha, Krishna, and the *gopis*? We shouldn't think that if we hold back and maintain reverence for Radha and Krishna, we will be disqualified from *madhurya-rasa*. It's all rather complicated. We don't want to rush in where we don't belong, but neither do we want to remain dull and dead with no feelings at all.

* * *

7:35 a.m.

In a few minutes we'll go down for *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class. Govinda Maharaja is singing right now "I hear his amplified voice from my perch in room 42 "but I think someone else is scheduled to speak. "Don't be critiquing everyone and everything but examine your own motives," said Laksmi-Nrsimha Prabhu in a class a few days ago. We all live together.

Just as I left the Prabhupada Samadhi this morning at 4:25 a.m., a devotee stopped me and said he had something urgent to say. He spoke with a German accent. "Do you believe in violence?" he asked me. He said that devotees were throwing him violently out of the temple. I said I didn't know anything about the issue, so it wasn't fair to ask me such a general question about violence. He said, "Do you think it's fair that they throw me out? I've been a devotee for eighteen years." I said I don't know anything about it, about this case. He had a *sadhu's* stubble and an old saffron *cadar*, like me. Then he said, "Will you speak up for me if they try to throw me out with violence?" Since I had twice told him I didn't know anything about it, I didn't answer but turned and walked away.

As I walked away I said to Madhu, "It's a madhouse." But of course, there are many sane devotees who live in the Krishna consciousness movement.

* * *

Short Lines

Reach rich widows
serve hot hannas
believe tall *sastras*
Revile rascal misleaders
miss Radha and Krishna
japa your rounds.
Refuse entry to misfits
"Don't listen to helpless."
"All glories to Camp Pendelton"
and the recovery of my senses.
Sweet almond oil to you.
May Krishna give me a little
hint which way to go.

* * *

Vrnda #3

Vrnda's secrets are kept from
Reprobates like me unredeemed
nerds and ne'er-do-wells. But
I may be better than
actually meets the eye.
Or worse.

* * *

11:15 a.m.

The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* lectur was exhausting. The speaker demanded eye contact and even facial response. Tired out afterwards. Leaving the temple I met Laksmi-Nrsimha Prabhu, who told me why he's leaving Towaco and what his next service will be. When he inquired about me, I told him my health was not good. He said, "But you're writing?" Yes. When we finished speaking at the bottom of the stairs, Bhakta rakesh was standing behind Laksmi-Nrsimha. He stepped forward and made obeisances, but I kept going up the stairs and not until I was halfway up did I look down and smile at him. I can't keep up the reciprocation. I'm not complaining here, but writing it down. Went to my room, bolted the door, and answered half a dozen letters. Remember that dream about being in a tight maze? Remember you wanted to write some poems?

* * *

Vrndavana is out there in the
temples and Govardhana Hill and
Radha-kunda in winter in
poverty and Indian language and
esoteric to me, the secrets
of radha and Krishna "all these
are obstacles and reasons why
I'm not permitted.

* * *

Vrnda #4
Vrnda is the *tulasi* plant?
Realize who you are. See the twig
of *tulasi*.
Nevermind your foolishness
Don't ask me "I lost a shoe
outside the temple.
Ask my mother, ask Madhu
ask *sastra*, "Who is Vrnda?"

* * *

I sit here waiting for hot water, for the time to say *gayatri*, for lunch, for my 3 p.m. meeting, for whoever else I may meet, to be alone and feel the limits of my own association. I wait for a chance to read Srila Prabhupada or Bhaktivinoda Thakura. And then "and then "when all things are said and done, can I say I had a good time?

"Don't act as the enjoyer" "it sounds harsh. Krishna should enjoy and you should serve His senses.

Serve

wave

no more Puri. But what was Puri? Thinned out milk. Loud music in America. Take what you can . . .

* * *

Momentarily I'm feeling like Arjuna's description of the riven cloud. I cannot be interested in introductory topics such as that this material world is a place of suffering, and I also tire when Prabhupada speaks a lecture where the basic ingredients are items I've heard more times than I can count "the meaning of the word Bhagavan, the three phases of the Absolute Truth, the different stages in the yoga ladder, etc.

On the other hand, I see I'm not fit to hear about radha and Krishna's conjugal pastimes. Neither do I want to study Madhvacarya, ramanujacarya, or Christian theology, psychology, Beat poetry. "Like a riven cloud, with no position in any sphere".

* * *

5:45 p.m.

I'm tired of being around so many people. I can't accommodate all the different viewpoints. I can't think or feel for myself under what feels like a bombardment. It's good to hear their voices, but I want to be free from having to hear o so many controversies. relax, enter a pace where you can be on your own and be by yourself. Yah, yah, blah, blah.

I read each day. Not forced to lecture on it or spew forth wisdom I don't have.

I spoke honestly to that disciple, but he didn't want to hear what I had to say. He thinks I should move outside the institution since I have such broad vision. I have no desire. I stay in ISKCON despite the straitjacket dreams.

He said, "Oh, I have learned and grown personally by going outside the institution." Good for him. I will learn by staying inside.

A brother said, "Sometimes I think I feel a conflict between my love for Krishna and my love for Srila Prabhupada." He wants my opinion. I don't have one. I don't know anything. All I know is that I don't know a damned thing.

Write a poem. This beat.

* * *

Vrnda #5

Vrnda "the *sadhus*

were sitting around a slow smothering fire and

one invited my Madhu over. He

sat with them, but they spoke in Hindi and

he thanked them while ISKCON

sannyasis and gurus went by

and asked, "What

are you doing there?!"

He was sitting, waiting for me to come back from my meeting.

Meanwhile, I was with this disciple hearing his conviction in his *Siksa-guru*. We talked around the point. He praised me for being a neutral *sadhu*. I said, "Yeah, yeah." He asked if it's okay to introduce my disciples to *raganuga-bhakti*. "Uh, I don't have a policy," and walked down the stairs. He had someone specific in mind. "Oh, he's a special person." I didn't tell him I was wondering whether I was fit to hear of the conjugal pastimes of Radha and Krishna. After this meeting I thought I would stop. I just want to serve Prabhupada and know Krishna. I'm nobody special.

Did I see any hogs?

Yes, a pale one. He was gentle and aware of our presence, and he walked lightly somehow on his feet. If we attacked it, it would have squealed intelligently.

Did you see any monkeys? Low-class Indians? Anyone smoking a big cigar? Did you see your father in the streets of Vrndavana? Did you hear Allen Ginsberg's song over the rooftops of your brain? Did it stay with you? Will Bhurijana Prabhu come to Vrndavana while I am here, and if so?

Listen, there are just too many people here that I know. If I talk with all of them, it will be exposed that I don't know anything, that I'm not the best anything, that I'm not anything at all.

Hey, are you trying to prove something?

Yes, I'm trying to prove I can be a rabbit free-writer. You don't understand, you who read this. You don't know. You misunderstand. I am a lover, a *Sisya*.

January 24, 1997

12:35 a.m.

Read Tenth Canto. Hearing Krishna's pastimes will relieve us from suffering. It solves any mental duality and diminishes any lingering doubts. Our natural affection for Prabhupada comes into focus. I feel confident that hearing from him will bring me to Krishna and does not need supplementation. The pastimes of other incarnations of the Lord are not as attractive as hearing about Krishna. Maharaja Pariksit praises Krishna's childhood pastimes in Vrndavana. This time, reading as I rise at midnight will enable me to face the social demands of life in ISKCON.

* * *

5 a.m.

When I give my *Srimad-Bhagavatam* lecture on Sunday (*karmis* don't try to solve the problems of birth and death, etc., they don't know there's a spiritual world, *sastra*, Srila Prabhupada's preaching), they will see through me. They will see my shortcomings, my isolation, my loneliness, and my foolish superior attitude. Hurt, wounded by what's gone down, he takes an inward arrogant air.

Yeah, bundled up family members stood through two *mangala-aratis* on the cold marble floors. "How are you? Good to see you. Are you going out (from Vrndavana) to preach sometimes?" I asked.

Yes, he says, in summer I go to Malaysia and America and Afghan Karunya. I feel inspired to preach.

Oh, see you later.

You should come to Vrndavana every year.

How's your mom?

Bow down. Wealthy followers support him. Take your time, I know you get headaches and your disciples are here. Take your time.

"He takes such a strong stand and you have to accommodate his reality."

* * *

Things gathered, what's their net worth?

At *mangala-arati*: A junior devotee put a straw mat on the cold marble floor for me to stand on. I deferred, so he promptly stood on it himself. I glanced over and sankirtana progressed, I noticed the singer, who was playing *mrdanga*, was just inches from me on my left. The drum was loud, so I moved and stood on the other side.

"Have you been away from here?"

"Yes, I attended a fund-raising ceremony in Bombay."

"How are things over at your house?"

"Oh, all right."

"Indian factors as usual?"

"Plenty of them."

* * *

"I'm an optimist. That's my problem." (That is, if I say something is good, you have to take it down a few notches.

"Oh. "

"Do you get more headaches when you come here?"

"No. I get the same amount of headaches here or there. But I try not to have too many meetings."

Ingratiating smile, the manager looks in my direction and bows his head. I do the same. Or was he looking at somebody in front of me? I didn't get a chance to go over and speak to Govinda Maharaja. His body looks big in the layers of clothes. *Mangala-arati* in the main temple. Stand at one altar, then move over. *Jaya Krishna-Balarama, Jaya Krishna-Balarama, Jaya Krishna-Balarama.*

How am I feeling toward those *arca-vigrahas*? I can't say.

* * *

Vrnda #6

Vrnda, this jerk is your maidservant? No, not yet.

Really, he said you've

Really got to slow down. Tell that rickshaw *walla*, "*Nyet, nyet. Bas.*"

No. Ouch! Pressure points hurt loud pain is good for you "

"your organs are responding."

Vrnda,
America, you grow there
too, O beloved of Krishna.

A couple of ISKCON *sannyasis* have paid for the construction of a big building near Krishna-Balaram Mandir. They have their building and compound walled-in. On the outer wall someone has written, "Is this the way Prabhupada wanted his *sannyasis* to live?"

* * *

* * *

5 p.m.

All day long I've been opting to do something other than writing. I guess it's procrastination. Sometimes it seems like a duty. I've got a bunch of letters here, from both local devotees who are here in India and the usual letters forwarded from America. I answered letters instead of writing. Then I read and prepared my *Bhagavatam* class instead of writing. Then I ate and slept instead of writing. Then I chanted an extra round or two. Then I went to a meeting to preach about surrender "all instead of writing.

I told myself, "You don't *always* have to write. Don't force yourself." And I said, "You're not *only* a writer. You could start spending more time reading instead."

So the pressure builds. I hope it will cause me to explode into irresistible writing full of realization.

* * *

Surrender
Surrender to what happens,
Lao Tze said, "Flow."
Unless Krishna's in the center . . .

* * *

Rasa dasa wrote me that his seventeen-year-old son was killed by a train.
Rasa wrote me that *Litany* brought him back.
End the day in surrender.
Never forget you're not a special guru or Kafka fan anymore, you're a *cela*, a *Sisya*, a *dasa*
Dee Dee Dee surrendered to Prabhupada.
Each one. I met an American devotee at the entrance gate, said, "Hello, hello"

smile fading out
like on a film
fade-out "
we're all vanishing . . .
Bring us to the master's feet
before it's too late
surrendered in love.

January 25, 1996
12:30 a.m.

I'm supposed to give the lecture tomorrow on *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 7.6.3. *Sukham aindriyakam*: happiness from the senses is available in any body, hog or human. Don't bother endeavoring for it; it comes automatically (just as the miseries come) by our karma. The special prerogative of human life is to stop the suffering of birth, death, disease, and old age by Krishna consciousness. *Na te vidhu-svartha-gatim hi visnum*. Happiness comes without effort. Trust in Krishna. You can't improve on happiness either for yourself or for others. What is my message from this verse? Work without fear and depend on Krishna. reform yourself and give your effort to that. There is no point changing others or in fighting for happiness.

* * *

O Lord, don't let
them drop it, don't let
them drop that atom
bomb on me.
Stop it, bebop it,
O Lord . . .

* * *

He's complaining (the writing subperson?) that he's not writing much because of the mail and meetings at Krishna-Balaram Mandir.

Is he saying Krishna-Balarama have caused the lull? Is he actually complaining to Them?

Oh, they will drive you away. Don't complain. A little stress is good. Stress means you are making a contribution.

What are the stresses? One stress might be that your "big frog in a little pond" pride has been crushed. There are those who sing better than you, those who are more expert lecturers, those who are more humble. Someone wrote me, "I thought you were reclusive and aloof, so I didn't write to you, but then in one lecture I saw you were jolly."

Does she think a reclusive life means living a life of constant frustration? Isn't socializing just as frustrating?

Someone else wrote me, "What happened to the three hundred letters Srila Prabhupada wrote to Srila Narayana Maharaja which were once in your possession? Tell me truly."

Does he think I'm a sinister liar, that I destroyed the letters and now won't admit it? I wrote back that I never received any letters, and that if there had been three hundred letters in my possession, or even thirty, or even *three*, I would have long ago shared them with others.

And someone else wrote . . .

* * *

Srila Prabhupada wrote that dreaming is simply mental life while you are asleep. Generally he seems to think it's material and therefore of no value, but a Krishna conscious person may also dream spiritually, and that's precious. Sometimes Krishna gives messages through dreams. But it depends on your advanced state of Krishna consciousness whether you can receive them. In my case, I don't claim that my dreams are valuable in themselves, or even that the messages I "receive" are from Krishna, but they certainly messages from my unconscious and they have more frankness and artistry than what I capture from the conscious state. I'm already writing as much as I can in the spirit of self-examination and purification. Sometimes I have writing blocks and don't know what to say, and I certainly can't see metaphors and symbols in my life in a way that I can put into prose or poetry. All that comes ready-made in a dream. How can I refuse to notice them? Therefore, in the spirit of *yukta-vairagya* I sometimes record my dreams in writing and try to make sense out of them to improve my Krishna consciousness.

Like this one:

Actors coming together to commit themselves to perform *Hamlet*

A large troupe of actors and actresses are going to do *Hamlet*, but they don't have the determination to work together. Somehow they are thrust together on location, and gradually they decide they should work together. They make this decision partly because they see how much freedom they have to be with each other in various ways. For example, two members of the orchestra decide to get married. Others make different commitments to each other. Eventually, they decide to do the play.

The dream goes on to combine different images and the actors and actresses are eventually cast in their roles. Some of them are outstanding, some minor. And there are elephants. The dream is not so much about the play but about the actors and actresses arriving at commitment.

A dream from my own attempt to harmonize elements within myself and even outside of myself. I haven't become successful at that yet, but eventually I'll have to surrender and "put on the show."

If it actually takes so many subpersons to pull off this show, it is only by Krishna's grace that they would all cooperate and become inspired. It reminds me of Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhu's art family where he has forty devotees pulling together and producing astounding artwork. I too would like to produce excellent works. Maybe the dream source is telling me that something more elevated and harmonized could be

undertaken. But since I'm committed to free-writing, it would have to come spontaneously. Even Shakespeare wrote without blotting his page. It just came to him.

* * *

* * *

Tribe Dream

Tribe sends out dreamers "
"Don't come back until you get a good one."
Recent results? They sit around
campfire and discuss them. Look for peace "
Indians, Americans, rich and poor
share their dreams. Look for wisdom.
"But it's already in the *sastras*."
Yes, but it must come through me.
Each one holds their post,
deploys, reports, seeks the good
of the whole.

* * *

Dreamer! We scorn them, we
practical people:
"religious folks don't dream unless
they are pure devotees."
Each night, each sleep
another chance.
Ask your dream self, "Help me find
the deep inspirations."
May I commit myself to dreaming
even when awake "
See the dream of a Krishna conscious
world and me working for it,
dream I'm serving my master,
I am with him,
accepted into his entourage.
Dream your way
back to Godhead.

* * *

Sublime Theater
Actors gather and
choose to work
beyond my control

past false ego . . .
The holy name Hare Krishna Hare rama . . .
the birth of "theater"
despite the frivolity, the bid
for freedom they
come together and work
and commit themselves to art.

* * *

Oh, make it true
make it art for Krishna
make it pleasing to Vaisnavas
in verse, like Rupa Gosvami
the best playwright
his actors and Vrndavana stage
to be read again and again!
Act it in love
to the best audience . . .
Each moment in Vrndavana precious:
given to you
a golden chance "

* * *

theater for Krishna,
Radha-Krishna *lila*
in the universe of Goloka "
never mind the dirt and the hogs
and your own wretched surmises.
Banish it, bath it in His perfect words,
the dirty mind released.

* * *

5 a.m.

Srimati Radharani was wearing a heavy silk shawl this morning. Their warm clothing is not as warm as you'd like Them to have, or what a human being might require for comfort. That Krishna and Balarama are barefoot reminds me that They are spiritual; there is no question of Them being cold. The shawls are really an offering of service more than a practical necessity. Krishna-Balarama, Radha-Syama, and Gaura-Nitai stand in transcendence. They're not marble statues, although I'm a statue before them, cold in heart and cold in body.

