

ELECTRIONIC BOOK

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Every Day, Just Write

Volume 6

Something reading

or Writing,

Something reading

or Writing

Ireland, April 30 - May 19, 1997

Also by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

Srila Prabhupada Lilamrita

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(April 11, 1998)

Dear Guru Maharaja,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your feet. All glories to you and to Srila Prabhupada.

Okay, here's another volume of EJW. This takes us up to the end of Vol. 9. It's interesting how each volume moves between one mood and another. The last volume, as I said, was intense reading. This one was lighter, more "positive," and focused on reading especially, and writing. It almost felt like reading the culmination of mood from the last volume. I look forward to seeing what's next.

I said in my cover letter with the last volume that I was going to work on something else for awhile. I did start on the letters book (Vol. 3), and am working on it gradually. There was some work to be done on the manuscript before I could really edit it, such as placing all the letters, doing the spell check, fixing the typing, etc. So that's all going on too. I'm also still going through the material for "Writer's Diary."

I hope all is well with you. I know you're moving into the house tomorrow, and I hope that will be a source of new inspiration for your writing.

your servant,
KaiSori-devi dasi

I tell you this is my practical experience. I am here always working "something reading or writing, something reading or writing, twenty-four hours. Simply when I feel hungry I take some food, and simply when I feel asleep I go to bed. Otherwise, always, I don't feel fatigue. You can ask Mr. Paul whether I'm not doing. I tell you, I take pleasure in doing that, I don't feel fatigue.

"Srila Prabhupada on the Bowery, Spring 1966

April 30, 1997

12:04 a.m.

I have a mission to be a spiritual master, a devotee, and to not fall down. That's my bottom line priority. But it has to come naturally from a deeper priority. I have to become fixed as a devotee. Steadiness does not come from tenacious determination (although that helps); steadiness is not born of a survival strategy. Neither is it based on the desire to keep a decent face on until you die.

Nor is it achieved by seclusion or by the opposite "plunging into institutional work.

Steadiness is achieved "I can't prescribe a formula. It's achieved by Krishna's mercy, and by recognizing your need for Krishna's mercy. *nayam atma pravacanena labhyo*. That's the only way to attain *bhakti*.

I want to attain it. I want to be instrumental in the *sankirtana* movement.

* * *

This is the time I have designated to work on *A Poor Man reads the Bhagavatam*. But I can't bring myself to do it. I've reached a crossroads. I was going to call it an impasse, but perhaps it's a breakthrough. It's not clear to me yet.

The problem is that working on that book saps my spontaneity. It's dutiful work. I read the verse and purport, then read the research that has been presented on the verse and purport, then respond to other people's questions, which are often not on topic or what I would want to write about. The quotes are demanding, the questions full of challenges or sometimes too-literal (material) understandings of the verse. I would rather simply write.

So I'm here and not working on PMrB.

And, I'm about to travel out of Geaglum to Belfast. I've already been warned about the pro-British flag flying across the street and the anti-ISKCON sentiments.

Krishna, please help me. I just wrote Your name when I wrote down the title of a *Krishna* book chapter. Then I crossed it out because I didn't get it right. Please excuse me.

No PMrB. I've stopped it and it's dead in the water. Then what instead?

* * *

Dreamt that I preached to thugs. I told them to be proud of their religious tradition, and I tried to encourage them to elevate their acts so that they would become an honor to their faith.

Thinking about it now, I thought such a dream was coming from the nervousness I feel about going to a house in Belfast where they don't like Hare Krishnas and where they are militantly pro-British. Maybe I should follow my advice and learn to see things according to *sastra*. In that way, I can elevate my activities. I don't have to be afraid for my body.

* * *

2:52 p.m. Belfast

Snug in the Belfast house. It doesn't seem so dangerous after all. The only Union Jack I see is a worn-out rag on a pole across the street. Anyway, M. has parked the van elsewhere, and I hope he's safe. I'm here with Bhakti-rasa. I think I'll invite him in and ask him to read to me from the *Bhagavatam* so I can prepare for tomorrow's class. The verse is spoken by Maharaja Pariksit, asking Dharma why we should not accuse the one who appears to harm us. Actually, we are being called upon to become saints. Bhakti-rasa added, "When you go on *harinama*, people sometimes attack and you have to be tolerant."

Then he said he has enjoyed reading *Poor Man*. He's glad more volumes are coming. His words didn't make me feel I had to snap back and resume my work on the present volume. I will suspend it at least while I'm in Belfast and Dublin. We'll see after that.

The house is ours for awhile, and Srila Prabhupada is sitting on his altar. I worshiped him this morning, then spoke in what sounds to my ears like a feeble voice to Bhakti-rasa, hoping he would understand my fragile condition. My health is weak right now.

In the room I picked up a few interesting books "*Dark Horse, The Secret Life of George Harrison*, (with photos of Srila Prabhupada and other devotees in it), *Poetry Ireland review, 1992*, and not much else. I want to spend this afternoon in *sadhana*. Peaceful today.

Fax from American GBC asking me to preach to a disciple and telling me what to say. I'm agreeable and even used his words. I hope the man doesn't go over to the other side.

Trees in yard blooming gorgeously this last day of April. Girls in school uniforms, knee length skirts and knee socks, going to school as we pulled into Areema Drive. Little white daisies seen from a second-story window.

Would I like to go on *harinama* in Belfast on Saturday? Maybe. Probably not. I'll decide later when I see how my health is.

Makes me wonder whether I should make a special push for the sake of austerity. In that way, I can speak as a soldier in arms to the Hare Krishna troops. Well, I have another way of doing that. I'll face my *japa* beads and this page.

Michael, Paul, the Fab Four, the dark horse ""It was a nightmare," George said of his years as a Beatle. But he earned enough money to live in his Friar Park and take trips to hideaways. The lovely children, fair-haired, the garden, the big pup running after the car. It's really bogus the idea that we can be happy in this world.

"We have beautiful music," TKG mock-challenged Prabhupada in a conversation in Hyderabad. "We have Bach."

Srila Prabhupada said that we have only one song, but we never tire of it. We continue to sing it all the time. Me too.

This series of books feels like one book.

Please

Krishna is on the Sesa bed,
He lifts Govardhana,
I lift only the blanket
on my bed. I try
to understand something,
but catch only a bit.

O Krishna.

He said I could empty the drawers of this desk if I wanted to, but since he didn't do it himself, I won't either. But if the drawers were empty, I would fill them with my crayons and pens.

Anyway, better to leave them on the desktop. They're more inviting that way.

One book and
one drawing again and again
one hymn, one God with
ananta-rupam,
no end
to the varieties of
pain and joy
all matter and dry

when you don't know Krishna.

* * *

5:30 p.m.

Just spoke with a devotee. I remember a Godbrother reminding us how important it is to listen to others when they speak. I asked him about himself and then listened to what he said. I gained something from that. At one point he said he had good relations with devotees as long as they spoke about Krishna. How true, I thought, and it made me feel I shouldn't talk so much about other things.

But we don't talk much of Krishna directly, do we?

Then this devotee spoke to me about his life as a writer. I told him that I try to make my life Krishna conscious so that I can write of Krishna in a natural way. We don't want to be mechanical. We have to find Krishna in our lives. Steer to Krishna. Be a Krishna conscious person.

I want that,

I want a religious
monk's life.

The devotee said that when he was only ten years old, he knew a priest who wrote and who favorably impressed him with his monastic attitude. Then he said he thought I was now that monk for him. It's a romantic idea, living in solitude and writing for God.

The priest told him that he listened to Bach and Beethoven to help him think of Jesus. That music is focused not just on God, but on the Christian Passion. Listening to them doesn't deliver us to Vraja-Krishna. We settle for the music in our *japa* repeated again and again "that one song. It is to our credit, Prabhupada said, that we have one simple song and we are satisfied with that. He said George Harrison couldn't get by with just one song because people would demand something new.

Music of the spheres "the sound at night of the planets and stars. Or the music in nature. The music of silence. Even the jarring sounds of city life can be music to some ears. Similarly, there is the music of devotional life, *kirtana* and *japa* and . . . Hare Krishna.

May 1

1:09 a.m.

Overslept. The body wanted it and I listened. The devotee I spoke to yesterday said he keeps a diary. He writes each night what made him tick throughout the day, and in this way he chronicles his happiness, his search for God, etc. I write too. I say I'm pleased that I arrived without a headache.

Woke thinking of photos and captions in the book on the Beatles and George. Also, thinking I'd rather not go on *harinama*. Weak today. What to do now? Now rising late, I may be late with *japa* too. Otherwise, outside of answering the mail, I have to give class. I've rehearsed my points. We have to recognize our own responsibility, even if we can no longer trace an action back to its root.

Also today, I want to try to go deeper into prayer. I need to communicate with Krishna to recognize His presence in the holy names. *This* form "don't neglect His

presence. Turn to Him and be tolerant. When things go "wrong" sing His song "the beads and yourself alone. Ask for strength, but give to others. Taking care of yourself, being the well adjusted or "normal man," is not enough. You have to suffer and die in any case. Do all, anything "hoping to please Krishna by the act.

* * *

5:38 a.m.

I spoke this morning with Bhakti-rasa (who's filling in for Madhu while he's singing at a festival). I was thinking aloud about what I could do at the disciples' meeting Friday night. I said I've actually come to Belfast just for my disciples, so I want to encourage them. I know some of the issues they're dealing with, such as the criticisms they receive from the congregation, etc. Also, they're interested in preaching here, and I think they're doing their best. They're also struggling with a small number of devotees in a big temple building. It might seem obvious that I should speak on these immediate issues.

But I'm afraid I lack practical expertise and even compassion or love for what I would be talking about. How would I be relevant to them?

Another idea I had for the disciples' meeting was to talk about myself in a personal way. I thought I could describe my writing needs, and yet how I'm aware of the readers needs also "how it produces a kind of tension. But if I speak about something so personal, how would the use it in their day-to-day lives here in Belfast?

Bhakti-rasa suggested that sometimes when I write about my writing life, I state openly my hope that readers will apply the essence to their own lives "not as writers, but in whatever they're doing. It's true that I am writing about one devotee's struggles. Although I focus my discussion on my own particular service, it can be applied to any service. Since I thought Bhakti-rasa's point was good, I'm saying it here. This writing is meant to be a bridge to the concerns of any devotee.

With this in mind, here are some rough notes. I offer them to you, dear reader, in hopes that they will be relevant.

(1) A general point: some issues in *my* life may be applicable to *you*. I can tell you how I handle my life, and you can try to draw from that when you turn to handling your own.

(2) A good topic to consider is how to gain conviction in what you're doing while at the same time remaining open to change "as suggested from within and by others.

(3) We have to learn how to deal with the inevitable critics "inner and outer.

(4) As a writer I am concerned to satisfy my inner needs, not to be a performer. Yet I want my writing to be read by others. We all have to face this issue in our particular services.

(5) It's important for me to give priority to chanting and reading with quality. Then I'll be able to write in the best way. Similarly, making *sadhana* a priority will improve the overall quality of your service.

(6) How to give ourselves time and space for what we have ascertained to be our vocation "our love. Otherwise, we'll be deeply dissatisfied.

* * *

9 a.m.

I gave my class about how to tolerate suffering. Dharma did not want to point to the perpetrator of his mutilations because ultimately, Krishna is behind everything.

As we left the temple I noticed that half the front gate has been ripped off. I'd heard that someone had broken in and smashed the windows on some of the cars. When I mentioned the incident, Bhakta Fergus told me what actually happened. About a month ago, a young man living in the temple turned out to be crazy. He took a hammer from the temple and went around the neighborhood bashing cars while screaming, "Christians are demons!" That young man is now in a psychiatric hospital, but the devotees continue to suffer reactions from the people in the neighborhood. Fergus told me that just today as we entered the temple grounds, a man cursed at him.

Hearing this makes me fearful. It also increases my respect for the temple devotees, most of whom are women, for the way they go on with their duties despite the threat. I lectured on tolerance, but they actually live it.

* * *

9:51 a.m.

The verse tomorrow addresses the four principles of religion. I plan to say that this discussion is important for interfaith preaching. You can belong to any God conscious religion, but you have to follow the principles. The state should see to it. Or at least the religious leaders have to see to it. They can help each other by coming to some agreement about this.

Do I believe it?

Yes. Do I care about it?

Not much, it seems.

I lectured this morning on the holy names. I said we would better be able to tolerate if we are attentive to our chanting. One devotee said she thought chanting was a selfish act, something she does only for her own purification. But it's good to remember that we actually chant for Krishna's pleasure.

Tomorrow, I hope to have an easy-to-handle simple outline prepared. I could go over the four principles of religion: austerity, mercy, cleanliness, and truthfulness. Then what? Don't want to speak in cliches.

Anyway, I can say the usual things. That's all right. Krishna will help me. Austerity . . . I spoke on that recently. I said we didn't have to invent new forms of *tapasya*. We simply have to accept our duties without seeking extra comfort or relief. We also have to offer our austerities to Krishna.

The main thing in lecturing is to surrender on the spot. That may mean improvising from the *vyasasana*, but in *parampara*. I need to be relaxed and confident that I have read Prabhupada's books, that I know the philosophy. I have given hundreds of lectures. Why should I be worried? I think it's that heavy silence that can suddenly descend on the temple room when a speaker runs out of steam after twenty minutes.

* * *

Blooming trees in front yard. I noticed my mind has many unworthy, silly thoughts in it. If I write that stuff down, it would be shameful, so I don't. We writers select what we think will be impressive and avoid the worst. When we say we'll be truthful, it means we'll express what we know best. It also means we'll let ourselves go, at least partially, to get beyond the cliches to a candid form of honesty. Anyway, it's a way to serve Krishna, the Absolute Truth.

That silly stuff is looking at the men and women in this movement and seeing how their faces are older and less beautiful than they were in their youth. You see what I mean? You can't help it if the senses and mind report such stuff. Novelists often dwell on the features of others to pull data for their fictional characters. I don't want to do that. It's all material and subjective and has nothing to do with truth.

* * *

Truth is the song
Rama is the holy name I am
not always true
under all circumstances but
to be like that I'd be a saint
to tell the truth
have a heart and forgive me
as I keep on serving,
increasing.

* * *

Prabhupada is lecturing and I am hearing. Bhagavata dasi is distributing books, chanting, and taking care of her family. Nitai is going door-to-door, even though people curse him. Fergus likes to go to a shed in the country and write. He says unless you give yourself uninterrupted time and peace, it's hard to write. We always assume that if you can find some peace and quiet to write, you'll come up with something truthful to say that will be interesting and helpful to others. But it also takes austerity. And a clean inner life, a sense of mercy and truth, a desire to serve.

* * *

I have now gone six days without a bad headache. I almost felt today's headache was welcome. It grounded me in the reality of my chronic condition.

While in pain, I dreamt I was a lonely boy playing in a small, woodsy backyard. I heard two devotees talking nearby, but I don't want them to come and ruin my play. I was playing with homemade a bow and arrows. Later, a young boy approached the backyard, but on the other side of the fence. I said, "Do you know who I am? My name is Satsvarupa." He had never heard of me, so I said, "I'm the first person to come here. Not here, but to Boston."

"Did you come before that?"

"Yes, I joined in 1966 when Prabhupada came to America."

He was astounded, and became almost embarrassed thinking, "Well then, you won't live much longer, will you?"

But I was proud of my heritage.

May 2

12:15 a.m.

Lectio divina is nice if you do it according to a simple, Krishna conscious version. I like to read a small amount, pause, personalize it, then pray. Verse 4.32 *Bhagavad-gita* tells us to approach a spiritual master. Get to your insides, your spiritual life.

A person in disciplic succession can convey the Lord's meaning as is to his disciples. Keep at it, each of us. Years grow long, life grows short, and days flip by faster than we can imagine. There's no time left to lose.

In the introduction to a book, an author wrote that his whole *sadhana* is just to remember a great devotee he knew, VamSi dasa Babaji. I make my *sadhana* to remember Prabhupada.

When I read the old edition of the *Gita*, a Godbrother who has had trouble comes to mind. The confusion, the issues in ISKCON "we have survived everything so far. If you find a spiritual master, what does he teach? That all beings are part of Me ""And they are in Me and are Mine." (Bg. 4.35) Krishna's book. It's good to think of Prabhupada, but not in "submergence" (Boissen's term). That is, don't stop with him, but let him guide you to Krishna. His *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* introduces Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. "The sense of separated existence from Krishna is called *maya* (*ma-not, ya-this*)."

In the First Canto we read of the principles of religion. Maharaja Pariksit refers to the bull as the representative of religion, and notes that in this age, he remains standing only on one leg. Austerity, cleanliness, mercy, and truthfulness are the four legs of religion. Prabhupada says the state should uphold these principles. I plan to speak on this in the small room on this spring day. The neighbors don't like us, snarl and curse or worse, but the devotees remain truthful despite the obstacles.

The sense of being apart from Krishna is *maya*, illusion. We are Krishna's parts and parcels eternally, and therefore we are always meant to serve the whole just as the hand is meant to serve the body. That's all that counts in life. Bodily relationships are not important at all.

* * *

Watched a video, vintage Prabhupada, with the devotees. Boston temple "Srila Prabhupada entering the temple, leading *kirtana*, playing *karatalas*, building a sacrificial fire.

"Were you in the temple that day?"

Yes.

"Is that you?"

No, that's Pradyumna. I didn't wear glasses until the '80s.

Don't they know?

A car outside (12:40 a.m.) beeps its horn to call someone again and again. I hope they're not after us, those night prowlers. In spring, the warm weather brings people out to wander in delusion up and down the block. That's the nature of community, I guess.

* * *

Had a dream that I was in Hyderabad with many devotees. Actually, the area is packed not only with devotees, but with Indian families too. I walked and walked and finally found the last sleeping space, near a trash pail. I found an old mattress with a note pinned to it that said, "Don't be so humble as to use this place." I decided to take it anyway, so I rolled out my sleeping bag on the mattress without showing anyone the note. I had this dream at 11 p.m. last night. It gave me a nice feeling of belonging to ISKCON and being humble, accepting the last position and being perfectly satisfied with it.

* * *

5:37 a.m.

It's hard to follow any schedule for unmotivated reading because I am having to give so many lectures "two a day. In my spare time this morning, I diverted myself by glancing through a book I found here called *The A-Z of the Human Body*. I read about brain death and psychosomatic illness (they say headaches are a frequent one). They explained that psychosomatic illness is different than hypochondria, where you imagine you have a disease. A psychosomatic illness means you are physically ill, but the illness has emotional or psychological origins. It can be treated by going to the root of the problem.

I tend to think the root of my disease is karma. Krishna wants me to suffer and become purified through this illness. Whatever the cause, I know that the headaches dominate my life. They even restrict my writing, and I can't go out on the street or attend meetings or debate controversies "none of which I want to do anyway. Headaches assure that I live in semi-seclusion. I like seclusion, but I do pay a high price for it. It's not that I'm free to work as much as I would want, and it's not that I get headaches *only* when I debate controversies or hold meetings. I get them all the time. I have come to accept my condition and live with it.

The Krishna conscious philosophy provides a certain rationale when we try to understand our health problems. That is, the pain may be coming as a token reaction to our own past sinful activities, or Krishna may be testing us, or we are meant to perform austerity and pain is our particular cross to bear. We just have to make the best of it and to focus on chanting the holy name. For me, it's important that I chant early, before the headaches come. Pain is ultimately the pathway to death. I have to learn to live with it now while taking shelter of Krishna. I am learning not to be afraid of it and also not to take painkillers all the time to drive it away. Just flow with what's actually going on.

* * *

10:20 a.m.

There's a dairy in Delhi that sells ice cream. I got from there a wooden spoon which I use to push out the underarms on Prabhupada's *kurta*. Do you know what I mean? I got that spoon when we stayed at Varuna's parents place. Madhu told me to use the spoon. Up until that point, I had been using a paper clip for the same job.

