

*The Waves at Jagannātha Purī  
and Other Poems*



The Waves  
at Jagannātha Purī  
and Other Poems

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami  
GN Press, Inc.

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The Waves at  
Jagannātha Purī

The Puri waves, the Puri  
waves catch your metaphor in rise and fall  
of waves on beach. Don't go too far out!

But what is the length of each piece, chorus, stanza?  
It's shallow—five breaths and two sonatas—no longer.

It's all here in trance and steno pad. This age it's all  
computers, but I don't go for that. The Puri stanzas. Roll in  
in praise of Gaurāṅga.

Of course I'm just joshing,  
 the waves will sloshing bring it  
 all out, in the breaking wall  
 of water sea frothy dirty  
 amulets, true worth, clean . . .  
 come clean, come clean  
 come dirty . . .  
 I'm simply fooling,  
 my total seriousness  
 flows each wave crashes  
 relaxed and independent  
 at Puri.  
 Relax and brace yourself  
 for what's to come.

We have come here to expend pen cartridges and good karma, to spend all bad karma—all karma. The *nirvāna* idea means cutting your throat when you're sick—cured but dead.

We live forever in Kṛṣṇa. Sure hope it's so. We are here, a sample party of eleven gringos. Madhu has a green card. We have a wing to ourselves at the Birla Hotel, which is not a bad place—no smoking or meat-eating allowed, no alcohol in the rooms—and I am speaking *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

## 2

Thunder dull caress  
rumble . . . pauses and  
hits the bosom of earth.  
The waves of Puri  
the crows of Puri  
Jagannātha's tongues fried  
in oil or ghee,  
the sugar grains, cool  
A.M., and a meeting we  
propose to hold each day.

Don't stop, mister. Tell us of sails at sea, of Indian lady  
and kid in sandy backyard of the Birla guest house, of  
Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa on a swing. Permit us to read of Lord  
Caitanya's topmost heavenly sports. We aren't qualified to  
enter? Then tell us of His 48 years, the simple arithmetic  
—24 years here, 24 there, of which 6 are this and 2 are  
that and the last 12 at Gambhīrā (which is nearby—  
a small stout cell we  
can't enter no how).

Waves at Puri. Gray sky and water  
 meet. We're happy in this shelter.  
 Devotee: "Amazing how we walked  
 in the commotion of streets and then entered  
 the peaceful atmosphere of Siddha-bakula."  
 She says they will go to Toṭa-Gopinātha  
 maybe tonight.

Wash, wash, waves wash  
 my heart. Wash, wash—  
 I'll go to bed and pray for good  
 dreams. But no anxiety.

Not ready to face it as Rādhā  
 and the *gopīs* did?

No, I want peace, he said,  
 and rested his head on a too-narrow  
 pillow surrounded by four walls  
 of mosquito nets.

I want *pax*.

He said, "No one can help me but those in our *sam-  
 pradāya*. No one can sing to me."

"Here is a picture supposedly painted by Viśākhā,"  
 someone offered. He saw it—the portrait of Kāna which  
 she showed to Rādhā. Charming and young, He snake-  
 bites their hearts.

Waves, waves, never stop, even after I've left Puri for Vṛndāvana via taxi over speed bumps and to the Indian Airlines waiting room, where I'm likely to wait through a three-hour delay for the Bhubaneswar-Delhi flight. At that time get out your violin. Let's see your inner reserve. Pace and chant the mantras and absolve. Write a hundred verses praising the Gaṅgā?

Waves at Puri break on shore  
 bathers don't go out far,  
 shout and jump as waves break waist high,  
 no bold swimmer far out,  
 ladies in full bathing dress.  
 I watch it all from the distance of  
 my room, the waves come in  
 rows, in white splash,  
 thunder and shouts of feeble,  
 happy vacationers.

Waves of Puri break  
 on my head and heart—  
 I'm so foolish and demure  
 and timid (false too).  
 I hide from between  
 lines of this verse. Haridāsa  
 Ṭhākura was bathed here  
 after he died  
 (he reasons ill who thinks  
 he died).  
 The holy ocean,  
 the taxis waiting now as  
 we go to see

Haridāsa's tomb and the ocean  
never far away. I wait  
for the time when I'll  
return peacefully to this  
room for a night's rest  
and hear the soothing surf  
and wake to it again.

I hear the waves at midnight when  
I wake and remove earplugs. It's  
music. I won't call it drums—  
it thuds but reassures,  
pacifies. I like it best when  
no one is there shouting in  
the surf. With first light  
they gather and by morning they  
are crowded on the winter  
beach. Often it's gray and too  
cold to swim and families or  
students, in sweaters and  
scarves and shawls and *cādars*  
and pants and *sāris* or long dresses  
stand at the border beyond the wet  
and watch, simply watch  
the sea.

Do the waves make sense?  
Do they have a message?  
“If I want a message,” Uncle Jim  
used to say, “I’ll go to Western Union.”

Do the waves rhyme,  
are they on time? Yes!  
And they don’t come on the  
shore more than they are allowed  
by the Supreme.  
Sometimes—rarely—  
every one hundred years in some places—  
He allows the waves to come up  
and soak or dismantle  
the beachside hotels.  
Ha! Then the laugh  
is on the capitalists, although poor people  
also drown.

The waves pound and don’t stop.  
They could kill a man.  
I hear them from a timid  
distance. I praise their  
drumming rolling qualities,

I sing of the hypnotic supreme  
the drunkenness of trancewords,  
the drum (admit it, it's  
a sort of drum roll), a  
roll call of names  
of the living and the dead.  
"From thence he shall judge  
the living and the dead."  
Just here happy with our  
group in Nilācala . . .

# 7

By 4:30 A.M., long before sunrise, they are out on the beach. A tea *walla* sets up a bench and they sit there facing the ocean, twenty feet from waves' edge, sipping tea in glasses, huddled in the cold, blankets, jackets and later walking in larger groups across the sands, not doing anything, just walking, and when one sees a crab they all gather around. I like their innocent do-nothingness, the no-ghetto-blaster mood, the no fighting, no bikinis, no strutting, and even though their visit is a *karmi's* vacation, they go for *darśana* of Lord Jagannātha.

Yeah, tune in, them poundin'  
 waves, and crows and *wallas*. "I'll have  
 one, please," a straw basket woven and  
 in it Jagannātha tongues, pastries, old  
 sugar-crusted buns, nuts, balls with  
 salty sweets. You are  
 a rapacious one  
 to sing a song of ocean. Maybe  
 like Yeats you should lie on  
 a board and get your rhythms  
 tight and straight.

Tune in. Door shut to keep out slow-flying bugs and mosquitoes that hide in room corners and in passport pouches and book bags. Ah, my thoughts . . . the mosquitoes warn like gentlemen and I paw them away.

Passing on the street, a guy overheard Mādhurya-lilā dāsi speaking in Hindi. She was saying, "You say I should live here, but they don't even allow us to enter the temple." At that moment, the guy passing, a perfect stranger, says cheekily, "Maybe next lifetime." And the man walking beside her said it might take three *yugas* of rebirths before any of us can see Lord Jagannātha in the *mandira*, but if Jagannātha wants, it could happen in three days. Puffed-up Puri *pandas* and me.

The waves thump and rump  
 and drum-roll on the beach sand  
 hard thigh.  
 Crow chorus picks at pus.  
 “We thank them,” the ornithologist said,  
 “for clearing roads of carrion.”  
 And the drawing of happy faces  
 with crayons surrounding the form of  
 Lord Jagannātha. Ubiquitous—He’s on the  
 motor scooters too.

I like to write and read and talk to myself (who else listens?). I feel like I am putting down another layer of clean lines and sentences whenever I write, like painting.

You know, I’m bored of the old presentations of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We say we speak for the newcomers, but I want to hear someone speak from the heart. Not something obnoxious or sentimental. It seems that when we open the floor, people immediately start complaining or talk politics or try to hurt someone with their outpouring of grief. I don’t mind grief, but speak it in a way that it sounds like blues music. Speak everyone’s sadness or make the Kṛṣṇa conscious element so true and full of yearning and appreciation that we don’t mind the pain. Don’t be a twig that snaps off the Caitanya tree in the wind. Bend, be flexible, and keep going.

Thud and wash. They'll  
 be getting up soon from their  
 beds, but I have a head start.  
 Immensity of sea is small  
 compared to light of Brahman  
 (*śāstra* says and *śāstra* is all,  
 is mother telling us who is  
 father)—immensity of  
 sea and stars are tiny—  
 liquid in a cup.  
 Brahman is only partial  
 manifestation  
 of whole spirit  
 who is Kṛṣṇa the inconceivable  
 Adhokṣaja, Acyuta.

He is kind to the devotees revealing  
 Himself to you and me.  
 Here in Puri guest house  
 I tack a print of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura  
 looking at the *mandira* dome  
 and chanting holy names,  
 holy surf . . .

High waves, Indian body surfers—  
 afraid? Stand waist high, jump  
 as it breaks, then recedes to knee high . . .  
 The fishermen oblivious to playful pull  
 on the hundreds-of-years-old ropes,  
 the boat bobbing, wildly buoyant  
 the shouts reach me here.

On my desk, assortment of Jagannātha, Subhadrā, and  
 Baladeva cards with gold embossed decorations, ready to  
 be used, adored. He is ubiquitous . . .

I see a Godbrother on rickshaw. I duck inside and  
 hide against the wall, then wash my master's clothes. We  
 heard of Sārvabhauma's great faith in Jagannātha *prasāda*.  
 I don't like it much when they bring those standard hard  
 sweets, old and stiff. I'm such a nerd.

# 12

Vroom, room, no room  
to go—the surf rushes in.  
Die down noon coming  
shouts incomprehensible  
the splitty words the  
beach we could sit on a  
small portion of it, eleven of us  
and me in center to one side.  
I project a voice of ocean poems  
but where is Kṛṣṇa in all this?  
They have a right to know.