* * *

I've got my Post-its in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* for tomorrow's lecture. Material happiness and misery come automatically, so "don't bother about it." As soon as you try to find happiness, your miseries begin. The remedies that you seek to counteract suffering turn out to be worse than the suffering itself. (In 1967 I remember Prabhupada saying that LSD was like that.) Later in his life, Prahlada Maharaja received similar good instructions from a *sannyasi* who was found lying in the road like a python. That *avadhuta sannyasi* said that from his observations, so-called sex pleasure brought only misery. Therefore, he was no longer taking part in such activities. He was just lying in the road and meeting his bodily necessities as Nature provided them and without any effort on his part at all. In another early lecture, Prabhupada was pleased to remark that one of his disciples was depending on Krishna for temple maintenance. Prabhupada said that that doesn't mean we should be lazy and not do anything, but we should work fearlessly. Krishna supplies His devotees' necessities. After this, I may give a reference to Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati on this subject and whatever else Krishna inspires me to speak.

As you see, I have solid references, so I will make a moderate trot through these topics one after another. Then I will have put another duty behind me.

* * *

11 a.m.

Just before going down to hear Dhanurdhara Maharaja's class, I felt the budding of a twinge behind the right eye. I calculated that it might go down and that it was very important for me to attend the class. He'll be attending my class tomorrow.

As I sat in his class the headache gradually settled in, like a mole digging in the earth, and began to flower. Dhanurdhara Maharaja's verse was about Prahlada Maharaja, but he soon shifted to praising Pariksit Maharaja for tolerating the pain he was experiencing by not eating and drinking, and because he didn't lament even though he knew he would die within a few days. It was sincere praise, but I wondered what it had to do with us "that spiritual giant so far above us.

Now I've come back to my room. Tried sleeping off the pain, but it hasn't worked. Dhanurdara Maharaja once told me that when you're sick, the one pleasure you have is that you're the object of other's compassion. Maharaja Pariksit renounced this in favor of feeling compassion for those who were consigned to hell. Instead of looking to his own suffering, he inquired how they could be saved.

As Dhanurdara Maharaja spoke, I doubted that a chronically ill person is always the object of compassion. Rather, he is often misunderstood.

The "story" of a headache may not be so interesting, but I track it as I track dreams, as I track the day. Literary soul. Record-maker. I just hope I'm well enough to give my class tomorrow. Big performance.

January 26, 1996

1 a.m.

I had to take rest for the night yesterday at 3:30 p.m., but all night long the sharp pain persisted behind the right eye. Sometimes I sat up in bed, but soon layed down again. I

couldn't sleep. I heard the monkeys crying and grunting on the roof, or the noises they make when they jump and run up and down the boards in the light of the near-full moon.

I tried to think that this is Krishna's will for me, but that didn't make it any easier. I kept worrying about not being able to give the *Bhagavatam* class. Let it go. Wait out the pain. I'm no Maharaja Pariksit with the quality of forbearance.

* * *

During the night I had a dream in which I had a headache. I walked into my father's room, but he was sleeping. Finally, He opened his eyes. He was handsome, like my father. "How are you?" I asked.

"All right."

"I'm having a really bad day. I have such a painful headache."

Then he noticed a few things wrong with me that were causing my headache "my neck beads were too tight and had something caught in them. He mentioned a few other things, and then told me to rest and take it easy.

When I awoke I thought that my father had been loving and caring. He was a younger version of my father, and he resembled me. I took it that he was some part of myself, a male source coming to give me solace "not exactly the spiritual master, but a caretaker extension of the spiritual master. Srila Prabhupada is my guide, and he has assistants who help him to guide me. It was a difficult night and it's a difficult life with a chronic illness, but I have help to get me through in a manly way.

* * *

Yesterday during the headache pain I was telling Madhu how difficult it is to be in ISKCON Vrndavana because of the social pressure, yet I would not want to come to Vrndavana and live outside the temple. I said that I might not come next year. He said he agreed, "But you're here now."

I'm here now and I'd better not complain while in the holy *dhama* about being in the holy *dhama*.

* * *

1 p.m.

I couldn't give the class today, but I'm scheduled to speak tomorrow. I'll use many of the same references I had for today's verse. I have a good opener: In the beginning of this chapter, Prahlada Maharaja says that human life is very rare and that one should use it to learn *bhagavata-dharma*. He should start his education at five years old. Prahlada then said that the Supreme Lord Krishna is our dearest friend. Therefore, we should search Him out. The children to whom he was preaching objected. They preferred to play now and search for Krishna later in life. An adult might object in a similar way: "If I search out Krishna, how will my material necessities be met?"

After this, I have a number of references, but my planned lecture seems to peter out with no relevant message for today's devotees. They're likely to ask me nitty-gritty

questions about economic development and dependence on Krishna. They'll want to know where the dividing line is between surrender and obligation.

I heard this morning that a woman devotee asked the lecturer, "Why does ISKCON mistreat its devotees when they grow older or neglect them completely?" If I were asked such a question, I might reply, "Just because I'm giving the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* lecture for half an hour today doesn't mean I have the answers to all of ISKCON'S problems." But that probably wouldn't satisfy such a questioner.

* * *

2 p.m.

Vrnda #7

Sitting on porch, I'm in Vrndavana.

Vrnda, save me, my head gets "
you know.

Repeat Prabhupada's messages and
never tire. Please bless me with that.

Don't let me stray from his feet.

Prabhupada is "good enough" "

let my words help others.

* * *

Vrnda #8

Vrndavana-dhama, damn my
hard dull etcetera.

Rama rama ramana

the words of the sense-
enjoyer can never know peace
nor soothe the hearing of
aspirant devotees.

* * *

Vrnda. Baladeva's house. The cricket game continues. I'm facing away from it as I write, facing a man painting a railing on the building next door. Sitting on the veranda, four of us chanting *japa*. Peaceful, cool January afternoon at Sant Colony. Narayana Maharaja has gone to Australia, and his *Sisya*, my one-time disciple, has gone to a book fair in Calcutta.

I've stacked up six books I've decided I'm not going to read here in India. Find someone to carry them back to America. I probably won't read them there either. Then carry them to Ireland. Srila Prabhupada says the scholar is like a donkey carrying books here and there and never reading them. Ah, me. Is Frankie Sinatra dead yet? If so, why didn't they tell me? And Sid Ceasar? And Imogene Coca? Did they get a divorce? Will I be able to let all this go?

I used to write of my sublime struggle here years ago in this house. It was 1992. Now I'm hardened to that particular struggle. I have stopped trying to learn all the technicalities of *bhakti* and am concentrating more on my need for honesty and heart. But I need *sastra*, and in particular, Vraja-Krishna.

Krishna Krishna, I filled up a glass vial with Vraja sand from just outside the Krishna-Balaram Mandir gate.

* * *

In Vrndavana I sprained a joint but never smoked one. In Vrndavana there are secrets revealed to sincere devotees. In the past, Syamananda found a bracelet belonging to Srimati Radharani. That kind of miracle can't happen to me. Give me a red dot on the forehead. I belong to She who loves Syama. It would be nice to be marked as belonging to Srila Prabhupada.

Listen, friend, there's no pen like this fat, black Shaeffer. I decided writing is as good as chanting or reading. Each has its place. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare rama Hare rama, rama rama Hare Hare.

January 27, 1997

12:15 a.m.

Vrnda #9

Vrnda, I'm rising

at midnight

"Never fear," the Lord says.

Don't you know I fear

and I'm seeking solace

in Your names "

O Krishna, Lord of Vrnda.

* * *

Just depend on Krishna for protection. This was the standard of the residents of Vrndavana. When Trnavarta was killed falling from the sky, Krishna was unharmed. Thus the Vrajavasis concluded that the sinful demon died, but pious Krishna was protected by God. *Ahara-nidra-bhaya-maithunam* "these four are always active in life, but a devotee transcends them. Even fear doesn't reach him because he fully depends on Krishna for protection.

Why am I trying to figure things out by myself, to be truthful, nourished, gain a little wisdom, etc.? Just depend on Krishna.

* * *

January 27, 1997

ISKCON Vrndavana

Dear Godbrother,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

I wanted to place before you a problem I have been having for some years now regarding my visits to Vrndavana-dhama. I don't think you will be able to solve this for me in a decisive way, because it's something like a personal problem and a situation I don't think can be entirely controlled but I would be grateful to hear your realizations as a friend, and especially because you are so deeply acquainted with living in Vrndavana.

Whenever I come to Vrndavana, I find that it becomes an intense period of socializing, with pressure from Godbrothers and disciples. There really doesn't seem to be any off-season at ISKCON Vrndavana, because *whenever* I come, it's the same. It's natural that at this temple more than any other temple in ISKCON, one is likely to meet devotees from anywhere in the world. Also, ISKCON controversies often seem to be focused here. This has been my experience in recent years, and although I tend to forget it when I'm away and again desire to return to Vrndavana, as soon as I get here I have the same experience. Then the tension begins to build day after day, week after week, until the pressure becomes almost unbearable for me and I find myself looking forward to leaving. This pressure usually means more headaches than usual, and also anxiety because when I have pain, I can't perform the duties I am expected to perform. Neither do I find devotees overly sympathetic to my chronic illness.

This year I decided not to give the VIHE seminar, but that doesn't seem to have alleviated the pressure.

One alternative I considered is coming to Vrndavana and living outside the ISKCON temple. I did that one year when I lived at Baladeva's house for four weeks to write. I didn't visit the temple at all during the period I was writing. The writing went well, and the fact is that I could produce some of the best writing I have ever done about Vrndavana (it was included in the front of the book called *The Wild Garden*). After those four weeks, however, a great sense of obligation had built in me that now I should participate fully in temple life. And once I did, the usual pressures developed, devotees wanted to meet me, my refusing to meet caused them to be displeased, letters poured in, and there were so many demands and controversies.

Neither do I like to live outside ISKCON because I don't think it sets a good example. I mean, not just living a few blocks away from the temple, but the idea of living here and not going regularly to the programs. If sometime during the year I want to take a writing retreat, I would never think of doing it in Vrndavana for this very reason. I find some other more remote place in the world more suitable.

But I don't think this is a good attitude to take toward the most sacred place in the universe. I may be developing an offensive attitude toward Vrndavana as I come here, complain, and so on. This year I even said to Madhumangala that next year we might not come. It almost seems like I'm starting to not like Vrndavana, and that's bad.

Also, I have a permanently crippled left ankle. After walking about an hour on any one day, I can't walk the next day, or if I were to walk two days in a row, then I can only

walk for a short period. This, my tendency for headaches, and my general temperament, prevent me from having much enthusiasm for going out. I can't even do the two- or three-hour *parikrama* around Vrndavana, although I know it's a blissful and purifying experience.

I like to *read* about the Vrndavana of the spiritual world in *Krishna* book and other books, and I like it here also, despite my complaints. Even here in room 42 I can feel the blessings seeping through the walls. But mostly my stay in Vrndavana is rewarding because I feel I have fulfilled the obligations I have to meet disciples and Godbrothers. It's an austere *yajna*. I go away from Vrndavana thinking I have paid some dues, but not with the bliss of falling in love with the place, tasting its simple life, tasting its intense devotion to Krishna even found in the ordinary residents "and what to speak of the deeper secrets of Vrndavana, of Radha-Krishna *bhajana*.

I would be appreciative of your comments on this predicament. Thank you.

I hope this meets you in good health.

Your servant,

Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

* * *

* * *

7:30 a.m.

In just a few minutes I'll go down to give the *Bhagavatam* class. I'm not afraid. The flurry of excitement for writing some kind of fiction of dream incidents has passed. If it wants to overpower me and come back with a novel-length dream, then fine, but I'm not up to it yet. Staying with *Every Day, Just Write*.

Of course, even within this *Every Day, Just Write*, I could tell small "stories" from my dreams. But I really have to want to do it. Seems odd to be thinking about such a thing here, a story set in Norway while I'm in here in Vrndavana.

Well, what do I want? A sequel to *Chota* (as one devotee suggested)? Chota goes to India and meets a *maha-bhagavata*, who tells Chota to settle there. In response to this suggestion I wrote back, "But I have not met a *maha-bhagavata* who told me to do that." I have to experience these stories before I can write them. Yes, the whole thing should run through me. That may be one of the reasons I can't plunge into telling dream stories. I don't even know what the dream-story means, so how can I repeat it?

* * *

Vrnda #10

Vrnda, I'm so low-powered "

Railroads don't know me

never make sense,

don't look behind

always wasting time.

* * *

Vrnda #11

Vrnda, there's the nicest *tulasi*
house in Wicklow
Really you'd like it, kept
by Hare Krishna dasi "names
of *tulasis* like "dear to Krishna"
written on each pot.
Never missing care, the
plants thrive.
Dear Lord, please make
me a maidservant.
Always pray like
that? You don't?

* * *

In Vrndavana
Oh, the parrots are singing or
is that the crows? Yes ,it's caws.
How could I have mistaken it?
Low-powered listening, crawling
confession. Oh, I am not
a harmless loser . . .
I don't care. Get straight now.

* * *

This is Vrndavana where saints live "
go out and see them carrying
just the right staff for
walking down Bhaktivedanta Marg.
Check them out.
Bhakti-rasa dasa wandered
off the *parikrama* trail to what
looked like an ideal
little thatched roof mud-walled
village but the young boys gathered
and stoned him! He ran away
in his bright orange Western
winter coat and they
pursued and he felt purified.

* * *

In Vrndavana hot water's on the way and I get at least two headaches a week.
ISKCONites want to help relieve my pain "a girl from Ukraine said she can do it with

acupressure, but I won't let her try. Bhagavata dasa from Russia says, "I'm different from those who cause pain trying to relieve a headache while it's on."

In Vrndavana I gave the lecture to over a hundred bundled up devotees in the temple room. We didn't speak about *rasa* or conjugal moods, only straight-from-Prabhupada examples on the verse translated by Prabhupada, our master. Was it okay? Passable.

* * *

I looked out and saw
one *sannyasi* with scarf wrapped
over neck and mouth
and the other eccentric one,
eyes rolled up and
when I looked again he was asleep.
Someone asked me after the speech,
"Why did Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati
chastise his disciples when they didn't
give the beggars some *paisa*?"
Because he saw they were hard-hearted.

* * *

In Vrndavana today it's cold and
dark-skied, yesterday it was sunny.
I like the sunny days
when the heart lightens and I think
I'm going to make it through.
But I can't chant with love
or remorse, or *anything*.
Lord, Lord, help me.

* * *

[artwork]

* * *

In Vrndavana
Quiet, the bell is ringing for
noon. You just have to listen
as all Vrndavana chimes in
even in this room.
The heater hums except when
the electricity cuts off "
as it does at 6 a.m. when I eat breakfast
in the dark and light candles to see by.

Then the heater comes on
and I remember I was dreaming
awake in Vrndavana.

* * *

In Vrndavana while lecturing
I noticed Aindra Prabhu wrapped
in woolen robes
just like the ones Bhagavata Purana
dasa is wearing "the uniform of the
twenty-four hour *kirtana*-ers.
My uniform is a knit cap from New York,
a sweatshirt from London,
a wrist watch from Hong Kong,
Glider slip-on shoes from Puri,
and Fixodent pasted-in teeth
from Brescia
and all this paraphernalia
I'm carrying from state to state.

* * *

Vrndavana catechism: I believe in the holy ghost, the forgiveness of sins, in Akrura-
ghat and the old mother who wears saffron, and everyone's right to be disappointed in
me. I believe in the sands of Raman Reti.
I believe I will get out there and see it.
I believe in Abhirama's house and the reddish
flowers that grow there on that metal frame.
I believe Bhagat-ji lived there and
gave me an orange once.
I believe in Prabhupada
who makes all this remembrance possible.

* * *

Walk
Walking your ankle says
okay, me too in Vrnda-
ban.
Always look around for
sights to treasure "
laugh while you can
stumble your mantras
add to footprints in the sand,
Krishna's calling you.

* * *

Impressions from a walk:

Madhumangala, Samika Rsi, and I walked down the *parikrama* trail in the direction of the Madana-mohana temple. Although the morning was cold, it was sunny and we soon found we were wearing too many clothes. I took off my scarf, sweatshirt, and hat. At one point we came upon two little boys no more than eight years old. They walked beside us for awhile. I asked one of them to chant Hare Krishna. He didn't respond. Then Samika Rsi asked him again in Hindi, "Hare Krishna *bol*," and the boy responded. A little later a group of more than half a dozen older boys came toward us. They were boisterous, almost challenging, saying, "Hare Krishna, *haribol*." We replied and they said a few other things "I don't know what "and had a laugh. We saw the old spots we've seen in previous years. Some things have changed, new walls built, etc. We bowed before the two trees "the Krishna-Balarama tree and the other tree at Raman Reti. We reached the ISKCON *gosala* and saw many cows crowded onto their land. They were mooing and grunting. Walking on sand. I became tired and didn't want to walk further, but we at least got within sight of the Madana-mohana temple. I said that another day we could go by rickshaw to see Radha-Damodara.