We were there for a few days in February. Sometimes we went to the roof to sit in the sun and chant some distracted *japa*. At that time, I was finishing the Vrndavana volume of *Every Day, Just Write*.

I gave the class all right, I guess. The verse praised religious principles. Nitai asked, "What did Srila Prabhupada mean by the phrase 'blackmailing the commodities?'" I said it may mean that the capitalists hoard their goods and charge whatever price they want. I also said that perhaps he was using the word "blackmail" imprecisely. I wish I hadn't said that. Better to have said I didn't know what he meant, that I don't know the wider meanings of "blackmail," than to have said that Prabhupada didn't use the word properly.

I told Fergus he can come to my room and take photographs because he wants to. He can take a picture of me worshiping Prabhupada or using the typewriter, or with a pen, pretending I'm writing alone. I can look like a guru in his room. I can act.

Listen, I won't be going out on Saturday. One devotee wrote and told me that last Saturday, a man attacked the *harinama* party in Leicester Square and this devotee cracked his *mrdanga* "over the *karmi's* head." He said the devotees appreciated him for his quick thinking.

Then another letter: someone was shocked to hear that I didn't agree with something they said. He's not the only one. I have to be careful, even as guru, not to tread on people's feet. I try to remain humble in my correspondence, but I mention it here and say that maybe it's less than what a guru would usually do. I know disciples have their opinions. Besides, I don't think my views are particularly absolute on every topic. Another prospective disciple wrote me and said that he was given an exam to prepare for initiation. One question asked, "Do you believe the guru speaks the truth?" He said he had a problem with that and he doesn't always think I'm speaking the truth. He disagrees with things I say. He wants to know if that's all right, if it's enough for him to say that what I write inspires him, whether or not it's always the truth. Sounds odd, but it's honest.

Prabhupada is waiting and it won't be long before I begin the soothing act of worshiping him. Please forgive me, I say, for not being bolder.

Looked at a book here on creative writing. The author says poems have to be well constructed in order to convey art. A reader should work hard, she says, to understand. Then she gives an assignment so the reader of her book can practice what she is teaching. I hate writing books that do that. Her assignment was to notice for one day the things you hear that you don't like. Then in the evening, write five hundred words on it. The next day, you're supposed to write all the things you smelled during the day, and on the following day, the things you touched, etc. Finally, she tells you to write what you saw. I saw a chubby girl on roller skates wearing a plastic crash helmet on the street outside my window. Whenever she slows to a stop, she looks most awkward. Why does she think roller-skating is so much fun?

* * *

The questions after the class were so-so. Not really the ones I wanted to discuss. And so it goes. Is it that I think I'm so great? No, I am a humble servant answering the mail.

The art of being a devotee in writing. Spring is well underway and some flowers have already died. When it's nice out, the kids make more noise on the street. I have heavy curtains, and that helps cut down the noise. At night the worst noise is the young kid with the motorbike driving around and around the neighborhood.

Madhu should be back this afternoon. I'm supposed to hold a disciples' meeting. remember please, to represent Prabhupada to them.

May 3, 1997

12:05 a.m.

Many thoughts pass through my mind and I'm determined to write *some* of them down without regard to order. Don't ask why right now.

I ought to read regularly in Srila Prabhupada's books. I saw a paper written by someone who has turned to a Gaudiya Math for shelter. He said we falsely think Prabhupada wanted us to stay in *vaidhi-bhakti*, and that if we study the quotes he has provided from Prabhupada's books, we will come to his conclusion "that we should all submit to his new guru.

When I read his paper, however, I didn't feel the way he said I would feel. rather, I felt I wanted to expose myself to Prabhupada more, and to read his books. Now looking at *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*.

O Krishna. I am satisfied with my Guru Maharaja's presentation of Krishna consciousness. I don't say that as if I'm trying to hold myself back from deeper levels of surrender, as this devotee indicated. Srila Prabhupada didn't tell us that he failed to give us the ultimate understanding. He taught that we could receive everything from his books, that Krishna would reveal Himself to us when we became more qualified.

Is switching gurus like plastic surgery, where you ask the doctor, "Please make my face more beautiful"? We are who we are and we have been given the promises we have been given.

Thinking about this, I also thought that if I say I want to be faithful to Prabhupada, my writings should deliver him. And they should deliver me (and ultimately others) to my relationship with Krishna by my making real contact with Prabhupada.

Prabhupada, I have days of peaceful study and writing available to me, if I want them. My desire to preserve my own statements is okay, but I hope it is not vain or futile. Matsya and Hayagriva *avataras* saved the *Vedas* at the time of annihilation, but I doubt they'd bother with my jottings. Still, my jottings are meaningful to me.

I can mock it
poke fun at myself
but vanity is the other extreme.

I am not an ordinary fellow in ISKCON.

I may celebrate my birthdays and the day I took *sannyasa*, the day I was first initiated, etc. I am so important and dear, so be sympathetic and take care of me, dear readers. But don't overfeed me.

* * *

The care and feeding of a delicate
plant should be learned
by those who care "
too much water or too little
is dangerous for his health.
Same with sunshine. Don't
expose him to louts'
shouts or sheep's bleats
(who are about to be slaughtered).
When you drive him over
a bumpy road in a cheap car,
do you know what it does
to his system?

* * *

Better to put him in a pot and worship him
with names, as "one who is
dear to Krishna." Then preserve all he
writes because you never
know, he could be another Shakespeare
(a Rupa Gosvami for us)
and it could all be lost so
easily.

* * *

Please care for my
drooping leaves.
Don't break me or burn me
prematurely. Give me hope and I'll
give you blooming *manjari*,
or eggs and a chick,
somniaulant poems
from the unconscious
conscious. The rose fading,
the pebble in the brook of
ISKCON warbling his meters
uneven
ought to be given a foot brace
and cane and let out to pasture.

* * *

Satire of the self.

* * *

9:26 a.m.

Fergus said both car doors were broken by thieves using crowbars. "When you were in the temple?" Yes, two weeks ago. He keeps a big chain around the steering wheel.

I gave my last class and won't go back over there during this visit. But the temple devotees live with this stuff all the time. They say there's no use fixing the front gate. "They'll just break it again." I came here to encourage them.

One devotee said she felt I didn't encourage them in my evening talk. She thought I had been influenced by the congregational members who criticize them. I haven't even heard their criticism. I was simply saying that we should be allowed to perform a service we love.

These are brave and stalwart devotees.

* * *

Gave a class in which I read excerpts from *The Beginning, Srila Prabhupada's 1966 Diary*. Then I linked them to tape excerpts from 1966 and commented on those. I love to speak of those days. Someone broke into Prabhupada's room and stole his tape recorder and typewriter. He told it in this book. I wanted to read the entry about him losing his pen, too, but couldn't find it. Instead, I read the entry on the day I was initiated, September 22, 1966. Yes, that was the day I got initiated from Steve to Satsvarupa, or whatever it is he called me.

Now you want safety. "You want to go back into your mother's womb?" he asks. "That is not possible."

Someone wanted to know what happened to Dr. Mishra. He has passed away. Maybe he . . . probably by serving Prabhupada, he achieved something.

It's May 3 today is moving along quickly. The flowers in this frost-bitten climate turn black at the hint of a frost.

People on this block own taxis and park them on the street overnight. I heard some people talking on the street at 1 a.m. and 3 a.m. I was up chanting, my mind, unfortunately, dwelling on unworthy things. Whenever I noticed, I brought it back to the name.

* * *

Swami, the reporter persisted,
"At what age did you
have your first enlightenment?"
"Four or five," he said,
and the devotees cheered.

* * *

Swami, I'm afraid
I am not a lover of the name "
but at least
you don't reject me. You give me service,
"Something reading or writing,
something reading or writing,
and when I get hungry I eat some food
and when I get tired I go to bed.
I don't get tired, 24 hours serving Krishna."
"I don't get fatigued. You can ask Mr. Paul
if this is not true."

Duty is deep for him. Deep. He said he was duty-bound. "If I do what I want that is sense gratification, to stay in Vrndavana. I came to America, which is like hell. I am not happy here. But I came here to teach Krishna consciousness because my spiritual master ordered me."

Did he write to God? Yes, sometimes it seems like that.

* * *

I told her I wasn't influenced by her critics. I wasn't even *thinking* of them. I was speaking pure philosophy. I didn't mean to comment on their local situation, because whatever is happening, I am on their side. The last thing I wanted to do was to make anyone cry or feel I didn't understand them. It seems I failed in the very reason for which I came. I'm sorry. Hare Krishna.

The two ton car fell on the
boy and injured his rumpus plus he
went on
until the bottom of the page
fell out in the drive,
shaft and felt a relapse,
escaped from the prison theater
although they ran after him
through city streets. Let's say he was chanting God's names the whole time.

* * *

* * *

3:52 p.m.

EkadaSi today. Can I chant more? It seems not. After sixteen the relish stops. If I do one or two more I'm proud as punch. Madhu and Bhakti-rasa left to join the *harinama* party. It would have done me good to join them, but I seem to have permanently shut down on reaching out to people like that. I feel too old and feeble, too prone to pain. (Srla Prabhupada in his room in Mayapur asked his disciples to sit up straight, "like my Guru Maharaja." He said, "I'm an old man, I'm excused.")

Well, I think if you don't do this one thing, if you cannot, then you have to drop down a notch and prosecute Krishna consciousness on a lower level. As the temple mouse, for example. How can you be a *sannyasi* who stays at the homes of friends and lectures only in the evenings?

Yes, but then I'm fiery.

Not really. I just read *The Nectar of Instruction*. If I don't have a headache tomorrow, or perhaps even if I have one, I'll give the Sunday feast lecture tomorrow in Dublin. First I have to survive the drive down there.

Perhaps I'll speak on the holy names.

What a hypocrite, I tell myself. You can't even chant an extra round, and you're thinking of addressing yourself to the public about the holy names.

Well . . . I could make it the holy names *and* pastimes of the Lord. Although I'm not attracted much to *them* either. Why not speak about free-writing in Krishna consciousness for a few minutes each day, or the pleasures and importance of eating two meals a day, or how to sleep? Why not tell them of these things?

I can't. I have to function as a public priest. So I'll speak on the verse about jaundice and sugar candy, and *atah Sri Krishna namadi*, which recommends service performed with the tongue (chanting and honoring *prasadam*). That's the invitation to an easy entrance into Krishna consciousness.

But what if a congregational member (or initiated devotee) complains that I'm speaking only the basics? What if they want more than "you're not this body"?

Srila Prabhupada didn't pander to his audiences by lecturing on *gopi-bhava* just because the people wanted to hear it. He preached about chanting. The topic of chanting Hare Krishna reaches the limits. It's more a matter of how much each of us realizes.

Jaundice. You chant and it gets better. You chant with the tongue: "O holy name." It's an address, and we are meant to call out to the name as a child cries out for its mother.

Anyway, I don't have to measure everything against my own limited and failing powers. I don't have to tell them I had more capacity to read at one point, and now I'm liable to get a headache if I read too much. My duty is simply to encourage them and to take encouragement for myself.

Temperature climbing. Boy walks by outside in red shorts, bare-chested. Smooth suburban rose. Voices of children. I am glad there are so many children with families; it tends to become not so wild at night as Soho Street in London. Whoever preaches in those places certainly receives Lord Caitanya's mercy.

A section in the creative writing book was on writing with the whole self. When I saw it I thought, "Good, I want to do it." But then the author said you should write with your body and not just your mind. I wasn't too interested in that "writing totally with my senses. Sure it's important and natural, but to me writing with the whole self suggests getting down to what you feel beneath the top level of immediate sensation.

Whole self, whole-hearted, fully sincere. Gaining access to what's underneath.

O Krishna. The typewriter ribbon ran out, and so did the pen cartridge.

I admit I'm timid,

Retired, a colonel

a . . . hieroglyphics scholar

dead-tomb scholar, book-

worm with an old skinny face

a ridiculous clown painted
into a sad smile.

* * *

Helicopter over the town
of Belfast "O little town
of Bethlehem, IrA,
smooth roads. "No use
fixing the front gate," said the
Hare Krishna chap, "They'll just
break it down again."
Low-class Catholics from
nearby estate do it.

The Hare Krishna members in a room with Prabhupada said they were better than Christians because they follow what Christ taught and Christians do not. But of the voices we heard on the 1975 tape, some of the *sannyasis* have given up their vows, and some have given up their entire Krishna consciousness. That's the sad history, and it proves that we don't have to be strident against Christians or make sweeping statements that they don't follow Jesus while we do. It takes heart and soul.

Looking for a verse about humble practice. Or faith in *sastra*. reach up for the spiritual world. I like to talk of Prabhupada, but that's probably not appropriate for a Sunday feast lecture.

* * *

4:39 p.m.

Within a minute I found the verse I was thinking of: *tasmad ekena mana/ bhagavan savatam patih/ Srotavyah kirtitavyaS ca/ dhyeyah pujyaS ca nityada*, "Therefore, with one-pointed attention, one should constantly hear about, glorify, remember and worship the Personality of Godhead, who is the protector of the devotees." And maybe use the one before it also "the highest perfection of doing your duties is to please the Personality of Godhead.

Sound unreal or like a platitude? Just please God and praise Him. What if we don't know God well enough to know *how* to praise Him, *how* to please Him? He seems so high and far away, abstract from our earthly struggles and immediate satisfactions.

The *sastra* can give us a new life in God consciousness. It can deliver Krishna. *Srotavyoh* "hear about Him. I can give an example of that. Blow their minds, maybe, with Govardhana-lila or Kaliya-lila. Explain how God can do anything.

Then mention *kirtitavyaS ca* and give an example of an ordinary devotee praising God. Of course, the best way is to chant His names and to share your praises with others. Anything done to spread His word is praise.

Then *dhyeyah*, remembering. Remembrance is the natural outgrowth of hearing and chanting.

May 4, 1997

Dreamt of Prabhupada's departure. At one point, I told Tamal Krishna Maharaja, "If what you're sankirtana, I think he would eat."

"If what you say is true, then Prabhupada's only problem is his mood." I meant, he didn't have the will to remain with us.

I don't know why I dreamt about Prabhupada leaving us. Perhaps it was because there was a brief mention of it today, and I again thought of watching that video of his actual departure. It occurred to me that I have been thinking more and more of my death too.

Or perhaps the dream had a symbolic meaning. If I maintain the proper mood, the mood Prabhupada had to come to the West to preach, I will remain alive in Krishna consciousness. He didn't display a mood of wanting to go back to Godhead, or even back to Vrndavana during his pastimes with us. Rather, he chose to stay in New York and then throughout the world, delivering Krishna consciousness to anyone who would accept it from him. Of course, that includes the mood of going back to Godhead, but the focus was not on salvation but on pleasing Krishna by carrying out His mission.

* * *

12:10 am.

If I manage to give the lecture today, I want to be sure to tell them that God is a person and that He is all-attractive. He's not ordinary. *Avajanati mam mudha*. The fools deride Me, Krishna says, because of My human-like activities. They don't know My supreme position as the Personality of Godhead. Therefore, we should associate with those who know God as the Supreme Person, and not with nondevotees. To be able to hear and chant, remember and worship "to desire to please God through our work" all this is known only by devotees. "The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are surrendered to Me, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss enlightening one another and conversing about Me." (Bg. 10.9)

"In the preliminary stage of devotional service they relish the transcendental pleasure from the service itself, and in the mature stage they are actually situated in love of God."

* * *

"There are many devotees who assume themselves to be in Krishna consciousness and devotional service, but at heart do not accept the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, as the Absolute Truth. For them, the fruit of devotional service "going back to Godhead" will never be tasted." (Bg. 9.12, purport)

Stay in the ocean. Even though we may stand on the shore, able only to tolerate small waves, at least we are in touch with the ocean. We see it, touch it, smell it, hear it, and eventually become engulfed by it.

"The *mahatma* does not divert his attention to anything outside Krishna because he knows perfectly well that Krishna is the original Supreme Person, the cause of all causes. There is no doubt about it." (Bg. 9.13, purport) A devotee develops through the association of other *mahatmas*. "Pure devotees are not even attracted by Krishna's other features, such as the four-armed Maha-visnu."

Thinking of that challenge I mentioned earlier by the follower of a Gaudiya leader. He says we will fall short if we read only Srila Prabhupada's books, which are too basic. I say I can pick up even a few phrases in Srila Prabhupada's books and stay with them, and they rock me gently into *Krishna-smaranam*. What counts more than the kind of information we receive is the quality of our reception. His purports explain pure *bhakti*, and one who can avail himself of those instructions will come to taste the sweetness of the highest realization. We respond to Prabhupada's words and Krishna responds to us. He gives us the intelligence to come to Him, and builds our faith, and He gives us Himself as we become qualified. That is the process of *bhakti* for anyone no matter what they read. It's not that by reading explicit descriptions of Krishna's pastimes in the groves of Vraja that we can gain entrance to something beyond our realization and surrender. If Prabhupada's books don't spell everything out in every purport explicitly, the material is available implicitly. Srila Prabhupada will take us to him and to the spiritual world. That's all I ask, despite my shortcomings.

Krishna speaks. Reading His words can be a mystical experience. "One who is unable to live for a moment without Krishna cannot but think of Krishna twenty-four hours, being engaged in devotional service by hearing, chanting, remembering, offering prayers, worshiping, serving the lotus feet of the Lord . . . Then his only desire is to achieve the association of the Supreme Personality of Godhead." (Bg. 9.22, purport)

In 9.25 we learn that whatever we worship, we attain to that. Worship of Krishna will send us directly to His abode. "This Krishna consciousness movement is therefore distributing sublime information to human society the effect that by simply chanting the Hare Krishna mantra one can become perfect in this life and go back home, back to Godhead."

* * *

5:40 a.m.

Re doubt: "But ignorant and faithless persons who doubt the revealed scriptures do not attain God consciousness. For the doubting soul there is happiness neither in this world nor in the next. (Bg. 4.40)

It's almost 6 a.m. and any moment now Bhakti-rasa will bring in Prabhupada's breakfast. Give him Krishna consciousness.

As I read this morning, I felt as if I was with Krishna. Something wonderful happened. The Vedic sages and their devotion to Krishna is the jewel of the world. Please, Lord, give me genuine faith to become Your true student, a speaker of *sastra*, and someone small who can please You. My only hope is my link with Prabhupada.

* * *

En route

Driving. This time doesn't seem always to be spent in vital pursuits. I spend most of it trying not to get a headache. Before leaving Belfast I told three devotees that process is more important than product. Product is . . .

(Can't pay attention now because Madhu and Arjuna are conversing in the front seat.)

Gorse on hillside. Mustard plants. I'm not noticing much or appreciating "either Ireland in May or the spiritual world. *Srotavyah kirtitavyas ca, dhyeya satvatam patih.*
How fat the crows are here!

* * *

1:30 p.m.

I took an Esgic and the headache went down forty-five minutes later. I conferred with Madhu before taking it. Now I should be fit to give the lecture. Tell the story of Krishna and Kaliya?

* * *

What do I mean by gently rocking? I'm thinking of giving this volume the title, "Gently rocking." I mean the motion back and forth while reading in the mood of *lectio divina*, especially at midnight. I felt it this morning. I can't describe it exactly. It's a motion. Also, you go from reading to writing and writing to reading, back and forth. You lull yourself, but not to sleep. Lulling or rocking yourself gently into *samadhi*. Or if not *samadhi*, at least into a deeper state.

Out of the cradle, endlessly rocking. The music, the rhythm, allowing Prabhupada's and Krishna's words to work on you. Reading without hard analysis whatever comes naturally. You choose a passage at random if you want. If it isn't just right, however, you can skip over it until you find something right, something that creates that rocking. You're a baby in the cradle whose mother is rocking him softly to sleep "not sleep, but transcendental, mystical emotion, *darSana* with Krishna in the *Bhagavatam*. Gently rocking.