He's in everything: Jagannātha's face,  
 the jackass-neighing night,  
 the Vṛndāvana reality,  
 the criticism of the local GBC  
 by the local *pandita*,  
 by the paid Gambhīrā *panda*  
 and the muscled tattoo-armed  
 men, and me fleeing in a  
 getaway to the rickshaw with Gambhīrā  
 guards shouting after me, "Stand!  
 Stand and fight!"  
 Their voices are lost in the surf.  
 The play of Indian vacationers is also lost,  
 but even a little *bhakti*—never.

He gave me a wilting piece of marigold garland from  
 inside the Gambhīrā. "They were having *kīrtana*. We went  
 inside and it was all right." All right, I'll go tomorrow.  
 Today the surf, the secular, the mundane, and remem-  
 brance of the holy Haridāsa Ṭhākura-bathed-in sea.

Wake up from dreamland and hear the  
 surf of Jagannātha Puri.  
 It's not the same as when I  
 stayed ten years ago at the Samudra Hotel  
 (when it wasn't a dump). I was  
 nearest the sea and it was romantic.  
 I actually thought of Lord Caitanya  
 (or is that just my imagination  
 making it rosy?)

I know from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* on  
 a night of full silvery moon the  
 Lord dove into the sea when  
 Svarūpa Dāmodara read of  
 Yamunā scenes in Kṛṣṇa's sports.  
 The Lord went inward floating  
 to Konark in His spiritual body.  
 He was a *gopī-mañjarī* on  
 the Yamunā's banks watching Kṛṣṇa  
 the blue lotus sport with the  
 white-lotus *gopīs* laughing,  
 splashing water, hiding, embracing . . .  
 "Where have I been? Who brought  
 Me here? Did I say something humble?  
 I was with Kṛṣṇa but by your chanting  
 you took Me away."

Stop and hear, stop and  
open ear. "Boom" it  
goes, so heavy it could break  
your bones and smash you  
like a salamander on the hard beach. But  
if you know the art, you can ride  
the crest of a smooth wave.

I know I'll be true.  
 The helicopter of night with light  
 flashing cruises down the coast—  
 searching for Indira Gandhi's murderer  
 or Sikhs and intrigues  
 of politicians and Army men, drab  
 itchy wool platoon of  
 millions in tanks ready to go  
 over the border to China or  
 Pakistan if so ordered by the latest  
 created emergency.

Come on, man, bring your head  
 to sublime considerations,  
 like *Rāga-vartma Candrikā*  
 or the *prema-bhakti-mārga*,  
*Prema-bhakti Candrikā*, prayers of the Six Gosvāmis.  
 Leave Ray Charles. Make your choice.  
 Hear waves and implant Lord Caitanya's  
 pastimes on your written page—  
 He bathed daily in this sea and said,  
 "From now on it's a *tīrtha*."  
 Before anyone comes it's dark  
 and all-night pounding  
 "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa." The pounding  
 sound, our master said, is the *gopīs'*  
 heartbeats in separation from Śyāma.

Night waves, blissful night waves  
 the Frisbee sun is down, it's dark, no boats  
 out there. Fishermen return to village where  
 they fry fish on earthen stoves and conceive  
 more children in pious low-caste  
 wives. Got to make a living, and they live  
 in Nilācala.

I'm a visitor here in a room all day  
 but all around me on all sides I hear  
 wash of surf encircled in soothing  
 sounds. Talked with my dear friends  
 Nārāyaṇa K. and Bala of old times, washing  
 our sores, admitting our wrongs and the  
 wrongs of the system, forgiving,  
 seeing the good—  
 eternal in service wrought.

What do I want to say, to be? To rise at midnight and read  
 of Lord Caitanya dancing and chanting and prepare myself  
 to share it. A devotee tells me he wants to serve Rādhā and  
 Kṛṣṇa, but I can't breathe a word of this to others. I don't  
 know. I just drink thin milk (from poor cows?) and squeeze  
 some thin Indian honey (from poor bees?) into it. I'm on  
 top of the ladder of species, a rich human being from  
 America, but still I'm ignorant of the soul and find fault.

I want to rocket somewhere, but have to crawl, be patient, so I look forward to dreams and writing and clues and waking to hear the surf.

It's all phony. I don't care about anything except getting something done, leaving something, and playing and wishing I could but knowing I can't enter genuine prayer. Ocean, ecstasy, steadiness, no rancor. I have to pass tests, not get left behind, not fall down or disappoint. Can you hear me, Ocean?

I wake thinking, “Now hear the surf.  
 Open your ears to it”—  
 the thuds and boom reminds  
 me of women slapping laundry  
 on the riverbank. This  
 is Nature’s all-night work,  
 God behind it remotely.  
 Work of ocean you can’t  
 understand. Why the ocean?

So big yet these oceans are just  
 full teacups floating  
 on planets in outer space.  
 Here I am on the shore of one.  
 My soul a tiny spark of God’s  
 immensity. Scratch your pen,  
 connect. It’s God  
 Himself and service to His  
 devotees headed by Rādhārāṇī  
 whom we are urged to know—  
 beyond *aiśvarya*. Remember?

Prabhupāda is teaching you:  
 listen to the surf  
 and get up and chant.

Waves long rhythm  
 dithyramb, the shouts reached  
 a high peak at noon.  
 What's that? I look out,  
 some dark jokers in rubber tubes  
 a little further out and a line  
 of shouting timid surf riders.  
 I like it better at night and  
 overnight at 1, 2, 3 A.M.,  
 they've got bright lights on  
 towers to keep the beach crime-free.  
 But it's a crime they  
 don't come here to remember Śrī  
 Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu,  
 a crime the sellers and dogs litter  
 and they don't let us into the temple,  
 it's a crime  
 that I complain  
 and waste time.

Pinch me a little and I howl,  
 can't hear myself think,  
 sink. The surfers here don't  
 risk drowning and neither do I.  
 Nothing ventured . . .

I know it's eternal,  
the washing in tide,  
waves  
touch and withdraw undertow.  
I dreamt of my master.  
He was holding a special  
class to teach pottery . . .  
these things are my own . . .  
but the ocean is everyone's—  
everyone's Lord Caitanya,  
I speak a salty drop  
of ocean chanting.

Night at Puri is blessed, we're  
 in a sheltered place, can rest hearing  
 God's waves the soothing  
 nature ocean without  
 much interference of people  
 and their horns and voices straining.

The planet bends  
 around in a circle and all along  
 the ocean edge the water froths and  
 spills upon beaches beyond our sight.  
 At midnight where is the moon?  
 The air is blowing. A bird calls.

People quiet down,  
 I drift away in  
 sleep in my own room, sleep  
 under nets, and dream of devotees . . .

I am not yet  
 at the pure, advanced stage where  
 I see Kṛṣṇa but  
 I go to sleep happy to wake  
 and hear.

Geaglum's far away. Madhu pacing  
 outside the hotel rooms in an open  
 air space. Below in the dark gardens, Rāma-rāya  
 paces. I go out there awhile, pacing and fingering  
 beads as they do. Is any one of us praying?  
 Is a *bhakta* praying at Bhaktivedanta Manor  
 as he goes around the bend like a racing horse,  
 trampling over the creaking temple room boards  
 in *japa* circumambulation?

The waves' noise. When I woke  
 it seemed so loud I thought it was  
 a nearby dock and we'd better clear out  
 of here before the tide engulfs us.  
 I thought of the Staten Island ferry, the way  
 they used to reverse engines and then slowly  
 crash into the wooden pilings and  
 everyone on board would be jolted forward.  
 Have they invented a smoother way to stop?  
 It was fun—the tall boards would  
 groan and hold the huge ferry a moment,  
 then water  
 gush through the boards, green moss clinging,  
 and we would smell the salt air, hear the sea gulls  
 cry and circle.

The ocean sheets pound down in  
dark in Puri.  
It's not my home but I come here  
and always hear ocean and talk  
about it like a broken record  
wherever I go.  
“Have you heard the waves?” Are  
they coming up into our bedroom,  
encroaching? Are we safe from  
Nature? Oh sure, God won't  
allow it to come an  
inch closer than allowed. But if He  
permits we will be washed away.  
*Pralaya*, destruction . . .  
Wash, wash your heart and  
soul, be washed  
even while you sleep,  
your dreams full  
of ocean surf.

Waves covering, enveloping,  
 peaceful now the day's surf  
 foolishness is over and the fishermen's  
 work is over. The sea is  
 by itself, washing the beach more  
 completely, not threatening to  
 flood us (although you sense  
 it could happen).

Waves of Puri—I stay indoors,  
 don't see temples or Deities  
 or *sādhus* with elephantiasis.  
 Just stay indoors and while  
 surf roars I speak to our group about *japa*—  
 how to face our lackings.  
 Tough guy: “No pastry puffs in  
 the name of *japa* notes.”

But now I'm silent,  
 relaxed, at peace,  
 the night surf is on the way,  
 motors die down,  
 dogs not visible—one stout  
 brown one grabbed the  
 skinny one by the neck  
 in his jaws  
 then let him go.

I watched from the balcony.  
As sky darkens,  
crows stop.  
“Take rest early,” he advised.  
Hear, hear  
*japa* and waves  
go together.

Waves sometimes sound like  
wind or rain. Then I focus  
and hear and recall what they are  
and where I am.

Krishna-Balaram Mandir has the bell  
and parrots.

Each place a certain sound. Here it's the surf.  
I'll be sorry when I leave  
and can't hear the engulfing  
surrounding sea.

We're going to the Gambhīrā. There's no way I will be able to capture Lord Caitanya's mood there. The Gambhīrā caretakers will prevent it, and the various external conditions, and the condition of my heart. It might help if I could approach alone the way I approach little bridges on my Ireland walks. I could look down at the water, be startled by a duck scared to flight, and make little advances, meditative pauses—but there's no chance. Just to touch that place will be purifying. It is inexplicably deep.