So we returned, sometimes meeting *sadhus*. *Everyone* is colorful in Vrndavana. Even seeing a man and his wife is fascinating. I saw one man watering his large garden by holding a bucket in his left hand, reaching in with his right hand, and splashing water in the deft way Indians have. I saw the same thing yesterday from Baladeva's roof where a man was thinning a paint job by first spreading water out in that same hand-flicking way.

We walked under one tree which was full of loud crows. We saw many little chipmunks or Indian squirrels everywhere we went. And old trees with old vines wrapped around them. As we came up the road on our way home, an fifty-year-old Indian man wearing a *pandita's* hat stopped us. Apparently, he was the leader of a group of about a dozen people. He spoke good English and had the verve of a professional interviewer. All he lacked was a microphone to hold in my face. He asked each of us which country we had come from and for our impressions of India. I said that my impression was that India is the land of truth and religion. Then he wanted to know my second impression, so I added that people in India have forgotten to practice their culture, but they seem to remember it at heart. He kept pushing for more impressions and I didn't have anything else to say, so I introduced him to Samika Rsi. Samika Rsi is from Madhya Pradesh, and it turned out that this man was too. Finally, after interviewing us as much as he could, asking what holy places we had been to, how long we were going to stay in India, etc., he finally let us go. His name is Surendra Singh. A pleasant chap.

There were many more particular impressions that my senses took in which I hope to remember at another time "the shape of the cows and bulls, details of the chipmunks, the twist to the trees.

Toward the beginning of our walk in Raman Reti, a row of tractors drove by one after another. Each had the word "Svaraj" written on the side. Also, wherever that *sadhu* has written "Radha", someone has added "Krishna." The signs now say, "*Jaya Radha-Krishna*." I joked that the one who wrote Radha was like the parrot who praises Radha. Now the Krishna parrot has come by and glorified his master.

* * *

From my bed on this fourth floor of the Guesthouse I have a good view of the end portion of the *prasadam* hall. It's outdoors and covered with a metal roof supported by brick columns. It's part of an old building that for many years wasn't part of ISKCON property but has since been acquired. I can just hear the men singing, "*Sarira avidya jal . . .*"

In front of that area is a path where devotees walk when they cut across between the temple and the MVT buildings. It's interesting to see Western devotees mixing with the Vrndavana dust and with the brown-bodied Indian devotees. Sometimes you see a little kid from Sweden or America dressed in a combination of Western sports clothes and an Indian *dhoti*. And they mix right in with the stray dogs, *chaukidars*, crows, pigeons, parrots, and monkeys. The monkeys are never welcome down at the *prasadam* area. Sometimes I hear a yell as someone shouts to chase away a monkey that has come too close. I'm sure the monkeys get their dinner later, after the devotees have gone.

On the *gurukula* roof I see yellow *dhotis* hanging on the line to dry. In about twenty minutes Bhagavata dasa will be here to give me my evening's head and neck massage, then accupressure. I relax through the pain his hard pushing at the sore points causes. Without my asking for it, Samika Rsi gave me an anesthetic aerosol called Lidocaine. You're supposed to stick it in your nostrils and spray, and it gets rid of headaches. I'm sure Madhu will be completely against it and I ought to be also, but believe it or not I'm thinking to try it in case it can do anything to help with those twenty-hour headaches.

January 28, 1997

12:20 a.m.

I'm reading about Krishna showing Mother Yashoda the universal form. A speculation occurred to me: how could Vyasadeva write these pastimes? How did he know they happened? I supply the answer to myself. Lord Krishna and Vyasa collaborated to write the *Bhagavatam*. Vyasadeva is himself an incarnation of God, so it's not a surprise that he knew the Lord's pastimes. After Narada coached him, Vyasadeva sat in meditation and saw the Lord with all His internal energies as well as the material energy.

Then I thought that the act of writing down the pastimes was almost as important as the pastimes themselves. Or, you could say one reason for Krishna enacting the pastimes is that He wanted them to be recorded for the people of the future. Otherwise, what is the meaning of our saying that Krishna came to this earth to perform His pastimes in order to attract the living beings back to Krishnaloka? How would He attract them? He would perform His activities within the one hundred and fifty years He remained on earth, and then the billions of people who came after that would never hear about them, unless they were written down.

My next thought may seem a ridiculous application of this teaching to some, but I'll put it here anyway. It occurred to me that I'm living my life in order to write it down. And that's not such a bad thing. My life is not a "pastime," something glorious to be remembered forever. Still, it is worth writing down because I am following Prabhupada's instructions. I drew two lessons from this: (1) I should live my life as ideally as possible

so that I don't leave a disastrous, tawdry record; (2) I should take the recording of it as important.

* * *

I've got my material ready for today's meeting with disciples. First I'll answer a written question that was handed me regarding how we can be confident as we practice. Then I'll read a segment from *Cc. Asraya* and discuss how to read Prabhupada's books. Then talk about *japa*. Ask Samika Rsi to tell how he met Prabhupada in 1973. He asked him how to control the mind while chanting. He can relate Prabhupada's response. Then I'll read from *Namamrta* and comment that I have faith in the process of *japa*, even though I haven't yet achieved the desired results. We'll chant one round together.

After that, I'll read some segments from *Wild Garden* and talk about our relationship as guru and disciple, which includes their reading my books.

Some people say I'm not a guru. I should agree. But I have to dance. And it's not a monkey's dance. There's no turning back from this basic commitment. I simply have to purify it.

* * *

Vrndavana

Vrndavana, I'm on the surface,
scratching my skin.

I rest and read and write and work in
Room 42.

Do I never go out? Walked to
within sight of Madan-mohana Mandir and turned
back with sore feet, head fogged.

Don't tell us.

I will.

Vrndavana is
my spiritual home. I aspire to die here.

That will be the end of
another ISKCON chapter when
Brahmananda, Satsvarupa, etc., finish up "
the class of '66 one by one goes
(we hope) to join with Swamiji.

And Vrndavana? Go to Krishna
and His friends if you
have the *laulyam*, and *that* comes after
lives of sincere practice
with His full mercy.

* * *

5:30 a.m., Escape routes

Words worth black sonnets cutey-pie Everest crescents.

Doo be doo be doo be get away from your life sometimes. The way out is to avoid nerve endings and to write pleasantly here in this notepad without saving it for later.

Save it for Mother who dreams of Norway and two girls who tell him he can ride with them. Wink and wake up your free of pros and cons, potatoes and nightly acus

accuse I don't

free runs down helicopters

Krishna Krishna Krishna is

Soopreme and I'm tired of Acting (like to just be). Well, you can do it at least on this page.

* * *

Escape routes. Can this page take a little pen action or is it too sorry for that? Seems to go okay. You can't always escape and don't want to, but I'd like to write it out.

Lie back and rest. You forgot to pray. I'm tired of reading my books, can't read Srila Prabhupada's unless I'm *up* for it. And someone else's and passports and tired of ready McFreddy. Tired of posing and passing Francs

fake you gotta stay with it.

* * *

11:05 a.m.

Some good things are happening here in Vrndavana. I'm feeling a growing conviction about my exclusive dependence on Srila Prabhupada. That came up strongly in 1993. It's still growing. It's fed by the challenge of ISKCON devotees taking shelter of Srila Narayana Maharaja. My dependence on Prabhupada is also fed by my seeing a Godbrother leave his post "he gave up guru duties and *sannyasa* "and by signs of others deviating. I can only depend on the strength I get from Prabhupada. It's that strength that enabled me in 1966 to give up my nasty habits and to continue on the platform of decent obedience. I don't say it's only the chanting that has helped me; it's the chanting as Srila Prabhupada gave it to me.

* * *

A Godbrother wrote me, "I feel our prime duty as the spiritual leaders of ISKCON is to bring *bhakti* more and more into our heart. Vrndavana has a special potency to facilitate that." He advised me to come to Vrndavana only for the purpose of deepening my attraction for the holy name. But he also acknowledged that as a senior man, I have to fulfill obligations wherever I am in ISKCON. He suggests I come here and not announce disciples' meetings. "You can meet them in America." He suggested I live outside ISKCON Vrndavana when I come here, and attend the temple two or three times at the beginning, then again at the end of my stay. Use Vrndavana for a retreat.

"I would strongly encourage you in this regard to take care of your own needs, but if it disturbs you that you are setting a bad example if you do "then that will also disturb

you. I beg you not to be disturbed and set the example of keeping Vrndavana sacred for yourself."

I like the principle of coming to Vrndavana to purify my heart and not thinking of it as a chore full of institutional obligations. I set myself up for suffering in that way, and the result is I may become offensive toward Vrndavana. On the other hand, I cannot conceive using Vrndavana for a retreat without living or at least participating in the Krishna-Balaram temple. When we hear that someone has come to Vrndavana and doesn't come to Prabhupada's temple, we think something is wrong with him.

I think I will no longer announce to my disciples in advance that I'm coming to Vrndavana. In that sense I will try to use Vrndavana for my own spiritual needs. I'll be discussing the details of this in coming weeks and months with Madhu, working out whether we'll actually come back next year and how. And when we do come, it can be for some specific function such as chanting sixty-four rounds a day, living near the temple, and participating a little, but especially making it known that I've come for a *japa-vrata*.

* * *

Japa Log

January 28, 1997,

Krishna-Balarama Mandira, Vrndavana

I propose to take notes during the day. At the end of the day I'll note the total rounds done and make a summary or final statement. This is an attempt to get my *japa* "going." It seems to have no feeling. My only purpose seems to be to count each round in the sixteen minimum quota. No prayer, no attention, hardly any hearing of the actual mantras, hardly any attempt to control the flickering mind.

This log is a small gesture to indicate that I'm seeking improvement. I might also write here other ideas I have for improvement, and anything to encourage me about the importance of *japa* in my life.

* * *

9:45 a.m.

Seventeen rounds. I heard of a Godbrother who is in Vrndavana but who doesn't come to the ISKCON temple. I heard that he's chanting a high quota *japa-bhajana*. I thought of going to see him to talk about chanting on beads, but I decided not to. I'll talk with myself.

Want to increase the quantity?

I heard Bhakti-rasa dasa chants *japa* on the roof. Maybe I could go up there and try it out. But in many ways, this room is an ideal *bhakti-kutir*. The door is bolted, a sign on it in both Hindi and English says, "Do not disturb," and an arrow points all would-be intruders to Madhu's room. I am free to chant here. But I don't want to. Have no taste.

* * *

My health limits me from vigorous quotas.

* * *

A deadness prevents me from pushing on with extra rounds or from relishing the bare sixteen. For now I must proceed with firm faith in the principle that chanting will produce the sweet taste which I now find bitter.

* * *

5:45 p.m.

Total of twenty rounds today. This writing makes me conscientious. Some devotees say, "I feel that my daily chanting only starts after I complete my sixteen rounds." A little extra quantity makes for hope "adventure in *japa*."

January 29, 1997

12:10 a.m.

My first impression on waking is that I gave too much at the disciples' meeting. Boasted of tangibly entering a sacred consciousness while reading Srila Prabhupada's books. Asserted that firm faith in the chanting of Hare Krishna will relieve *avidya*; boasted that my personal writing is a unique contribution to ISKCON "a search for the authentic. As a result I'm humbled, reduced.

To ashes?

No, to my real size. I even dreamt of being a tiny chanter. I'll tell it in my dream report. Right now, rather than give myself first preference, I'll try to read of Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in Srila Prabhupada's purports. I'm tiny, one ten-thousandth the upper portion of a hair in size, and I'm most fallen. I boasted that I depend utterly on Srila Prabhupada. Let it be true. I presumed to be their teacher, and now I must set a good example.

* * *

While reading about Gargamuni approaching Nanda Maharaja for Krishna's name-giving ceremony this morning, I was struck by the importance of *believing*. This is why I depend on Prabhupada and not someone else. The most important experience for me is to overcome doubts, and Prabhupada is the one who can best do that for me.

I need to overcome doubts. Is what I'm reading real or just a relative Indian cultural expression? When Krishna says *dehino 'smin yatha dehe*, "The soul takes another body at death," is this Hindu philosophy? Why doesn't it appear in other religions?

My answer to this doubt is that Krishna is speaking the Absolute Truth regardless of whether it appears in other religions. How have I gained this conviction in Krishna's words? I gained it from Srila Prabhupada's presentation of *Bhagavad-gita*. Therefore, I need to continue to overcome whatever doubts come up in my mind. Doubts arise from bad association. Prabhupada is bringing me to Vedic culture and insisting that it's not foreign but the truth. This is my constant need when I read, when I'm taught by my guru,

to enter the reality of what he is saying. Prabhupada is convinced. No doubt other gurus are also convinced in what they say, but he is the one who convinced me. He is my spiritual master. I don't cling to him sentimentally but because I know he can help me. If in any way I were to switch over to another, will he do a better job on this one particular thing I need "the conviction that the teachings are real? No, I don't think anyone can improve on that. Neither am I prepared to gamble.

I realize that people might say I'm not very adventurous. In fact, I'm not even very trusting. I should trust in the scriptures' description of the multiplicity of gurus and not think that it's such a fragile relationship that I'll lose hold of it by hearing from someone else. But Prabhupada himself has not encouraged this kind of adventure. He even warned us that his Godbrothers could not do help us; he even said they could do us great harm. I maintain this kind of "childhood" impression. I honor it. I want to please my guru and I don't get the impression from him that he would be happy to hear that I'm ranging wide in Vaisnava readings and approaching other members in the Sarasvati *ghotra*. That's just the way it is. I admit that my position may not be the same as others have adopted, and it may not be the position that will be manifested by followers of Prabhupada in succeeding generations. right now, however, I am confident that it's right for me. And I don't feel it is harmful to those depending on my teachings. It's authentic. The idea of being more adventurous as a teacher seems to be extremely risky.

It occurred to me yesterday while asserting this faithfulness in Prabhupada that I'm not the only one who's remaining faithful in ISKCON. rather, the whole generation of ISKCON leaders, and the new devotees also, comprise a body of persons fiercely loyal to Prabhupada. It has its excesses, I admit, but it's the saving factor of ISKCON. ISKCON does have *guru-nistha*. We do express it sometimes in fanatical or superficial ways, and we sometimes misuse Prabhupada's authority in our zeal "that's all unfortunate" but by maintaining singleminded faith in Prabhupada, we remain fixed on the Gaudiya Vaisnava *siddhanta*. There's a jungle of possible misunderstandings in the name of being faithful to Prabhupada, but that doesn't mean it's wrong to attempt it.

* * *

My Godbrother has done me a nice service by pointing out that I should use Vrndavana for its actual purpose "to increase *bhakti* in my heart. I propose that my future visits to Vrndavana will be more focused on this. Even now I should salvage the remaining few days I have here to be more Vrndavana conscious. That doesn't mean I have to try and imitate rupa Gosvami, live as *ababaji* practicing severe austerities. It doesn't even mean I have to run out and visit many places. Still, I should try to find out some essence, even if I mostly stay here at the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. Today I'm planning to visit Prabhupada's resident rooms. I hope to place renewed emphasis on my chanting.

* * *

We might have used the word "emphasis" too much to point out the importance of following Prabhupada over any other teacher, yet the word "emphasis" has meaning. Here are the relevant meanings I found in my dictionary. First, it's a word that comes

from that which shows, and to shine or polish. "The force of expression, thought, feeling, action. Special attention given to something so as to make it stand out; importance, stress, weight as in *to put less emphasis on athletics*." Out of the great kingdom of Vaisnava thought a particular guru will give special prominence to certain aspects of the philosophy. Then it's a question of whether the follower accepts this as absolute or thinks, "My guru was on a particular trip and I needn't emphasize the same things he did."

For example, in Srila Sridhara Maharaja's book, *The Guru and His Grace*, a devotee asks if it's true that a preacher is better than a *bhajanandi*. Sridhara Maharaja replies that those who say so are expressing their own party spirit which favors preaching. His statement is an objective one about the relative merits of preaching over *bhajana*, and it is an intelligent analysis. But it's different than what Srila Prabhupada says. Srila Prabhupada is also aware that sincerity is all that counts in the attempt to please Krishna, but he gave emphasis to preaching as the quickest way to catch Krishna's attention. He said frankly that the *gosthyanandi* is better than the *bhajanandi*. If we, as Srila Prabhupada's followers, accept Srila Sridhara Maharaja's statement as having the same weight as Prabhupada's statement, then we have to accept that Prabhupada may be a party man who has overdone it. That's what I'm talking about. It reminds me of Prabhupada telling Mukunda in 1967 that if one of his Godbrothers comes and changes one thing, everything will be upset.

* * *

5 a.m.