May 5, 1997

12 noon

Here we are to read *Bhagavad-gita*. I want to turn to it to ground my spirit in praise of Krishna. But first for the record, yesterday's Sunday lecture went well. Afterwards, a devotee approached me to say that, and to say that I was animated while I delivered it. There were many guests. I told the devotee I felt like I was delivering a lecture I would have given in the past at Trinity College or some other preaching program. I felt the same energy.

You mean those innocent days when I was preaching strongly without headaches?

Yes, those ones.

This moment's good too with the wind beating against the house. It's good too, and good to describe

Krishna's original pastimes in Vrndavana
without apology for those who did not believe it
but Krishna in Vrndavana with His dearest devotees.

Timid or vague religionists will hesitate to hear of Krishna in His Vraja feature. *Avajananti mam mudha.*

Okay, that was yesterday. What will I do today to practice *Srotavyas kirtitavyas ca, jneya and puja and samsiddhi hari-tosanam?*

"A *brahmacari* hears only words concerning Krishna consciousness." ("Some sacrifice the hearing process and the senses in the fire of mental control.")

"And therefore the pure *brahmacari* engages fully in *harer nama anu kirtanam* "chanting and hearing the glories of the Lord." (Bg. 4.26)

Our attractions should be controlled and fixed on Krishna. Hear only direct praises of Krishna "songs about Krishna as the cowherd boys used to make. "He restrains himself from the vibrations of material sounds and his hearing is engaged in the transcendental sound vibration of Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna."

That's it, simple. In these remaining days of life, *go for it*. Ask for the implicit melody to come out of the mantras as you finger your beads. Unheard melodies are sweeter.

In the lecture hall I said Krishna consciousness is culminated in remembering Krishna, and if we do it at the time of death, we will go to Krishna. Our service is pleasing to Krishna if we remember Him while doing it.

* * *

Did they know I was in town? The operatic star (small and white in the sky). Did they know I was in town? Green flags and orange flags flying high down this city block. What for? "It's a Euro Vision song contest."

O Krishna. The best song is sung by the *gopas*
on behalf of self-spirit desiring
Real praise for green pastures, the
soul joyful and Krishna protects them,
sattvatam patih.

* * *

Never mind mundane, Krishna is all that is
blissful, and great souls
always praise Him.
Do people
know? Krishna can protect us always.

* * *

Saul Bellow's book I referred to
to make a point
"in Krishnaloka they would
not need that.
They just sing what He did
to Baka and how beautiful He looked.
Good to know that highest

standard.

* * *

"The devotees of Krishna enter the Krishna planet, Goloka Vrndavana . . . if one quits his body at the end of life chanting Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare." (Bg. 8.13)

Could you think that fast while lecturing? I will play tapes of his lectures today "little excerpts. Srila Prabhupada as storyteller. Whoever is present can hear from me. *Tat srnu*, hear from Krishna, the original speaker.

Bhadra's house "I don't want to make noise to look for more pen cartridges. Mine's empty again. That's okay, I have another pen, but it's cold. Let me warm it in my hand. This desk is slightly tilted, but it's a solid child's school desk with a carved-out slot for a pen and an inkwell. The lid lifts up and you can store books and things underneath. No initials carved in it "I guess no one dared. Hare Krishna chanting can bring you to the spiritual world.

Rock gently
in the cradle

Rock out doubts. Bring me to the Lord in His names and fame.

* * *

Dear Lord, I thank You for allowing me to lecture yesterday. I'm grateful. It was my bit to say there is God and that Krishna consciousness gives us the best access to Him. My dear Lord, many devotees present there already knew it.

I said Krishna likes us to depend on Him. Of course, that statement could be misunderstood. "As indicated by the words *ananya cetah*, in pure *bhakti*, the devotee desires nothing but Krishna." (Bg. 8.14, purport)

"*Bhakti-yoga* is very simple and pure and easy to perform. One can begin simply by chanting Hare Krishna."

Some say you should live in the holy *dhama*, "But a pure devotee can live anywhere and create the atmosphere of Vrndavana by his devotional service."

That's good news!

Are you rocking gently in there?

Yes, of course, but you can't expect a bloke like me to immediately enter *samadhi* in only two tries. At least I'm hearing in my mind the holy sounds.

Goloka is the planet of cows.

There they please Krishna

and love Him as He is

love Him as a cowherd boy, the
original Krishna, happy.

* * *

You remember Krishna by chanting, he says.

Really? I thought chanting was just syllables and counting. But you say by saying the names you remember the person. Yes, that sounds right. Sounds true.

"This is the great blessing of the Krishna consciousness process of chanting the *maha-mantra*. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare."

"They only want Krishna and Krishna's association and nothing else. That is the highest perfection of life. This verse specifically mentions the personalist devotees of the Lord."

* * *

"Humble Pat" didn't come to pick us up to take us to the temple. Madhu phoned a taxi. No one answers the phone at the temple. I'll start the class late, maybe skip "*Jaya Radha-Madhava*." relax. It's just a morning class. We'll start late, but that's okay. Tell how Srila Prabhupada is a storyteller. He participates in an oral tradition that's thousands of years old. The storytellers knew an art different from the art of composing *Slokas*. They knew how to gesture with their hands and show emotion in their faces. They changed the words with each telling, injecting the story with more and more feeling. Like Suka, who sweetened Vyasa's message. Srila Prabhupada used a minimum of hand gestures, but his face was always animated, and he changed his voice for his character in such a subtle and delightful way. I remember him telling of Govardhana-puja, and the story of Rupa Gosvami wanting to hold a feast for Sanatana Gosvami.

Head as breakable as glass. Listen for car tires going over wet road while waiting for the taxi.

* * *

4:20 p.m.

One who comes to understand Krishna as, "The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the proprietor of everything, the unborn, is the most successful spiritually realized person." (Bg. 10.3, purport) In class this morning, a devotee asked candidly how we can accept Krishna, the bluish boy, as the supreme being. It seems "crazy," he said.

What did I reply? I admitted that it does seem unlikely that an educated Western person would accept Krishna as the Supreme Truth. Srila Prabhupada's conviction attracted us. He seemed to know Krishna as his best friend. It's not exactly explainable. We know that outsiders see the pictures of Krishna as depiction of a mythological person, and we don't "somehow. We see them as depiction of the spiritual world.

Still, even if we are here and practicing, we want to actually experience the reality of Krishna. It has to "happen" to each of us; Krishna has to touch us, encourage us, draw us forward into pure devotion. Maybe it's good to imitate the pure Vaisnava's desire to expose himself to constant hearing about Krishna from pure devotees. If we expose ourselves like that, we will be changed. (Sounds like a classic case of "snapping," as the anti-cultists described it.)

". . . and those who are actually in the Vedic line hear about Krishna from authority, and by repeated hearing about Him, Krishna becomes dear." (Bg. 11.52, purport)

Hare Krishna. May I too . . .

Light outside growing dimmer, but the overnight electric lamps shine in here. It's never completely dark, even when the light cloth shade covers the window. My dear Lord Krishna, this is a devotee's home. These devotees say that in the last place they lived, although it was a working-class urban area, the neighbours were friendlier. Here it's quieter, and nicer for the children to play, but the neighbours are cold.

M. went to the temple because a police officer is trying to reach him by phone. Something about his green card application.

Tomorrow two visits "a doctor and one to the Justice Department. Then if all goes well, we'll head out to Wicklow.

Krishna is God. He can be known only by His devotees.

Calling to Him

"My dear Lord Krishna"
and Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna
the chanting by me is
also chanting instead of
Dublin roaming or
hearing "great music." O
Krishna I do so many foolish
things. And still you think
you are worth listening to?

* * *

Leave it all behind, enter Krishna's abode. If you desire it. "My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing before you and can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter into the mysteries of My understanding." (Bg. 11.54)

Does that seem illogical? You have to know Him in devotion to know Him at all.

Saw on display Billy Graham's autobiography, something like "As I Actually Am." Good, old, honest Billy. Dostoevskij's *The Diary of a Writer*. Saw an autobiography advertised as flicker pictures "the way you take a book and breeze through the pages with your thumb so it looks like it's in motion. Interesting idea. Memories. I'm not into that right now. No one writes the kind of books I write "this enormous room filled with anything.

May 5

5:45 a.m.

Twenty minutes before breakfast. When we drove from Belfast, I wondered why I wasn't appreciating springtime in Ireland. And I thought, "I'm a devotee of Krishna. Can't I think of Him and derive benefit?"

"Therefore to become Krishna conscious is the highest stage of yoga, just as, when we speak of Himalayan, we refer to the world's highest mountain, of which the highest peak, Mount Everest, is considered to be the culmination." (Bg. 6.47, purport)

By that analogy we could say, "Don't expect me to climb Mount Everest!" I'd need oxygen tanks and ropes, and I'd have to be expert with a pick. I'd have to be brave. Only a few dare-devils "or fools "would even attempt the ascent.

Yeah, but don't be an underachiever. Prabhupada has supplied us with an elevator by which we can be carried to the top of the mountain. It's Mount Everest, but it's not impossible if we accept the elevator ride. Krishna consciousness is higher than any mountain, Everest or not. We need even more oxygen tanks, more ropes, more picks, to be prepared for even more exposure. That may be true, but because the trip is worth dying for, Lord Caitanya made it easy. Just chant Hare Krishna. I sometimes draw pictures about chanting, showing a man climbing a sheer rock face with his pick, determined to chant sixty-four rounds. Reaching up for *bhava*. Up for attention at the very least.

* * *

Someone gave me a copy of *Etcetera*, by e.e. cummings. Here's something from the Introduction:

"By now the idealized view of the world that had marked his Harvard years was hidden under a tough veneer of expression that appeared in poems about drunks, bums, prostitutes, chorus girls and harsh urban scenery. And in satires directed against politicians, generals, preachers, educators, advertisers, the whole political and social leadership of the United States and the values of its business dominated society. But the genuine tenderness of his sensibility still peeked out in exquisite love poems addressed to Elaine or the woman he loved and later married, and poems that display a sensitive awareness of the beauties of the natural world. The 'i' who spoke in his poems was not only the little man who was pushed around by authority or ground under the wheels of society, but also a Pierrot whose heart yearned for his beloved, or a soft-souled romantic who could feel sympathetic identification with a mouse or a chickadee. These were the years of his earliest volumes of verse, *Tulips and Chimneys* . . ."

Of course, I thought that this really did describe cummings. I have a nostalgia for cummings too, and my sister also read him. The people in this book say that when he died, he was the most popular poet in America outside of Robert Frost. He was the first poet I liked. I even wrote some cummings imitations. But the book's description seems accurate. On the one hand he was who he was, but his life and times and inevitably his poetry was shaped by the terrible events going on in the world at that time "World War I, his being incarcerated in a concentration camp. How could he not develop a tough veneer? Later, we came to appreciate the poems he wrote against the U.S. establishment.

For me, it wasn't his veneer or his tough language, his vernacular, that endeared him to me. It was who he was underneath the toughness. I think it's a shame when an artist or writer has to do act tough and expend a lot of energy maintaining that front in order to express himself. We expect that from ordinary people who choose to remain blind to their own inner subtleties, but we wish more for a sensitive poet. Thinking about this today left me thinking that I would like to let my own real person come out rather than to display a persona. Let whoever I am speak the truth, my truth, and to be confident that this is the best thing I have. It's *all* I really have.

I'm not sure what my veneer adds up to, but I may have developed one due to my experiences in this movement, things that were painful. It's not easy to give up our veneer of cynicism or even individualism to show vulnerability. We have to survive. But we should try for it, at least within ourselves.

* * *

11 a.m., Alien registration Office, Dublin.

Hand shaking. Twinge behind the eye. Africans in line speaking a foreign language. We took a ticket. We're #61. #58 was just called. Those who are refugees or seeking political asylum don't wait for tickets. Many of them come in and go right up to the desk. It makes me nervous seeing people get in line ahead of me because I'm starting to have pain.

The Chinese medicine woman tested me with her electric machine. It supposedly checks the meridians to see where you're blocked. I held onto a metal bar as she placed different bottles on top of the machine. result? She's says I have candida and shouldn't eat sugar. She's confident that if I stop eating sugar, all my headaches will disappear. But my life is so limited. "Headaches every day," I told her. She said that according to Chinese medicine, pain is like a sieve. It drains your energy. Yes, I said. Hare Krishna.

Now writing this to keep from getting worse. Hands tremble in chill.

* * *

The woman at the Alien registration wanted a new letter. I'll have to go back again, probably in three weeks, to take care of that. I was a little mad that Madhu didn't take care of it because I had reminded him about it.

Otherwise, everything went well in both Belfast and Dublin. I didn't have to cancel any classes, although I took Esgic to get through them. Got to meet nice people, and tried to encourage disciples in Belfast. Met Bhadra and Sile in Dublin.

Daruka took us to Wicklow, where we were greeted by a wild goat. The goat persists in staying around the house and won't go away, trying to get into the house, trying to eat whatever he can. Then a hailstorm started, and the stones built up on the windshield of the van and on the road. On the radio playing in the doctor's office this morning a man said that there's no longer definite seasons like winter, spring, summer. Just this weekend it started out with a record warm weather and wound up with a record cold weather.

May 7

12:10 a.m.

Maybe I can leave out of this writing the passing action. It's not important. I want to remember Krishna at the time of death. That's my next big test, right? Not long before I die. Before that, I want to preach in Prabhupada's footsteps, if only in a reduced way. Prabhupada preached into his eighty-second year. I can't imitate that, but I'm inspired to try to follow his example. Let me contribute to his ISKCON, live in it, and never dishonor my vows.

* * *

The demigods prayed, "O Lord, persons who, because of their serious attitude, attain the stage of enlightened devotional service achieve the complete meaning of renunciation and knowledge and attain the Vaikunthaloka in the spiritual sky simply by drinking the nectar of Your topics." (*Bhag.* 3.5.40)

Alone without friends. Is it that I'm too proud? No, I say, it's not that. Is it wrong if I say Prabhupada is my best friend, and even Krishna? I'm also a friend to myself. My writing is a friend, and *japa*. Disciples, the people I preach to . . . I can't count nondevotee authors I read as friends, but in a sense they have been too.

"O Original Person, we are therefore but Yours only." (*Bhag.* 3.5.48) O son of Maharaja Nanda, I'm your eternal servitor, but somehow I've fallen into the ocean of birth and death. Please pick me up and place me as an atom at Your lotus feet. Because we are born under the modes, "We could not act concertedly for Your transcendental pleasure."

* * *

This is an old body, fifty-*seven* years old, and it has stoppages and blockages "poor circulation. What do you expect at this age? But don't make it an excuse not to surrender to Krishna.

Hear Srila Prabhupada. Exercise. Krishna, Krishna, Krishna. Lie down if you have to. Cry and swim and gym and make things up.

(1) He went to the gym.

(2) He read about Diana: "No longer 'Your Highness,' but never again can she lead a private life."

(3) He heard about Doherty, the snooker champ. "He should be an ambassador of Ireland."

(4) He heard what suckler cows are and about the beef industry.

(5) He tided away. He's okay to drink milk, but no pork, eggs, or coffee.

No sugar. He can

Read Chaulkner and Faulkner, but

can he deliver us?

Can he make up a new language a la James Joyce?

At his own risk. With his wrist

that moving joint

a mess along with the human body at death. How to be beautiful, she reads a magazine. Lurid topics to catch the eye, and sports cars.

Finally free, we're finally free

and we have free water

no tax

and can read what the demigods said.

They couldn't act in harmony to please Him, the Supreme Lord,

because they were

in *maya*.

* * *

How can we accept a bluish boy as God?
What *is* God, anyway?
O Krishna.
It's true.

* * *

Poems in Krishna consciousness
by me
needn't be perfect
of course. They are only music to
soothe the beast.
The goat?
O Krishna. No,
Ecce homo, behold
the man
this one in his pajamas.
O Lord, please
forgive us, the demigods pray.
We wanted to serve You
but *maya* intervened
again. Our
ill luck and
poor desires.

* * *

I was reluctant to get up at midnight, but did it anyway. Waiting for some inner signal of spontaneous joy. It hasn't come yet. Glad to be roused anyway, in case I miss anything. Hare Krishna.

* * *

4:15 a.m.

More on e.e. cummings: I don't know what he was trying to do, don't know his mind and heart, how he was being true to himself, and I can't guess. That's how it is with an author or artist "you can only see the product, the writing or the work of art, and respond with who you are. It makes me realize how conscious I want to be as a devotee, and how much I want to take advantage of the process of self-realization so that my writing leads my readers forward into Krishna conscious response.

* * *

We are still in the moving-in stage in this house. There is food, and when they fix the water we'll be in business. Nothing in my life requires complaint. So what if you have a bad foot and can't take a brisk walk? I can still sit here, hunched over my fountain pen.

Play with words. Fountain pen . . . soda fountain "that's what they used to call it. My cousin-in-law, Calvin Brown, worked as a soda jerk. My father teasingly called him (behind his back) Adonis, because Calvin was affectedly muscle-bound, beautiful, not really good-looking like an Italian. Calvin worked at Fiorelli's for awhile. I don't want to launch into a whole array of memories here, but here's a little one . . .

I get up on the revolving stool at the counter and say, "I'll have a vanilla fudge cone please, sugar cone." You had to ask specifically for a sugar cone or you would get an inferior, pasty one. Did it cost only seven cents? I can't remember. Sometimes my father would send me out to buy loose ice cream, as we called it. They would scoop it from a big container into a cardboard box and I'd hurry it home on my bike. Okay, let's get back to the holy life.

The *Bhagavatam* says the demigods are like old prisoners. Sanatana Gosvami was in prison and bribed the guard to get out. Prabhupada explains that you can do anything if you are motivated by Krishna's pleasure.

But it has to be authorized.

Too bad when some people heard this and went wild, pushing dope, buying automatic rifles and using them, saying that smuggling was for Krishna. They could do anything because they were devotees. I'm sorry to have to comment on that. I don't want to join the ISKCON bashers, but we each have a right (in love) to make a few non-virulent asides.

* * *

Cummings is a tough guy writing in vainglory. He's a wise-ass from Harvard, speaking of pimps and whores, then onto Paris full force with the American dialect. Fifty years later the poems jar and intrigue and perhaps also touch you. His references to God are playful and irreverent, and it's clear that sometimes he believes in Him and sometimes he doesn't seem to. Not someone you can actually follow. He'd take you down a cul-de-sac to whorehouses, fair sooth, the Smith Brothers' beards (that was in the 1920s when baseball players wore baggy knickers "I didn't, because I wasn't born yet).

The demigods have finished their prayers. One said they could not cooperate to serve Krishna because they were influenced by *maya*. Another said, "We are Yours." Another said, "You are the father, and You have no father or cause."

The next chapter starts with points about the *mahatattva*, but Srila Prabhupada wastes no time in his purport getting to the *Brahma-samhita*.

Read it and weep. Collect money for the temple. Live there, rise early, and greet others at *mangala-arati*. If you are managing a temple, that is a kind of thinking of Krishna. If you don't live in a temple and the water stops running through the taps, ask yourself whether fixing it is a Krishna conscious activity.

In my case, I say yes, yes it is.

* * *

Swami is the name. They think Swami
is swarthy, wears scarves,
is ensconced in salubrious scarves and
lies on a bed of nails
or is a cheater from India "like so many.

Harpers magazine had the cover story, "What happened to
Swami Bodhi Maya Sacit Brui Padi Boomi Netherwalla?"

I said hold on, you blasphemer, but he got away. They get away with *murder*. I
overheard the adults talking in the front of the car, something about pictures of Krishna
that had been disfigured by demons. We cannot just sit back and accept that. We have to
fight. And we have to refrain from too much worry. It doesn't affect pure Krishna in His
abode or the authorized pictures and our own peace of mind. Even if they disfigure and
make fun and demean and the public goes along with it, we will chant pure Hare Krishna
mantras in mind and voice, and associate with pure devotees who love their Lord and
who won't be contaminated by the demons.