Good-bye waves of Puri.  
 Old friend, I'll see you, hear  
 you another year.  
 Or not. Is this good-bye forever?  
 Will I meet Lord Caitanya?  
 Will I come back to visit the  
 Gambhīrā as an outsider  
 again in my next life?

Be kind, be kind, Raghunātha  
 Gosvāmi prayed to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.  
 They're kind, he knows.  
 But he prays for more mercy.  
 Eternal good-bye and return . . .

A generator motor is drowning out  
 my last chance  
 to hear Puri's waves,  
 but they pound anyway  
 and the fishermen with practiced eyes  
 extract fish from the sea.  
 In my eye, I see the V-line of ducks  
 over Geaglum.

End this poem to waves.  
Your literate nice sayings I don't  
deny you, but they're no  
surf. They're your expression  
of what can't be said.  
The waves say it.

# Isolated Stanzas

*New York*  
*Philadelphia*  
*Boston*

# Bhakti Spring

All systems go, I'm  
scheduled to be picked up at 6 P.M.  
in a red car and carted over  
the bridge to Manhattan.  
I'm getting too old to care about  
my Lower East Side youth.  
You mean even your days with  
Swamiji you don't want to remember?  
Oh, that. Yes, that I'd like  
to recall.

The new generation attends—some have never  
heard me speak, read my books, heard  
of me. I'm the same as I was only  
older, more fragile, less egoistic.  
Relax and give what you can. Even if  
you were terrific tonight it wouldn't matter  
that much.  
Everyone still has to go back to  
being who they are. But maybe something will  
stick—that's the potency of  
hearing about Swamiji and the Absolute Truth.

Lilacs arrived in a vase, purchased from a florist.  
They grow wild outside Gitā-nāgari's *brahmacārī*  
house and on the grounds of the Towaco temple. For  
a few days at least they bring  
branches into Brooklyn and make garlands  
for Rādhā-Govinda.  
It's May and *bhakti* is eternal.

# Sitting Alone

When you don't even know  
if you've said noon *gāyatrī*  
you're in bad shape. I don't  
berate myself. I'm in Queens, NYC,  
where I was born,  
sitting on a bed in a fairly quiet apartment.  
Answering the mail: "Here is  
a photo of George Harrison in between  
Śyāmasundara dāsa and Mukunda Mahārāja.  
Here's . . . "

If you're not going to castigate yourself,  
then what will you do?  
Castigate someone else?

Tomorrow I'll go down to  
26 Second Avenue.  
I'm sorry. I wanted to be  
better, praying, inward, happy.  
Someone could turn to me  
and I'd speak Kṛṣṇa conscious *śāstra* in  
my own words with conviction.

I prefer to write freely, to  
dig in a small spring garden  
in front of this building,  
next to the statue of Our Lady  
sheltered in her plaster cave.

# My Poem's Different

My poem's different—don't know  
the theme. I quest for the  
state called Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I'm one of those who belongs in temples,  
preparing lectures, then lecturing  
nights to groups who come.  
Out of millions who hear  
a dozen accept *Bhagavad-gītā* as it is.

A daydream:  
Enthusiastically I  
hear troubles of a  
temple community, stay up late,  
help sort it out for yet another day.

Fact is I'm estranged from that,  
although I did it for 20 years or  
more. I've drifted toward the  
outskirts, an alien, recluse,  
with headaches . . .

I was disappointed with how our  
society went and perhaps they were  
disappointed in me.  
I was—disappointed with my  
chanting and reading and preaching.  
By the time I turn 60, what will I be?

# In New York City

Wondering if I'll live another day.  
Well, of course I will. I've got  
a lunch appointment in Philly tomorrow  
with two old friends in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I told him that 26 Second Avenue  
is covered when I go there.  
There are so many  
disciples and young devotees. All I can do is  
take them on a tour down memory lane.  
Second Avenue is different now.  
Those who live and  
preach there know it and know Prabhupāda  
in a way I don't.  
Do I live in an old story?  
Do I live in a story at all?

# Remembering Confession

Said my farewells to the  
State Park.

While my traveling partner  
speaks upstairs on the phone—  
maybe to Ireland—

I try to concentrate.

His muffled voice sounds like a  
person confessing his sins, the  
ten lies, the stolen cookies,  
the rudeness to siblings,  
disobedience to parents—and  
the things we dare not say.

“What’s that, my son?  
Tell it before God.”

I sometimes suck my thumb.

“That’s all?”

My soul is roiled, spoiled, my chanting  
dry. I don’t like to help anyone,  
like to eat and be peaceful,  
spin words for posterity. And I don’t  
want you, dear priest, to make me  
feel guilty for that.

“For your penance say ten Hail Marys  
and five Our Fathers. Now make a  
good Act of Contrition.”

I firmly resolve, with the help  
of Thy grace, to sin no more,  
to avoid any occasions of sin . . .

Can't remember. Saturday afternoons at St. Clare's,  
the outside calling me, a  
boy's world and his superficial religion. But I  
remember the candles and the smell of the pews and  
the creak of wooden floors in a small  
chapel. Gone now—  
a list of names and the  
chapel is locked.

Back here, upstate, he's still talking  
upstairs and I've already left  
in my mind for travels.  
May Kṛṣṇa grant me His grace.

# Ask Me About Prayer

“Do you still pray?” Haryaśva asked as I went out the door of a Puerto Rican shack eight years ago. No, I said, it’s too private and anyway, no. I don’t. I don’t pray. I never did.

“But what about

*Entering The Life of Prayer?*”

Oh, that. That was just a trip

I went on, led by another.

Prayer? Poetry is prayer.

*Japa* is prayer. And *Brahma-sambhitā*.

There’s no need to ask,

“Do you pray?”

as if I were

a Christian.

“Do you pray?”

I told you, don’t ask.

# Uncensored

“Be precise and relentless in the remembering—  
and the feeling—and the hearing—  
will emerge.”

What does that mean?

I am here in my Godbrother’s room. Many  
books on the shelf—the  
complete works of Shakespeare and  
one by Paul Fussell called  
*Thank God For The Atom Bomb*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said he  
looked at Hayagrīva’s book collection in  
New Vrindaban 1969 and it contained all  
philosophical books, not cheap market  
commodities. He was lecturing on  
Nārada’s statement to Vyāsa that literature  
which doesn’t glorify Kṛṣṇa is for  
crows. He was making that  
point.

A devotee reads Kṛṣṇa conscious literature and  
doesn’t waste his time.

Of course, for research . . .

I am confined  
because I don’t want to offend  
or get myself in trouble.

We live in an institution with laws  
and police (of sorts).  
I want to say, "I'll  
be a well-behaved devotee."  
Blossoms all over Mt. Airy.  
Christian crucifix on cement stands out  
in all weather in graveyard.  
Gardens and trees.

In the mail:  
an invitation to attend the "Samadhi installation  
of Vishvambara Goswami at Raman Reti" (Vṛndāvana),  
an invitation to stay in Philly another  
day. I can't accept.  
Must move on seeking some space  
to burn.  
I mean, to utter some honest words  
that might be permissible.  
Someone up high won't send me  
an e-mail and say, "It's  
a straightforward case. You have gone against  
an official resolution. You are hereby  
censured."

# Mother's Day Weekend, South Street

Soul music rolls up, vibrato, the  
cars on South Street, up these  
four stories to this cubby hole at  
Haryaśva's. He's got an art store  
on the first floor, there used to be a  
restaurant on the second,  
temple room on the third, and my bunker  
is half the fourth.

Warm day, windows open,  
sirens, that old man on the street in his  
wrinkled clothes and dreadlocks holding out a  
plastic soda cup to passing cars.

A rough  
black voice came over his answering  
machine: "Listen! You shouldn't make  
me call you. I want results!  
Results! Results!"

I glimpse the pressure he's under in  
this heartless world that grabs for  
money and where that old dreadlock man  
who has no place to lay his head, that  
music, the sugary, tough  
stupid rock music pounding out and  
floating up here to my room.

# The Most Amazing Thing

I have a bona fide spiritual master.  
Is it still hard to  
believe I'll die? It's the  
most amazing thing. No nice  
lunch can quell that fact.

We read of the Lord,  
keep moving,  
make plans to keep  
living, more seminars, planning a  
year at a time, and it looks  
like we'll get home scot-free.

# Off My Chest

I already got it off my  
chest that I'm agitated by  
immature devotees who say that only  
their guru is *uttama-adhikāri* and  
all others are sexually agitated.

"Why do you confess  
you are fallen unless you are  
fallen?" writes a raw recruit.  
Go to someone else to  
learn the ropes, naive one.  
It will take him decades  
to sort out the trips  
in this society.

It's off my chest but  
I'm still cruising through  
head pain, sitting  
at a low table, facing video  
cameras, answering  
questions.

He doesn't understand.  
It's not wrong to struggle and  
it's good to help others  
who suffer with you,  
to admit you're not  
*uttama*.

As far as I can see, it's a  
farce to read the highest  
philosophy and then claim  
you're living it. A *gopī-*  
*mañjari*? Too hard to  
believe.

I look in the mirror and see  
me, Stevie,  
who was saved by the Swami.

# Sacred Poetry

Lawn mower Sunday.  
Read a few poems written by a 'Nam vet,  
some by a woman mourner at the Vietnam  
Memorial Wall who looked at the  
names.  
What have I to say but  
to preach about  
the holy names?

*Nāmāmṛta*: chanting  
makes you remember Kṛṣṇa,  
protects you from accidental falldown,  
the names distinctly pronounced  
and chanted with feeling.  
The Vietnam Wall—book distributors on  
the mall, near the wall, selling books.  
“Real welfare work,” we say, and  
we mean it.