The electric current is weak this morning, but not weak enough to go out completely and switch on the generator. Everywhere around the *mandira* lights are dim "a brown out. The atmosphere at *mangala-arati* was quiet, and taking *darsana* of Radha-Syamasundara in the low light was interesting. Then suddenly the power came on strong and the lights surged on to brighten the altar. reminds me of my own energy level. Not enough umph to write a poem, even to just write a lot.

* * *

Vrndavana Is
Vrndavana is always reminding me
I will have to die.
I bow down in his *samadhi*,
"Prabhupada," and suddenly remember
he's here, buried
here. What does it mean?
Why do we forget it in a
haze of vague Prabhupada-isms?
Prabhupada and the temple Deities, dark
mangala-aratis in the cold,
an electrical brown-out.

* * *

In Vrndavana yesterday there was a
monkey fight "the devotees on
the ground were calling up to
the monkeys "excitement spread
between the species.
In the morning announcements he said,
"Beware of monkeys who steal eyeglasses
and cameras."

* * *

In Vrndavana Radha and Krishna play and
pure devotees can partake but
don't imitate. Prabhupada said
come here and then, surcharged,
go out and preach again.

* * *

Vrndavana is the place more
than any other where you can
contact Radha and Krishna
and here I go sleepy
lie under heavy quilt and
dream "not of the perfection.
May Krishna bless me with
a drop of *hari-nama* nectar.

* * *

Vrnda #12
Vrnda, Tulasi, I saw you
one moment in the temple
in dim light your delicate
branches and leaves I didn't
have time or presence to
bow down . . .
Release me from feeling
nowhere in Vrndavana.

* * *

I love you, Vrndavana.
When I

die, it's here I hope to come
to remember Srila Prabhupada
and be born again in Vrndavana
in this world or *that*.

* * *

Chanting *japa* on the roof of the Guesthouse. Since it's five stories up, you get to peer down into everybody's backyard. It makes me feel like a voyeur. Sometimes they notice and look way up at me. On the roof of a building just outside Krishna-Balaram's walls, I saw a Western man. His head was mostly bald, but the remaining hairs were grown out long. He held a beadbag, and wore a shawl. He also had a guitar up there with him.

In another direction I saw into the yard of a school where boys wore uniforms of dark blue shirts and gray pants. They were playing an orderly game of volleyball, but then one of the boys grabbed the ball and ran with it. Both teams broke ranks and ran after him as if the game had suddenly turned into a free-for-all.

When construction goes on in Vrndavana, it's often to repair temple domes. One nearby dome competes with Krishna-Balaram's. They're making their spire even higher. Some well-kept buildings seem to be empty, only a *chaukidar* sleeping on one of the verandas or porches waiting for the owners to come for their vacation.

Then there's the MVT buildings, a section of forests, monkeys on the domes of this temple, and me and my mind. I remember the time I went for a health retreat in Puerto rico. The neurosurgeon recommended Migranol for headaches and the iridologist recommended a vile-tasting cabbage drink. That was when I wrote a group of poems with peaceful, clear-cut images in the tradition of Kenneth rexroth's translations of the old Chinese.

* * *

11:30 a.m.
4:45

A devotee named Anantasaya came and filmed me talking about Prabhupada for russian television. He said that eighty percent of a person's effectiveness on TV is how he looks. Fifteen percent is how he speaks, and only five percent is the actual substance of what he says. He requested that I smile as often as possible. Once the interview began, however, I couldn't crank out any smiles. He admitted that when one talks about a serious thing, he can't always be smiling. Ananta emphasized, however, that russia is under the grips of an anti-cult movement pushed by the Russian Orthodox Church. The devotees want to break the image of the Hare Krishnas as fanatics.

He said the best part of my interview was when I talked about my "intense intellectual life" before becoming a devotee. He liked that I mentioned Allen Ginsberg, Franz Kafka, and Vincent Van Gogh. When we finished the interview, he discovered that his batteries had run dead for part of the interview, so we had to do it again. Again I talked about Kafka and Van Gogh, and this time laid it on even thicker. But I still couldn't smile.

As soon as Ananta left, I met with Samika Rsi. We talked about how I could sometimes take a painkiller while on a long plane trip to alleviate a headache. I won't use them at other times.

Now I'm left with just a little bit of the day, but I'm disoriented "don't know how to use my time and still have fog in the head. I can't push myself.

* * *

Vrnda #14

Vrnda, Vrnda I can't direct this
one to you, I'm just a fellow who
met the Swami back then.
Really, Vrnda, I could have
spent this day better, watered
Tulasi-devi and walked around her.
No, I didn't go to my Swami's
Rooms and sit there and write.
Don't know if I'll take a pill
on that long plane journey . . .
And night is coming,
the parrots,
days running out
for another stay.

* * *

Vrnda #15

Vrnda, Vrnda what do you think?
Will I be able to read and chant?
Realize you and Krishna consciousness?
Earlier today was nice reading
of radha's love.
Now the day is going down,
I didn't
achieve taste in *japa* but
I ask you, dear self, chant
another round,
Ask the Lord for
mercy to persist.

* * *

5:15 p.m. F.W.

Write what comes, fog head
look down into the dirt yard
where devotees walk through "

brahmacari with cane
white-haired *grhastha*
mom and daughter

three men talking about what? Do they talk *rasika* talks or about how to make money? Are they more surrendered and *engaged* than I am? Look down through the screen. How agile the monkeys are! There goes my friend wearing a long white cloth wrapped around his waist, no white piece tucked up the back . . . There goes a stylish *mataji*. Oh, a guy is checking *me* out from the *gurukula* roof.

They're putting up blue drapes to cover the sunlight and cold wind in the *prasadam* hall. Get your stainless steel *thali* and sit down. Servers with buckets.

I'm not hungry, but I'll eat something with tea and hear Srila Prabhupada in 1968 speaking about Aghasura from *Krishna* book.

Listen, we've got our free-wheelin',

we could go to Narottama dasa Thakura's tomb. We could sit somewhere and watch ants and pigeons. We could ride on a rickshaw.

Tee hee, tee hee, I giggles.

"Smile," he said, it's *very* important.

But I couldn't. I was telling him I read F. Kafka. I read B. Doffer and Bonhoeffer and G. Gestalt and Fried Sartre and Albee Camoo

and who else? Jack Gelber the Living Connection theater with Jackie McLean slicing angular alto sax.

Is this Vrndavana? Can you dream of Vrndavana?

"Don't come here except to take care of your soul, to chant and get *bhakti*," he said.

* * *

Japa Log

January 29, 1997

5 a.m.

Fourteen "good" rounds. That means I chanted them vigorously with the motor running. Not attentive or prayerful.

The goal is not to increase mechanical rounds. Start with awareness that chanting is important, shouldn't be pushed aside, neglected. Here's a special chance to start a wave in Vrndavana and continue it after I leave. Hear the names, can you?

Chanted rounds fifteen and sixteen on the roof of the Guesthouse. Don't think I'll do it again. Nice sky and scenery, and interesting things for the mind to play with. My pleasant room 42 is more private, better for *japa*.

* * *

You would do well to stay there and chant extra, sit down when you want before Prabhupada's altar . . . I wish I could "be content to stay in this room and chant Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare.

* * *

5:30 p.m.

Twenty rounds done. I can't report that it was a great day, but I did chant some extra rounds and *wanted to*. That's good. I can keep it up as long as I don't get head pain. When all is said and done, chanting is left. It's the first and last spiritual practice. It's what I do.

I actually heard the words of some mantras. If I keep on chanting, I'll start seeing clearer how bad my chanting is. Then I can chant in that space. Chanting supplies the answer.

Red beads are fine, thank you. Hope they last as long as I do.

January 30, 1997

12:45 a.m.

Lectio divina. I write what's in me. I say I am a devotee and carefully plan how to improve. I stopped him in the Samadhi Mandir and began talking, but to hear me he had to first remove his earplugs (was wearing them as an aid for concentration in *japa*).

When I concentrate too much I get a headache. Same if I push too much for an extended free-write (gone are days of full one-hour exercises, summer nights and days at Stroudsburg, *Shack Notes*).

Gone? Or can I return? Also, lost some faith that such a "slow" process "working through effluvia of mind" is the best way to go.

Be careful you don't write over-careful thoughts already in your psyche. Write to surprise yourself.

In Vrndavana a man was holy. In Vrndavana when you come here you may become automatically Krishna conscious. To die here you go to Krishnaloka. The monkeys will do that. Don't envy them. Don't hate anyone in the *dhama*. Don't critique everyone. Don't be a faultfinder. (Fruit-finder.)

Oh, equations and geysers like "Old Faithful," American history books and road Atlases, Jack's *On The road*, and Salinger's Central Park merry-go-round, and "yeah they are so hip and hard-edged,

gowns, lice, hell, sex, they're so hard-edged.

I spoke to the russian TV devotee. Now I think he shouldn't have chosen me since he says TV is eighty percent how you look and only five per cent what you say. Better to pick a young guy or a media-perfect girl. He said it is *very* important that you occasionally smile, but I didn't. Why waste my time and his?

This way leads to the exit. Yadu writes, "How can we tell people that Putana witch was thirteen miles long and that Krishna had millions of children and billions of people living in Dvaraka?" I will refer him to Sadaputa Prabhu's higher dimensions, expansions of space and to simple faith in *acintya*.

* * *

Strange dream, but now I'm awake. Fortunately I'm not like the little alienated cell member of that other world, the sensitive person wanting quiet and cleanliness but who somehow is being forced to live surrounded by low-class people and the loud noises of a tenement. rather, I am a respected person in this Guesthouse. When I walk downstairs

the guards stand in their long overcoats, hold their rifles at attention, and give me a little bow. I return it and say, "Hare Krishna" or "*Jaya Prabhupada*."

Yes, I'm living at least on the surface of Vrndavana. It's cold out and there's no central heating, but I have an electric heater in my room. I hear the poor but fortunate dogs barking outside. Do I believe that they'll go back to Godhead at the end of this life? Do I believe in the spiritual world? Do I understand who is Srimati radharani? All I see is poverty, young kids who live here and don't seem so exalted yet who have something special in their eyes. Kids who taunt you for being a Western "monkey." Krishna, please help me to understand. I am going now to chant Your holy names. I beg to hear the syllables and to let the mercy work on me.

* * *

* * *

A disciple wrote requesting that I give him permission to worship a Govardhana-Sila. He has already given his heart to it and there's nothing I can do but agree to it. Last year another disciple made this request and I resisted, but this disciple's request sounds right for him. I know of his inner life and I think it would complement it. He is a book distributor and wishes to think of radha-Krishna's pastimes while he's out on the street; he wants the protection of Deity worship while he places himself so close to hell to distribute Prabhupada's books.

As I read his letter I thought of my own occasional desire to worship Govardhana. I can't see how to do it because I don't want to increase the time I'm already giving to *puja*. I already bathe and dress Prabhupada every day. Of course, I *could* do it, but this gives rise to another thought.

If I'm going to make any increase, I would rather it be in the direction of writing. It seems a long time since I've been able to write a one-hour timed sessions. I seem to be writing less and less. I don't want to arrange my life so that there will be less and less time for it. My *bhajana* is to rise at midnight and to write and read. I'm grateful to be able to do that. I go straight to Prabhupada's books; that's certainly a kind of *puja*. Then I write, my worshipable practice, and then chant *japa* "the best worship. I worship the Prabhupada deity at two different times in the day. I think I'm already complete. At least I have a complete schedule for purification. If I were to take up a Govardhana-Sila, I think the drive to do so would have to become more spontaneous for it to make sense for me.

* * *

I've been churning feelings about writing. Finally I let them out in three letters I addressed to my editor and to Madhu. In one letter I expressed my desire (almost a greed) to be able to again write high-powered one-hour writing sessions. I regretted that I don't have the health to do them, and also that I don't seem to have the conviction in their value. I also reasoned that maybe I'm just at a different stage where I'm flowing gently and more efficiently. I seem to be on the verge of praying here in Vrndavana for a new burst, a new dedication.

In the second letter I discussed how devotees, under the influence of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, are making "mission statements." They're careful about the words they choose to express their life's mission. One devotee told me that a mission statement is not for others; it's tailor-made for yourself and what you want to do with your own life. He's trying to decide whether his mission statement is to cultivate *bhakti* in his heart or to serve and please Srila Prabhupada. I thought he should include both concepts, but he pointed out that it's subtle how you find your exact focus.

With this in mind I was thinking about my own focus in writing. I want to achieve several objectives: (1) To cope as a practicing devotee, and writing helps with that; (2) to preach, and publishing serves that purpose; (3) to make art. It's difficult to include all three objectives and yet have a most specific focus. I think the idea of a writing *process* fulfills it, and the idea of the "zigzag path of truth." And it may not be that each emphasis gets equal attention at every moment. Sometimes I'll be working toward one at the apparent expense of another.

In the third letter I recalled the metaphors used by Natalie Goldberg in *The Long Quiet Highway*. She spoke of the marathon-running monks who vow to complete a certain *vrata* (running quota) or else die trying. A writer has to be similarly determined. The other image is of a quiet, desolate highway in America, and of a driver driving down that road. This is similar to the often unrewarding, seemingly endless, even seemingly dull task of going on, writing all your life without expecting excitement or rewards.

* * *

3:20 p.m.

I'm in Srila Prabhupada's room in Vrndavana. Best thing I can do here is write, read, chant, and pray to him. It's 1997. A disciple got the key and unlocked the door for us so we could go in alone, before other devotees began to arrive. Srila Prabhupada is still resting, but they let me in anyway. The sign says, "Open to public at 4 p.m." Write until then? Oh, I can't write for so long without going crazy or getting a headache or becoming illegible.

Krishna's *dhama*. My heart is closed. I simply don't comprehend it. Just a tiny ray of light. I stand by the foot of his bed where I stood on November 14, 1977. Don't feel "because if I did, if I remembered everything I'd "what? Cry? Die? Or nothing. Stone now and stone then.

I feel I have passed through too much stress, although worse may be ahead in this life or the next. I seek peace, but even more than that, I seek devotion to my spiritual master. I seek it before I die. I am his disciple, his Satsvarupa dasa. The letter on his desk today is to Ksirodakasayi in Vrndavana 1971. This letter is entirely taken up with business for preaching "get the import number, I'm sending you devotees to keep up the work, do it nicely, etc. Prabhupada had a mission to be accomplished, and he needed cool-brained, practical-minded people to help him.

It was hard then. Is it easier nowadays? Someone wants to concentrate on the study of *sastra*, some *want* to bear the burden of pushing on the movement (corporate ISKCON they call it) forcefully.

Yeah, well I have another contribution. ISKCON strain. Failing trust. I must keep up my end.

I decided to go to my room as soon as I leave here. I'd prefer to look at the murals in the temple room, but I may bump into someone I know and waste time, become implicated. Hermit. recluse. Dreamer. Writer. Looking out for rodents and possibly monkeys to enter your periphery vision, sneaking up to grab your eyeglasses. Drum rolls over the loudspeakers mixing with the dogs' growls.

Exhale. Don't die. Imagine, you too, you who write this with a bold pen "you too will die.

* * *

* * *

I can't get into literary convention or actual prayer talk like, "Dear Srila Prabhupada, I'm here in your room. I feel your presence. Here is my prayer: I wish to always serve you." But he knows my intention to be his disciple. I need to know who I am so that I can serve him best.

Oh, the controversies. More to come, and me sitting here talking about death from a pleasant distance where it can't harm me, like being on the roof of the Guesthouse and looking down at the dogs and poor people in the dirt lane and thinking I'm above it all because I have a karmic cushion. There's more to come and when I die, I will leave it all behind. At least until next time. O Lord, O Vrndavana.

* * *

Vrndavana
Vrndavana, you are the summit
Reserved for the best
not allowed am I "
Don't believe I'll
be born in Krishnaloka when
I die here?
Ah, ach!
Believe it, you fool. Don't
come back a monkey.
Austere I am not, but hope for
a special ticket to get to
head of line.
"Not allowed "loafers
and shnobs."
Her dirt, her secrets.

* * *

Prabhupada's books in his room. In Hindi and other Indian languages "all Greek to me. Ah, the English ones. "*Dusta-mana*" written by his Guru Maharaja. When is the last

time I was deep and earnest and innocent in thinking of him? I wanted to write more and now it's coming. Thank you, thank you.

* * *

Vrnda #16

Vrnda is the plant "
Tulasi and a *gopi* "the one
who recreates Vrndavana in pleasant
kunjās and bowers for radha and
Krishna.
Now you know? Oh, I don't,
it ain't that easy. I prefer
to eat marshes and mallows.
Wind in the Willows. I saw
that book on a shelf in the temple president's
home in Delhi "
intended for his kid.
Vrnda "you are all things
but you exclude, kick out,
all that falls short
of pure devotion to
Radha-Syama.

* * *

O mind, why aren't you a Vaisnava? Hear your master, hear and read. And write these seemingly endless letters.