* * *

6 p.m.

I did a pain control exercise. First I relaxed, sitting in a chair, and paid attention to my
breathing, paid attention to my center, and started paying attention to my place of pain
behind the right eye. I started to think of a metaphor to describe what my pain is like. I
came upon the image of a bird who has been pinned down. I changed that to a bird with
a needle through its eye. I watched the bird suffer, pinned down literally by pins. The
point of the exercise is to change your image to an ideal one. I changed my image by
releasing the bird and allowing him to fly away, free.

After the exercise I thought about the possible meaning of my image. I often draw
birds. To me a bird is a free spirit, a playful spirit "what I want to be. As free as the Bird
to improvise my own music in praise of Krishna. A Hare Krishna man. But this bird is
suffering "he's pinned down.

Then in the exercise I went back to breathing and feeling the center experiences " all
in the body. I didn't feel any reduction in pain, but I'm willing to continue this exercise
every day for now, hoping there will be some result.

I already told you what Dr. Kane says at the end of his tape. He says we have to
examine our lives and examine the triggers for pain to see what kind of life we are
leading. "After all, why would anyone want to change their life if the pain was
tolerable?"

Sometimes I think I no longer need pain to make the quality of my life more in
keeping with my nature. The pain has been useful in many ways; it transformed my life
in ways I couldn't have done without it. Now I tend to think the pain is still with me
because I haven't changed enough. Perhaps there's more I have to do, more I have to be,
more I have to face. I wish I could make these changes without being forced by pain, but
I see that as soon as the pain lets up, I begin to think of all the things I should be doing,
or that are expected of me, and I feel the conflict with what I need to do as an individual.
Maybe I can't be trusted to be pain-free just yet.

May 8

9 a.m.

Sharp headache all night. Lasted until now, just going down. Madhu left at 5 a.m. for Dublin. I'm alone in the house, but the goat has jumped back into the yard. He stands against the glass back door, and sometimes pushes against it. An aggressive fellow. I would say he's clever, but probably stupid. Fearless in his own way. Bleating. I decided to leave him alone. Yesterday I saw Patri trying to chase him away, but the goat ran rings around him. Madhu threw stones at him and chased him down the block, but then the goat returned. If I go out, I'll just make a fool of myself. He's a weird presence, like lust or doubt personified. Maybe in his past life he lived in this house and he's still attached to it. Just in case I'll use my blackthorn walking stick and poke at him to show him who's boss. Behold, the human.

Aside from that, it's raining and cold and only my one room is heated. Miserable, quiet rounds this morning. Let me see if I can salvage the rest of the day.

* * *

10:24 a.m.

Piece # 6,000.

The raven flies flap-flap and lands, half gray, half black, on top of the fence post.

Oh man, don't belabor it.

Poverty of spirit, of health. rain. "It could be worse," has become a familiar motto for me.

The goat is here, pressing against the glass door. Stevie is prepared to poke and hit him if he gets angry enough.

* * *

A letter from Guru-seva arrived encouraging me in non-performance art. Let the hand move freely, she suggests. That also applies to writing. I find my hand freer, more unconscious when I draw. Does that make sense? Do the drawings look pretty or deep, tragic, arty? Do they please or repel? Are they lacking Krishna conscious imagery? Or else, why do I always feel impelled to tack on *tilaka* and words like "Krishna"? I just want to.

Rain slanting toward the right. Radiator humming. Patterns crisscross on the skin of my thumb and then change a little higher to horizontal lines. That's art too, the patterns and shapes of a body.

"Get your face changed without surgery" "a sign in the doctor's office.

I don't think my face is so loathsome I need to change it. Anyway, the before and after photos didn't look so different to me. I wonder what that would be like "going to a friend and saying, "I have a new face, but it's still me!"

I am not this hair or chin or mouth.

Point to yourself.

I can't.

Ahah. Your self is *atma* in the heart.

Beyond the body and the mind's chatter is *sastra*.

I'm ignoring the bumps against the house. Blackbird, I see you.

I could go downstairs silently and spy on the goat to make sure he's not eating the lining of the door or making progress in entering the house.

Writing. Pound wrote collages, but now he's archaic. I need not bother to comment on him here. I want to learn to synthesize, in ways that don't seem awkward, my reading of *Bhagavatam* and my writing.

Lord Krishna is the original person, the *Bhagavatam* says "*aham evasam evagre*. He existed before the creation and before all His Visnu expansions. The *purusa-avatars* came from Him.

Wiped out here yesterday by a headache. Earlier yesterday morning I felt waves of bliss, but the head (which lasted almost twenty hours) dismantled my momentum. Looking for it again. During the headache I found myself roaming over my past "details of the Navy, visits to 14th Street in NYC, then kept coming back to myself here in the bed. I realized that I have a privileged position now, and that Krishna has been kind to me. I shouldn't complain. I have no family worries, and no institutional management, yet I fritter away this freedom in superficial worries. I owe it to myself and others to become deeper and more simple.

* * *

Now I'm trying to center myself on the holy name. Trying to pay attention to its features, its sound, its length, its shape. If I can't do it, I'll pretend I can and perhaps that will give me the inspiration to be successful.

* * *

O day of awakening
O poem of reckoning
It took a while to get here.
now sing free
of Marlboro
cigarettes and from
pain,
while sitting
beside my spiritual master's
form. Abide awhile.
Got nothing much to say.
This stuff . . . Lord
Lord You were here
before anything else.
Give me the right
to serve You. (These words uttered with a certain lack of conviction and love
nevertheless come as I try to compose a poem.)

* * *

I have been thinking of going to America. Maybe I've abandoned that country of mine. One devotee once asked me to come to America, and then added that so many American-born *sannyasis* have left for other places and now America is in need of preachers. I doubt I could add much to the preaching there. Wherever I am, I don't do much. And I tend to think of myself as free to go anywhere, not bound to any country. Maybe bound to peace and the search of a life beyond distractions and the chattering mind.

Even in that interest, however, it's good to sometimes change locations. That's because although I am trying to describe the interior landscape, it's inevitable that the "genius of the place" where I am writing comes out. I feel the seasons, see the goat, and add that into my writing. It's good to gather a variety of sense impressions.

Or maybe that's superficial.

Anyway, I'm not another Henry James abandoning America, or a disobedient disciple abandoning his *prabhu-datta-deSa*, and I'll have to think about whether or not I really want to go.

* * *

3:05 p.m.

Feeling considerable resistance to starting this piece. It's cold in the typewriting room. That's the main reason. Plus I've had a day off with yesterday's headache. I'm really starting cold. I have nothing to say. The resistance is the resistance. I could be in a warmer room reading page after page about the universal form, from whom comes the palate by which all *jivas* taste. From Him comes touch, fire, sight, and most important, hearing. We are meant to use our sense of hearing to listen to the *Vedas*.

That goat is still down there. I locked the inner sliding door so he couldn't get in by rubbing, and I highly doubt he will smash his head through the pane, but if he does, I'm sure it would be noisy enough that it would wake me up. I don't have to worry about that.

* * *

Daruka brought lunch. He said he and Uddhava are going tonight to Waterford for a preaching program as a follow-up to the festival. Then tomorrow night they will do a home program at a devotee's house in Cork. They're excited about that. Daruka's wife will milk the cow, and Uddhava's wife will care for the children and her smashed by the rain garden. Always the back-up crew.

"Will you need anyone else to do anything for you until tonight?"

No, I say, you can leave me alone. I have your phone number in case of emergency. It's May 8th and it's almost over. The red marking on my pain calendar has been changed to blue, which means the headache has gone.

How foolish I am to think I will live forever. Let me spend my time reading the *Bhagavatam*. remember those good old days in the '70s when I was in my late twenties and early thirties? I could read with such vigor. There were no *rtvik* controversies then, no ISKCON gurus falling down or stepping up, no threats from the Gaudiya Math. We had only Prabhupada and our own attempts to follow him.

We were all complete neophytes and happy to admit it. Yes, those were the gold old days of simplicity.

Of course, if I remember them more precisely, I can see that they were also full of holes. People were leaving the movement every day, and some of the leaders had a gangsterish mood. We did a certain amount of pretending about that . . . I don't remember. So many problems. I never imagined becoming a *sannyasi* would cure me of all ills, but I took *sannyasa* and began to wander around America, writing only occasionally in the back of the van, usually an ordinary essay with beginning, middle, and end to please my spiritual master and publish in *Back to Godhead*. More often I was lecturing on the basics in temples and colleges.

But it's true: in those days, I loved to read the *Bhagavatam*, and could do it with energy.

* * *

It's 3:30. My assistant is not here. I'm alone with the electric heater, the lamp, the typewriter, and twenty fingers, and the stuff I've learned the past thirty years. I go back that far. It's better than being a priest in the Catholic Church. At least, that's the consensus among Hare Krishna members. But put me among conservative Catholics and you've got an old cult member who left the sanctity of the church even though he was baptized and confirmed. The cults got him, an aged swami became his guru, and he's worshipping a strange representation of God. That's what they'd say. Liberal Catholics might not agree.

And what do the ISKCON leaders say of me? Well, I haven't applied for a check-up in about ten years. They know I'm harmless enough.

* * *

It occurred to me after reading something in that e.e. cummings book, that the *Bhagavatam* is really known only to a few. All the world's divine men and scholars think of it as Hinduism and miss the *bhakti* essence, if they have heard of it at all. I want to be one of those who knows better. I made the right connection when I bought the Swami's volumes. Who could have known? The *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, Lord Caitanya says, is the faultless *Purana*, and it delivers the highest understanding of Krishna. Krishna is also known only to a few, those who are pure devotees, because only His devotees can understand the mood of Nanda and Yashoda, the *gopas* and *gopis*, and how they feel in relation to God.

* * *

The weather was fine and there was no goat in the yard until I arrived and brought the bad omens. Usually they say I bring good weather. Maybe I don't. I just come and go and the universe doesn't have to respond to it. I give a lecture and they say it is good, but two weeks later who remembers it? In two months they'll barely remember my being here at all. "Oh yes, he was here. I remember now. He came here and didn't have

anymore headaches. He was wearing blue shoes with pink tassels. He was always reading."

Well, he could use a drink of water, please. And maybe later, a drink of red grape juice. He offers all he eats or drinks to the statue of the memory of his spiritual master, who when he was here, was the driving force behind the movement. They say his spiritual master is still the leader of the devotees, but all I see is that times are changing and things appear to be breaking up.

At least this one fellow is planning to last until death in the phalanx of discipleship. At least that's what he told us. He'll be telling Prabhupada stories, playing tape excerpts, and looking for ways to remember his guru even in dreams. He sure is growing older.

* * *

O Krishna. I'm not going to talk much of things that don't matter. I want to save my energy for the precious jewel of quietude when Krishna will speak in my heart. If I want to forget Him, He allows it to happen, but when I pray for remembrance, He blesses me. In between, I look for sincerity, attention, and to endure pain, joy, and sameness.

May 9

4:23 a.m.

Reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is theological study, but more than that, it's devotion to Krishna. While reading, we receive a direct infusion from Krishna via Vyasadeva and Srila Prabhupada. Now Vidura is asking Maitreya how the Supreme Lord is connected to the material world. That's a question about God the inconceivable. No wonder people find it hard to accept that the inconceivable appears as a bluish boy more beautiful than millions of cupids. Even if they accept Krishna, they prefer to subordinate Him to the concept of the inconceivable. Something must be more inconceivable than God.

Vaisnavas are pure theists. Supreme Being means Supreme Person. If the Absolute Truth is ultimately impersonal, then how are we ultimately persons? We are not, by the impersonal conception of reality. We are formless, or, according to the Buddhists, void.

Come on, pen, write this. Stop fading out. Get your source of ink flow and tell my story as I try to read the *Bhagavatam*.

The intellect may be satisfied in favor of Krishna by the logical examples and analogies, and by the position of *brahma Sabda*. That is, if it's taught in the *Vedas*, it must be true. That is also the recommended approach taught within the *Vedas* themselves called submissive aural reception. Yet, aside from teacher-student studies, there is the revelation that touches the heart. We call it mystical, but it's the mystery of *bhakti*. Narada experienced it as a boy when he ate the *prasadam* remnants of the Vaisnava sages and suddenly felt cleansed of the modes of material nature. Infectious devotional service occurs when we hear sincere devotees chant and preach, or when we simply observe their activities.

* * *

5:05 a.m.

I don't re-write at all. Maybe that's wrong, or not good for my writing. I want to be first a devotee, a disciple of my spiritual master, and second a writer. Let me say that again: I want to be first a devotee, a disciple of my spiritual master, and second a writer. My service is discipleship through writing, so I write and pray that my spiritual master accepts it. I also hope that my writing will serve others in their own attempts at Krishna consciousness.

What else? Tess Gallagher said about ray Carver that he wasn't one of those poets who are merely sincere, and who use their sincerity as a subtle form of salesmanship to gain attention at any price. She means, they confess and think that confession is bold and courageous. Ray did something else, she said. He spoke for all of us.

Well, I'm not sure *what* I do, except that I don't rewrite. I don't know *how* to talk for all of us. I try to talk for myself and hope others can take it and apply it to themselves.

You can "kill" the soul when you fail in self-realization. When you don't preach to others, that's violence. Dear reader, can you commiserate?

What else? Transcendence, the Absolute Truth "how to put it into a poem? You want to seriously study poetry so you can write it too? You think to do that you have to know what nondevotee poets have written? (I use the word "nondevotee", aware that it's a clumsy thing to do. But what are they ultimately, if they are not Krishna-bhaktas or even *sadhus*?)

Tess G. says that Carver was not one who offered up his reticence instead of what he meant to say. Rather, he gave us amply and with gratitude, expressing love to the people close to him in his life. That's good advice. I want to come out and say it too, and acknowledge what's on my mind and the debts I owe. And I want to stop complaining. But the problem with me is I write every day and am cursed never to throw anything away. Hare Krishna.

* * *

8:12 a.m.

A scenario: you start to read and what do you get? A jumble of jargonish phrases. Why? Because you're not reading openly enough. You find it all too familiar.

"This cosmic universe is created by the Lord for those living entities who are carried away by the illusory thoughts of becoming one with Him by imitation." (*Bhag.* 3.7.4, purport)

That's better. Now consider it. It's simple, clear, exact. Few in this culture will accept this as the purpose of creation. They prefer to say creation has no purpose, or that its purpose is unknown, or they have sectarian reasons "God created the universe for a particular species or religious denomination. Out of all the speculations and partly correct theories, why do *I* accept the *Bhagavatam's* version, and how do I know it is true, exclusively true in some ways?

Is it too much to accept that the *Vedas* came first and that all knowledge is a branch or a sub-branch of Vedic thought? Unfortunately, knowledge as we call it in this world is so often adulterated from the original theistic understanding. Therefore, it takes simplicity to accept what the spiritual master teaches and to correct the lifetimes of wrong information or wrong essence that we've gathered.

Vidura asked how Krishna is connected to the material world. He also asked how the pure soul becomes engaged in nescience. The answer is that the soul becomes influenced by God's *avidya* potency. And Vidura asked how the *jiva* can be put into illusion if the Supreme Lord is present in his heart as guide and well-wisher. These questions will be answered in due course. I can answer them myself, if someone raises their hand in a class or writes me a letter. I'll say, "Hare Krishna. This is what the books say and what I have learned. It's all mighty true." The way to learn anything in earnest is to accept instruction from authorities.

Maitreya was surprised at first by Vidura's questions. It almost looked as if he didn't know the answers. Then he settled in to answer, and homed in on what he had heard from his authorities.

* * *

Rain dripping, birds chattering "sounds pulling me out for a walk into the Wicklow County seat. But my wellies have a rip in them.

Listening to more about Boissen. RS Prabhu is explaining what happened between 1984 and 1987 in what we now call the guru reform movement, of which he was a leader. He said that if you try to reform others without reforming yourself, it will come back on you. Interesting old ISKCON, how the boat rocks from left then again to right, then back to left again. I'm still trying to understand it all.

Maitreya answered all Vidura's questions. He explained that the living entity is confused about his identity. (The Supreme Lord is never confused or under the spell of His own *avidya-Sakti*). The *jiva* is like a person who dreams that his head has been cut off and yet sees it. It's absurd, but that's the kind of illusion in which we live. Not that reality itself is absurd (as Sartre used to say), but our illusion, our thinking that we are God or that we are this body. Absurd.

* * *

Those birds sound inviting. I think I'll take a break.

* * *

9:20 a.m.

I remember this walk, although I haven't come here in several years. It's solitary in the woods. Coming out of Daruka's house, you make a right turn and walk not far before there's an entrance into the woods. It's a logging road and an easy walk despite the slope. The beauty of it is that within moments you're plunged into a pine aisle leading deeper into the woods. At this time of year, the gorse is blooming a gummy yellow, and the green grass holds pearls of water from the rain. There doesn't seem to be a wide variety of wildflowers as there were in Geaglun, but I'm may see more as I become accustomed to the area.

In past years I worked on *Prabhupada Meditations* here, and especially on this walk. I tried to improvise in prayer: "O Srila Prabhupada, you are the spiritual master who seems far away to me, whom I'm really forgetting in my material memory. But you are

with me as I study your books and remain in Krishna consciousness." Thoughts like that. I'm looking forward to coming here every day, even if it's raining. I've got my wellies. Even if they're ripped, they seem to keep out the water.

* * *

3:02 p.m.

We take the self as the body, matter. It's deep illusion. The great poet's wife, herself a poet, spoke of how her husband caught a ten-pound "steel head" fish and what a great gift this was. They walked together to the source of a river, but didn't think to mention God. I'm writing this privately not to put them down but to remind myself that they can't teach me anything. My burden is to worship God, read *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and create my art from that. Even if we say, "Some folks go fishing and some read the *Bhagavatam* and there's no difference," then my way is to read the *Bhagavatam*.

And they're not the same. They're not. Eternal life of bliss and knowledge in Vaikuntha is not the same as dying without knowing where you'll be going, and because you assume all is void, feeling free to kill fish, your only legacy poems which offer no hope. These poets may pay more dues than I do in their acceptance of life as it is, and the input and suffering delivered by their senses, their sex lives, their attempt to make a go of it no matter what. Still, it's a waste.

I have no choice now but to embrace my faith and finish my life honorably, going as far as I can to attain love of God.

The pure soul is not tainted by illusion, lamentation, or misery, but we think we experience these things. We quiver like the reflection of the moon on the water. "A more settled conditioned soul quivers less, but due to material connection the quivering quality is more or less present everywhere." (*Bhag.* 3.7.11, purport)

I quiver too,
my head like a vise.
The ink on a page of
cheap quality paper sinks
through to the next page and
blots and blurs onto the page
where I haven't had a chance to write.
I quiver with doubt
fear. Be steady, I tell
myself. Sixteen-year old
Pradyumna dasa says he has chanted
Hare Krishna all his life. He doesn't
see that it's a problem to vow,
"I shall always chant 16
Rounds a day." But it's hard
he says, to control the mind.
"You have written books on
this and my parents are a
source of inspiration, so I'll
continue with hope."

That's good. I may have
good news for him about myself and
paying attention to the
names. But more or
less we are all
quivering.

* * *

By degrees you can get free of quivering, the misconceptions of self-identity, by Lord Vasudeva's mercy, experienced through the process of devotional service. Even if the paper is cheap and the ink blots on it, you can write as many pages as possible. Be alive in it. Devotional service. "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," they say in America. Never be complacent. Work ever conscious of your goals. Be free of doubt.

* * *

It's nice to be not too cold or too hot and dry from the rain. I like to hear rain beating on the roof when I go to sleep at night. It gives me a sense of security. I know my real security is at the feet of the pure devotees, but still, I like a little rain-freshened air.

Don't you know any pure devotees? No friends at least?