# Return To Boston

Rain sloshing out on Commonwealth Ave.  
breaks the May-end heat wave.  
It's cool in this basement.  
When I arrived young devotees  
stood around the temple room  
to greet me,  
he who first came to Boston  
wearing a summer suit jacket,  
the frightened welfare worker  
with the duffel bag.

# Cement Underpass Graffiti

God I Love

—we are

Pro-life, against animal

slaughter—don't kill even an

ant. I'd write name of our

scripture but you'd trace us

and make us pay fines and otherwise

punish us.

But Kṛṣṇa is God.

Corky,

Bhakta dāsa,

Anne, Sarasvati, '96. S.F.

*Gealum*  
*Inis Rath*

# Isolated Stanzas 1

1

What, Madhu listening to Śrīla Prabhupāda  
in the bathroom? How come he's  
so spiritual?  
Who's his spiritual master anyway?

2

Walk in Geaglum  
down lanes marked "No Fishing"  
(a smiling picture of a fish) in  
silence, just *japa*,  
three rounds.

3

The blooming hawthorn,  
clover, buttercups—  
Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma—  
dandelions gone.

4

The isle of Inis Rath—  
where Rādhā-Govinda live.

# Repetition

Starting off a new diary and after two  
pages I stall again. It's  
going to have to be my life.  
Is it interesting? Is it art? Religion?

Walking the three-quarter-mile circle through the  
forest while sun rises on horizon.  
I'll meet no one but birds in trees and  
purple and yellow flowers,  
plenty of wild grass this June day.

I worried a diary would be  
too much the same, but I talk  
through the pain of sameness.  
Repetition is inescapable:  
Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare.

# After The Film, Returning To Myself

After a half hour watching “Thérèse”  
we decided to stop. Looked at my watch, as  
familiar as my body, domestic  
like that, and returned from the  
film.

Get away from that movie—those images—  
and move into who you are pounding with  
hammer on stone,  
writing on writing  
at midnight, answering questions  
and a little more.

Get away from that film but  
remember Thérèse’s Little Way.  
When she wanted to enter the convent  
at 14 the prelate warned, “It entails  
much suffering.”  
“Not love?” she asked.

Footprint of my shoe on this page where  
I walked this morning. Many trees in white  
blossom in this first week in June,  
motorboats cruising.  
“Thank you, Jesus,” she wrote in her  
blood when her prayer saved the sinner.

# I'm Here Sunday Afternoon

My poems arise, walk out,  
roll over, play dead like the ox at Geaglum  
who doesn't want to pull.  
They are the man threatening suit.  
He wants us to pay for crop damage  
because "our" deer ate his corn. That's my poem—  
his sharp tongue.

My poem is fear of  
Protestant invaders or  
IRA or motorboaters,  
police or oarsmen, someone  
after my wallet.  
I'm guilty of misunderstanding and judging  
people on poor information. I'd  
like to promise (if it's not too hard) to put that  
in my poem.

My poem's Kṛṣṇa conscious—  
ecstatic *mṛdāṅga*, Bhaktivinoda  
Ṭhākura, Haridāsa Ṭhākura, Sanātana Gosvāmi—  
the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*.  
There's no need of my poems,

but I'm here on a Sunday  
afternoon writing across the lake  
from Rādhā-Govinda's temple  
and ready to rest to awake to  
enter *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*  
at midnight.

# Picking Flowers

As I pulled a branch  
of white blossoms to bring home to Prabhupāda,  
the thorns of a lower bush grabbed me.  
“Whoa!” I meant no harm.  
I thought the woods  
could spare a few—they’ve got so many—  
brief white flowers. From the field I  
took buttercups while rain  
tinkled in puddles.

# Laps With A Hare Kṛṣṇa Theme

Trees I didn't notice. Empty  
trailers. No boats in sight.  
Hare Kṛṣṇa is so different. No one knows  
about it except us theists and we  
don't know much either.

Beyond me it's got  
to be.  
Here in  
this wearied soul is a tiny spark in the  
walking body.

One more lap: orange sweat-pants,  
stiff walking boots, stopping to exercise,  
grunt and sigh and go on  
chanting, fingering the beads, cool morning.

# The Voice

“You will live to chant God’s names another day,” said a voice. Whose?  
The imaginary one who speaks in plays.  
He said, “You will chant better tomorrow.”

Who are you? Are you the Spirit?  
He said something else:  
“You are a novice  
on probation.”  
I had heard that somewhere, those words  
from Prabhupāda’s purport.  
Does that make him less than spirit?

He added, “You will rise at midnight, light a lamp, do your usual thing.”  
I thought to ask how long I would live. Will I continue to write? Am I pleasing guru?  
Is it permissible for me to know?  
Then the voice started talking about an ex-Hare Kṛṣṇa guru and some other stuff. I  
turned off the sound.  
He persisted. I went outside and caught the strong breeze on my face.  
I’m not young anymore.

# Film Speeds

1

How the mind goes back.  
I'm entering the Allston storefront, 1967,  
chanting "Hare Kṛṣṇa! Haribol!"  
Film speeds: married,  
unmarried (both Swami's doing). He could  
do and undo our lives like that. We were meant  
to serve his movement. I'm feeling that same fear  
of going to Boston, of being there,  
but I'll never desert  
my duty.

2

Leaves all green—June,  
I pray not to die so  
unresolved. I don't want to be  
famous but with dirt  
in the heart. I want to come clean by chanting.

3

Film speeds:  
on GBC, off GBC,  
doing the Charlie Chaplin step  
up the Māyāpur stairs typing 600 words a minute,  
books piled around me like snow in drifts.

Endless rounds, endless minor deviations,  
endless embarrassment.  
I don't want to see all that. Show me the parts  
where I'm with him again.

4

Or show me a film of the soul with his God.  
Release me from the burden of  
exhaustion and pretended perfection and . . .  
Oh, stop this. Will you finally  
admit that you want to  
do your thing without being degraded?  
Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, lead kindly light.

# Hearing From Sādhus

It's never enough to grasp  
what Czeslaw Milosz does returning to the city  
of his youth and feeling inside him the men and  
women who were there with him and now gone.  
He wrote these beautiful lines:  
"If we ever accede to enlightenment,  
he thought, it is in one compassionate moment  
when what separated them from me vanishes  
and a shower of drops from a bunch of lilacs  
pours on my face, and hers, and his, at the same time."

It's not enough. They die—  
even the trees, the things we love and feel would  
be pure if no one else looked at them.  
It doesn't help to hear him except in a temporary way  
when it reminds me that there is an eternal to be gained  
and if we fail,  
then what use in recapturing  
a June day from youth and  
to weep again in a meadow?

Better to hear from *sādhus*  
and to achieve the mercy of Kṛṣṇa  
who appears in His names. That's what I  
say this fine morning in

Gealum, in June, in the rain,  
after having placed a  
branch of white blossoms on  
the altar.

# Alone In A House

I'm alone in a house with friends  
not far away. If something really went wrong I  
could plug in the phone and call for help.  
A young man would get up from  
his bunk and run down to the boat,  
row across—maybe too late.  
What happened?  
Strangled by a bad dream or  
a non-Vaiṣṇava poem.

# Sunny 5 P.M.

Van Gogh said  
he had a fire in his heart but no one  
wanted to warm themselves by it, but God  
would make things come out all right.

Sun going down over this strip of  
mainland. I rest my gross body while subtle  
body climbs mountains and  
falls back and I pray for the day  
when I will be more interested in  
serving Him than in serving my senses.

# My Poems Are Walking

My poems are yours if you want them.  
That bird sang like a parrot or a human  
in the gnarled tree as I walked  
past houses where no one lives.

My poems are influenced by everything—birds and  
*śāstra* recently read—  
the truth of Kṛṣṇa, sages,  
Vedānta *darśana*—  
but not by *paśandis*.

My poems are influenced by theory—the protection  
of cows I never milk,  
the land I don't cultivate. My actual  
experience is with ink and mind and this one body and  
friends and *mūrti* of  
Prabhupāda and loving disciples  
and trying to write free from pretense.

# Ācārya

On the cover of *Ācārya*, Śeṣa Prabhu chose  
the photo that Guru dāsa took, '67 in S.F.  
Prabhupāda is heavy, guru,  
bead bag in hand,  
*Bhāgavatams* stacked,  
the first formal photo of our spiritual master.  
His Godbrothers  
always found fault with him,  
even in his photo.

I am a worshiping disciple,  
and I serve as I did then.

Allen Ginsberg told Prabhupāda,  
“I am slowly gaining all these qualities  
except for sanity.”  
Prabhupāda: “That’s all right,  
you can be crazy for Kṛṣṇa.”

# Almost-Passed-Out Locomotive

Almost passed out on  
forced march, my head feels  
queer. Feel tired, could lie down  
without a poem and maybe  
that will make me better,  
better . . .  
sleep . . .

Once a locomotive is off  
the track it's not so easy  
to get it back on but I did it,  
in a dream, pushed it off  
my chest so I could eat  
old pancakes to my fill  
but decided not to because in  
waking life I hadn't eaten  
breakfast yet and should wait.

Prabhupāda, I'm so far into  
this (writing free)  
that tedious were as returning—  
I mean to say returning were as tedious  
as to go o'er.

The Franklin Park Zoo is where  
Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees first chanted  
in Boston.

My neck hurts stiff and a  
headache isn't far  
but I'll be all right. Just got to  
chant better.

Prayed

“O help me”

(make this up)—I prayed “help  
me”

and felt better and resolved to  
pray better and read more, no nonsense and  
listen to tapes  
go back to Godhead.

# What Do You Want For Breakfast?

I was thinking  
of saying, before leaving the house, “Could I  
have yogurt on fruit for breakfast?”  
Prabhupāda would do that, call  
Pālikā dāsī into his room in Māyāpur  
and say what he’d like for lunch.  
“He said he wants *śukta*. Do we have *karela*?”