Better save yourself. Srila Prabhupada set a different example. He reached out to his disciples in his last days, and continued to write his purports to the *Bhagavatam*. I should do what he says and develop *bhakti* for Radha-Govinda. *How?* By keeping the hand moving? GNP duties? Publishing books? Helping others.

* * *

Ten more minutes before they open the door to the public. Write until then and then chant one round here. My twenty-first. *Dusta-mana!* Do the needful to conquer the mind. At my age and as a *sannyasi*, that means that my first duty is to read Prabhupada's books. Prabhupada himself told me that. So I will do it. Don't look to compromise that instruction. "Can I read other books?" You can, *but*. Can I write a lot? Yes, *but*. Can I live forever? No. Am I a devotee? Yes, *but*.

No ifs, ands, or buts.

But master . . .

"What impact did he make? What kind of a man was he? Tell us, sir, your impressions for the potential two hundred million people who want to see you smile on Russian TV" "damn those Orthodox priests who hate us!

Krishna, please protect and improve the ISKCONites. Do as You will. You are always victorious, but that doesn't mean that ISKCON always wins the court cases or gains the famous multi-millionaire followers. Nor does it mean all temples will be saved from closing or all devotees will not desert. It simply means that You are always victorious. Your will is supreme, even if we cannot always understand what you intend.

* * *

Japa Log

5:45 a.m.

Fourteen rounds so far. It's not going to be bliss and easy and feeling, "Wow, I'm on a wave of reform and new pleasure in chanting; I'm on an increase in quota like what I wrote for three months in *Japa reform Notebook*."

It'll be something, however, if I can give that little extra push. That little extra effort to hear the names and to do a few extra rounds. Don't stop dead, cold-stone finished after sixteen. *Hari-nama* awaits you.

Reclining on the desk
they invite me once again
my red *japa* beads.

Take them up and finger and walk and sit. Push . . .

* * *

5:10 p.m.

Twenty-two rounds done. I could do another. They are not "better," but I get more of a chance to chant with attention. The mind separates and notices the individual words as they occur: Hare, Krishna, Hare, Krishna, etc. That's a gain.

Don't say anything else in this log, as if all you do is live to chant.

* * *

Chanting Japa

Chanting makes chanting
and Hari takes all and gives more.

Always chant "sixteen,
twenty, twenty-five
and don't give up
'til you die.

Japa awards and
punishment.

Am saying what comes
just as in chanting rounds
please pay attention
and rescue your own

dharma.

Fishtail Puri

memories "
begin another round
on beads.

January 31, 1997

12:40 a.m.

Good morning. I just prepared for today's disciples' meeting. I hope I don't get a headache, but if I do, I'm prepared for the next meeting we can schedule. Do it like that, sane and easy and what you can actually do.

Samika Rsi said some people take medicine all their lives, risking the side effects. They figure it's a better option than lying day after day in pain.

I dreamt all night and recorded a bunch.

* * *

10:15 a.m.

Sixteen rounds and whaddya get? Blah, chirp, chortle. Heart beats still. "My Foolish Heart." Little life in Vrndavana, *mixed*, like *jnana-misra bhakti*, *maya-misra bhakti*.

Vrndavana is. I am. Prabhupada is, Krishna is eternally. radha is supreme.

The *rasa Sastras*, *Bhagavad-gita*, Krishna is speaking.

Who gave class today?

Listen, prison is bad, but Dhira-Krishna dasa meditates after chanting *japa* in the mornings in his cell. The rest of the day he tries to retain fragments of that prayer state.

Good. Look out your screened porch. See below. Hear Hindi.

Talk ISKCONese. Who's who. Who bowed down best? Who danced and strutted? Know yourself. Fault-finding is contagious. Keep it to yourself? Don't poison yourself. I spill a little of it and say, "I can't help it. Just don't take it seriously."

This morning between 5 - 6 a.m. I worked steadily at answering letters. A sense of accomplishment.

"Maharaja, what is the meaning of radha-kunda? How to think and behave toward the residents?"

Prabhu, Prabhu, my shoe.

She gave me a knit slipper. Carry it down to the Mandir in a book bag and put it on as you go inside. Step out of your shoes and on with the slippers, see?

But then can you walk from the Samadhi Mandir to the other Mandir in the same slippers? Not really. On and off. Oh, it's not worth all the trouble just to keep your feet warm. You can warm them when you return to your room and stick them in front of the electric heater.

I've got friends at Krishna-Balaram Mandir, connections. I get Radha's garland, *maha* sweets, a lady makes me Russian bread. I get a hoodwink, a broadside.

I didn't notice who was bowing at my feet. It was a brother, the keeper of this house, Ganapati Prabhu.

Hare Krishna. Is someone knocking at my door? My ear strains. I here the smashing of rock on rock and the sound of parrots. Twenty-five days and nights in Vrndavana, the

toe, the head, the plain man, the uncontrolled mind on surface of Vraja. Failure to enter, a failure . . . Here isn't soft enough. Hard, hard.

But I fall down at his feet, my Prabhupada. That much.

Caw caw

awful how you

fail to tune into Vraja

Vrnda poems calling

out from back seat of

old Studebaker and

Plymouth times and memories

crying out

Prabhodhananda Sarasvati,

I know the names too . . .

* * *

Japa Log

January 31, 1997

This log can't last. It doesn't matter. It's 10:30 a.m. and I did one extra above sixteen. Do another. Cool air. Someone at the door.

Chant, chant

can't, can't

Red beads in hand "the essence of Vrndavana. Chant here and carry it west, extra is all I know to improve.

Zero, desert. Music of beads. New counters. Hear, man. The writing can help. But chanting is itself, is Hare Krishna mantra.

* * *

5:30 p.m.

Twenty-one rounds, the last one done in front of my disciples. Someone looked at me. Someone took a flash picture.

Kept on chanting. I spoke on need for humility in a life dedicated to chanting. A devotee assigns himself to a lower position. How to do it practically?

* * *

Be humble when you chant and don't record brilliant ideas that come while you chant. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare.

February 1, 1997

Good moment in disciples' meeting yesterday when a disciple asked a challenging question and I groped and found the right answer. I had just presented the four stages of *lectio divina* and demonstrated it with a purport in *Krishna* book. He asked, "Is this from the Christians?" I answered with one word, "Yes." Then he asked, "Do any of

our *acaryas* teach this?" At first I couldn't think of any good examples, so I said that everything comes from the *Vedas*. Then I hit upon Lord Caitanya in the Gambhira. The Lord actually went through the four steps "(1) heard and comprehended a verse from *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, usually Tenth Canto, about the *gopis*; (2) took it personally in the mood of Srimati radharani; (3) made prayers in His own words; and (4) attained "union with God." So there. It wasn't me speaking something *asampradaya*. Lord Caitanya did it.

* * *

M. and I have been saying that we may not come to India next year. While I'm here, however, I have been reading statements about how this is the best place to be. Perhaps I really could come again and have a more solitary stay. Or, I could recreate Vraja in the West if I read Prabhupada's books or did a sixty-four-round *vrata*.

* * *

Room 42

Room 42 is where I stay because
of headaches I get here.

Open . . . I'm free of them for five days
in a row. I press a button and a bell
Rings in room 41 and a lady's voice says,
"Open the door, please!" "
a source of endless jokes.

* * *

Madhu comes in and I say I don't
like this guy, I don't care for this trip.
The fourth floor where
monkeys come down from roof.
Two monkeys, me and one at
top of stairs "in imagination I run
forward to him and he stands his ground
snarling and baring his teeth until he sees
the brick in my hand.
Land of radha and Krishna, next
year I won't come to 42
but I tell you
this is also a good place for
chanting
and reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

* * *

Reading Prabhupada's books is like a medicine we constantly need to ingest, but it goes beyond that. It's a nourishing and tasty food. Why ever stop? It's a shame if we abandon such nourishing food or become disgusted with it and start to crave novelty for its own sake. Prabhupada does say that "variety is the spice of life," but we can find it in his books.

One devotee wrote me on these points and said as follows: "Faith is a conscious choice. I do want to see Prabhupada as absolute, but I can see that I won't attain that loyalty cheaply. I will have to make the first investment and then wait for reciprocation. This point makes me appreciate so much what you are saying. You say Prabhupada saved you. He is the one who convinced you of Krishna consciousness. It was Prabhupada who quelled your doubts, not someone else. I honestly do appreciate your lack of adventurousness, as you call it, no matter how many gurus the *sastras* say we may have. I want to learn to follow your mood with honesty and conviction."

There's more to it than the amazing but isolated historical act of Prabhupada saving me in 1966. Even if that was *all* he did, I would owe him my life. It's such an extraordinary 180-degree change in my life. No, more than 180 degrees. It's beyond linear history. I was plucked out of a life that was mixed-bad or mixed-good and given something entirely different. I could never have found it on my own even if I had stumbled onto the *Bhagavad-gita* or the *Upanisads*. (Emerson and Thoreau stumbled on the *HarivamSa* at Harvard University hundreds of years ago. That's quite an esoteric book, yet they didn't change and become devotees of Krishna.)

Therefore, I love to remember 1966. But it's not that Prabhupada gave me initiation and has done little for me since. He has given me and so many others a life to continue in Krishna consciousness. For the journey he has given us his books. When you surrender to guru it's comprehensive, total. If he says these are the books you should read, you can't jettison them later. It's an act of faith to constantly go back to them and work past the repetitiousness of what they contain.

Nowadays we face challenges we never had to face in the past. No one dared say that Prabhupada didn't give us everything, that Prabhupada only "cleaned the pot," that he only chopped down with a machete the rough weeds and jungle growth of Mayavada philosophy and only now are we ready for someone else to give us the nectar. The challenge has been made, and we have to meet it by finding everything in Prabhupada's books. It's there in the *Caitanya-caritamrta* and in other places, but there are also the warnings. Don't take them cheaply. Therefore I pray and I work to find satisfaction in Prabhupada's books alone.

* * *

5:55 a.m.

We went over to bow down before *tulasi*, but I saw women standing there so I bowed to *tulasi* from a distance.

Room 42. That's where I am in long-johns, dental adhesive, and dream thoughts, sometimes feeling the body too hot, sometimes too cool.

He asks, "Please change my initiation name. Duhkhi-Krishna changed his name to Syamananda."

"Keep your name. radharani changed the name of Duhkhi-Krishna. Are you so extraordinary that your name should be changed?"

The guru in a righteous huff catches the errant disciple.

Get 'em, go get 'em. O days in Vrndavana, please let something happen.

Bow in front of Srila Prabhupada in his Samadhi and catch yourself thinking, "rush through these *pranama-mantras* and get up so you can finish the fourteenth round before the conch blows." But I don't get up immediately, I stop and say the mantras slowly, and even when finished I stay there, "diving" in space downward, feeling blackness, and thinking, "You will die, you will die too," although it's a painless thought and therefore just a musing. But it's true, and you could do it every day "come here and say to Prabhupada, "You're here and I'm coming to join you in this life and the next."

* * *

9 a.m.

Now they're chanting, "*Sarira avidya jal*" down in the outdoor *prasadam* hall. Sun filtering through the haze, gradually lifting the chill from the air. A large monkey sits on the wall of the temple and surveys the serve-out. He does not dare to come down. This is his last life in the material world.

* * *

Vrnda, land of trees
forests of Vrndavana "
Ramacandra is in Ayodhya
Narayana in Vaikuntha
does and bucks hear the flute
and here I am
dwelling in down
original mind covered.

* * *

The BBT asked me to write a pop book on Vedic culture. I said, "No, I only write books for those already won over to our side. I don't confront issues, I confront my own shortcomings."

A disciple wrote me about a dream he had after he broke the regulative principles. In the dream his guru (me) had transformed into a nondevotee. This disciple came upon him, and he had dirty blond hair, a goatee, and was playing basketball at an outdoor court. The devotee began to cry and confronted his one-time guru, "Why have you done this to me?"

The guru (me) still holding the basketball and looking through his sunglasses, fixed the devotee with his gaze and said, "Now you know what it's like to be shit upon."

The disciple said that the dream taught him that it was he who had done the wrong thing. I guess he means it forced his guru to fall down.

* * *

1:10 p.m.

I've got a headache rising behind the right eye. It started around 9:30 a.m. and we cancelled our group reading. It's likely I'll cancel my 4 p.m. class on "Prabhupada Appreciation" too. Naturopaths say that when you have pain you shouldn't eat, but I ate a moderate plate of spaghetti just now. It was tasty but I couldn't enjoy it.

Along with the headaches, two ideas are growing about chalking something out that I could do for the whole year. In 1993 when I left Vrndavana, I gave myself the task of beginning and continuing worship of Prabhupada *murti*. I also resolved to read the whole *Bhagavatam*. I dedicated 1994 to that reading and that was good for me.

Last year I began *A Poor Man reads the Bhagavatam* on January 11th and left Vrndavana with full sails and fair weather to cruise that ship. It lasted half a year, and I'm glad for it.

I want to make practical my desire to be faithful to Prabhupada by reading his books. I want to prove to myself that the books are enlivening and enlightening, not that, "Swamiji had to clean the pot" and therefore he couldn't give us advanced teachings. My reading program has dwindled down to about fifteen minutes a day. I need some kind of reform, some kind of plan "but it can't be something forced. What?

It will become a discipline and I will have to work for it. Maybe again read the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* "from the beginning?

Another line of thinking is about my writing. I've noticed that I am writing less and less. I've had different thoughts about how to increase it, but there too it's not a matter of forcing myself. In both areas I'm wondering if there is some kind of foundational shift I can make. I'm hoping that Krishna will give me some insight on this before I leave room 42.

Last year I was happy, almost euphoric, about starting PMrB. I therefore celebrated the fact that the inspiration came to me here in room 42 by gathering dust from under the bed and putting it in reticules, keeping one on my altar and giving a couple to my writing assistants. I won't be doing that this year, but maybe this could be the scene again of some directions for reading and writing.

* * *

Room 42: Dream lab, centre of my universe, a cell in Prabhupada's house.

Place where I lie down when I get headaches. Place where ideas come that I can follow for a year "inspiration to read *Bhagavatam*, inspiration for a semi-fictive trip to the Caribbean, a Henry-type character (as in Berryman's *Dream Songs*) "a place where it can all come together.

Room 42, located in raman reti just off Bhaktivedanta Marg. How noisy it is just outside the temple with all the shops and rickshaws . . .

Room 42 has an electric heater while I'm here because the temple president's wife is my disciple. How is it that a fellow like me can be a spiritual master? Some people would like to tear me down, but Prabhupada protects me.

From room 42 I can look down to the *prasadam* hall with its blue drapes, and I can see people passing on the dirt path that connects the temple to the MVT houses. I can

look out, but what can I see? Can't see the soul, can't see my Beloved. I can see young *matajis*, old *matajis*, young and old Indians, almost everyone wrapped in scarf or sweater in this weather.

* * *

Japa Log

February 1, 1997

9 a.m.

Empty, but I did two rounds above sixteen so far. I wanted to chant them. I thought of other things while my voice said the mantras and that makes me sad. I walked back and forth in my room carrying a bamboo walking stick until my ankle started to hurt.

If I come to Vrndavana next year with a plan to chant thirty-two or sixty-four rounds a day, would that help? O holy names . . .

February 2, 1997

12:50 a.m.

I took rest for the night at 4:30 p.m. The headache went down by 6:30 p.m. I was clear, but then couldn't sleep. My mind went toward writing plans. I got up and began to write notes around 8 p.m.

I thought of a book I could write. It would have a basic fictive twist to it, just one change, then everything else could be writing from my actual life, starting with my trip to Trinidad. I would use the energy of the moment-to-moment realities of travel, temple visits, even free-writing in Krishna consciousness, but it would be part of a "story." Just as Franz Kafka changed reality with the first sentence of his story "Metamorphosis" "he gave us the fantastic image of himself as a large bug lying in bed "but then wrote a realistic account of what would happen, so I'd like to do something similar, probably not so wild.

I thought of different ways to make the fictive trip. I thought of telling a story that the BBT had ordered me to write a certain kind of book. I would be somewhat resistant to that assignment, but would carry it out of fear of censure and a desire to please them. I would work on it as I visited each Caribbean temple. My next thought was, "What assignment?"

I thought I could report on devotees' dreams, and I would do that by using my own dreams as the material. Or maybe I could be researching ISKCON's favorite self-help book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. I could be working on my own "mission statement."

But it wasn't long after I wrote these notes that I decided against the proposal. It seems antithetical to my desire to continue and renew serious, lively reading in Prabhupada's books. Whatever I do in my writing life should not create so much energy that I become deviated from my reading *sadhana*. I began to surrender to the idea that if I do find a way to improve my reading, I can just write what actually happens.

Yes, that's the kind of writer I am, as I wrote the other day in a letter to my editor, " . . . it's all right to have churning moods that maybe I can go in this direction, maybe I can go in that direction. It's all right to actually start a streak of something new, a poem

series or whatever, but a commitment is a commitment, so I just have to accept it "that I'm a certain kind of writer who *wants* to write a lot everyday, who doesn't want to work and re-work polished pieces. Therefore, drive your car and chant Hare Krishna."