Institutionalized confessors
are okay but if your
ISKCON temple doesn't
have designated
brahmana counselors "
then you've got to find your own "
a friend whose guidance
you can trust.

Yes, I heard that on tape and
I'm wry and
wiggle
and write
and read my
master's books.

* * *

It's the senses that cause the quivering of the soul.

I thought it was those arteries in my head.

"In Chinese medicine," she said (making a career of spleen-chi, Yin and Yang, etc.)

"We say there are no diseases as such, but . . . "

Well, then tell me too, Maitreya, how to get rid of this quivering.

Maitreya says it's not the senses per se that cause the quivering, but when we use the senses for sense gratification. We have to learn detachment, and more than that, to engage all sense activities for Krishna's pleasure.

Well, have you done it?

Maybe I'm off on this one, I don't know.

What?! Don't you even know whether you're doing what you're supposed to be doing, what a surrendered soul would do?

Hmm, I have to admit . . . But I did surrender when I lived in Boston. I worked hard for Krishna.

You wanted to please yourself too.

Is that wrong? Can't it transform me, eventually, into a pure devotee? I'm not madly in love with myself. I'm not a Narcissist.

Narcissus is that guy who thought he was so beautiful he couldn't stop looking at himself. Even an old guy can fall for that.

And the other foolish evil "solipsism.

All these errors are put
down by literary critics.

* * *

Solip Narcus
was quivering in *maya*
seeing only a reflection of his self
in the water of a
puerile poem.
He got smacked by
the critics and seers
and woke up, got
off *maya's* lap and
Reported for duty with
a new name,
Krishnadasanudasa-
anudasa.

* * *

Wiper of tables,
washer of pots,
he heard we should Go Out
and preach, but he quivers at
that assignment
and does the next best
thing,
washing pots in
Krishna's kitchen and
obeying the boss.

* * *

May 10

12:10 a.m.

Approach *Srimad-Bhagavatam* with respect. Gradually you gain the greatest thing. You get filled in on all levels (filled in the way a starved man fills in his flesh when he begins to eat again). For example, you develop a philosophical acquaintance with the knowledge, and that leads you to remembrance. With remembrance comes conviction.

"Simply by chanting and hearing of the transcendental names, form, etc., of the Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, one can achieve the cessation of unlimited miserable conditions. Therefore, what to speak of those who have attained attraction for serving the flavor of the dust of the Lord's lotus feet?" (*Bhag.* 3.7.14)

"By practicing *sadhana-bhakti* one may gradually rise to the point of *raga-bhakti*, and by performing *raga-bhakti* in loving transcendental service one can even control the Supreme Powerful Lord." (*Bhag.* 3.7.14, purport)

* * *

Jeepers and gripes.

Swami, the truth is gonna
bring you down.

Swami you never were "we have
a file on you. It doesn't look
good. Swami, confess your
predilections.

They say it's okay if you admit your wrongs and then try to rectify, but to deny your wrongs is bad. There's sin attached to it because it means you're not trying to please your most important persons "guru, Krishna, and the Vaisnavas.

My wrongs are the failure to chant with attention. But I'm working on it. And I have failed to be humble, have found fault with others, and lack love for Krishna. I don't have a deep preaching spirit, which I guess means I'm not overly compassionate. I also tend to be afraid of the nondevotees, or repelled by them. I'm afraid they'll think I'm in a cult and will despise me (paranoia).

Oh, so much fear "fear of pain, of disease, of death, of displeasing Srila Prabhupada, of doubts. I'm afraid I don't measure up. My life can be immediately overturned because of my shortcomings. Maybe I've become irrelevant to those who used to look to me for support. Maybe we actually burden each other.

O Krishna, please see these faults in me, and grant me attachment to the flavor of the dust of Your lotus feet (*caranaravinda paraga-seva ratih*).

The fact is, our whole being is summed up as deficient when we're in the conditioned state. There's no other position we *can* take. We wouldn't be here unless we were fallen and neglectful of our eternal relationship with Krishna. The only thing that can save us now is to hear regularly from a pure devotee.

Dear reader, I am preaching to myself again. Please know that I write from an overflow of feeling. I have no other currency. I'm waiting to be transformed.

* * *

Spring is confused here. April was more standard in Geaglum. Now it's cold and rainy, and the goat . . .

But I don't have to mention it. I'm just glad I rediscovered that walk through the woods all the way to my ramble-on bridge.

* * *

Swami, the upholstery is
worn-out, machines don't
work well because the
family doesn't have much money.
This country never enjoyed great
wealth like Holland or Portugal, what to speak of
the present super-powers.
I don't live here but
notice a few things and
my body, the flowers "
tiny daisies closed up in
cold and rain, the yellow
gorse passes as a flower,
a bush it is, despised by
farmers.

* * *

4:56 a.m.

Listening to Prabhupada. It reminded me again that my years will soon be up. Suddenly, it will be my turn to die. All I'll have to my credit is whatever chanting I have done. If I get a hundred percent on the final exam, some teachers say, I will be able to go back to Godhead. Fortunately, the final grade isn't everything. The Lord will count in our favor anything we were able to do in service to Him. It will ultimately depend on how much *laulyam* I have for Krishnaloka. real *laulyam* is rare. That's why Prabhupada says we will perfect ourselves gradually. Although sometimes he indicates that attaining Goloka is easy, at other times he gives the impression that if we have the slightest material desire, we won't deserve to go. Krishna will send us back here to pursue it. We have to learn to cry for nothing else.

Prabhupada was lecturing in Ahmedabad and I found myself listening. He said that the Brahmajyoti is subordinate to Krishna. I thought, "This is real knowledge, but people want to know what Prabhupada is doing to help humanity."

* * *

Someone said to me, "What if you left your body? What would I do?" That was selfish of him. He thinks if Sats dies, he may be diminished. He should have thought of

me. I'd be diminished! I'd be dead! But maybe he thought sentimentally that I would go back to Godhead. Well, I don't know. I just watch for the first signal of a headache coming behind the right eye. Here it comes now. That means writing and reading are over until the pain goes away.

* * *

9 a.m.

Merton said that he didn't consider being alone selfish because when he was alone, he felt closer to himself, closer to God, and closer to everyone else. When you accept solitude into your life, you can share what you gain when you return to society. Questions arise in the mind, such as, "Do I want to go to Krishnaloka? Is it possible for to go there?" And then there's the silence in which to pay attention to both inner movings and outer movings in nature. The pine trees are silent, the epitome of tolerance.

There's a chilly tang in the air today, and it's so cold it bites through my gloves. Crows gliding overhead. Crows have an impressive wingspan. I noticed this morning from my window two rabbits, cuddly bunnies, darting out from the bushes into the grass. Suddenly they darted back as a crow passed overhead. I doubt the crow would attack, but a hawk would. Animals live with such fear.

I came out for this walk partly because I thought I should and partly because I had read enough for the moment. I'm not as interested in the questions Vidura is asking Maitreya as I am in other parts of the *Bhagavatam*. That's the austerity. Vidura wants to know about the Manus and how the planets are situated above and below the earth. What would I rather be hearing? It's not that I'm ready to jump headlong into purely *madhurya-katha*. As a matter of fact, when I think of so many young devotees around the world becoming more interested in the details of radha and Krishna's affairs than in the presentation Prabhupada gave, I find myself turning away from it. I know I'm not fit. Prabhupada gave us something special. In the purport to any verse in the *Bhagavatam* he takes us directly to *bhakti*. When we can understand what *bhakti* is, then we will know how to understand the details. To understand Krishna's loving nature toward His devotees, and to hope to taste that "this we have to know first before we can enter *madhurya-rati*."

* * *

9:35 a.m.

I would like to add to what I said earlier. You can't pray nicely to the Supreme Lord unless you have developed a fine affection and love for Him. That's why it's so hard to pray. If you lack love, what will you say? We wait lifetime after lifetime for a drop of affection for Krishna, and in our dreams we wander all over the universe, not always remembering what we are seeking. Is this the train line to Vaikuntha? No, this is a terrible diversion, an attack by demons. Oh, show me the way home.

Krishna is UttamaSloka, which means He is addressed in select words by His devotees.

O Krishna, I too pray to You by reciting the *sastras* words, which I know are pleasing. And I make my own attempts at prayer, in my own language. Please allow me to control my mind and to chant the Hare Krishna mantra with attention and devotion.

* * *

Mundane poets are not all atheists, but it's gauche to mention faith or God. They want the news of the senses and they want to convey it as purely as possible. Often, they can't understand why God would allow so much suffering to go on. Or why all the hypocritical religionists if faith is something real?

In God we trust.

The poet has ways to speak of peace of heart and courage in the face of atrocities.

Well . . .

Then Krishna consciousness bursts in with its raucous *kirtanas* "smashing *karatalas* and banging drums. Sexton said after meeting the Hare Krishnas at Harvard Square, "They know what they know."

What do we know? That by chanting the holy name, we can traverse an entire universe of diversion and arrive at Krishna's lotus feet. Therefore, distributing the holy name is the best welfare work. "The highest perfectional work of charity is to give people in general immunity from the anxieties of material existence. This can be done only by performing activities in devotional service to the Lord." (*Bhag.* 3.7.41, purport)

* * *

3:43 p.m.

Well man, I'm suffering for want of a literary structure. I wanted the openness and here it is. But I had no idea there was such a big plain this side of Texas. The openness was meant to allow me to turn repeatedly to the *Bhagavatam*. I didn't want a big, absorbing literary project that would take me away from the book. So we swing in a narrow compass from book-reading to writing. Small increments of both.

Yesterday I couldn't do much because I had a headache. Today I'm clear, but still don't seem to be able to do much. It reminds me of how repeatedly within the hour the sky clears and all looks pleasant, then it clouds over and a heavy rain falls.

"O Father, O Lord, O Personality of Godhead, the living entities . . . can never have any happiness . . . Therefore they take shelter of the shade of Your lotus feet, which are full of knowledge, and we also thus take shelter of them." (*Bhag.* 3.5.40)

Now I'm up to Chapter Eight where Lord Brahma is described atop the lotus flower at the time of creation. I wasn't there, but I don't think of it as make-believe. Brahma really was perplexed and Krishna enlightened him.

Come on, Lord Brahma is atop the lotus. He tried to search out his origin by climbing down the lotus stem, but he reached "his ultimate time" without finding his own source. He then returned to his seat on the lotus and concentrated his mind on the Supreme Lord. "To cease from personal sense endeavours and to concentrate on the supreme cause is a sign of self-surrender, and when self-surrender is present, that is a sure sign of devotional service." (*Bhag.* 3.8.21, purport)

* * *

4:12 p.m.

Lift it up, man, this is your heave-ho. Dig deeper. You're not so old you can't get deeper. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna coming from my mouth like vapor on a cold day. I can't go for a second walk. You know why. Better I stay in my room and chant and read. If someone sees this, what would he say? Would they throw me back into the action because I'm not using my time well enough? But I'm just tracking what goes on. We all have our troubles, busy people too. All of us lose momentum from time to time. What do we do about it? We continue to work within our limits.

It's clear then rainy then sunshiny out there, and my head clear all day so far. I'm not used to so much pain-free time. If I had it this much time all the time, I might be thinking about how to be a more mighty preacher. But I don't have it often, so what's the point? Stay simple "chanting, reading, writing. That's all there is for me, and I take the beautiful, round form these provide to avoid complication. Tomorrow I'll give time to the community here by speaking on the nature of reading the *Bhagavatam*. I'm ready for it, and then to return to my own process.

Hare Krishna. Plenty of fresh air today.

* * *

Lord Brahma. I remember those old paintings of him that showed him with long hair, like a woman, on all four heads. Who can actually visualize what he looks like? Sadaputa Prabhu tells us to accept his existence as occurring on a different dimension or whatever you would call it "how he has four heads or a thousand heads on one neck. So we think, "There's a Lord Brahma somehow," and we leave it at that. We know he wrote the *Brahma-samhita* and offered his obeisances to Govinda in almost every verse. We know he is the father of humanity as we know it, and the *adi-kavi*. Certainly knowing Sanskrit would help us conceptualize a little better. Sanskrit lends credibility to the philosophical terms we use and helps us to see them in a different light than the one usually associated with Christian theology or mundane philosophical speculation.

I'm sure Sanskrit could help me, but I don't know it. I went through a mill of secular teachings at Brooklyn College, where my egg was cracked open by the Marxist-inclined Drs. Pessen and Alexander. They were hard-core intellectuals. I've gone over this before. I was such a hip, skinny, timid cat. Well, bold in my own way, because taking LSD is bold, or should I say reckless. But it's a form of seeking the Light following the way of Ginsberg and Alpert. The Swami picked me up, and since then, my world has had room for a Lord Brahma.

May 11

12:20 a.m.

Devotional service is pure. The devotees don't ask Krishna for any favors in return for their service. "Thus the Lord becomes a kind of debtor to the devotees, and He can only try to repay the devotee's service with His ever-enchanting smile." (*Bhag.* 3.8.27, purport) The devotees are ever enlivened by that smile, and totally satisfied. I just want

to put on record that although that smile eludes me due to my offenses and my conditional service, something sweet is reaching me. I want to stay with Krishna's devotees.

Seeing in my mind's eye Lord Visnu's form as it is described in the *Bhagavatam*. Actually, it can't be seen through the artist's rendition without being envisioned in the mind upon hearing the words of *sastra*.

It's all we want. We don't need big arguments to prove that a devotee can achieve success through *bhakti*. We need nothing from the material world to prove anything. "He also acknowledged the service of the devotees and vanquished their distress by His beautiful smile." He's a person. A "gigantic" form in person is much more pleasing than nature's mountains and streams. His beauty mocks the beauty of nature.

Driving out doubts seems to be a constant factor in my life. I can't seem to do it just once and for all. The doubts are like mosquitoes, bothersome, tormenting, but to be sometimes ignored and sometimes crushed. I think about that, and the fact that I often express dissatisfaction in my service. These are constants with me, and because I write every day, I can't, in honesty, not admit to them in order to make more pleasant, victorious reading. My victory will be something different, and has nothing to do with writing to please an audience.

* * *

I'm reading "Brahma's Prayers for Creative Energy" (Chapter Nine). The Supreme Lord brings about the creation, and Brahma becomes the secondary creator, empowered by the Lord. This chapter will be filled with themes relevant to my own urges to create in writing and art. Creation is sometimes evoked by passion and sometimes by the desire for pure service, and sometimes it's mixed. To become successful in any creative act in the world, Srila Prabhupada states, we have to take shelter of the Supreme. "Lord Brahma, being surcharged with the mode of passion, became inclined to create . . . and he began to offer his respectful prayers."

As I read *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, I receive a confirmation that I can attain the highest level through the creative process. Of course, reading should be followed by other acts of devotion, and writing should be shaped by reading, but there is no harm to get lost in that world of reading and writing, in the talks of the great devotees and then in describing them. "*Para-bhakti*, or spontaneous love of God, is the basis of an intimate relationship with the Lord. This highest stage of relationship with the Lord can be attained simply by hearing about Him (His name, form, qualities, etc.) from authentic sources like *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, recited by pure, unalloyed devotees of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 3.9.5, purport)

* * *

Dreamt again about our institution. It's interesting that I dream so much about that. Of course, the dreams always give an exaggerated account of what's happening in reality, or a symbolic account. Last night I dreamt we were approved by the Catholic Church as a bona fide movement interested in good over evil. In the same dream, I saw a temple being floated from India to America. It gradually came apart in the water and we each

had to hold onto the beams of wood as they floated to their destination. In the dream, I had nice association with Godbrothers as we swam in the dangerously deep water trying to keep the thing together.

* * *

4:45 a.m.

Thoreau wrote beautiful passages about uninhabited roads and his walks on them. He preferred not to meet anyone when he was walking. "Now I yearn for one of those old, meandering, dry, uninhabited roads, which lead away from towns, which lead us away from temptation, which conduct to the outside of earth, over its uppermost crust; where you may forget in which country you are traveling; where no farmer can complain that you were treading down his grass . . . along which you may travel like a pilgrim, going nowither . . . where you can pace when your breast is full, and cherish your moodiness; where you are not in false relations with men, or not dining or conversing with them; by which you may go to uttermost parts of the earth. . . . There I can walk, and recover the lost child that I am without any ringing of a bell . . . "

He was able to perceive a July morning fog, and through it, the sounds of a rooster. I don't see things quite so clearly in Ireland. This isn't where I grew up and the uninhabited roads here, although welcoming, do not speak the same language. Thoreau says uninhabited roads make you forget the country you're in. You could be anywhere in the world. Thoughts are the important thing as you walk, and nature becomes only a background that delivers peace. For me, I translate peace into prayer. "Granted that you are out of doors, but what if the outer door *is* open, if the inner door is shut! You must walk sometimes perfectly free, not prying or inquisitive, not bent upon seeing things. Throw away a whole day for a single expansion, a single inspiration of air." (August 21, 1851)

* * *

I am reading. Hare Krishna. Another good day. See how far I can go with it. The goal I want to achieve is to feel directly connected with Krishna when listening to Sukadeva Gosvami speak. The reality of Krishna consciousness is ecstatic. We must be aware of this goal and not think reading means only study and nothing else. We don't read to gather material to preach to others or even to gather information, although those things are important. We read to find our Krishna conscious heart. I want to hear Vidura say he's heard enough of the ordinary topics. Now he wants to hear spiritual *katha* "anything in connection with Krishna. We want that same direction, and we want to ask for it as personally as possible. Tell the speaker what you prefer and enter the flow of *bhakti*. It all depends on your being a *Sraddhadhana*, a faithful reader.

O Krishna, Hare Krishna. What time will I meet with Madhu this morning? The halcyon days, the millions of books I haven't read. There is no time for anything but concentrated Krishna consciousness. reading, writing, and chanting.

Over the edge, fall over.

Don't know what to say.

* * *

Trade noises: turn off the electric
heater which blankets out everything "a good
feature if you're parked at a gas station
but here when I turn it off I get
the rain beating on the skylight window.
I trade that for the typewriter
to get my immortal thoughts down.
I could trade that for the relatively silent
scratching of the pen which would enable me to
tune-in to the rain beating down at the same time
and drive out thoughts of the filthy goat.

* * *

That goat walked into the house yesterday when
Praghosa left the door open for a minute.
They got him out by opening the back door and
Madhu walked indifferently, at an angle, toward him,
not looking at him
until the goat saw he had enough space
and he bolted out the open door.
That's a noise too, in the mind
in the brain . . .

* * *

Noises means stuff that's
bothering you so you can't love
Krishna in your heart
in your *atma* soul.
I'm afraid sometimes to think
what it means to surrender.
My mind will scream.
I can't do it I say.
I want quiet and peace.
But then you'll get a wailing next life.
The sound of blood in your own ears,
your own next body, no end of
sirens and bombs falling,
and of falling short.

* * *

Looking through the published *ISKCON in the 1970s*. I was lecturing in the American colleges in those days. I want to look at these diaries again and remember what I was doing to please His Divine Grace and to spread the word. I was trying to fulfill my duty as a *sannyasi*. Did I ever stop to think in those days whether I was becoming satisfied by my own activities? I don't think so. I went as far as duty, and stopped there. Everything else was *maya*. Srila Prabhupada was present in the world to pull us up short if we forgot it.

Sometimes it seems we are more willing to examine our happiness against our definition of surrender now that Prabhupada has disappeared. Does that mean we are more willing to venture into *maya*? No, I don't mean to say that. I mean, we tend to know we must also satisfy ourselves, and that our lives are uncertain. We're trying in a different way to surrender. I wouldn't trade it for what I was back then as a "chalk dust preacher," a GBC man who didn't know how to manage, a member of ISKCON who, admittedly, felt ashamed at what we were doing in the airports (change-up), but who also felt guilty that I dared to question our own sacred cow. I wouldn't trade my present for my past. And if someone were to ask me back then why I didn't write the way I'm writing now, I wouldn't have even been able to consider it.