I’m different.  
I used to kick a can in the gutter  
and talk dirt with Phil Backoff.  
It’s hard to be  
a normal Vedic village guru and say what  
you’d like for breakfast without thinking  
you’re on a trip.

# Preacher

KC is the life of  
chastity  
celibacy  
transcendental knowledge.  
It's all in the books, if we read them.  
It comes through us  
with faith.  
It could light up a dark world,  
make peace of a storm,  
except the people (us)  
don't want it enough.

I'm trying to give up pretense.  
I'd like to be something, a *bhakta*,  
but I'm a poor substitute.  
I play this down and say to you  
anyway that Kṛṣṇa is God,  
is in everything, and it's  
better to specify for ourselves  
what that means and drop the excesses  
be His man (or woman), to  
speak what He does, to chant.

# Kṛṣṇa In Every Line

Neck ache, eye ache, lie down on  
mattress and sleep, dream—all in  
Kṛṣṇa's time.

He's above it all.  
In Vṛndāvana their love is not  
because Kṛṣṇa is God.  
They love Him for Himself.

Prabhupāda said, "These are not stories.  
A fly called *diwali*  
lives only one night. If we told that  
insect, 'There's a human being who lives  
a 100 years' he wouldn't believe.  
You kill a million ants or people with an atom bomb  
and there's a creature who kills you  
in the same way.'  
'Time I am,' Kṛṣṇa says."

When our master talked to others he  
said to live with the devotees,  
chant to be with God,  
and stop murdering others.  
Start with that.

# You May Demand Much More

It's 7 P.M. I'm calm and slow as I  
go about my work. Peacefully  
I accomplish something, then move into  
the next room where Śrīla Prabhupāda on altar  
is illuminated by tea-lights  
shining.

And I chant  
the mantra that's beyond me.

Prabhupāda, may I put you to rest?  
I'll wrap you in blankets  
and then ask your forgiveness,  
and your permission to sleep.  
I have to admit  
I like to sleep without  
you pressing the intercom bell, calling  
me to stay up until 11 P.M. to massage you.  
I need my space, I say, and I nod at  
my lack of surrender  
from my old man's niche.  
I'm satisfied, but I realize that you  
may demand much more.

# Need A Fix

It's like a fix you keep needing  
several times a day—  
to touch a purport quick.

I need to see Cc.—  
at least hear something. Come on, tell  
me something, will you?

In Geneva Prabhupāda told a  
*hatha-yoga* teacher  
*bhakti* is best.  
Husk without paddy is useless. Take  
Kṛṣṇa directly from hearing and  
serving, chant. I can't remember exactly.  
I need a fix of  
precise words.

# Reminder To Be More Spiritual In Poems

I ought to make  
non-mundane poems. I'm  
not among the solitary monks  
who pray all the time in  
Christian vigil or Gauḍiya *japa*  
—100 rounds a day at  
*kuṭīr* or *kunḍa*, Vṛndāvana.  
I'm not on the GBC  
or any committee.  
Then where do I fit in?  
Am I an artist?  
A psychologist?  
A clown?  
Poet-taster?

I just don't have a taste  
for so much stuff.  
I abhor hamburgers and all  
meat and cigarettes. Abwhore  
word play. Deer shriek at me  
when I walk by.

The thing is, I'm not strong.  
I'm nearly 57 years old.

I want to practice and ponder  
favorite scriptures. Tune into  
*śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ-smaraṇam.*

Thinking that, then and there I wrote on  
two index cards  
verses 9.1 and 9.2 and  
looked at them, recalled them,  
chanted them from Dublin to  
Fermanagh—recited them  
until memorized.

# Clearing The Funk

I don't judge or condemn but put far  
from me jazz. You see I don't want  
to come back again.

They all admit it's blues they die  
and are sad, outraged and all—make  
music out of it—but still  
die losing.

I want out. I want to dance  
with Lord Caitanya at Puri,  
and see Him at Gambhirā.

Will I become finally eligible to hear of  
*parakiya-rasa* and be free forever of  
its perverted reflection in this  
world?

Won't be long before I'm dead.

So *japa* before candles  
and Prabhupāda and writing on  
*Bhāgavatam* themes—the  
life I want, the niche, that which  
will make me eligible  
for the kingdom of God,  
and preaching.

I know it's not easy.

I'm just clearing the funk.

# In Search Of Kṛṣṇa

Options closing in. Can't pray. Could  
crank out another round. No  
TV, of course, to zone out in front of. I have to  
sit and wait and wait some more  
for clarity. What does Kṛṣṇa want?  
How can I serve Kṛṣṇa best?  
What does He want from me?  
What can I actually do?

My ears strain to hear the van return and to  
learn what Madhu was able to do.  
He's no superman against the  
Irish government, but he is persistent.  
I want to get the van on the road and write  
again the adventures  
of my inner search.

Prabhupāda sometimes mocked searchers.  
"Kṛṣṇa is canvassing, 'I am God,'  
so what is your research?"  
In Vraja they don't care whether  
Kṛṣṇa is God but to love Him.  
I'm searching  
alone in this house,  
rising in the night to follow a fresh trail  
of ink and blood and sweat and mind.

# Truth And Lies

Bought a copper *kalasa* with 1,008  
waters for pouring on my Prabhupāda  
on his birthday.

“Only copper, Mahārāja?”

The water is the main thing and not even  
that but the feeling I want to give him a  
treat on his birthday  
which I plan to spend in Belfast.

I am helpless  
to talk of what’s happening, so I propose  
to tell lies:

The ferry boat went to heaven,  
mint tea floated us in a cup.

Madhu broke his fast with *laddus*.

We’re okay and sincere, and  
arrive in England to face the troops.

We go on *harināma* in Piccadilly and

I fight off football hooligans  
with a sword and plastic shield.

Hare Kṛṣṇa resounds in my ears.

I’m a quiet hit speaker in  
the morning lecture at Bhaktivedanta Manor  
speaking Cc. regarding the scriptures of  
*yāvanas*.

Truths and lies:  
traverse the water to England—  
it was a miracle  
of God speaking to us directly  
in our hearts or  
how could we exist even  
for a minute?

## Isolated Stanzas 2

1

I was alone but all day interruptions and I  
heard we had to move tomorrow but  
now I hear it's not true.  
We can stay in this house all day tomorrow.  
I feel the day was salvaged by my  
reading of Lord Caitanya's dancing at Ratha-yātrā.  
He jumped high and allowed  
the king to see Him expand into seven  
*sankirtana* parties, to see Lord Jagannātha  
enjoy His own dancing:  
Caitanya and Jagannātha are one.

2

Day coming to end,  
heat beginning to cool.  
It will probably rain.

# Starting With Smoke Alarm

Smoke alarm went off and there's no stopping  
the noise. I'm writing this to  
seem composed and calm.

Greener this June, but it's all  
void in a sense. Ah, Madhu has it.  
The noise has stopped.

Manu read a diary I wrote four weeks  
last year and said it was best in the  
beginning when my writing was close  
to the rain-falling clouds catching  
pure and meditative before the world  
started grabbing me up with the  
van sale, the mail, and other concerns.

Of course, I can't keep that world out.  
The smoke alarm comes piercing  
and some say it's better to struggle to keep alive  
and not be "called and bespoken."  
A religious writer has to struggle to make his  
writing true, turning from lust and false attraction.

Prabhupāda's 1971 Ratha-yātrā  
speech (I heard it today): "God is everywhere.  
See Him with love."

# Making Up Lines

There's a daily morning program in ISKCON  
temples but you can be a devotee even  
if you don't live there  
provided you have your own program  
at home—in your flat, your brownstone, your row house,  
tepee or van.

I'm usually in temples  
but sometimes we travel and  
preach, stop in state parks after late-night *kirtanas*. We  
convert campers and distribute  
*prasādam* at Rainbow gatherings—  
lecturing and singing until we are hoarse—  
then get up early the next morning.  
We rush back to the temples  
where my writing day starts  
around 10 A.M. and lasts only fifteen minutes  
before I fall asleep. Then the mail  
starts chugging in on  
silky paper.  
I write in between  
takes, in between  
lines, before  
getting ready.

# Only When I Chant

Diary's always true to you so be  
true to it. Make diary say, "I've  
been taking it easy. I will drive hard  
to Dublin and back over the military  
border."

Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, only when I hear  
my master am I devotee, only when  
I write am I writer, only when I  
chant am I chanter  
(above envy).

Kṛṣṇa—the name means  
nothing to me  
if not love of God,  
Swami says.

# Prologue To “Back Of The Van”

He pulled out in the shiny white  
Ford Econoline, red lights flashing to  
try again in Dublin.  
We’re still driving with Pennsylvania plates.

“Good luck,” I said. “Will you be  
back tonight?” “Maybe,” he says. That means if  
he succeeds.

I’m getting ready to start a  
“Back of the Van” series of prose and poems.  
Devotees look inside—“You  
must be claustrophobic in there.” They would prefer  
a motor trailer for me, one that goes 10 miles  
per gallon, 30 miles per hour. No thanks.  
I like to cruise at 80 mph through France and into  
Germany, on to Italy while I sleep.  
Those days are ahead of us we hope  
if he gets it registered with  
Irish plates and a tax sticker.  
Then we’ll be in business and  
I can write my Kṛṣṇa conscious odes.

# Boredom

I keep looking at my watch.  
This is so different from  
the real thing. The wind  
is up, the lake full of ripples.  
Devotees starting in the rowboat seemed  
in danger, but I'm sure they know  
what they can do. Slowly I saw them  
progress over the waves.  
My heart kept beating—  
let go, let go!  
Your quiet self.

# Stanzas At Inis Rath

No bacon and eggs.  
No TV, no wife-beating father or  
nasty kids or newspapers or  
even job to go to, no school,  
no masturbation (I'm no  
pimpily lout), no bad times.  
I'm fortunate.

One ought to express gratitude  
by preaching—"Hey, you slobs,  
take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness by reading this book  
or hear the holy name or at least  
in your ignorance take a piece of *prasādam*."