This is another victory for my continuance of *Every Day, Just Write*. I feel like I've weathered another challenge to it, similar to the one I weathered when I thought of writing a fable based on a dream. The challenges will continue, and perhaps one of these semi-fictive waves will carry me along with it. But overnight I returned to my little life and writing it out as it is. Somehow the fiction seemed to me like Prabhupada's example of reaching around your head to touch your nose. I'd be putting all this pressure on myself for a certain kind of writing, hype it up and make it better for the devotees. Knock their socks off with a new fictive piece as good as *Photo Preaching* or better.

To some degree I sacrifice my identity as a "writer" for my desire to be a well-rounded devotee. Aside from that, I like what I'm writing. It doesn't drive the reader along in a suspenseful way, but if he or she quiets down to read, it's good. For example, my activities here in Vrndavana "I'm telling them as they actually are. As true as I can make them. I work to write more truly, more nakedly. And when I can take off on a good deep free-write "which I can do whenever I am free in the day "that will allow me to combine different fictive touches, dreams, and so on.

* * *

I'm thinking of my disciple's request for a new name and how it can be applied to my seeking something new in Vrndavana. We hope when we come to Vrndavana that something special will happen to us. This disciple says the *pujari* in Prabhupada's Mandir asked him, "What is your name?" When he said his name the *pujari* said, "That's not a good name. It should be changed to such and such." My disciple said that that's exactly what he was thinking also. He wrote me asking for the change.

We hope some divine word will be whispered to us in Vrndavana and we can come away with a new name, a new project, a new direction. But obviously that can be hasty and it might not last once we leave Vrndavana. Therefore, my expression of this in terms of wanting a new literary project is like asking for a new spiritual name. I already have a good project. Let me pray to continue to write every day and let it come, let me come to it.

* * *

8:35 a.m.

Lots of notes and letters focusing on writing. Lots of letters to local devotees. What about actually writing and reading?

A Godbrother says, "Most of the *acaryas* in our line have gone to other planets to preach. At the end of his life, Srila Prabhupada also said he was going to another planet to preach and that his sincere followers would join him there."

The mood of this assertion is a challenge. It takes the edge off any salvation motive we may have in our service. I'd like to find out the source of these statements. Usually we hear that the *acaryas* have rejoined Radha and Krishna in eternal Vraja. Did Prabhupada actually say this and does it rule out any other possibility of Prabhupada's

location? We also have to ask, "What is preaching?" Different persons may answer in different ways.

Any good thing can be abused.

Hold on, mate. Get through this day until 4 p.m. when you can give your class on "Prabhupada Appreciation" "which was cancelled yesterday.

They say he's okay, a good writer. Get him to write a book we can use in the preaching mission: a list of ten ways to heal wounds, five reasons why book distribution is best, what ISKCON is doing to solve the *varnasrama-dharma* need, what to do with the *gurukula* mess. Hey Bol.

* * *

Vrnda #18

Vrnda, I need to know more about
tales of your glories so
I can sing these irregulars,
not leave them so empty.
Don't abandon us, dear *tulasi*.
You grow even in the north,
asked to stay there by your devotees
who wanted
what Prabhupada said.

* * *

Vrnda #19

He was pleased when
tulasis appeared first in Hawaii then
in a St. Louis, Missouri attic
with fluorescent bulb through snowy winters,
even Boston, even Sweden,
barometer of devotion "
now, the twigs are dry,
don't cut, take care, let her
bloom "
Devotee's plant
connected to radha and Krishna.

* * *

We are planning to go to radha-Damodara, Srila Prabhupada's room, and another day to radha-Gokulananda. "It's only the *puspa-samadhi*" (of Narottama dasa Thakura). That's all right "pray there, pray to write in American language with devotion, your own description of what happened as you tried.

Play tape and say, "See? He's great, he's fine. He said this because "

I chose it because it moved my sense of appreciation." Spontaneous, not prepared. All glories . . .

* * *

Room 42
Room 42 is where I do
open to Lord Krishna
my heart I mean, and
Madhu when he knocks. I unbolt the door
to 42, a magic number.
Two is radha and Krishna "
mind and heart
beads and hand
books and brain.

* * *

Japa Log

February 2, 1997

I thought, "What's the use of keeping a *japa log*? I certainly won't keep it up after I leave Vrndavana."

Why? I think it's an artificial extra. I pretend to be more devoted to *japa* than I am. Besides, there's nothing to say. *Japa* is *japa*. It's inexplicable. It's either good or bad. What's the use of writing, "Today was better," "Today was worse"?

Okay, but I may just keep the log anyway. It's nice to write "and thus think about *japa*." "Write your realizations," Prabhupada said. I remember the editor of *Modern Haiku* used to publish his one- or two-sentence realizations and descriptions about haiku in each issue of his magazine. He numbered them. You could tell he loved haiku and liked writing about it. A haiku, like a Hare Krishna mantra, may be inexplicable by nature, but a lover likes to talk of the one he loves. Even a struggler or offender like me wants to be focused on chanting.

February 3, 1997

Last week here. Class went all right yesterday. Played an excerpt where Prabhupada pauses and cannot continue after saying that a pure devotee never asks Krishna for anything; he simply gives to Krishna, "Just like *gopis*. They never asked Krishna for anything . . ." Long pause. Then, "All right, chant." I stated an "appreciation" that Srila Prabhupada himself was like that: he never asked Krishna for boons, but gave everything to Krishna by preaching "gave Him souls surrendered to Krishna consciousness. We think that Krishna sometimes indicated to Prabhupada that he loved Him very much, and Prabhupada was overcome by Krishna's love and could not speak. I didn't mention that when he said the word "*gopis*," he might have merged into that *bhava* and left the scene of lecturing to neophytes at the Los Angeles temple.

"We are all neophytes," he said in a New Vrindaban conversation as soon as a disciple said something about, "a neophyte devotee."

Jaya Prabhupada. Thank you for allowing me to speak of you, and forgive me for making mistakes. I want to encourage the devotees to hear your tapes, even though I sometimes struggle to hear them myself. All glories to you.

* * *

Poor bodies get malaria and dozens of other diseases. I read of it in letters from disciples, how they went to the hospital and slept on ice-packs. I too . . . have one of these bodies.

Keep a record. Nightly accupressure from Bhagavata dasa. He said I need to drink more water, rubbed on almond oil, Madhu watching and learning. Bhagavata says, "At night I hurt the devotees with my fingers" (his description of acupressure).

O Vrndavana, I'll go to the *mangala-aratis* this morning, if Krishna allows me, and if my body agrees. The impressions will come through my eyes " Srila Prabhupada in his Samadhi Mandir, the Deities shining out from Their altars, the devotees who are truly attached to Them.

* * *

8:45 a.m.

We're going to travel to the Caribbean with only hand luggage. I asked Madhu to put my carry-on bag in my room and I'll gradually decide what goes into it. Thus we have started our departure from Vrndavana.

One disciple wrote me she regrets leaving Vrndavana and going back to her country. I wrote her that the only reason to leave Vrndavana is to preach, and preaching is often better outside of Vrndavana. She wrote back and said that in her case, she wasn't going to preach. She had another whole life awaiting her. She's young and is at that point in her life where she's trying to see how to live it to her best capacity.

I answered, "You have to face the fact that you're not ready to surrender everything and live in Vrndavana either doing full-time service at Krishna-Balaram Mandir or living under a bush chanting Hare Krishna twenty-four hours a day. By staying in Vrndavana you're avoiding the fact that you have to go back and sort out your life. Besides that, even those of us who say that we're leaving Vrndavana to preach are leaving because we're not qualified to live here. That includes me."

And it does. I surely don't appreciate the dust of Vrndavana, the lanes for walking, the temples for *darsana*, the *parikramas*, monkeys, hogs, and people. I don't even appreciate the great devotees. But I'm also unhappy about leaving in this state. I wish to return to further my progress toward becoming attached to the lotus feet of Vrndavana.

Vrndavana can be saved for culturing *bhakti*. Don't come here and stay at the temple to teach seminars or invite disciples to be here with you. Stay outside and chant and hear and wander Vrndavana. Fulfill minimum obligations, and otherwise stay focused. When will I return?

* * *

3:20 p.m., Srila Prabhupada's room

Devotees are walking around the campus quietly. Some are chanting on beads, some have stopped to talk to each other. I feel responsible to give them the best thing. That is, unadulterated Srila Prabhupada. Find him again in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I'm thinking to start with the Second Canto.

He's ours. Each one finds him and keeps him. I can share him only partially. It's not the same as embracing him "his purports.

O Prabhupada, I'm a phony, but you keep me on the right track.

He is who he is, Sats.

Don't point your feet at your spiritual master.

I'm not Norman Mailer. I don't have to read Allen Ginsberg to see how he divides his lines. Write on your own.

The audience will read you. Tell your life in Krishna consciousness, and the life of devotees. Hare Krishna.

* * *

Guys talking loudly in Hindi outside, something about work. It's pious, it's even "transcendental," but it's a distraction. I want pure *bhakti* and wish to find it by a discipline of chanting *japa* and reading Prabhupada's books.

Recently I decided my writing should serve the interests of my pursuit for better *sadhana*. Also, *sadhana* should be done to please my spiritual master. Make it contribute to his movement. Stay in his movement, even though it's inconvenient sometimes.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna.

"routinization of charisma" (Max Weber). *The Web and the rock*, by Thomas Wolfe.

The pert girls, the sad boys who want a pert girl to love them. The guru in trouble with material desires. The dry, tired-out ISKCON sage.

Yapping, yapping Hindi workers. On and on they talk.

The monkeys of Vrndavana are not to be hated. Vrndavana is Vrndavana "worshipable. I have a great purport to read on this tomorrow.

I'm allowed to read *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta* to the devotees tomorrow since it's Ekadasi. Don't ask me to chant sixty-four rounds or do sixty fasts or sixteen pinpricks inflicted on purpose. *Tapasya* for me is to chant despite dryness. To worship, to go to Trinidad and Guyana and America with goodwill and gratitude.

* * *

They walk by, two devotees, talking quietly, and sometimes fingering their beads. They would like to help each other. How do they do it? Pray here in the *dhama*.

The *gopis* never asked Krishna for anything, but we may ask Krishna for help to serve. Be personal with Him, but don't bargain. Oh, I don't know.

If He wants me to stop writing . . .

If He wants to allow me to write better . . .

If He tells me what's best for me, will I be willing to follow?

Be sure, confident, patient, etc. Spill out intelligent instructions. Be confident. It will work. But when? It's already working. More will come.

* * *

I get agitated when I see my own disciples on campus and they seem to be waiting for something to happen. Or they may be talking about my books as if they are worthwhile. I become humbled, even unnerved. How can I assign myself to a lower position and yet be the guru whose books they edit and publish, print and sell?

Ask for protection from pride and falldown. If writing or dreamwork helps in that, then fine. If not, why are you doing it?

I am who I am. I remember '50s and '60s jazz as if it were good. I think of the old days before I was a devotee as if it's meaningful.

I'm thirsty. Wanton. Krishna is out there. In my heart too. In books. In Name. Like butter in milk or fire in wood. Work and pray and He will manifest. They come after you begging, "Have you found Krishna? If so, give Him to us." Greedy beggars.

The artist says, "All you're going to write is a diary?"

It will be an art diary, a smart one, a short-story essay personal poem diary.

You mean like Little Lulu kept?

Like Anne Frank's?

Thoreau's? Kafka's?

Yeah, and more. It's one book true for me.

Died on the road. Expired on the way to spiritual heaven. Had unfinished business and had to return. One of two dogs in Sweden?

No. I'll tell you, it's going to be all right.

Yellow straw mats with green elephants on them. Parrots outside, me in, inside this room where he sat and talked to so many. Preached and managed. Didn't want his disciples to be cheated or deviant or lazy. He reprimanded us: stay in ISKCON. Do your work. "Don't be like a monkey at Radha-kunda." Don't be a monkey associating with the radha-kunda *babajis*.

Yes, Prabhupada, you sure did say those things. I'm still in your ISKCON and not well enough to even go out on a rickshaw to the radha-Damodara temple. I figure your room here is as good as your room there. Better, in fact. I can write here freely and no one will kick me out. Guards will chase out the monkeys.

* * *

* * *

Krishna-Balarama statue on black mantle. Framed pictures of Radha-Gokulananda from the old days, Radha-Damodara old days, 1977 when he was here. Nothing new to say.

After all the flood that has passed over, you mean you have nothing to say?

Peace and quiet

master is master

ISKCON is afloat despite . . .

I'm not adding to the trouble. I'm trying to "set a good example" as we say. Set it.

Japa Log

February 4, 1997, 1 p.m.

Sixteen rounds done. I'll try for extra. Just to say I've done more? Yes, because I see it as a virtue. To scale higher on the wall. Hare Krishna. Maybe it will help me overcome mechanical chanting.

Hear, please, your chanting. Early in the morning I did fourteen by 4:30 a.m. Hear and chant.

* * *

5:35 p.m.

Four extra today. Caw, caw. I don't brag. Screech. Thud, Yap. Hindi. Crash. Hare Krishna. You ate sweet bread? Tomorrow is EkadaSi "I know, I don't expect you to do something herculean. But at least four extra. Or, don't let me pressure you. You've got two lectures. Just make whatever chanting you do good quality. Start before 1:30 a.m.

February 4, 1997

12:30 a.m.

Thank you for assuring me that the diary form would accommodate the needs of art as well as the needs of my Krishna conscious expression. What we are saying is write in a way that will not hinder my *sadhana* and that will also fulfill my desires to preach through literary art. Now if it *is* the diary form that does this, I should be glad for the discovery and go with it. I should push it to its limits for Krishna conscious expression in the art of diary writing. Neither do I have to think of it as "diary" or "mere diary," but simply writing. Writing in a life of attempting to be a devotee.

* * *

Surrender here. You just read about Mother Yashoda seeing the universal form. Praise it. Consider it. Pray for the vision of appreciation.

Surrender while reading and in writing it down. I have nothing extra to achieve. I am poor. Another day I may write a "great" poem, or rather it may pass through me. A powerful description may pass through my pen onto the page. I'll write in quiet and in excitement. I'll leave a trail of words. Some will be memorable and readers may wonder, "How was he able to evoke this, to flow like this? This piece is a breakthrough. He didn't used to be able to write so well." But often it will be the quiet walk to and from the shed in Geaglum. And who knows what is the best in the trail of words? I don't know; it's not up to me. I have to speak, write "and it must come from a life that is not diverted by literary aims (by greed for powerful writing pieces).

Approach Krishna to surrender.

* * *

10:30 a.m.

I gave the EkadaSi class in the temple room, reading and speaking from *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. The topic was Prabhupada in Vrndavana. I was planning to read, but I decided to paraphrase. It came out all right. As soon as I began I felt a twinge behind the eye. It didn't develop immediately into a painful headache, but now I'm afraid that it may. Therefore, I haven't dared to write here, and neither am I able to chant extra rounds for Ekadasi. Neither am I able to read to prepare for my 3 p.m. class. Gun-shy in Vrndavana.

* * *

Night Notes

Lying on my back while Bhagavata dasa does accupressure just before I take rest for the night. Madhu is watching to learn the art. I hear the wonderful sounds of Vrndavana "the bell ringing at 6:30 p.m. for the evening *arati*, the bell that I associate with Srila Prabhupada and his last days here. At the same time a flock of peacocks start calling out. Not so "wonderful" are the screeching, chattering, and grunting monkeys nearby. But they're also part of it. Then during the night I'll hear the *chaukidar* walking by loudly banging his stick, insensitive to the Guesthouse full of sleepers. He makes a gruff ho-ho sound to show the monkeys who's boss. And when I'm up here in the morning after *mangala-arati* I hear clearly the duet between a man and woman loudspeaked from a nearby *asrama*. He sings, "Govinda-Radhe, Radhe" and she sings back, "Radhe-Govinda, Radhe-Govinda," back and forth in a musically interesting way. We may object that it's not a scientific mantra, but nevertheless it's nothing but Govinda, Radhe, Radhe and Govinda. All sounds in Vrndavana are different than sounds elsewhere.

As I said in the class this morning, Vrndavana was not just Prabhupada's residence but it is the residence of all Gaudiya Vaisnavas. Although we may feel culturally foreign here, certainly we feel religiously at home. Nowhere else, even in India, do we find people of "our religion" with beadbags, the same *tilaka*, the chanting of Hare Krishna, and with radha and Krishna as their worshipable Lords. So I'm appreciating Vrndavana even as I'm approaching the last days of this visit. Tonight Janmastami dasa, who's trying to live here as long as he can, said that the local devotees refer to a "transcendental boot" that kicks you out. They're always fearful it may happen. That boot is easily applied to a person like me who's just a tender visitor. But I hope there's something like a return permission and maybe some day in the future, a longer stay for me. Prabhupada angrily denounced one of his own disciples who went to live outside of ISKCON at radha-kunda with the *babajis* there, "Don't become a monkey!" Whatever I do I want it to please Prabhupada and I think that means contributing to his movement.