Anyway, why try to judge the past against the present? Our duty is not to judge, but to live, so maybe I'll get a walk in this afternoon. Hare Krishna. Prabhupada's says it's a spot-life.

* * *

11:58 a.m.

Those who don't chant and hear of the Supreme Lord are unfortunate "because of supernatural control due to their offensive activities performed simply . . . for sense gratification." The devotees kindly approach them and try to persuade them to perform devotional service.

Preachers again. They had a follow-up program in Waterford and only one person attended "he was from Wexford and was already chanting sixteen rounds a day. The next night no one attended the home program in Cork. It's tough. They say they didn't advertise enough. Even advertising is part of preaching. So many practical arrangements to induce the slow and bad people to hear about Krishna.

Madhu says he's getting soft on the goat. "He has a nice face," he said, and burst out laughing.

Has it really come to this? Are we really going to just allow him to sit against the window-door and dominate the yard scene, forcing us to be alert at every moment lest we leave the door open?

I'm not sure I can agree that the goat has a nice face, but we're already co-existing together. I thought of throwing a bucket of water on him to chase him away, but he'd just come back and I would feel diminished, "petty," as D. H. Lawrence said when he chased a snake by throwing a bucket at it.

Trying to make and maintain devotees is a noble endeavor. You need to be convinced that people are suffering for lack of Krishna consciousness. Give it to them. Make the effort, as Srila Prabhupada did.

Drowsy. I look at my watch. The nondevotees suffer insomnia in the form of *maya* of various sorts. They need devotional service.

Devotional service, devotional service, I get tired of hearing it, or rather it doesn't penetrate. The mere words brush off my exterior. What do they *mean*?

Bhag. 3.9.11 is well known because it states that we worship the particular form of Krishna to which we are attracted, and Krishna will appear in that form before us.

* * *

2:35 p.m.

Keep coming back to it: "Krishna does not disclose Himself to a casual or inauthentic worshiper to be exploited." (*Bhag.* 3.9.11, purport) The demigods are *sakama* (self-interested) devotees because they do not think of others, "and therefore they are not able to satisfy the Lord perfectly, whereas the pure devotees take the missionary responsibility of turning nondevotees into devotees . . ." (*Bhag.* 3.9.12, purport)

Try to grasp what it *means* to be a pure devotee who wants only to please Krishna. Feel it even if it's not yours yet. What it would be like?

* * *

Praghosa said they won't be celebrating Lord Nrsimhadeva's appearance on Wednesday when it occurs because the men will be working. They plan to wait until Sunday. I'll observe it mid-week. I told M. that it has been twenty-five years since I received *sannyasa*. Somehow, people calculate twenty-five as more noteworthy than twenty-four or twenty-six.

M. said, "We'll get you a silver *danda*."

Maybe I should receive a *danda* of punishment because I have fallen short of true renunciation. No, I'm just joking.

Lord, the books,
tell true life
torn out, perforated
from the quiet life,
much of it my own self
because I can't tell
of others.

We each value our private life so much that we wouldn't like to see even a portion of it published. Others will naturally misunderstand. We will open ourselves to criticism. It's too close to who we are.

Lunch and then it's over.

* * *

4 p.m.

The luxury of walking alone in a rich, spacious acre of pine woods. Plenty of gorse blooming. Far ahead I saw three deer break loose "long necks, white tails. Think of the white page with the print on it, *Srimad-Bhagavatam* waiting for me back in the house.

Some devotees may prefer to read *Caitanya-caritamrta*. One person even told me that the *Bhagavatam* is too old, not "pure" Krishna consciousness the way Lord Caitanya's pastimes are. I say Srila Vyasadeva is the heavy-weight *sastra* compiler, and this work was compiled in his maturity. Can we be more mature than Vyasadeva, or is it that we don't understand it? Lord Caitanya called the *Bhagavatam amala-purana*. I'm fortunate to read it, and lucky, too, to get this breather in these woods.

* * *

5 p.m.

I read Lord Brahma's prayers to the Supreme Lord, the tree of the cosmos, the transcendental Supreme God. Then the words and concepts started to jumble and it became harder to concentrate suddenly. I could have pushed on, but I came here instead. Before reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* I looked at Thoreau's journal. He lived for only forty-four years, and in that time, developed his pleasingly and uncanny intuition that the divine was present in nature. By contrast, Lord Brahma lives billions of years and is attuned directly to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna. Lord Brahma and devotees like him are beyond our purview, yet they have left records as certain as Thoreau's.

Thoreau's work is still within Krishna's kingdom, his little bit of realization. He writes, "I omit the unusual "the hurricanes and earthquakes "and describe the common. This has the greatest charm and it is the true theme of poetry. You may have the extraordinary for your province, if you let me have the ordinary. Give me the obscure life, the cottage of the poor and humble, the work days of the world, the barren field, the smallest share of all things by poetic perception." (Thoreau, August 28, 1851)

* * *

Krishna, Krishna, Krishna.

Will I be able to sustain another round of reading tonight?

Keeping accounts.

My 1970 diaries tell only what's happening in the life of an ISKCON practitioner. He keeps his identity immaculate, and he never wavers. I'm not less sure of myself twenty-five years later, but I allow myself more free expression and admittance of what before I could not even examine. This is a later stage of life.

O Ledger man, tally the days expenditures and income. My heart beat faster on the walk, and I felt chilly. It was a mistake to wear a *dhoti* without the sweat pants. Eventually, I warmed up. Good exercise. That makes both an expenditure and a profit.

Pen cuts, ink traces "both are part of the miracle man discovered long ago. God intended us to use our intelligence and handwriting and language to understand Him.

* * *

More to add: rain on slanting roof at 5 p.m. Another day going (expenditure). Thoreau lived for forty-four years. It's hard to believe my time is almost up. Because life is so vivid and continual and the only state we remember. We don't recall being dead or going

through death. We can't remember anything about our past lives. Therefore, death and rebirth remain abstract despite our best efforts to bring them into something more real. Who can imagine that they will cease to exist as they presently know themselves? We see it happen to others "to everyone "but it's still abstract in our own case. In the meantime, the living carry on their daily work, pleasure, maintenance, and listening to the rain on the roof while their precious life drips out of them. The lower forms of life, the thousands of plant, insects, birds, and beasts, most of them in low consciousness, live only briefly.

Kali-yuga is hard on humans. There are so many diversions in which to waste our time.

Add it up. All zeroes.

If Krishna is God, the single greatest person, human-like yet supreme, why do so few people recognize Him today? Because they are fallen. They have been misled by rascals. Krishna says, "No one knows Me in truth." Krishna pulls a curtain between Himself and the living entities because they are sinful.

Yeah, but.

Yeah, but.

Pantheists and others say . . .

monists say, Christians . . . cummings,

wise guys

don't even say it. They'll never understand. But never measure yourself against the conclusions reached by the vox populi. Stick with the devotees.

May 12

12:06 a.m.

"May He be merciful toward me so that, as before, I may be empowered with the introspection to create, for I am also one of the surrendered souls who are dear to the Lord." (*Bhag.* 3.9.22)

* * *

"The Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead, is always the benefactor of the surrendered souls . . . I pray that I may not be materially affected by my works, for thus I may be able to give up the false prestige of being the creator." (*Bhag.* 3.9.23)

You'll become dear to the Lord if you truly recognize that He gives you all your abilities. Don't own anything falsely. You are not a poet, a creator of any kind. You are simply an instrument. And, since creative power comes from Him, use it in His service.

* * *

I detect in myself an unwillingness to let go in free-writing even while I'm attracted to it. I tried it in *Shack Notes* for the first time, then later in *Forgetting the Audience* and other books. The process is that you write quickly for an hour, cutting below the surface noise. I trusted that it would develop into an expansion of my usual devotional service; it would become a further step. I was not trying to defy my subordination to the Supreme

Lord, but to break out of stereotyped limits of what that relationship was supposed to mean. It was like trying to go from mechanical to spontaneous.

Why do I hesitate now? Of course, my health limits me from pushing too hard on the accelerator for such long periods at a time. Still, I ought to let go sometimes and to see what will come up. I'm still convinced that it's part of my offering, or my attempt at least to find my offering.

In *A Poor Man's Bhagavatam* I used something I called "hand writ," which I derived from the surrealist's concept of automatic writing. The idea is to let the hand move on its own. There are other methods too. For example, when a verse says "almost all" the dirty things will be removed when we hear the *Bhagavatam*, I record that information, then range out from it.

For now, I guess I want to stay with the basics and assure devotees of them too. Chant *japa*, accept that Krishna is God, and be safe from the bomb.

Thought of Madhava's son Srivasa. When he's eighteen, I'll be seventy-five or dead. I'm not likely to initiate him. What will life be like for these children in the next century? Will the coming decade blow the material illusion apart? European Economic Community, indeed. Mont Blanc ride. Anything could happen (and usually will).

A good hand writ will take you down a ski run, and when you want to slow down, it will steer you back to the *Bhagavatam* track. Brahma prays. That means truth, feeling, assurance you're talking to God. The expression of the desire to be Krishna's instrument. Pray to be a chanter who pays attention. Pray to stay in the *bhakti* ballpark.

* * *

Lord Brahma was praying while looking upon the gigantic manifestation of GarbhodakaSayi Visnu, whose eyes were opening from His period of *yoga-nidra*. Can you imagine? Brahma had that vision. He didn't have to question whether God existed, but he had to earn his *darSana* by hard penance. He prayed and then "became silent, as if tired from his activities of penance, knowledge and mental concentration." (*Bhag.* 3.9.26)

You can hold homemade hamburgers together with grated apple if you are on a no-egg diet, said the doc.

O Krishna, You are *svarat*.

Someone asked me which of my books was my favorite. I don't know, they're all imperfect. I like some parts of a lot of them, but sometimes things are flawed due to my negativity born of my inabilities.

But they're all flawed in one way or another "*Entering* "any book. I like *Memories*. Wonder if my books will be like cummings', outdated after half a century.

Be simple. Maybe then you'll still look good in two hundred years.

* * *

Maitreya says, "In spite of my inability, whatever I have been able to hear (from the spiritual master) and whatever I could assimilate, I am now describing in glorification of

the Lord by pure speech, for otherwise my power of speaking remains unchaste." (*Bhag.* 3.6.36)

As I read Prabhupada's purport, I saw that he was affirming my free expression. You can't stop consciousness, so you simply have to use it in Krishna's service. *That's* how we remain chaste.

Of course, someone may assume that allowing the consciousness means repeating everything strictly according to how the previous *acaryas* said it without any expression of your own. But consciousness flows fresh at every moment. Therefore, we should either think and praise Krishna spontaneously on our own, or we'll be spontaneously driven by the modes of nature to speak nonsense. "It does not matter whether the Lord's glories are fully explained or not. One must attempt to engage one's bodily, mental and verbal activities in the transcendental glorification of the Lord. Otherwise such activities will remain unchaste and impure. The existence of the conditioned soul can be purified only by the method of engaging mind and speech in the service of the Lord.

The *tridandi-sannyasi* of the Vaisnava school accepts three rods . . . "

This doesn't give me (or anyone) *carte blanche* to say whatever I like. I have to always steer to Krishna. But go with the wind and make your interest one with Krishna. There's no such thing as unconsciousness, Prabhupada says. You're always conscious and never silent.

* * *

4:10 a.m.

Blissful to be up sipping warm lemon juice, with the electric heater humming and the desk lamp lit and typewriter going. It could be otherwise.

What did you learn? That sages such as Vyasa would not have spent their time on Krishna if He was a mythical creation, that Sukadeva was perfect in Brahmavadi realization, but that he still became attracted to Krishna's pastimes. Swamiji taught us of them " Narada, Sukadeva, Maharaja Pariksit, all the great souls, and the ones in Vrndavana, who are the best. Uddhava went to Vrndavana to examine the *gopis'* devotion and found their love the highest. He didn't want to pray to them directly because he was afraid they would reject his request, so he begged their blessing to become a clump of grass in Vrndavana. Then in the future, he could get the dust of their lotus feet on his head. That's both a metaphor and a direct truth.

I'm not interested in systematic studies of the Krishna conscious books. I just want to read regularly because it will please Srila Prabhupada. He has distilled the essence of nine great commentators' *tikas*, and if I read the Bhaktivedanta Purports, I will glean everything.

A string of prayers in the *Bhagavatam* chapters is like a string of precious jewels. Brahma says, "Now I am asking you to protect me in the work of creation of the universe. I don't want to fall down by associating with the demons." He knew it was possible. It is possible for me too. I also pray to Krishna to protect me. Then I have to earn His protection by staying with the fire of devotion. Keep mowing down diversions; avoiding nondevotee association even in books. The outer world is blaring away, full of sex and other repulsive things. Stay clear of it.

Prabhupada said that he's always working. He said he had a taste for it and that he didn't become fatigued. "It is my personal experience, I'm always doing something reading or writing, something reading or writing. Simply when I am hungry I take some food, and when I am tired I go to bed." Like that you work and gradually you notice the body's demands. You take care of them, but then you keep going in Krishna's service. The particular services Prabhupada mentioned are also dear to me.

Bhakti-rasankirtana-rasankirtana-rasankirtana-rasankirtana-rasa says it makes him cautious about his own life. Martial arts or government protection cannot stave off inevitable miseries though. He needs Krishna's protection.

* * *

I'll answer the letter about whether growing flowers in a home garden is devotional service. Letter-writing can be as difficult as this writing. In this case, the garden is not a mainstream ISKCON project with a product directly applicable to the preaching movement. It's just a garden. I want to encourage her. The answer to her question may not yet be clear, but I feel a kinship between her gardening and my free-writing, my wild gardening. Her husband grows vegetables "more useful.

Sip the lemon juice and savor it. It's bittersweet citrus. This body is a temple of disease and pain, and the senses are networks of paths leading to death. But we're okay for now. No noticeable cavities in my four remaining teeth.

* * *

I want to speak strongly to my friends, and I don't want to hide behind words as some poets do. I want to tell them I love them, to tell each of them. I may love some more than others, but I feel no skin love for any of them. I was there when Prabhupada used that phrase, "skin love," to Yogi Denkar on the telephone. I also want to tell them that I have made mistakes. I have barely escaped with my life and reputation. Krishna has taken care of me. Whatever else happens, I have come to understand that you shouldn't live for yourself but for pleasing guru, Krishna, and the Vaisnavas. They want us to practice and to preach "both. I want to say that straight.

It's dawn and I still don't care about that goat downstairs. I saw him jump nimbly from the grassy bank onto the shed's tin roof, then down to the ground. I realized he's a cousin to those mountain goats that climb to the tops of peaks and stare down at human mountain climbers, those goats that resemble ancient hermits with beards. Goats are both stupid and wily. They also appear clumsy, yet they are graceful and too fast to catch.

Anyway, they've given up on catching the goat. I've heard no more talk about it. Since Madhu mentioned his nice face, I have seen him differently and with more kindness. He's got gray, shaggy hair, shades of black to light gray, actually, like an aging man. It has been richly combed by nature. And a black beard to prove his virility. They say goats are lusty, and that they'll eat anything. This one seems content to hang around the house and nibble fresh grass.

O Krishna, please let me read Your books.

* * *

8:30 a.m.

Just a few yards from the house I saw a gray and red rag lying on the road. As I came closer, I saw it was a just-killed animal. There wasn't much left of it, but I noticed the ears and looked away. Had it been eaten alive or run over by a car? My not wanting to look at it seemed a denial of the truth. The underbrush is bursting nowadays with rabbits, but they all become "recycled" soon enough. I don't intellectually deny that they are killed, but I don't like to stare at death in the face. Neither do I like to think that's the only reality of material life worth focusing on. What's the value of life that can end so quickly on the road?

Prabhupada says philosophy means to keep death always in front of you. He means that death should force us toward the resolution of life's miseries. It should strengthen our resolve to see Krishna face-to-face. After this scene, I began to chant with earnestness until gradually, my mind turned back to plan-making.

* * *

Just outside the turn-in for the logging road, there's a sign "Rathdangan Community Alert." It's put into the ground with a sturdy steel post, and it's an official sign, apparently put up by the government. Daruka has a sticker on his window that says the same thing. But it's between that sign and Daruka's house that I saw the smashed rabbit. No one was alert to protect it. On my walk back only half an hour later, I thought the carcass had been removed, probably by carrion-eating birds. No, it was still there, but smaller and flatter than it seemed at first. Did I want to examine it?

* * *

9:12 a.m.

"I pray only to engage in His service in the creation of the material world, and I pray that I not be materially affected by my work, for thus I may be able to give up the false prestige of being the creator." (*Bhag.* 3.9.23)

The Supreme Lord told Brahma not to be depressed or anxious. "What you are begging of Me has already been granted." (*Bhag.* 3.9.29) A worker in Krishna consciousness must always be aware of his subordination before the Supreme Lord. Only then can we consider our work a success. Although Krishna gives the strength and intelligence to work from within the heart, we have to work with penance and perseverance to receive Krishna's mercy consciously. This is the answer to Brahma's concern that he not be contaminated by his work. And it's the answer to our own question. We have to always remember our eternal relationship with Krishna. In this way, we can learn to see Krishna everywhere and in all things and we won't be affected by the outer coverings. If a devotee does become bewildered by Krishna's energies, it will become a lesson for his further advancement.

O feet, you are tender. Post this sign: "No flywheels here, and no Dalai Lama." No, he's okay. He wears a sleeveless vest, and he's getting older like all of us "still meditates too and tries to save his people from Chinese persecution. And they want to start a llama farm here. Srila Prabhupada says plans to spread Krishna consciousness may appear material, but they're not. Therefore, there's no point judging others.

Community alert. Is anyone robbing a house? Do we prowl around like the bloodhound on the Crime Stoppers poster in New York to see? Krishna, Krishna, Krishna. Lord Brahma prays and Krishna assures him.

Krishna consciousness means to see Krishna everywhere. You can't rubber-stamp that realization. You have to actually see Him. It takes qualification. That's what Lord Krishna is telling Brahma who is highly qualified. Even lacking that realization, we should cling to the *Bhagavatam*, hear it, and do our duties faultily, neophyte as we are. Shed your *japa* tears.

* * *

4:47 p.m.

I rally around the prayers of Brahma to Lord Krishna in His GarbhodakaSayi Visnu form. I also rally around Lord Visnu's words spoken to Brahma offering His protection. He told him that he was able to make his prayers by His mercy. I wonder how I will apply this today because I want to be included.

I am included because I'm in the ISKCON race, one of the old horses running in the traces. Is that called a sully? No, it's a sulky. My father used to call my mother Sully. remember that? Sully, a silky Sullivan. I am of that race from the past and now of another race.

I would like to celebrate something. We could prepare quiet croissants or scones with soft butter, bean soup . . . I would like to acknowledge, not too loudly, but in a convincing way, that I have been a good soldier, not only up until 1984, but right up until the present. But I would only say it quietly.

* * *

The poet said that these are bad times. Democracy has eroded. Marx was right about some things, and the rosenbergs were framed, she said. These are sad times. The poet saw a film about the sadness of a young woman who was mistreated. I didn't see that film. The body's pain, she said, should never be divided. Oblique talk. What does she mean?

The rabbit was squashed as flat as a glove. It was so small I couldn't see it on the way back until I came right up to it.

That woman who wanted to know if her flower garden counted as service "she already feels assurance about that in her heart. She so much loves her service that she will garden even in the pelting rain while her husband cooks for the children. I said that by getting such deep satisfaction (and by weeding), you will become steady in devotion. Go on gardening.

I wrote to another devotee who answered questions about initiation in ISKCON. I approved of his responses.

* * *

Smell attention, feel its shape in the vowels and consonants in the Hare Krishna mantra. Feel them coming out of your mouth like smoke. Imagine the mantra as Krishna

Himself. Imagine you are greeting a guest. Just pay attention to the sound. And if you feel like you are trudging through sand when you are chanting, push on anyway. The spirit of reform is in the attempt to pay attention.