I look around at this Hare Kṛṣṇa island  
and wonder, "Why maintain it?"  
Do I need to create a new reason  
for this long-ago scheme to  
exist? It was meant to be a retreat center  
for city people. Now it's a white elephant, although  
it still has potential with its beautiful forest paths,  
old house, worship of Rādhā-Govinda, the  
center. Nothing hopeless.

# Flowers And An Explanation

Walking back to house seeing blooming  
hawthorns, stooping to pick little purple  
clovers and yellow buttercups, arranging them  
and then tiptoeing over  
alone, silent,  
to Prabhupāda. I put the flowers  
near him, Jagannātha, and  
Lord Caitanya—all in rows  
with stems pointed, the hawthorn  
on its branch. Then I bow down and out of  
the room.

Why cruelty in the world if God is  
good? I heard a poet wrangle over that.  
I know the answer: God is good but  
you want to enjoy apart from Him  
so He gives you the chance and  
by further desire a soul falls into a cat  
body or becomes a mouse and everyone suffers.  
Give up the vain pursuit and  
serve God.  
You can be restored.  
I assert that in my poems.

# Life

Was just about to begin this when  
I heard the engine of Madhu's  
white Ford van pull up  
with the latest news  
(probably not good)  
about how he didn't get the van  
registered—yet. He'll be  
interrupting this poem,  
but I'll want to know.

Sign on cardboard:  
“Madhu, look in oven”—  
*halavā* and bread for his lunch  
but he's already on the phone  
not caring to eat, in a flurry to  
push those bureaucrats  
to give us the right  
to drive where we want,  
to write without interruption.  
That's life: the noise, the  
bureaucracy, them entering my poem, the  
large airplane somewhere up there.

# Devotees

“I’m sick of being just a mother and wife.  
I’m in a KC crisis. I don’t  
know who I am or if I like KC  
or if I have faith in chanting and hearing.  
I’ve acted all these years from external  
pressure but who am I? What is my  
relationship with you and Kṛṣṇa?”

I advised her to find her own interest  
and Kṛṣṇa conscious love apart from  
her being a mother,  
a wife, like a lady I know who loves  
gardens.

We have perfect teachings and should teach  
them. Her twelve-year-old son likes to write  
stories but says kids don’t want  
philosophy in a tale. I replied,  
“Even Pinocchio  
has a moral and it’s a good tale.”  
He says he likes to write because  
he gets lost in imagination and hours go  
by. Forgets he’s in *gurukula*  
under everyone’s thumb.

# Disciples' Meeting Ahead

I'll address them in the afternoon  
and thank them for allowing me  
to live alone two weeks and see them only  
from a distance in their rowboats  
while I wrote.

What did I write? I don't know.

I'll find out later.

It would be embarrassing to  
have nothing to say, as if  
I'm an ordinary guy taking a  
break from his desk,  
pretending  
to be the perfect  
direct representative.

Thank you. As for their services,

I wish them well. At least we'll

read *sāstra* together. Why not?

Or I'll field their questions.

Love them?

That's the thought that started my diary last week:

Do I love and care for them? If so,

how?

Dear disciples, I hope you  
like to live on this lake-island  
and struggle with the inconveniences.  
I hope you see Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā  
in the *arcā*, and I hope you are satisfied.

# After The Disciples' Meeting

It would take a million words  
and I couldn't convey  
guru/ disciple meaning.

Too much action I can't contain.  
Sawed-off buttercups,  
azaleas, rhododendrons on a string.  
I spoke *Bhāgavatam*  
and thanked them as I said I would,  
my words like crumbs of a *laddu*.

In the group I saw 12-year-old Mādhava,  
*gurukula* student from Vṛndāvana. He's on  
vacation because it's intolerably hot  
there now. He swims in Lough Erne.  
I saw him from my window.

Smṛti, young-faced, but gray-haired—  
we all work too much.

Questions?

“We have come  
together at Inis Rath,” he said, “and we  
are your disciples. How can we gel?”  
“Just work together and it will  
come.”

## Sighting “Our” Deer

I saw the small herd of eight.  
No horns, narrow heads, leaping up and  
over the weeds in Geaglum. Our  
infamous deer herd begun years ago by  
Hare Kṛṣṇa island people, they now run loose  
on several islands. The farmer wants  
recompense  
because they eat his crops.

I saw them running,  
heard their hooves thud  
and immediately hoped to see more.  
Please, Lord, I thank You for this  
morning’s writing.

Like the ravaging deer who  
hop over a fence and eat  
a neighbor’s crops,  
I want to leap over the weeds  
and into the harvest  
of good writing.

# Last Poem On Geaglum

Kṛṣṇa teaches but I keep forgetting:  
No remedy but to turn and hear  
some more: Lord Nṛsimha killed  
the demon who would not tolerate even  
his own 5-year-old son's God consciousness.  
Prahāda's only fault,  
Jesus' only fault.  
The world is so cruel.

Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke this on May 27, 1972 and  
that day gave out *sannyāsa* to four  
of us.

Please, Lord, give us courage and clarity.  
The mail may come,  
I may fall asleep over the best book,  
life may change,  
but may our vows protect us.



*Wicklow*

# In A Garden House

The garden outside this little house,  
the nest the rooks have built in the outer rim  
of the chimney, the noise when the parent birds  
return, cheeping and beating wings—  
I hear it all from this little room.

Alone today while Madhu scours Dublin on  
business with the justice department.  
By chance he may meet an old friend on the street  
while I stay home and think of things to  
write, some silly, like comparing myself to  
a scarab beetle who represents immortality or  
walking in that garden on pebbles and  
thinking that I may not be able once  
again to give shape to what I'm trying to say.

Uddhava built a house for himself,  
a getaway from wife and kids.  
I used it too, to get away  
from my too-close childish  
thoughts and feelings. Out there you  
see differently, have more hope.

## Wicklow Walk, July

I had the walk alone  
with pines and rushes and overcrowding of  
weeds with white spit and  
bursting pods, some dead  
from spring, old berries, new flowers now  
crowding one another out. The milkweeds  
are flat-topped,  
the clover red and buttercups  
along the narrow road built  
when Ireland was still a colony.

Walk and chant.  
I make this list but don't see  
much. Just pushing counter  
beads every eight or ten minutes,  
a hopeless case,  
sold out to Kṛṣṇa but  
doomed to no juice  
no deer  
no sheep  
no love  
and to return on time.

# Rook

Listen, rook, you and me gotta share  
this house, you with  
your kids (must be growing up soon. Will  
you fly away when they're grown?)  
and me with my writing *yajña*,  
my Pāda-yātrā.

Rook, listen,  
do you get headaches or  
lose your teeth or lose sleep over  
problems? Your life is like what?  
You fly away when you see me,  
dark menacing bird,  
yet you cry your rook cry.

Rook, you can't hear *śāstra*.  
That makes me better 'n you! Kṛṣṇa is  
your God and mine  
but you don't know it,  
not in love.  
But I don't either.  
Maybe you're better,  
you crook.  
O rook, you have no  
problem doing  
what comes naturally.

# Hare Kṛṣṇa People

I walk up the road where pines  
close in. I don't  
think of women, at least not seriously.  
I'm a Kṛṣṇa conscious monk.  
They call them "eunuchs for God"  
in Christianity.  
This is Hare Kṛṣṇa,  
it's different.  
We can get married but  
wear saffron and you're a monk.

How to explain this to those who don't  
know what I mean?  
How to explain why we wear robes and  
play drums  
on the street? "Oh yes," said the Swami,  
"chant God's names."

Walking down the pine-closed road  
chanting rounds ten and eleven.  
Back to house,  
the garden, the  
white bench under the vines—  
and chant  
you Hare Kṛṣṇa person.

# One Day After Solstice

Sun shining above the slope,  
bright as shining butter at 5 A.M.  
I still remember—  
that man raised his hand (in  
Philadelphia) and said, “Why do you all  
chant so fast on your beads?” It seems  
we’re just trying to get our rounds done.

# Chanting Sheep

Simple souls chant.  
Clouds provide background.  
The sound dissipates quickly  
as rooks cry for their  
babies and lambs push  
against their mothers,  
urging them to stand so they  
can nurse.  
They hear me walk by, look at my  
metal-tipped cane, the beads,  
like idiots.  
They have chosen something else.

# Dija Hear?

1

The cows  
came close around the house. One  
fat black Kerry with small udders  
stepped onto the cement, sniffed the bicycle but  
moved on to inspect the grass.

2

Dija hear? I have to leave this house  
here in Wicklow, go down to Dublin to  
identify myself as the owner of a van, show  
that I'm the same head and sweatshirt and eyeglasses  
as in my passport photo: Stephen  
Guarino from New York. That's me.  
Now give us the van.

*Dublin*

# Sheltered

I'm not a Dublin street  
chronicler. While I am here our kind host  
can't use his computer.  
But when I went out for an hour and  
returned, the blue screen was on and  
read, "Lord Nityānanda . . . Lord  
Nityānanda."

This is Dublin for me. James Joyce with patch  
over eye and old-time fedora.  
Summertime for tourists.  
Early this morning we saw a pre-adolescent  
boy roller-skating down a main street.  
Lots of building construction, a huge crane  
above city. Old city, modern sex on billboards.

U.S. Coast Guard sailboat moored  
at the River Liffey. Poor artists painting chalk portraits  
on sidewalks. Saint Vincent DePaul's  
"Buy a Bonnet Day."  
I can't  
help but read the signs:  
Bleeding Horse,  
Crooked Elbow,  
Oscar Wilde,

Sex Pistols,  
The Guyz, The Aces,  
Reggae!

Walk early to the preaching center  
and then straight back here.  
Śyārna dāsa said we can walk  
through St. Stephen's Green at 9 A.M. but later  
"it's even worse than the streets."