* * *

Japa Log

February 4, 1997, 3 p.m.

Chanted one extra round so far and will do another at the disciples' meeting. A Godbrother wrote me that he concentrates as he chants on Srila Prabhupada's "Just hear." And he regularly reviews as he chants, "Am I hearing? Am I hearing?"

Squeeze out an extra round. It's what counts. *Japa*. How serious am I? How good am I? I'm tired of trying to figure it out. Don't want to pose as a serious chanter, but neither do I want to fall into a negative cliché that I'm incorrigibly inattentive. I do care and there is hope for reform. Therefore, extra efforts are worthwhile.

How long will this log last? It's like a flickering flame that could blow out with a sudden gust.

February 5, 1997

Midnight

Is there something I should try to achieve in my remaining six days in Vrndavana? The program is chalked out. I should try to give several more classes and go on a few outings. My health limits me so that it will take my full effort to fulfill these obligations. I say this is not the real Vrndavana; even in my present neophyte stage I am capable of better worship and residence in Vrndavana. Therefore, we have been planning our return visit.

But this conclusion, "This is not the real Vrndavana where you wear yourself out with group obligations" "is it right? Seems so. Keep Vrndavana sacred in your life for personal development of that which is soft and sweet (as Vrndavana is described in *Caitanya-caritamṛta*). Go to Vrndavana (as Lord Caitanya did) without a crowd. Allow yourself to think that you have paid enough of the institutional dues to worship alone in Vrndavana, concentrating on chanting and reading instead of lecturing and meetings. Then you'll become a fit instrument to preach when you leave.

As for "doing something" during these last days, that may not be up to me. At least I can avoid making offenses and I can seek forgiveness for offenses I've made. Don't take entering Vrndavana for granted. Pray you'll be allowed to return. Pray to understand the essence of Vrndavana and how you will keep it alive even when you're not here.

* * *

A *sadhana-siddha-bhakta* cannot become Mother Yashoda nor Srimati Radharani nor Nanda Maharaja nor Sridama nor any of those eternally existing *parisads*, but "by following the principles exhibited by Nanda Maharaja and Yashoda and their associates, the inhabitants of Vrndavana, ordinary living beings may attain such affection as exhibited by Nanda and Yashoda." (*Bhag.* 10.8.49) This hints at *raganuga-bhakti*. Let us do what Srila Prabhupada teaches, absorb what he writes, but don't think vital supplementation is needed from the teachings of a guru who is much more "*rasika*" than Srila Prabhupada. Don't read into Srila Prabhupada's teachings something concocted.

Will how to attain *prema-bhakti* be revealed "automatically"? How to show or develop the required greed (*laulyam*)? We say we accept the *bhakti* Srila Prabhupada is teaching and recognize it as pure devotional service. It is our most crucial, immediate need. It will lead us on. I think Krishna and Srila Prabhupada are capable of revealing to me how I'll serve in Vrndavana when I'm liberated. I can't practice it now anyway. That would be artificial "to pretend I'm a *gopi-manjari* massaging radha's feet or chasing Krishna from Her *kunja*."

Go for *bhakti*, pray to understand Prabhupada's books. This morning I read and understood how we cannot become Yashoda or Nanda (just as we can't become God "a Mayavadi conception). I also appreciated reading that Mother Yashoda surrendered to Krishna as the Supreme when she couldn't understand the cause of the universal form appearing in His mouth. Then Yogamaya covered Mother Yashoda with maternal affection. She is beyond Bhagavan realization. I plan to speak on these topics in a class and say, "But we cannot imitate her."

How will a follower of Srila Prabhupada receive specific *raganuga* practice, since Prabhupada doesn't teach it? I have faith that we are all right as Prabhupadanugas, but I'd like more "scientific" information to answer this challenge: "You are merely practicing *vaidhi-sadhana-bhakti*, so you'll go to Vaikuntha. You need to specifically hear and practice *raganuga-sadhana-bhakti*, hearing of the *gopis'* service to radha. You need to hear it from a *rasika-guru*. Unless you do so, you cannot reach the ultimate goal, certainly not in this lifetime."

But who is so great that he can achieve perfection in this lifetime? Our perfection is to attain pure love of Krishna in His Vrndavana feature. Srila Prabhupada *is* teaching this. Serve his mission in practical ways. Help his followers. Work for the spreading and strengthening of his movement. Your service will be rewarded.

* * *

* * *

In each of the disciples' meetings I've been citing references and speaking on the same items: (1) Living in Vrndavana; (2) reading *sastras*; (3) *japa*; and (4) our spiritual master/ disciple relationship. On the last topic I always read something from one of my books. My point is that the best way we can relate is by their reading my books. Only in my writings am I able to be most honest and intimate. Last night I read from the first chapter of *radio Shows*. It ends with the words, "This has become the assumption of my writing life and the code I live by." In that session I describe my participation in a *harinama* party in Verona, Italy. My perceptions were those of the "mechanical man," not very deep, but then I assert that it's worthwhile to write any experience in order to preserve the moment. "rather than lose, lose, lose, *ayur harati vai pumsam* . . . an artist wants to hold onto what happens between sunrise and sunset, and if he can write it down, it will be saved."

I like this spirit. Here in Vrndavana I feel that I'm not preserving as much as I'd like. By following this code I have faith that life is not just trash or a series of trivial events. "Although I can't feel it when I walk on the street with the *harinama*, still, I know that even if I describe the mechanical level of existence, it will be meaningful. The essential

Krishna conscious impressions will be beautiful and worth saving." This is especially true in Vrndavana. At least I've accumulated a good number of pages in my weeks here. I look forward to traveling to Delhi, the long plane flights to the Caribbean, my stay in Trinidad, and going to Guyana. It's all worth saving, even though I'm in the mundane world, and my Krishna conscious insights are not deep. I'll say it again: it's worth saving. As Prabhupada said about his own writing, he gets up at midnight and writes because he must, he has to. He has taste.

* * *

Mangala-arati
Mangala, auspicious
but all I can think and feel is who is
near me, pushing me, and can I fit my
skinny body between those two devotees?
God is here but I'm worried
how I look before others.
Prema escapes me.

* * *

Room 42
Room 42 contains me.
Open the door for *prasadam*
open your eyes after sleep
my heavens . . .
four days, two nights
six left . . .
42 is 24 backwards
and 14 is a number I used
when gambling with dimes
at the wheel of fortune
in Saint Clare's Church.
Did you win the Eucharist?
Naw. I won the prize for
sad
boobs.
Anyway, forget all that "
from room 42 I go out
surmising
that next year
I may return to Vrndavana
to stay somewhere else.
But this room is ever dear.

February 6, 1997

I Want to talk to Radha-Vallabha dasa about Curing my Ill Health: a dream

I go to see Radha-Vallabha dasa about my health. He's a famous doctor from whose body light emanates and water trickles. I wonder if this is just a stunt he performs to gain followers or if it's true. My only fear is that he will prescribe a fruit-only diet. I also hear that this doctor very much respects someone who has the drive to get better.

When I awoke I realized that I'm feeling a little desperate with my health. The pain is intense and and I have frequent bouts of it. Maybe I should adjust my diet again or try some new way to get better.

I do have a strong will to get better, but I don't have much hope. It seems that Krishna is not allowing me to get better. If this is true, then I should go to the Caribbean despite the inevitable pain. If Krishna wants me to have a headache, then it will be better to continue my duty as a preacher than to take a health retreat. "Die on the battlefield" is not necessarily a harsh philosophy. It just means you recognize that your health will be bad no matter where you are or what you do. You might as well preach.

It seems significant that the person I wanted to talk to about health was radha-Vallabha. I think beyond Radha-Vallabha dasa to the original Radha-Vallabha, Krishna, who is dear to the *gopis*. The dream source is asking why I don't take my case to Krishna Himself. If my dream Radha-Vallabha dasa is an instrument for the original Krishna, he is reminding me of the importance of having a strong will to get better.

But I never got to talk to him; I only made an appointment. O Krishna, O Srila Prabhupada, what should I do about my health? Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhu, my Godbrother, told me that when he was very ill he dragged himself to the drawing table and went on with his work and the pain went away. I can't push myself like that. O Radha-Gopivallabha, O Radha-Vallabha, You are my refuge. I'm not this body.

February 7, 1997

8:45 a.m.

Finding quotes to read this afternoon. I'm not living rightly in Vrndavana. No big offenses but . . . Just choked up, dry. Always on the verge of another headache. Writing dwindled. Nothing to say. Most important is to use available energy to (1) prepare and give lectures; (2) answer letters; (3) chant *japa* "squeezing out extras.

Little waves do come and then I know I'm in Vrndavana. When I leave, my main regret will be that I didn't love this place and its residents. But I don't want phony trends or a "*bhava*" of the imagination only. In that sense, this visit is real. I mainly want to come back with a proper attitude. I think only by going away from this straitjacketed life of temple obligations will I be able to read Prabhupada's books more steadily. So the Vrndavana mood, loving Krishna, may be better attained by leaving. Today an ISKCON guru will arrive, and his secretary has already invited me to lunch tomorrow. I don't want to go. Another leader is phoning me from abroad, probably to get me to cooperate with his side in a controversy, and I'm lying low from another big Godbrother "letters and requests pour in. People suffering. "My heart is full of pain," she said. What does she mean?

"The school needs a new headmaster. What do you think?" I don't think.

"Come see my newly installed *Sila*." No thanks. I'm not up to it and don't want to make a farce: "He looks cute. What's His name?"

"Come lecture to the children in our writing class. We like to invite ISKCON writers to come share their realizations about the craft." I don't know the craft. I'd not be a good influence on your junior craftsmen.

Arrogant sonofa . . .

"So and so is making huge amounts of money."

"What is my *varna*?"

Eating food cooked in butter is not good for you. Why don't you do yoga?

Vraja, Vraja . . . twenty-four-hour *kirtana*. Look it up in his books.

You see what I mean?

* * *

Room 42

Room alone before 9 a.m., sounds distant. Open your mouth, shut it, *saumya*.

Open-shut case. He's a nervous wreck. A lazy piece. Too many pies and creams

burning in gut.

Four, four. Two, two, his

Room number. Give up the key when you leave in

two days plus one and a half.

Then where do you go?

When do you return?

* * *

Vrnda #21

Vrnda I'm plumb out

Realize I love Krishna

somehow

and *tulasi*

oh, chant.

* * *

The Bell at Krishna-Balarama Mandir

Bell ringing 12:30, caw caw

elephant hand? No, little hand

of me

little life

little bell, moment gone

Swami, Prabhupada is in

his rooms and I'm with him
dying "got a long (a little)
way to go. Not long now.
Hang on to the rail.

* * *

5:15 p.m.

Walking over to MVT buildings to give last disciples' meeting "met the bright warm sunshine. How nice! Small monkey on ledge of one-story building and me with strong pole in my hands. I read about leaving Vrndavana from *Wild Garden* 1992, on reading Srila Prabhupada books from Cc. *Asraya*, and on *japa* from *Begging For the Nectar of the Holy Name*. Didn't talk much in between. I didn't read sections I had lined up as examples of the intimacy of the relationship through my books. I said it's too intimate to read to a group. It's just between each one of you and me when you read my books. In this way I honored the precious relationship of reader and author. You can only go so far in an out loud reading with such a large, diverse group. Anyway, some of them know and I know.

February 8, 1997

A devotee praised me for pushing on with travels and lecturing even though I'm ill. She connected it to a line in Prabhupada's purport, "One who lays down his life on the sacrificial altar, or in the proper battlefield, is at once cleansed of bodily reactions and promoted to a higher status of life." (Bg. 2.22, purport) She praised me for my determination, dedication, and sacrifice. "Still you are going and putting your body on the line for the cause of preaching and encouraging others in Krishna consciousness." She doesn't know I have canceled my tour. From Vrndavana I'm going to a place where I can be free of obligations and can just repair my body.

I read this call to die on the battlefield just before bed last night. I thought I would probably think of it during the night, and worry whether it was cowardly of me to cancel my Caribbean tour just because my health has broken down. I called Madhu and he asked me to rest peacefully. He said as far as he was concerned, my "proper battlefield" was first *sadhana*, then writing, and only thirdly traveling and speaking where people see me in the flesh (what's left of it). I accepted his assurance.

* * *

Realizations in Krishna consciousness are ultimately meant to be shared among devotees and those eligible to come to Krishna consciousness. *The Nectar of Instruction* states this in the *priti-laksanam* verse, and Krishna also says it in *Bhagavad-gita*. But sometimes we need time to assimilate what we have read before we can express it deeply to others. Each person can read the book for themselves. "Hey Prabhu, there's a great purport in *Bhag.* 10.9.5 where Prabhupada advises us, 'On the platform of love and affection, it is the duty of the devotee to do one thing first and other things later. The proper intuition by which to do this is given by Krishna.' See? This means

even when Srila Prabhupada isn't directly available as he used to be, if we are sincere and pure in serving guru and Krishna, the Lord will tell us what to do."

To this the Prabhu might reply, "You mean Krishna is telling you how to write your books and telling you what to quote from *sastra*?"

No, I don't make that claim. But Krishna may be instructing me through my intelligence or through the material energy. Intuition.

* * *

Giving the Hindi class was fun. I restrained myself while speaking about Mother Yashoda and the *gopis* complaining to her about Krishna's naughty activities, the accusations that Krishna ate dirt. I didn't want to play it up too much or be too corny. Still, it's sweet to speak straight about the pastimes. Mother Yashoda made an important philosophical point about surrender to Krishna's will when we don't know the cause of some overwhelming situation. Prabhupada advised us to follow that path. Krishna gave me the intelligence to speak in a balanced way.

It was fun speaking in Prabhupada's residence. He was present in his *murti* form, sitting at his desk. The audience was Hindi-speaking only devotees, almost all men. Their faces were brownish, wrapped in scarves, humble looking. There were also some Western devotees, mostly my disciples, blond-haired Trivikrama dasa, Ekatvam from Puerto rico in a big, green winter jacket, and *matajis* from America, Australia, Finland, etc. I gave preference to the Hindi-speaking devotees during the question and answer session. I took a firmer control over their questions and spoke to them as a teacher. I played the role. When a devotee asked what to do if he can't fully surrender, I said, "Did you think you would be surrendered by now?" When a devotee said that his life is a failure and he wants to know why it is since Krishna wants him to surrender, I replied, "Your life is not a failure, but you have to prove that your will to surrender is strong and that you won't accept *maya*."

I've been complaining that I haven't been able to get the taste of Vrndavana-dhama, but certainly this was a real Vrndavana event. ISKCON Vrndavana is also Vrndavana. And the heart of ISKCON Vrndavana is to be able to speak Prabhupada's teachings from his *Bhagavatam* purports to an audience like I had today.

* * *

Noon

Yesterday I told the devotees that they should examine themselves as to why they're leaving Vrndavana. Probably it's because they're not fit to live here. Maybe they're admitting that they don't want to live here, or they may hold some idealistic notion that they'd like to live in Vrndavana, but they know they're not fit.

To live in Vrndavana for an ISKCON devotee means finding some service at the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. That can be demanding. Maybe there's nothing here for us to do. Are we leaving because there's no service?

Or are we leaving because we want to preach? That's a good reason "the main reason" to leave. It's the reason Prabhupada left Vrndavana-dhama.

One devotee admitted that she's too shy to preach, so she can't claim she's leaving Vrndavana for that reason. She admits that she's leaving Vrndavana in order to pursue relative goals. She wants to go to school and figure out how to make money. She also wants to get married and thinks Vrndavana is not a good place for contemplating a marriage partner.

Later, I wrote this devotee a letter and said, "It's good to admit that you're leaving for those material reasons and it's not necessarily bad. You're leaving Vrndavana in order to make progress in your *varnasrama* evolution. It's natural to get married and you may have to develop career skills. Leave Vrndavana, then, with the idea to accomplish what you need to do and then eventually work on coming back."

Neither is it all or nothing "no Vrndavana or all Vrndavana. We can take Vrndavana with us in our hearts. We make resolutions here that we carry with us outside of Vrndavana. And we can come back to visit.

I spoke these things but what about me? Why am *I* leaving? remember that haiku I wrote about ten years ago? It was at the end of *The Dust of Vrndavana*. It went like this:

Driven out of Vrndavana
by a Sikh
in a Mazda.

I'm leaving because I'm not fit to live here, because I don't *want* to stay here, because I have no service at the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. I'm not sure about making progress in my *varnasrama-dharma*. I'm a *sannyasi*, and that's already the end of the *varnasrama* road. But I have to evolve in my devotion to Krishna before I can come back to stay. Yes, I'm going to preach. That will help.

* * *

Room 42
Room 42 lease up,
I signed my name in register
O. Stephen. O Satsfer
Oh, time is up "Time is
flying!" Madhu said.
I asked him, "*Which* time?"
Today you mean?
Or "he meant for our
stay in Vrndavana '97.