Thinking about the society for Krishna consciousness. Prabhupada told us to become Krishna conscious and spread it to others. Spread it like butter, like wildfire, like a fad. It *was* a fad in 1969 in Britain and elsewhere, but it didn't spread so far and even slowed down in the '70s. Before we knew it we were becoming our own worst enemy. Get out of the airports, he said. You are ruining your chances. Was it too late? No, ten years passed by and they had forgotten us. Although by then, the anti-cultists were hitting hard. Then in the '80s we *were* a cult "of gurus and disciples. That came crashing down again and again and again, the towers, the empires, builders falling hard. I escaped with only my thin hide and my *danda* and my trauma. Now I wonder if my disciples actually love me, and when they write, what it is they want.

I read in a position paper that we shouldn't do solitary *bhajana*. And don't live in Vrndavana. All that's still suspect because it appears when you do those things that you are shirking preaching and managerial responsibilities. How can you walk a primrose path when the rest of us are walking a thorny one? Translate as: how come you tell others to practice minor virtues when you avoid surrender to the major ones?

These are the teachings of Anton Boissen and Anton Chekhov and Charles Dickens and Charles Lord and Henry Adams and Charlie Henry of THS. This is getting more oblique by the minute. You don't know me unless you've read a book called *Tom Sawyer. My Search Through Books* chronicles certain information that may also be useful.

I am playing with your mind. Please forgive me.

Now ladies and gents, here it is, the world's most famous place.

Vrndavana

where I don't spend much time

because the underground may get me,

or if I live in the Guesthouse I may

free-write and say something crazy like,

"Someone is coming to shoot me." What nonsense.

You're supposed to go to Vrndavana simply to surrender to Krishna.

But I'm not going this year.

Listen, I'm clear "my head, I mean "and I'm good. My assistant is going to sing every month at the festivals, and while he's away ,I'll be alone to write my odes and sonnets.

But you know, everybody writes from where they are at in time and space and in relation to their mothers and father. In my case, Father Hicks was the last Catholic priest I spoke to. In fact, he is the only one I ever talked to, and I was not in my right mind at that time, but confused.

Gone from that now,

a lapsed Catholic.

Now the Swami is my Pole star. I know I always say the same things.

I go back there again and again. I grew up in the institution. Had a top place. Now you could say I'm retired,

you could actually say that.

I've been forced by pain to live a quiet life

behind the lines.

(We here in the army have to use metaphors to hide our secrets.)

I'm behind the lines, and some are on the front lines, meeting the opposition.

Back or front, we're all opposed by the material energy. We all have to fight to bring Sita back to Rama, to situate Yudhisthira on the throne, to kill the demons, to overcome complacency and schisms.

Well okay, I've got it easy in one sense, but there's no end to the battles.

Krishna told Brahma He liked his prayers. Then He sent him out to do his job. No one else could do it. Yes, it was material, but it was done in Krishna's service. There had to be a universe because that's what we *jivas* wanted.

We will be reading about how Brahma created various vicious creatures, but we already know (from previous readings) that he was protected because he prayed not to fall down and not to claim ownership over anything that he did.

I got a letter today. I'm fifty-seven plus six months. We chose a morning ferry, but we don't know yet if we can get tickets. I'll send my reply by mail filled with Sastric overtones. I'm a bookworm, after all, but at least I read the right books. The thing is, we need people like me. The thing is, I can't do otherwise. I am the interlocutor for your own cause. Finally I'll get tired of the artifice and say a few honest words that will ring true, look good, like a decent meal, or a forest.

Only devotional service is forever, the book says. I try to repeat it. I like listening to Sadaputa Prabhu. He says it is plausible that there are higher dimensions where the Vedic reality takes place. Ravana's ten heads exist there.

He said the embryo grows, but it's a mystery to the scientists. They don't really know how it happens. The soul is complicated. How can so many souls move on to new bodies after leaving the present ones? What organization is there to ensure that everything is just? Only the Lord and His agents. What scientist can see that? We understand how it is happening because we read *sastra*.

May 13, 1997

12:15 a.m.

Moving so fast now. How weighted are these words, and how clear? When you approach the *Bhagavatam* and it seems old and familiar, that's just the beginning. You wouldn't want to rise so early to read something new and speculative, or relative, would you? You rise to be with your spiritual master. Yes, again and again.

"People are wrongly attached to the gross and subtle bodies, but they should be attached to Me only." (*Bhag.* 3.9.42) Only on re-reading does it start to come through. I should (and want to) love Krishna. He is beyond the purview of the senses and the material mind, but I see symptoms of His presence everywhere. Become humble and chant His holy names.

Krishna is the basis of all love. We are His eternal parts and parcels. Constitutionally, we love Him. When we forget this "basic principle of love for everything," then our love is flickering, and definitely not fixed on reality. The more we focus love on unworthy objects, the more we'll forget our original love of God. Revive this one love and other loves will come to you naturally. Reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is only for this purpose. Please Lord, let me love You.

The *yogis* who want to merge with Paramatma don't love Him. Therefore, they cannot take advantage of His presence in their hearts. Theoretical knowledge of Brahman or even of the Supreme Being is not sufficient. We need affection.

* * *

Please have faith in your own day and way. It starts with me. I have to feel reverence and joy for the life I've been given. Krishna has been kind and I should be happy. When pain comes, I should also accept that. Pain doesn't stop realization, even if it stops activity. Pain can be used to increase attraction to the activities of devotion.

I keep fighting to gain attention and to invest my consciousness in Krishna. Reading is one thing, but in chanting, I have learned to hear each word of the mantra and to go directly to the affectionate relationship I have with Lord Krishna. I do as I am told directly by Srila Prabhupada. I enact my faith blindly. I call on Krishna and carry out what I read.

Reading . . . Maitreya explains that Brahma composed himself after hearing Krishna's encouraging words. He then dealt with the situation of the devastating water surrounding his tottering lotus seat. "Long penance and transcendental knowledge of self-realization had matured Brahma in practical knowledge, and thus he drank the wind completely, along with the water." (*Bhag.3.10.6*)

Srila Prabhupada writes that Brahma's struggle is an example of the continued fight between every *jiva* and the illusory energy. We are each tottering on our "seat," and battered by violent winds and high waters. We have no control. Science can't help us gain control. All we have is Krishna's protection and our relationship with Him.

* * *

The Supreme Lord had already impregnated the seeds of all the planets in the lotus stem. The *jivas* were also all generated in seedling form by the Supreme Lord and born in Brahma. The Lord's first creation is called *sarga*, and Lord Brahma's manifestation and development of it is called *visarga*.

Vidura also wanted to know about time, *kala*. There is a time for universal dissolution, and a time for the dissolution of the human body. "Time" means "time is up." Time means death.

Speaking of time, I remembered William Carlos Williams' poem, "Overture to a Dance Locomotive." In it, he describes the scene at a big train station:

Covertly the hands of a great clock
go round and round! Were they to
move quickly and at once the whole
secret would be out and the shuffling
of all ants be done forever.

* * *

Swami, master,
is a rhythm and blues

master.
I his, servant
beating it out against the force
of my own rebellion.

* * *

Rebellion is caused by *maya*
O bewildered soul.
Swami Bhaktivedanta
looked at me and saw
my hopeless self-consciousness
and he looked sad,
said poet Ginsberg.

* * *

Swami, the time has come.
I'm with you in separation.
My time is rushing to you.
We are connected.

* * *

But there's still time to chant
a round
or two. Time to face the
truth. To face the opposition.
To preach.

* * *

4:43 a.m.

Tess Gallagher wrote, "I recall a commentary on the life and work of Emily Dickinson in which Dickinson's poems were described as having arrived so directly out of the necessities of the soul that they violated even the notion of poetry as a formed artifact of language. They were instead the soul incarnate in its most vital appearance."

But is that the soul? That cry may be the person's honest bearing of their total present feelings, but if it were pure soul, then it would directly praise God in an overflow of spontaneous *bhakti*. Don't claim "soul" when it's covered. Yes, it's the soul that drives effort and expression because when the soul is absent, there is only a corpse. That's fact.

This soul is humming in the body. Thus the heart is pumping blood and the brain is sending electrical energy flowing throughout, all incredibly complex. And I'm steering it to Krishna.

* * *

A list

(1) Why I told my editor I'm writing "Writing While reading."

(2) Black glove.

(3) Why I have a head. Why is there anything?

(4) Things I did: wrote letters to disciples by hand.

(5) Debts, Deppi's playground.

(6) Sully.

(7) Make it right "no *sahajiya*, he said.

(8) This guy yawns.

(9) No films. No heroics, please. Lifeguards at Great Kills beach, 1960, orange swim trunks and orange sleeveless T-shirts, a number on them, handsome guys strutting, tanned, luring the girls, sitting way up on their high white towers looking out at the ocean for drowning persons. Could they really save anyone? They made more money than we parkies.

(10) "Vedic Village."

(11) Stop, stop, stop, and do something more to the point.

* * *

8:15 a.m.

On a logging road I saw two large deer. Just before I stood still to watch them, I heard in the distance what sounded like a dump truck banging its top down. The deer ran away. This concurrence of events reminded me of Sadaputa Prabhu speaking yesterday about the ant's view of reality. He said that ants live in a world of complicated trails, but they're probably completely unaware of the human beings who observe them from above. Similarly, from thirty thousand feet above when we look down at a busy highway, the car traffic looks like ant trails. According to the *Vedas*, human beings are observed and governed by demigods, although we don't see them and don't even think they exist.

After I saw the frightened deer, I found myself alert. I stood ready to walk, one foot in the air, trying to know where the truck was now and whether I would run across it in "my" solitary forest. I don't like to be disturbed in my world.

Just before coming out, I dreamt of an old Godbrother who pretended to threaten me with his fist. I didn't really take him seriously, but mocked fear. I wasn't threatened though. I knew I had no more teeth to lose.

* * *

10:30 a.m.

Pain beginning.

Saw in the GBC resolutions that if an ISKCON guru, disciple of Prabhupada, wants to be included in Mayapur's masterplan, he can apply to have his memorial tomb (no higher than three feet) placed, after he dies, somewhere in the neighborhood of Prabhupada's *puspa-samadhi*.

Go for it? What if I die in North Ireland? Should they bury me here and hope my soul will travel to Mayapur on spiritual wings? Am I supposed to be concerned with little groups of disciples gathering before a tombstone somewhere?

May 14

12:09 a.m.

I like what M. said about me staying mostly alone. It's not so romantic, actually, being a hermit, and it needn't be a source of either pride or uncertainty. We each have to find our own integrity in our service.

I think Srila Prabhupada approves of me as I am. I think he also approves how others arrange their service with their particular natures. He can approve of us all and find a place for our sincerity.

Now let me see how Lord Brahma is doing in dividing the planets. He's been given the seeds by Lord Krishna, *sarga, visarga*. Yesterday when sidelined with a headache, I hankered to return to the momentum of reading and writing. I don't have to understand all the technicalities or even all the subtleties, such as in this purport: "Factually, time had nothing to do with the relativity of things, rather, everything is shaped and calculated in terms of the facility offered by time . . . time has no beginning or end . . . Time is not subject to any form of psychology, nor are the moments objective realities in themselves, but they are dependent on particular experiences." (*Bhag.* 3.10.11, purport)

I can know simply that time acts as a scythe to mow everything down. It moves through all forms and all places and persons, ideas and epochs. "Time I am, and I have to come to destroy all things." Time is "the impersonal feature of the Lord," according to this purport. I can know that I should give up petty pursuits.

* * *

In a dream I saw in a newspaper a photo and caption that appeared to be our friend, Professor Hopkins, and it seemed to be in the obituary column. I looked closer . . .

* * *

If you can understand Time, you can see Krishna in all things in the material world because time is His separated energy. Or rather, the world is the selfsame Personality of Godhead, although it appears to be something else "because of it being separated from the Lord by means of *kala*."

Example: a tape recording separates a person's voice from himself. The whole cosmos is a "tape" of the material energy.

Now I've come to "Calculation of Time From the Atom," which we sometimes refer to (in jest) as the most uninteresting chapter in the *Bhagavatam*. I'll go through it though. I sometimes advise devotees who complain about chapters like this to skip them if it disturbs the flow of their reading.

* * *

"You still have to choose your plot in the cemetery, and your tombstone. Buy it now while there are prestigious spots left near Prabhupada's *puspa-samadhi*. This land is reserved for you gurus."

How much?

"We can talk. I'll give you a good deal. You want a marble edifice? But no taller than three feet, remember."

How about three feet six inches? I was a writer. Class of '66.

"Maybe. What do you want written as your epitaph?"

Oh, I could free-form one, but since it will be etched in stone, let me think about it a few minutes . . . maybe say he served his guru ever since he met him. He was a good guy. His body collapsed in death, and if you like, you can invent a story about how he stepped on Death's head and went to Goloka.

"A *manjari*?"

Hey, don't tempt me. 'He reasons ill who says that Vaisnavas die . . .' How about that?

And tell them to read my books. That's how I plan to live forever, or at least until they go out of print.

"Yeah, and if you come back next life, you gonna go to *gurukula*?"

* * *

One *truti* = 8/13,500 second. How much *trutis* do I have left? Katvanga Maharaja had a few, and when he heard that, it motivated him toward total surrender.

"You've got one minute left."

Will that be enough notice so you can quickly cover the remaining distance to perfect surrender?

A dull person wouldn't make it. He'd use his last moments in the same wasteful way he had spent his life.

Time is calculated by how long it takes the sun to move over an object, from the smallest atom to the largest universe. *Maha* time is the running time of all planets and universes from beginning to end. Then it winds down and goes kaput.

Time is God-supplied, is God in a personal sense. *Fill it in* with your thoughts from beginning to end. The shape is to read some *Bhagavatam* and write these notes (on varied topics). Then read some more and write some more.

* * *

4:35 a.m.

Srila Prabhupada spoke to a British-sounding woman in his room after his Bombay lecture. Before that, a high-pitched girl's voice asked details about Krishna moving from one universe to another with His *lilas*. Prabhupada answered briefly and simply, then went on in ecstasy to speak away from her question. He said, "Devotees see Krishna everywhere and see the whole world as void. Lord Caitanya prayed like that."

Prabhupada spoke for five or ten minutes, "answering" her question. Then she asked it again. He said it was a detail. He again gave her a brief answer, explaining that when he travelled from Paris to Los Angeles by plane, the sun was shining the whole time,

although it took twelve hours. He spoke of how the devotees please both the *dhira* and the *adhira*. I could tell he was speaking in ecstatic trance whereby a pure devotee doesn't comply with social conventions such as answering nit-picky questions asked by people who impose their material concepts on spiritual truths.

All glories to Srila Prabhupada. May I also stop imposing my material concepts on His Divine Grace, on the way he speaks, argues, and convinces us.

* * *

Hail storm. The balls bounce off the ground and I know they are beautiful. Life should be loved. The inhabitant of this room sees through the almost closed curtains a raven, black-winged and gray-headed. The raven stretches its neck forward and croaks boldly and with vigor. I don't know why he's "singing," but he is. It looks like he's got a worm in his mouth because he's walking with such a swagger.

That raven is a metaphor I chose to transform a headache. I started thinking that a rod was pushing against the flesh behind my eye. Then I thought of the raven. Neither image got rid of the headache. They say the pain will stay, but it won't hurt as much. They say that by choosing words and images, you can change your perception of pain.

Since those didn't work, I tried this one: a guy in an airport is pushing his foot onto the fleshy rim around my eye, but inside my head. To transform it I imagined him leaving through the departure gate. He actually got onto his plane. Good riddance. That didn't work either. Back to the Esgic.

* * *

You write too much, they said of Sartre. They can say it of me too, but that's my private business, how much I write. It's never enough, as far as I'm concerned.

I said Srila Prabhupada was in ecstasy when he answered that girl's question. I'm in a kind of ecstasy too, following him.

Poet Jane Kenyon was sorry her sarcasm wounded a student. Later she heard him running down the stairs. I was glad she regretted it. It made her human. I shared the moment with her through her poem. I want to invest similar feeling into my poems, so that readers can share a moment with me.

Chose songs to sing on Sunday. "*Gauranga bolite habe*" the way Govinda Maharaja sings it, and "*Jaya radhe, jaya Krishna, jaya Vrndavana*" as Srila Prabhupada sings it, and as I do. Think of that holy place, not exactly the way it is when you visit, but in the ideal, in its spiritual essence. I also want to sing the song to the guru, *Sri guru-carana-padma*, because we don't sing it often in a group in Wicklow. I'll speak on each of the songs.

How about the one by Govinda dasa that tells us the material world is full of suffering and illusion, so we should take shelter of *caranaravinda* Krishna?

That will be our concert, and then we will sail off singing Hare Krishna for awhile. Nothing sustained beyond my breaking point. I can't continue to ride on the crest of allopathic pills just so I can make public appearances.

* * *

The atheist class always says, "I don't see God." A devotee always sees God in everything. Srila Prabhupada says that when the devotee goes on the street, he doesn't see cars and people rushing back and forth. I thought he was going to say, "He sees Krishna there," like Syamasundara standing at VamSivata. Instead, he said a devotees sees void. Everything is void of presence of Krishna, whom he loves. Either way "we see God or feel everything void in His absence "we have to learn to feel like a devotee. The atheist sees a brass doll; the devotee sees Radha and Krishna in the Deity. The atheist sees death; the devotee sees Krishna coming to offer Him protection.

I am fortunate to have heard, even though I sometimes forget.

* * *

8:30 a.m.

When I walked out of the house I saw a rabbit lying on the road in almost the same place as the one I saw yesterday. At first I couldn't believe it was a different rabbit, but soon it was obvious that this one was in a much more complete form than yesterday's smashed remnants. It was a larger rabbit too, and as I walked by it, I didn't see any wounds or dents. Its perfectly-formed ears still looked alert. I even wondered if it was dead. The only sign of violence I could see was a little ball of fur nearby. You swallow a sight like that and then walk on, knowing that it's somehow a sign. "Do not ask for whom the bell tolls . . ."

* * *

9:30 a.m.

Devotees don't have to acquire mystic *tri-kala-jna* to know past, present, and future. They can know by reading (and believing in) *sastra* and from the Lord in the heart.

"The blazing fire from the mouth of Sankarsana rages for . . . 36,000 human years." I write it here because it's so incredible. It's the sort of thing Prabhupada would challenge us on: "What do you know? All you know is your mother's womb. Don't be Doctor Frog."

Wouldn't want to get caught in *that* fire.

"Then for another 36,000 years there are torrents of rain . . . and the seas and oceans overflow." (*Bhag.* 3.11.31, purport) We forget or disbelieve so much. We continue to make plans.

Universes are like atoms covered by seven layers, each one ten times thicker than the last. The diameter of the universe is four billion miles, so the first layer of earth is ten times four billion miles. So it goes. The number of universes can't be counted.

Lord Brahma created rudra when he became angry at the Kumaras refusal to create progeny. rudra's generation began to destroy everything, so Lord Brahma told him to stop creating offspring and to practice austerities until his time came. Lord Brahma then created ten sons who were mainly interested in fruitive activities. The tenth was Sriman

Narada Muni, who taught devotional service, without which material activities are worthless.

* * *

Another list:

- (1) Whist and other games for children.
- (2) Tell half the truth. Save the other in the fridge, but consume it within five days.
- (3) Don't go to Dublin.
- (4) M.'s disarrayed room. He says everything is in its place. His filing system means placing things here and there, spread out.
- (5) A car pulls up. Shall I go out and see who it is?
- (6) Listen to birds.
- (7) Oh man, . . . rabbits run out onto the road in the early morning when they are stiff and when people are racing off to work.
- (8) Knock, knock "brass knocker on this door.
- (9) Ever-present moments. You think the future may be more interesting, but you can only live in the present.
- (10) Forgot what you were going to say while listening to someone's footsteps crunching on the gravel outside.
- (11) Goat gets nervous when people come.
- (12) Ryan Air has a cheap flight to London.
- (13) Crunch, crunch the footsteps retreat. I didn't hear voices. Now he comes back. Just go away and leave us. I may be quiet this morning with no great ideas, but that's okay. I looked out the window. Did the person see me? Who was it? A man or woman in a white car. Went away.