# Waiting For Mail

Waiting for mail pack so I can spill  
three weeks' worth onto the floor, all  
addressed to Satsvarūpa Goswami,  
“Dear Guru Mahārāja.”

Our host just came in and saw Diana  
Di Prima's poems on the floor next to  
Thérèse of Lisieux. Should I  
hide that I'm a poet who pulls syntax ideas  
and then springs into action for Kṛṣṇa?

Mail, where are you?  
Dublin thump thump white rock  
music derived from black soul pounded  
from room above but it's quiet now.  
Śrīla Prabhupāda *mūrti* and I replaced  
our host in his room of computer wares.  
Gone is the peace and privacy  
of Geaglun and Lough Erne  
but preaching is in Dublin.

# Tyger! Tyger! Burning Bright

Śyāmānanda said he and his brother tried  
to define a poem but couldn't.  
Before he became a devotee he rented  
a bed-sit and took books in there, *Bhāg.*  
*Gītā*, *Īśopaniṣad*, William Blake,  
Joyce's *Portrait* and Socrates.  
He liked it when we went together  
into a Dublin bookstore.  
That was two countries ago.

In Belgium to give a seminar.  
Cold July, blowy gray wet.  
At 2 A.M. full moon behind clouds. I  
walked outside and chanted, cracked on a  
snail shell. Sorry. He'll crack on me in my next life  
but Kṛṣṇa will save me.  
Śyāmānanda  
came out of the bed-sit and decided  
to be a devotee of Kṛṣṇa not  
Socrates or Blake but he  
still likes "The Tyger"  
and wishes I could write  
such a poem.

# Gītā-nāgarī: A Series

Arrived at Gītā-nāgari at the home of Gītā-nāgari dāsa. I hope to write poems here. It's a bold assertion, I know, but it can be done, even though I am typing on a portable typewriter with elite print. To write poems, I have to be willing to take what comes and not claim every word is immortal. Sing your song.

I *preach* because I'm supposed to, and I choose profound subjects like fear of death. But a poem is supposed to be inherently musical, as dramatic as life itself, like birds landing at a bird feeder in cold weather. It should tell what it's actually like. A poem shouldn't figure it all out exactly. It should be honest and true, as deep as its author, Kṛṣṇa conscious, not posed, but a dance.

That's why loping along in my head with  
Thelonius Monk's beat isn't such a bad  
idea, as long as I don't think I'm a blues  
musician or brilliant eccentric made  
of rhythm (dirty or clean). I'm  
a splintery-headed monk who  
still thinks of women sometimes.  
Looked into Merton's biography and saw how he  
messed around with a nurse. Not  
"messed around"—that's not fair—  
but fell in love like a fool, poor guy.  
He thought she understood him as  
no one ever did  
except God. What the heck.  
As long as it doesn't happen to me.  
Deepy deepy deep.

Deepy deepy deep—  
man, you still on that?  
What comes my way, the latest Aindra *kīrtana*  
and the tough green *capātīs* she made for lunch,

and stuff I like, raspberry jam  
delivered by Turiya with shaking hands.  
I left Śrīla Prabhupāda in the middle of  
a massage to receive the gift.

Poems should evoke for the readers  
and form a pact with them to share  
the best. Readers catch up  
and sometimes race ahead,  
then wait for me (at least some of them).  
It is for them that I write,  
not the stodgy ex-bullets who say,  
“What the hell you mean by  
‘ex-bullets’? And what’s a ‘deepy deep’ anyway?”  
Oh dear . . .

Reddish orange rim on top of tree-topped horizon.  
Burnt blue, orange, close to the night of a beautiful time of  
winter after a lovely sunny day.

Quiet in this house. I spoke to Madhu about Merton’s  
love and Madhu said he’s glad I’m afraid of it. Women  
after men with power. Behind every great man there is a  
greater woman and all that. Orange reddish rim fading  
already into deepest indigo blue, spidering the tree  
branches. I was told there would be a meteor shower these  
last two nights, but I don’t think I’ll watch for it tonight—  
the peak will already have passed—but it captures my  
imagination, the spectacular shower of stars falling down  
all over the earth while we are up praying Hare Kṛṣṇa. I  
know that holds a key: I *haven’t* prayed my mantras, and  
that’s why I’m left with only a thin admittance, “I couldn’t  
do it, didn’t do it.” A waterbug flitting over the surface.

Feeling poets, we wander over stubbled earth,  
passing cows and oxen brown and awkward.  
I don't know if  
they're suffering from cold or what—  
they say a new man is taking care of them well—  
but it is cold and they huddle together near  
the outdoor shelter, a roof but no walls, floor of  
dark cold earth. A bale of hay a day.  
They seem to be prisoners even on this free  
*bhakta* farm,  
imprisoned by their bodies, acting out karma.  
We call them "retired", which means more or less useless,  
and it is our good will (and duty) not to kill them.  
Let the useless live on. The cows may feel that.  
We might too, but in the human body  
the chances to enjoy are multiplied. We have the  
chance to eat cream, Cream of Wheat,  
to dangle our toes and keep warm under blankets  
read newspapers, read *Bhāgavatam* and  
hold ceremonies for gurus and  
be angry or mean to others.  
A cow can do some of those things  
but not in such exquisite ways. We have the chance  
to worship Kṛṣṇa, Govinda, the protector of cows.

But who gets the chance to be honest,  
plain, loved, protected,  
to know Govinda as his best friend?

A pure devotee's eyes are anointed with *prema*,  
pure soul. The rest of us are retired cows,  
plowing through days,  
dazed like cattle, living mere duty.

Chagall had a vision of life as an artist. His cows often float in the sky and his snow-soaked streets are lined with peasant houses. He painted the night, lovers and flowers, Jews and images of war. I like to think about art, but my vision—what is it? It's just as personal and subjective as Chagall's. Should that worry me?

It's a question with implications, depending on how you answer it. When I die, will I still be only half out? I mean, not settled in myself as to my exact position in an institution that is moving forward, not sure I want all the consequences of my choices? Life is full of fine tuning and negotiation. That's the way it is.

# My Vision

Secretaries fly in the window with typing,  
someone cooks lunch, I lie on my  
back in an attic room to watch clouds move  
quickly across a blue sky,  
waiting to lecture.

No Chagall cows here, nor fiddlers,  
just a next book and a withering face  
while ISKCON controversies rage and finally  
swirl down the drain.  
We're an unfurling flag. I can't see  
everything once and for all.

Vision: put aside all else  
not Kṛṣṇa conscious  
and wait for *śuddha-*  
*sattva*, or even a millidrop  
of faith to descend. I am ready, Lord.  
A frozen field in Gitā-nāgari,  
me a listening post for others,  
I gather in and then let go.

Ask for prayer, then work with a modicum of determination: "I will go on practicing no matter what comes." I'll count the names round by round, blessed one, trying

two, pacing three, albeit four, phony-me five—absolute names all—names-are-names six, Kṛṣṇa in seven, hope in eight, the-day-may-come nine, push-the-counter-beads ten, and between each round bow down in candle light. Prabhupāda is here.

O my Lord, this eleventh round is not so good—inattentive. It's not easy to love for one who has misused his affections and has seen too much lust and triviality and lost dreams. I don't mean just in this body, but I'm referring to this soul, that essence of me unknown to others. I am here right now in light and consciousness, eternal *ātmā*. My history stretches back to eternity. So subtle, this truth, but it's as plain as the nose on your face.

Oh, that I can become a simple man,  
a scholar of *nāma*  
a not-seeking-fame poet,  
a sane fellow, mad only for more *japa*  
because there his friend Kṛṣṇa is  
present, he can't keep away  
from His scent and  
sweetness that drives him  
mad. Only one drop to  
drown in.  
Oh, please!

My words are make-show, I know, but there's a real world out there of spiritual emotion which Kṛṣṇa awards to His dearest. It takes humility to see it. Emotions or no, we can't forget who we are in this lifetime, but chant, praying for pure identity, formed by the mercy of Prabhupāda.

The creek water looks glass-like, a reflector of light-gray sky and almost-black shadows of upside down trees. These are perceptions on a shimmery surface. Below that I

know that Kṛṣṇa personally takes care of His friends. “Don’t be afraid,” He tells them. “I am personally going to search for your calves.”

Baladeva replaces light bulbs, gives us more soap and for seven days here crayons and paper as if I am another Vincent Van Gogh or some tortuous genius. I’m just a *bābāji*, an adolescent finding fault with his own self. You realize I gouge out these bad words so an angel of mercy can come through like a snow queen, a truck that throws salt on the roads to protect us from slipping, a hero of sorts, an eagle, an owl sweeping down on the mice, like Prabhupāda come to save us. Prabhupāda, you told people outside your room at Misra’s ashram that they could come in. I’ll remember that.

Madhu said to me, “It must be hard for you to have so many disciples here.” He means I cannot be myself. I have to respond to their concept of the spiritual master. They take pictures of my sagging face and video my *kīrtanas*, but often don’t write. I face them all. That’s all right. That’s the way it is as the world spins around.

Better than the news. I heard that Newt Gingrich and Bill Clinton killed some ducks to prove, they say, that Clinton is All Right and that hunters may vote for him in the election.

Or the mail. A strange letter arrived from a devotee who said she had worked hard at her service, but others advised that she find something else to do. She wrote of her struggles

and concluded by saying, “The bottom line is that my son is a thief.” She said that because she was feeling so low, she read *Oliver Twist* and her spirits revived. *Oliver Twist suffered*. Dickens revealed to her the suffering of material society and made her feel grateful to be practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I don’t mock her, or at least I shouldn’t. She is sincere and I am too. I write this sincerely.

Tonight we’ll have *kīrtana*—

Rādhā-Dāmodara and 26 Second Avenue,  
me assuming my 26-Second-Avenue-  
in-1966 pose, rocking  
back and forth. It is . . . true  
to those days. The harsh  
scrape of Swamiji’s voice on tape,  
the beat and thump of his drum as we  
slip a little  
from his rhythm but  
regain it in the chorus.