* * *

42, get it?
24 backwards
no more coming back
go to Vrajaloka with
Srila Prabhupada.

* * *

Prabhupada
Phony Prabhupada lover
Real one I want to be
as reader and follower
Brahmananda, Satsvarupa '66
Hayagriva, yeah well now
Vrndavana means die and go
Prabhupada is waiting. I
always make sense but not
in this one.
Done poem done
always his *Sisya*.

* * *

5:30 p.m.

I spoke with a *sannyasi* Godbrother and asked him questions that were important to me.

I told him I'd heard that most of the *acaryas* in our line have gone to another planet and are preaching there, and that at the end of his life Prabhupada said he was going to preach on another planet too. He said his sincere followers would join him there.

Maharaja said he didn't know of any references showing that our *acaryas* are preaching on other planets. He said he knew of a story told about Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura's last days. One night he looked at the moon and said, "Krishna consciousness is diminishing on the moon." Some of his followers then surmised that when he left, he went to the moon to preach. But Maharaja didn't think it would be correct to assume that our *acaryas* have all gone to other planets to preach. We say of them *nitya-lila pravistha* "they have gone to join Krishna's *nitya-lila* in the spiritual world. I was satisfied by his replies.

I then asked him my questions about the challenge from Srila Narayana Mahanraja's followers. Narayana Maharaja teaches that there are two paths of *sadhana-bhakti* "*vaidhi* and *raganuga*, and that *vaidhi* will lead us to Vaikuntha while *raganuga*, which is difficult to obtain, will lead to Goloka Vrndavana. They also say that the only way to attain *raganuga-bhakti* is to associate with a *raganuga-bhakta*. This, of course, is our *siddhanta*. But they also say that ISKCON is following *vaidhi-bhakti* and that they will not attain Vraja. Therefore they need to associate with *arasika-guru* to receive more specific *raganuga* teachings.

Maharaja replied by first reciting lines from a Bengali song composed by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, which he sang on the day he and his disciples moved from their modest temple in Calcutta to their new temple. The general translation is this: "The path of *vaidhi-bhakti* has been abandoned and *raganuga-bhakti* has now taken over. The *sadhus* are engaged in apparent *visayi* (material activities)."

The purport of the song is that Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati was engaging devotees, perhaps for the first time in Vaisnavism, in intense *yukta-vairagya* "using cars and so many other apparently material things to spread Lord Caitanya's movement. In this song he defined *yukta-vairagya* as *raganuga*.

Maharaja also quoted a song by Prabhodhananda Sarasvati stating that when one follows the path of Lord Caitanya, then Radha-Krishna *bhava* appears in the heart. Lord Caitanya, who is worshiped in *dasya-rasa*, leads us to worshiping radha-Krishna in *madhurya*. Ordinary *dasya* performed in *vaidhi-bhakti* by which we see Krishna always as master, will lead to Vaikuntha, but *dasya* rendered to Lord Caitanya brings us to radha-Krishna worship in *madhurya*.

Those who concentrate only on hearing of Krishna and radha and Their intimate pastimes have to show us where they are strongly connected to Lord Caitanya. We know that we're connected to Lord Caitanya through the *sankirtana* movement. It's by execution of *sankirtana* that we become eligible to have radha-Krishna appear in our hearts.

Sankirtana can be explained in various ways. Literally, it means the congregational singing of the holy names. It also means engaging everything in Krishna's service. Prabhupada was expert in doing this.

I told Maharaja that his explanation was satisfying, but there's a further challenge. One could say that he is a learned devotee and has given references outside of Prabhupada's books to support ISKCON as competent to lead us back to Godhead. One might say that these references are not in Prabhupada's books specifically. Maharaja admitted that he learned a lot from sources outside ISKCON years ago, but he said he began to feel that by hearing from those sources, he was minimizing his relationship with Prabhupada. The point is, both Maharaja and I agree that it would be all right for a devotee who is fixed in following Prabhupada to sometimes explain Srila Prabhupada's books by making references to other Gaudiya Vaisnava sources. If, however, this kind of commentary on Prabhupada's teachings or on Gaudiya Vaisnavism in general is done separate from a connection with Prabhupada, then it will not be good for Prabhupada's followers. They will risk losing their strong attachment to him and focus on his movement.

I then raised another challenge: could he give more support for his statement that *sankirtana* activities could be considered *raganuga-bhakti*. He *sankirtana* movement.

I was also encouraged to think that if I am writing even experimentally in Krishna's service, this is a kind of spontaneous devotional service.

Maharaja added that those who follow the path Prabhupada has given us are preaching around the world. The Radha-kunda *babajis* who jump ahead to talk of esoteric topics do not preach or do much of anything. He said Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's followers are strict about not openly discussing the highest pastimes of Radha and Krishna.

He also *sankirtana* movement. He quoted the song that we sing every day, *divya-jnan hrde prokasito*, "The spiritual master will reveal *prema-bhakti* in the heart."

I *sankirtana* would have to be done deeply. And, of course, it has to be done in a life where hearing and chanting are emphasized, not only that we concentrate on outer activities. He then confided in me about his own project and the boldness required to carry it out. It gave me confidence and inspiration in my own service.

At the meeting today, I heard a story about Prabhupada. Once, an ordinary man came to Prabhupada and demanded to know his *svarupa*. Prabhupada said, "rascal *svarupa*." Then he told the man that if he followed the principles of Krishna consciousness nicely, the rules and regulations, then Prabhupada himself would reveal the man's *svarupa*.

I also heard another story that illustrated how one who actually has *bhakti* doesn't brag. He keeps himself humble and waits to be raised up. We shouldn't be presumptuous in our attempts to be Krishna conscious.

February 9, 1997

Midnight

Nothing will work perfectly, but I write and live. This is the work of the Madman, Wink Pervis Bhakta. His hair in disarray. His . . .

You can split.

You can leave Vrndavana, but it's in your heart. I'm afraid of the Vrndavana underground and what may happen if I come back here, but I can find a space at the trough.

Serve in the *sankirtana* movement wherever I am. Fashion an instrument, a cultural weapon.

But a morning walk, how is that serving?

The Vrndavana underground.

The *bhakti* rivers flow, she said, from many places, and she went off to collect it. I said, "I'll take what comes from Srila Prabhupada. That way I'm sure I won't get poisonous water."

Commendable.

American cameras and gadgets tumble. They'll all be stolen. Better to procure a treasure moths and thieves can't break into "*Krishna-bhakti*. But it's not found in the Vrndavana underground or Krishna-Balaram Mandir?

"I tried desperately to get in touch with you in November, but you're not on e-mail and no one in America knew where you were. They said only that you were traveling in Europe."

You sent it to the wrong address.

Blue-green algae. Tickets at twice the price.

Don't get fat. Don't go to the moon. You go where He takes you or sends you "like a boat going over the waterfall.

Write, Mistah, write. Get your second voice in order. Use any method you can. For Krishna take a chance.

sankirtana has many meanings.

* * *

Today the 9th, then the 10th, on the 11th we leave. Therefore, if you are going to steal nectar, do it today.

Oh, this is Vrndavana, but I can't find it.

He came back shiny-eyed from Nandagram. I came back shiny-eyed from a talk with a Godbrother.

Hit sturdy bamboo pole against the cement walk "there, I got it, the authentic *chaukidar* sound.

I'm serious but petering out. I wanted to take Vrndavana home in a jar. It won't stay there. Jam it in your heart. No, I can't digest it. The gas in the intestines.

Please write an objective account for the BBT of whippersnappers you carried back from Vrndavana. My book will be called, "The Vrndavana Underground, Is There One? An Anthropologist's Delayed Apology."

Pigeons. Next life
stony heart

the pallet people "dread on feeling I've returned to America. Spend too much money to get there as if desperate, and hope your head won't split.

Too much. Too much, that's what the widow said of Satsva when he walked into the *Mandir* in Glider shoes.

Too much, too little. Lord Krishna is also the Judge and the Mercy. Too much.

* * *

In a dream there was so much fear. People were afraid to speak their truth or to be themselves. They did a lot of beating around the bush. Who can cut through? The fear is based on the reality that a young giant would kill them at any moment. Death could come and you would lose your nice things, your shelter, your friends, your good meals, your trip to Nandagram or wherever you were planning to go and return from this afternoon. All your hopes for the future life could be similarly smashed because the body is fragile and can be killed. It's no wonder everyone was living a compromised life in the dreams. Heroes get killed.

Nevertheless, you tried to express yourself. What do I mean? I mean by speaking obscure double-talk, I could get messages out. Or by accepting Krishna's protection. Get your truth out and into the people's hearts somehow or other.

I have so many dreams. I can't expect any one dream is suddenly going to change my life. Such powerful dreams come but rarely. All these little ones, though, if I take them seriously and thoughtfully, can guide me. Now I'm awake in Vrndavana, but am I really?

* * *

Good-bye sir,
I've got it in the jar.

Tickets he didn't get yet, but we've got reservations. He could have bought them if he had had the money. "The full whack" we had to pay.

Determinists. Feminists. I'm tired of it. Palavar. Pancakes. He says it's all in the cooking; in the simple diet you'll find health. ride smooth.

Another russian doctor says, "Just smell this. Put some into your nostrils and around your ears. It should smell light, not heavy or sweet. What do you think?"

I think it smells sweet and heavy, but I don't know what it's *supposed* to smell like. I don't know what's right.

No Guru but one.

* * *

9:30 a.m.

This morning in the Prabhupada Samadhi Mandir several more *sannyasis* and GBC men arrived. Madhu and I have the same thought: time to go. In fact, we've over-stayed. Two of the new arrivals mention to me that they will meet with me, but there's no time, given my limited capabilities.

We've decided to leave by 5 a.m. tomorrow and we have a place in Delhi to stay until final arrangements are made for the plane. It's an abrupt departure from Vrndavana, but I've already settled matters in my mind about my inability to enter Vrndavana. Staying here longer would not be good. I leave, but with hopes to return in a better frame of mind. We're purchasing round-trip tickets so that we can come back next year.

* * *

12:25 noon

Chant or read. Don't think only writing will last (in print) and that chanting fades away. Krishna hears. It's eternal credit when you chant. If only I could do it with more feeling. Maybe one day I'll stop writing and only chant. I *could* write, "The chanting of the holy names tastes like honey," as one Gaudiya *babaji* wrote in his diary in his last days. Or I may go on like this.

Krishna escapes me. He doesn't call me because I don't sufficiently cry for Him.

* * *

List of things to do in last afternoon in Vrndavana:

- (1) Make this list.
- (2) Feel nonverbal.
- (3) Feel nothing to say.
- (4) Think over.
- (5) Get a book like *Easy Journey to Other Planets* to read on the plane.
- (6) Think in the vein of fictive lists (*A Fictive Diary*, Nemerob).
- (7) Think, think, drink, drink.
- (8) "Vrndavana! Vrndavana!"
- (9) Say *jaya*.
- (10) Answer letters.
- (11) Avoid a headache.
- (12) Maintain. Heart beat.
- (13) Live.
- (14) Be confident your 4 p.m. class will be okay.
- (15) Think of Trivikrama Swami.
- (16) The lot.
- (17) Be here as crows and parrots caw and screech your last day over.
- (18) Sneak-away plan "keep it.
- (19) Money bag pouch on wall "get it down.
- (20) O ladies and gents, I tried to be a guru. Don't suck at my ear.

(21) I am the kitty in my dream "hurry, lick up the milk from the floor, get down and do it.

(22) Sorry r.r., I love you anyway.

(23) I'm going to stay fit.

(24) Phone, phone, write letters, notes "prove something.

(25) Make prayers to radha and Krishna "please give me strength to serve my guru.

(26) I can't go to his room, go to radha-Damodara, Nandagram, Yamuna. It's too late. I couldn't taste it if I went anyway, but it would have been good for me.

(27) Look out the window down into the edge of the *prasadam* hall "line of six devotees sitting on green mat facing a *brahmacari* who's giving them a class. His hand gestures.

(28) Just outside the *prasadam* hall in the February afternoon sunlight, small *tulasi* in a pot on a table. Worship her.

(29) But Prabhu, this is a list of things to do. You're just talking about things that are. Yes, because to be is also as good as to do. There's nothing to do but just carryout your duties as faithfully as you can.

(30) Vinay Aggarwal became Varuna dasa, and his sister Madhu became Madhumati.

(31) Looking for the bag to put my sleeping bag in.

(32) Waiting the last hour, chanting a round.

(33) Watch Prabhupada's clothes dry.

Completed uncompleted on February 9, 1997

in room 42 of the guest house at Krishna-Balarama Mandira, Vrndavana

Appendix

Dear Godbrother,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

I want to write a letter to you which is like a P.S. to my last letter, and a further discussion with you about the nature of pure Krishna consciousness or surrender to Krishna.

You have been defining in an analytical way the further and further stages of pure devotion. Pure devotion is not simply offering the fruits of one's work, or working in a dutiful way. It is serving spontaneously, in chanting and hearing, and doing what Krishna actually wants us to do. This acting just to please Krishna goes beyond wanting to serve according to one's personal nature.

What I want to express to you as a friend is a line of argument that I find compelled to take in answer to this request that you are making on behalf of Krishna, that I just do what Krishna wants me to do if I want to attain pure devotion.

First, however, I want to relate to you something I read many years ago, before I became a devotee, in the diaries of Franz Kafka. Kafka said something about the nature of Judaism. Although Kafka was not a religious man in the ordinary sense, in this one diary entry he spoke in praise of Judaism and said something like, "Now there's a real religion. It accepts the whole man." I don't know exactly of what he was speaking, but it

struck me. I thought in contrast of the stereotype that is sometimes given of renounced Christianity, which is that one surrenders in spirit and negatively renounces the flesh. Perhaps Kafka was praising Judaism as a religion that accepts the human man in all his dimensions.

I like to think that this is what I am trying to do in my own Krishna consciousness. Perhaps when I was younger and I *appeared* more surrendered, I was partly pursuing that renounced version where one suppresses certain "impure" drives one has (and I don't mean sinful activities, but personal natures) and does just what Krishna wants according to the order of the spiritual master. Although it appears that one is on the higher platform of devotional service, that "whole man" has not been eliminated. Therefore, he has not been fully engaged in Krishna's service.

I think that now that I am allowing myself to dovetail my creative nature in Krishna's service, to be a writer for Krishna, I am more surrendered than when I was completely submerging my desires to write in this way. I know there's a thin line between indulgence and offering something to Krishna, but I try again and again to be honest about this. The best I can come up with so far is that this is my surrendered offering to Krishna. In other words, it's not a matter of theological discussion but existential reality. A theoretical discussion can go, on one hand, as perfect talks from the *vyasasana*, or talks between you and I about what Krishna is actually saying in the *Bhagavad-gita*, but if I ask myself, "All right, so now I know what pure devotion is, I have to do only what Krishna wants," I have to ask further, "Then how do I follow it up? How do I know what Krishna wants? And how do I attain it?"

First of all, I don't really know what He wants in my very specific, tiny life. I have to offer Him the best I can in terms of what I think He wants. Furthermore, even if I were to make a guess and say that Krishna doesn't want me to be, say, a writer, first of all I wouldn't know for sure that that's what He wants, and second, how could I give it up?

I don't want to define myself on a lower rung of devotional service, but neither can I artificially do something beyond my realization. I try to fully surrender (*atma-nivedanam*) in the sense of that impression I got from Kafka's line. I want to give the whole man and not just a renounced version of myself to Krishna. I want to give Him what I love, and I want to also let it serve energetically in a preaching way to show others how they can give their whole selves to Krishna.

Here the words "whole self" do not just mean pure self, but they mean giving all aspects of ourselves as we know them in the conditional nature "giving our money, giving our talents, and so on, giving all the things we have. I also expanded on this image while writing a book called *Churning The Milk Ocean*. There I said that when I write, I churn up things that are sometimes poison and sometimes nectar. We reject the poison and don't offer it to Krishna, but still, in the process of living, it gets churned up.

I am writing this to you personally. I wouldn't advocate it at any kind of ISKCON forum for social living, or, in the name of Western psychology, inviting devotees to do their thing for Krishna. But I have to admit that it's what I'm doing. I do restrict myself from expanding on any inner desires I may have, say, for a woman's association or listening to nondevotee music or whatever. There is certainly a constant restraining of oneself from certain desires one has. But on the other hand, I'm going ahead as fully as possible to offer Krishna my nature and to do the best I can to respond to the perfection that Krishna desires "that we act only to please Him.

It may sound strange to say that I claim I don't know what Krishna really wants, so I have to agonize on it on my own. But what do you think? Do you think you know in vital aspects, and that other devotees in ISKCON know in vital aspects, exactly what Krishna wants? rather, isn't this part of our free will to struggle with this?

I could say much more but I don't want to deluge you with letters that you may find a burden to answer. In fact, you don't have to answer, but just hear me. Thank you.