Dāmodara’s golden flute, His *sakhis* on either  
side. Hare Kṛṣṇa!

There is no joy in Mudville, but here  
O Govinda, O Dāmodara  
the trips we took in ’66.

We swooned and swayed and rocked for half an  
hour and forgot Newt and Bill and Miles  
and Monk

and Garber Brothers’ clothing store and mom.

The Swami  
led us,  
we gave him  
our hearts  
and made our  
bones happy.

Please, Dāmodara, place devotion for that Swami in my heart more and more. Let me please him. Let me read his books and delight in them. Let me die in that state.

Van Gogh said, “Misery is eternal,” and it was true until the Swami opened our hearts and brought us into the *kīrtana*. The wind is up and moaning on this warm January night. “Warm” at Gitā-nāgarī means mud, and I went out along the back road, sloshing through the truck ruts.

Musical blues ran through my mind: “Speakin’ of bad luck and trouble,/ well, you know I’ve had my share . . . ”

Kṛṣṇa, You assure me, “Don’t be afraid!

Don’t be afraid!

I will personally search for your calves.”

Causeless mercy.

If we want to know Him

and to please Him an

excellent start is to hear

His pastimes and to chant His

holy names.

The fact that I’m imperfect, a show-off,

look at women,

afraid of thieves in the night, or

marauders, afraid of re-birth,

afraid to read, “of four miseries,

fear is most

prominent”—that

doesn’t matter so much. It’s

okay/ every day/ I follow your

way/ my rounds . . .

What of the *kīrtana*?

“It filled me with great joy,”

wrote a six-year-old girl.

What does she mean?

I chanted but quirked.  
I chanted and was with them,  
just a wood chip, part  
of the scene painted by  
a folk artist—crude figures,  
one ma swaying back and forth  
while holding arms upraised as  
if she were delivering a child—  
painted that picture with the wood-  
chip figure of saffron guru  
saying  
“I’m not special but  
I just want you  
to be happy.”

This brown wood chip’s utterance:  
“Prabhupāda’s grace.”  
We pay a price and write and chant  
until the end. We’re grateful.  
Be happy.

The last stretch of the back road between the ox-  
power unit and the cabin. This is the most familiar and  
filled with memories and moods. It’s a warm, gray, winter  
day. A puddle in the road reflects the branches. Beyond  
the brown road, through more bare trees, you can see the  
creek. You round the bend and see the cabin once again.  
Don’t ask the question, “How many more times?” You’re  
not seeking an answer. Just keep going while you can. Be  
gentle, yet as strong as possible by depending on Kṛṣṇa’s  
name, Kṛṣṇa’s form, on Rādhā-Dāmodara.



# Glossary

## A

- Ācārya**—a spiritual master who teaches by his personal behavior.
- Acyuta**—a name of Kṛṣṇa meaning “unconquerable” or “infallible”.
- Adhokṣaja**—a name of Lord Viṣṇu, meaning “He who is beyond the reach of the material senses.”
- Aiśvarya**—majesty, opulence.
- Arcā-vigraha**—Deity.
- Ātmā**—the soul or living entity.

## B

- Bābāji**—one who devotes the major portion of his life to solitary devotional practices, especially chanting the Lord’s names.
- Bhagavad-gītā**—lit., “song of God.” The discourse between Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotee Arjuna, expounding devotional service as both the principal means and the ultimate end of spiritual perfection.
- Bhāgavatam**—See: *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.
- Bhakta**—a devotee of Kṛṣṇa.
- Bhakti**—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.
- Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura**—an *ācārya* in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava disciplic succession; the father of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.
- Brahmacāri**—a celibate student living under the care of a bona fide spiritual master.

**Brahman**—the impersonal aspect of the Absolute Truth; spirit.

**Brahmaṇa**—those wise in the *Vedas* who can guide society; the first Vedic social order.

**Brahma-saṁhitā**—Lord Brahmā's prayers glorifying the Supreme Lord.

## C

**Cādar**—a shawl.

**Caitanya (Mahāprabhu)**—lit. "Living force." An incarnation of Kṛṣṇa who appeared in the form of a devotee to teach love of God through the *sankīrtana* movement.

**Caitanya-caritāmṛta**—the biography and philosophy of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, written by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavīrāja Gosvāmī.

## D

**Darśana**—vision; audience.

## G

**Gambhirā**—a room in Jagannātha Purī where Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu would experience intense feelings of separation from Kṛṣṇa.

**Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava**—a follower of Lord Caitanya.

**Gaurāṅga**—lit., "golden-limbed." A name of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

**Gāyatri**—a prayer chanted silently by *brāhmaṇas* at sunrise, noon, and sunset.

**GBC**—Governing Body Commission, ISKCON's board of directors.

**Gītā-nāgari**—a spiritual farm community established by Śrīla Prabhupāda in Central Pennsylvania.

**Gopi**—a cowherd girl; one of Kṛṣṇa's most confidential servitors.

**Gosvāmi**—one who controls his mind and senses; title of one in the renounced order of life. May refer specifically to the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana, who are direct followers of Lord Caitanya in disciplic succession, and who systematically presented His teachings.

**Govinda**—a name of Kṛṣṇa, meaning “one who gives pleasure (*vinda*) to the cows (*go*) and senses (also *go*); may also refer to Lord Caitanya’s personal servant.

**Gurukula**—a school headed by the spiritual master.

## H

**Halavā**—a sweet dish made from roasted grains, butter, sugar, and water or milk.

**Haridāsa Ṭhākura**—a great devotee of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu; known as the *nāmācārya*, the master who taught the chanting of the holy names by his own example.

## I

**ISKCON**—acronym of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

**Īsopaniṣad**—a summary of the essential Vedic teachings on the universal nature of personality.

## J

**Jagannātha**—lit., “the Lord of the universe”; may refer specifically to the Deity of Lord Jagannātha in His temple at Puri.

**Japa**—individual chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra while counting on beads.

## K

**Karela**—a bitter gourd, valued in Vedic cuisine for its beneficial effect on the digestion.

**Karma**—The cycle of action and reaction which binds one to the material universe.

**Karmī**—one engaged in karma (fruitive activity); a materialist.

**Kirtana**—chanting of the Lord's holy names.

**Kṛṣṇa**—the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

**Kuṇḍa**—a lake or pond; generally refers to one of the sacred ponds in Vṛndāvana.

**Kuṭīr**—a hermitage-like residence for the practice of devotional activities.

## L

**Laddu**—a traditional Indian sweetball, made with chickpea flour, butter, and sweetener.

## M

**Mandira**—temple.

**Mayapur**—a town in West Bengal, India, where Lord Caitanya appeared.

**Mūrti**—a form, usually referring to a Deity.

## N

**Nāma**—the holy name.

**Nārada Muni**—a great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa who travels throughout the spiritual and material worlds singing the Lord's glories and preaching the path of devotional service.

**New Vrindaban**—a spiritual village established by Śrīla Prabhupāda near Wheeling, West Virginia.

**Nilācala**—another name for Jagannātha Puri.

**Nirvāṇa**—freedom from material existence.

**Nityānanda**—the incarnation of Lord Balarāma and a principal associate of Lord Caitanya.

**Nṛsīṃha(deva)**—the half-man, half-lion incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared to save Prahlāda Mahārāja from Hiranyakaśipu.

## P

**Pāda-yātrā**—a traveling missionary festival, conducted mainly on foot.

**Paṇḍa**—temple priest, usually of a caste *brāhmaṇa* family.

**Parakīya-rasa**—the Lord's paramour relationship with the *gopīs*, as distinguished from His *svākīya* relationship with His wives.

**Prema**—love of Kṛṣṇa.

**Purī**—refers to Jagannātha Purī, a city in the province of Orissa, India, where the temple of Lord Jagannātha is located.

## R

**Rādhā-Dāmodara**—the presiding Deities of ISKCON's Gitā-nāgari farm in Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

**Rādhārāṇī (Rādhā)**—the eternal consort and spiritual potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

**Ratha-yātrā**—an annual chariot festival celebrating Kṛṣṇa's return to Vṛndāvana in which the Deity of Lord Jagannātha is pulled in procession on a *ratha* (chariot).

**Rūpa Gosvāmī**—one of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

## S

**Sādhu**—saintly person.

**Samādhi**—trance or absorption in the service of the Lord; also refers to the tomb of an *ācārya*.

**Sanātana Gosvāmī**—one of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

**Saṅkīrtana**—the congregational chanting of the holy name, fame, and pastimes of the Lord; preaching.

**Sannyāsa**—renounced life; the fourth order of Vedic spiritual life.

**Sārī**—Vedic women's dress.

**Śāstra**—revealed scripture.

**Siddha-bakula**—the tree in Puri under which Haridāsa Ṭhākura lived and chanted the holy name.

**Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam**—the *Purāna*, written by Śrīla Vyāsa-deva, which specifically points to the path of devotional love of God.

**Śuddha-sattva**—the transcendental state of pure goodness, uncontaminated by the modes of material nature.

## T

**Tirtha**—holy place of pilgrimage.

## U

**Uttama-adhikāri**—a topmost devotee.

## V

**Vṛndāvana**—Kṛṣṇa’s personal abode, where He fully manifests His personal qualities.

**Vyāsadeva**—the original compiler of the *Vedas* and author of the *Vedānta-sūtra* and *Mahābhārata*, and the author of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

## W

**Walla**—a Hindi suffix signifying a vendor of goods or services.

## Y

**Yajña**—sacrifice.

**Yāvana**—one of the lower classes of men, generally meat-eaters.

**Yuga**—an “age”. There are four *yugas*, which cycle perpetually: Satya-yuga, Tretā-yuga, Dvāpara-yuga, and Kali-yuga.

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