* * *

3:15 p.m.

Sidelined this afternoon with a diffuse headache. The "healing" book says that I should keep a journal and write it all down and describe the pain. "Get in the habit of pulling out the book and writing in it whenever you are uncomfortable. . . . Try to include feelings along with the description of the discomfort. If any external or internal events appear to be affecting you, note them . . . a journal can give us a chance to objectify and make permanent our most personal reactions to life. A person with a chronic illness may have two or three episodes of discomfort in one day. We know it is healthy for that person to express the discomfort during this period rather than to bury it in memory by repressing it."

But of course, my journal is not divided into many different journals, and it's meant to be literary. I don't want to burden readers with medical charts.

Still, if they're important to me, why not mention them here? I write about so many other things on a daily basis. Of course, I do keep a medical journal where I color each day red or blue or half and half according to the status of the pain. That justifies my not talking about it too much in *Every Day, Just Write*. The one thing I don't express in my medical journal, however, is the restraint and sometimes the frustration I feel at not

being able to work more. I can usually expect to work from midnight to 6 a.m., but after that, it's touch and go. The last two days I have not been able to do anything in the afternoon.

I guess that has become the norm for me now. It's been frequent enough this year.

As a reader, I don't mind if writers talk about their pain once we've established a more friendly, interesting relationship, and once I accept their integrity. For example, in this poem by Adrienne Rich:

"Calle Vision wounded knee
wounded spine wounded eye
Calle Vision but your heart is still whole
how is this possible?
. . . Calle Vision . . . never forget
the body's pain.

* * *

Never divide it."

That line "never divide it" seems to say never divide the body's pain from other pain or other experiences or from life. Pain is part of life.

* * *

4:05 p.m.

"One may be very learned in the mundane estimation, but that does not mean that he is free from all low activities of lust and anger. Good qualifications can be expected only from a pure devotee, who is always engaged in the thought of the Lord, or in *samadhi* with faith." (*Bhag.* 3.12.26, purport)

See how the passages resonate? Mundane poets may be low and lusty. Devotees are perfect. Where am I? There's a little let-up in the diffuse wise. I'm taking the time to ask that question.

Brahma's anomaly in lusting after his daughter is told, not avoided. Still, we must approach him with respect. Brahma's sons, led by Marici, spoke to him about his behavior and Brahma became ashamed and gave up his body.

Then he continued the creation and the *Vedas* manifested from his four faces.

Brahma, what's up?

Hey, I can't say that here. He is too great.

I can say my name: "Sats, what's up?" Everyone else will object if I mention them. Their privacy is too dear. P. and D. and Y. and L. and M., my Godbrothers, and Godsisters P., Q., and Mary Doo, and Devi and Dasi. And my disciples Sumana and Angel and Putrasa and Simhana and Doodaiva and Worry-sure, Beneva, Goons "as many as I can name and even create, none want to be mentioned with any candor in my writing. They would all be hurt, even if I meant well.

So don't pin it on them. Brahma is too exalted and Charlie too lowly, and most are in between. Be anonymous. Say, "A certain red-haired divorced man," or, "A certain piquant sycophant."

A cinquefoil
a jonquil

were walking together. They were spied upon by the mental police right in the act of baking a pie. The pie was still hot and was left to cool on Grandma's windowsill when two naughty boys became enchanted by the odor and stole it. Grandma was sure mad.

(I can tell that one because I saw it in the funnies fifty years ago. But Little King McNerty, who you actually know, him I cannot write about.)

May 15
12:05 a.m.

In 1966, a Lower East Side nondevotee acquaintance looked at a picture of Srila Prabhupada (the one on the back of the Happening album) and said approvingly, "He thinks with his heart." I suspected that this was actually a condescending remark, but I accepted it as praise. Often people think devotees aren't original thinkers of any sort. "You are tethered to a cause," that guy, Cardona Hines, wrote me, and his implication was that I couldn't be a serious poet. I thought, "Yes, but you are a street dog with no master."

* * *

I read in that position paper that Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati and Srila Prabhupada emphasized preaching, not solitary *bhajana* on Radha-Krishna's pastimes. I agree. Then I read a statement that we should follow Srila Prabhupada and not shirk our responsibilities for preaching and management. Oh, I manage to help design the book cover, I manage my time in Krishna's service, but I don't manage men and money (although I honor those who have the stomach for that work). The GBC has even introduced "Emeritus GBC." That is, they have come to recognize that there is a time to retire from ISKCON management. Srila Prabhupada never retired from it because to be honest, he didn't really have much choice. We couldn't have made it without him. My management is not crucial to anything. "Our Satsvarupa is a perfect gentlemen (*sadhu*), but he cannot manage."

* * *

Rock back gently to the *Bhagavatam*:

"The art of literary expression, *usnik*, was generated from the hairs [of Brahma] . . . The art of writing verse, *pankti*, became manifested from the bone marrow, and that of *brhati*, another type of verse, was generated from the life breath of the Lord of living entities." (*Bhag.* 3.12.45 - 46)

(I hear some voices. I hope it's not intruders, or the goat inside the house.)

Brahma had a serious defect in his unlawful attraction for his daughter, but still, he recovered from that and went on to do great work. There's a lesson in this, but it's not

easy to apply. We have become confused how to apply it ourselves in ISKCON's history. regarding Brahma's indiscretion, Srila Prabhupada writes, "His transcendental value is not to be minimized."

Transcendental sound, *pranava*, comes from his body. "There is a purpose for the exhibition of such a tendency [to enjoy his daughter] and he is not to be condemned like an ordinary living entity." (*Bhag.* 3.12.48, purport) Brahma is unique; we are not so unique.

Brahma then contemplated how to create population. Mysteriously, from his body, came Svayambhuva Manu and Satarupa, his queen. This couple began to generate progeny.

* * *

Now we'll follow Vidura's inquiry into more topics of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He was never bored or distracted in his hearing. "He wanted to hear more and more so that he could be more and more blessed by the transcendental message." (*Bhag.* 3.13.1, purport)

You who read these notes, please accompany me and don't complain that these notes have no structure. We are weaving this writing with *Bhagavatam* topics. As Thoreau stated, "Write often, write upon a thousand themes, rather than long at a time . . . Let there be as many distinct plants as the soul and life can sustain." (November 12, 1851) I don't have "a thousand themes," but I allow myself to go from one to the other. Join me if you like. Here comes Lord Varaha.

* * *

When we hear either of the Supreme Lord or His pure devotees, our devotional service will develop. Srila Prabhupada writes, "Transcendental students are those who undergo great penance in being trained by hearing the *Vedas* from the bona fide spiritual master." (*Bhag.* 3.13.4, purport)

It's not wrong to admit that reading is not always easy joy, that sometimes it's hard work. The *tapasya* of a student is to hear of pure devotees as they are explained by other devotees. "Because one cannot explain about the Lord or His devotee unless one happens to be a pure devotee himself."

The Supreme Lord is called *sahasra-sirsnah* (3.13.5), "one who has diverse energies and activities and a wonderful brain." This qualification is applicable only to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, that's obvious. I have low energies and creep around like a black snail on a forest path, what to speak of my brain.

* * *

List of reasons to be a . . .

- (1) You have a brain so use it.
- (2) Note body's changes.
- (3) Tiptop shape (Tiptop bread).

(4) remember five brothers Guarino: ralph, Frank, Steve, Jimmy, and Mickey. My Dad was the best. That was Steve.

(5) Grandpa's belt buckle. White mustache. Big belly, patriarch of that working-class clan.

(6) I am a flinch, a finch, a borrower, a springboarder from cummings and others. I'm going through another literary period.

(7) *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is your anchor. This is a relaxed version of *A Poor Man reads the Bhagavatam*.

(8) ravens. Don't know how far I'll fly, but try.

(9) Every day more dead rabbits. Bushes full of live ones.

(10) Midnight car passes.

(11) Want to encourage M. in his own creative service of singing for Krishna. He helped me think of Krishna by relieving my mind of unnecessary anxiety.

(12) O Krishna, O Lord. I'm entitled to say those words. Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I am His servant.

(13) Swami taught us. Lucky day! Kick off adversaries and spoil-sports and sour-grapers, but be compassionate toward those who want to be devotees, provided they are salvageable and don't drag you down.

(14) Unless you are a pure devotee, you can't speak of pure devotees. I don't claim I'm pure, but should work on it. I can't be a preacher unless . . . you're concerned.

* * *

Swami I keep
going back to first days because
he formed us then and I was
on the beam.
Swami, the controlled teacher in
saffron *khadi*.
Don't abandon the dress, the
shaved head, the way.
When you taught us it was
your mercy.
We "forgive" you any little
apparent discrepancies we see with
our faulty eyes. Please
forgive us our rude ways.

* * *

Swami, when you were
among us many took shelter
of your lotus feet.
Swami Krishna, "Sami Krishna"
as the *New York Post* put it "
these words swim out of me

crazily, not like Brahma's
emitting forms at creation.
You took us to the U.N. Plaza
on a summer's day to
pray for peace and you said
on the way back to the Lower East Side,
"There will never be peace"
(unless they take to Krishna consciousness).
Hayagriva recalled it, recorded it,
or was that Brahmananda?
Please gather us Swami,
your summer flowers,
your hippies who want to reform.

* * *

5:10 a.m.

I have recommenced remembering Prabhupada's letters to me for that series of memoirs. We're up to March 1971, where I had just returned from a tour of the Southern U.S.A. GBC zone. After that, I said *gayatri* and noticed that my *brahmana* thread has turned a greenish-blue color.

You wore a greenish-blue *brahmana* thread? Tell us about it. And tell us your 1971 days when you drove south. I returned from Florida to Boston, although now I'm in the republic of Ireland, County Wicklow to be specific. I realized when talking about these letters that I have broken the ties of nationality. I don't feel national pride to be an American, or any particular attraction for living there. The souring happened gradually as my youth faded and as Americans became more alienating. When I was in the fire of college preaching or other preaching, I drove myself hard to please Srila Prabhupada. I can't do that anymore, at least not in the ways I used to out on the streets of America, and eventually my attraction for that country withered. Those days are over now and I have to face it.

Ireland is more backward than America in certain ways, and that's what I like about it. I have a different expectation of myself here too.

* * *

We want love of God. We want love among ourselves too. Srila Prabhupada says love is for Krishna, otherwise it is lust. I accept what he says. Soon it will be breakfast. It will break my heart or not, but I can't expect to be fully satisfied just by eating. Or by any human exchange either. I hold out for love of Krishna to appear in me. I have been told that Krishna already loves me. I can't fault Him for not giving me His love. At the same time, I tend to wonder if there isn't more He could be doing to help me. Well, there is, but I won't let Him near. I think I don't want Him to rush me, to drag me, to smoke me out from my conditioned state. And He won't. He doesn't interfere with my free will. Thus I am without love, or left to "love" myself and others according to my false ego. I really don't know where to go from here with this topic.

Because we each have our own way. We may sit in a large hall, such as the Krishna-Balaram Mandir in Vrndavana, to listen to a lecture on the *Bhagavatam*, but as the minutes pass, each finds his mind drifting away somewhere. We are critical and demanding of one another. Yet another lecture "it never seems like such a big deal. It's unfortunate that we can't listen nicely, but we are just too merciless for that. We watch and wait, and our bodies rebel against sitting on the cold floor for an hour. We think we already *know* this philosophy, or that we can read it on our own. And if the speaker says something new, we rebel against that too because where did he get it? It takes fresh affection for a devotee if we are to hear a Godbrother speak on Krishna consciousness. Unfortunately, our histories, even within ISKCON, sometimes throw up blocks. Too much has happened and we see more the irony and contradiction between what the book says and what is actually happening in this movement. We can't always see the heart of the situation.

* * *

Swami, the hermit walks alone
Rubs out the bad thoughts in his brain
that person he thinks of and criticizes,
calls him an opportunist,
a rascal for criticizing *me*.
I'd do better to let him get his reward,
wish him well, and release him.

* * *

Day is dawning. It's good
that I'm left alone to hear the bird cries.
I'll see snails and maybe a deer,
maybe another dead rabbit.
I'll chant one extra round with hope
before grinding to a stop.
I tell you, the days are going to get
worse before better. I tell you, I don't
know the future at all.

* * *

10:40 a.m.

Keep quiet and lay low. Let the pain not rise. Oh, I keep myself cool, says Susan Ebetya, asthmatic all these years. Most chronic sufferers have something worse than I have. I barely qualify. But I'm stopped when it rises and there's no point trying for more effort or I'll be finished. When you can't do more, you learn to live for less up time. It's hard even to chant *japa* when I'm in pain. *Japa* is not so restful when you have a mind for determined surrender. Trying to maintain attention is not a passive act. Some say it is. They say we just have to let it happen, because you and your attention are one in the

mantras. Wherever the mind goes, you then notice it and bring it back to the shape and length and texture of the Hare Krishna mantra.

* * *

When Lord Brahma asked Svayambhuva, his son, to create progeny, he was obedient (unlike the Kumaras, who are never blamed for their rebellion, which was based on higher principles).

Then someone noticed that the earth planet had fallen into the water. There are two occurrences of this in history. In one, Brahma began to deliberate on what to do, and a small boar suddenly came out from his nostril. In a moment it grew to a huge size and roared with its gorgeous voice (terrible for the demons).

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna.

The sound of the mantra . . .

* * *

2:26 p.m.

The thick book, slick dust jacket, Kaliya Krishna on the cover. We are fighting *maya*, Srila Prabhupada says. Let us fight then, in our way, as we enter *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

I hope that my writing is considered Vedic prayer by the Lord. Fortunately, He accepts any sincere offering like that, whether metered according to Sanskrit rules or spoke in vernacular, or even wordlessly performed. The Boar incarnation accepted the Vedic prayers made by the devotees. He knew they were for Him. (But the prayers should describe the Lord's activities. Not *any* writing is Krishna conscious. If you say, "I took off my slippers because my feet were too warm," that's not a Vedic prayer. You could take off your slippers and read the *Bhagavatam*. Then you're getting closer.)

Want to try?

My throat itches. Second day of a cold. (Not a prayer yet.) I'm reading in the afternoon; it's a rare jewel of opportunity. Even if my reading isn't so deep, I sense that I'm doing the best act. I'm grateful for that. (Getting better.)

He played the part of a hog, searching out the earth by smell and using His tusks to lift it from the muck into which it had fallen. The devotees were not afraid of Him. He glanced at them pleasingly, and they felt transcendental happiness.

The earth was lying on the bottom of the Garbhodaka Ocean. The sages in the upper planets began to pray to Lord Varaha in a series of *Slokas*, beginning *gitam gitam te jite yajna bhavana*, "All glories, all victories to You, O unconquerable enjoyer of all sacrifices."

That was long ago. As I read, I sit at a desk in a room facing the street. The house is isolated, but on a main local road. Cars sometimes zip by. I'm expecting one to stop because there are six different parcels on the way: (1) one from GNP; (2) one from the stationery store in Dublin; (3) one from a bookstore; (4) daily mail; (5) legal pads from England; (6) forwarded mail by Airborne . . . As I sit and wait for them, I read the verses one by one and look for faith. I'm not this body, not the scratch in my throat or the pain or absence of pain in my head, not my fragile state. Not this gray-sweatered body, not the old, smooth-skinned, in-need-of-a-shave face.

Little spark star in the chest. He sends light and comprehension to the brain. With it, I can understand an ordinary book, or use it to understand the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

Don't find fault with Him for assuming the form of a boar: "O Lord, Your form is worshipable by performances of sacrifice, but souls who are simply miscreants are unable to see it." (*Bhag.3.13.35*)

Imagine the reader you want to be; become him now. The boar incarnation is addressed as the personified *Vedas*, to whom ritual sankirtana yajna.

* * *

O Krishna, I hear the pleasant sound of leaves rustling on the tree across the street. Life is made up of so many brief moments. I don't stay long with each verse, but I am noting that the Boar is called the object of offerings, as in ritual *yajnas*. The parts of His body are the varieties of sacrifices, *soma*, hymns, and other ingredients. By devotional service to the form of God, the purpose of all religious *yajna* is attained.

The sages felt purified by drops of water sprinkled from the hairs of the shoulder of Lord Boar.

My scratchy handwriting "I don't consider every inch of it blessed. Krishna, I can fill this last portion of my life with Your holy name. I shouldn't think I won't preach unless I'm assured of a mighty, influential result. Since I can't expect that, I will have to preach anyway. That's how we calculate for our own purification. We can't wait around to be splashed by water from the Lord's shoulders, but we have to serve Him while we have time. What is our *sankirtana-yajna*?"

I thought almost anything was *sankirtana*, any kind of offering in this movement.

Yes, but are you "in the movement"?

Yes.

Oh, whimsical brother,
you think you'll get an honorary
degree simply by sitting
under the light of the window and
Reading this book?

Yes. Why not?

Whoever touches this book touches
Krishna the Supreme Lord.

* * *

5:10 p.m.

At the end of the Varaha chapter, the *Bhagavatam* states that anyone who is not interested in hearing narrations about the Lord's activities is just like an animal. There are many books and writers in this world, but none can mitigate suffering. Anyone interested in them at the expense of *Krishna-katha* is nonhuman. There it is.

Watched "Images of Srila Prabhupada" for about twenty minutes. Wonderful. How beautiful are the young girls and boys who danced before him in the airports in '68 and '69. They danced with their hands upraised. Oh, there is Jayadvaita and sankirtana and

preaching from his *vyasasana* lectern. He was never enchanted by the young women dancing before him. He accepted the role of spiritual father and made us a family.

* * *

I read this recently in Thoreau: "If thou art a writer, write as if thy time were short, for it is indeed short at the longest. Improve each occasion when thy soul is reached. Drain the cup of inspiration to its last dregs. Fear no intemperance in that, for the years will come when otherwise thou wilt regret opportunities unimproved. The spring will not last forever. These fertile and expanding seasons of thy life, when the rain reaches thy root, when thy vigor shoots, when thy flower is budding, shall be fewer and farther between." (*Journal*, January 24, 1852) Thought I'd put it in here for inspiration.

* * *

Hare Krishna list:

(1) Chanting sitting in the chair, paying attention, recalling the early morning when you race and get sixteen done in two hours. But it's deteriorating into another mechanical act. Not as bad as others.

(2) Silly stuff.

(3) Stuffy stuff and then stop counting and just go, go to the fields and say Hare Krishna.

(4) "He's eccentric," said his mother. The little boy calls out loud Hare Krishna mantras in his neighborhood. He's four years old, but tells the neighborhood kids that they should chant God's names so that at the end of life, they'll go back to Godhead. His parents were indoors and heard him speaking like that.

* * *

I would welcome a thunderstorm if it were to come this weekend. The *Bhagavatam* is endless nectar. There is always more. A student never rejects any part of it. Hare Krishna.

May 16

Midnight

Lord Krishna knows the motive of the pseudo devotee. Such a pretender cannot attain the highest perfection. "One merely has to become sincere in his purpose, and then the Lord is there to help in every way." (*Bhag.* 3.13.49)

There's a difference between doing something for name and fame and doing it with the desire that it be effective. Sometimes the lines between the two appear less distinct. We want to help others by our service, along with serving Krishna as purely as possible.

* * *

Because Vidura liked to hear of Krishna's fighting pastimes, he inquired from Maitreya about the fight between Lord Varaha and Hiranyaksa. Maitreya said that hearing of the Supreme Lord, including about His fighting, will liberate us from birth and death. That's good encouragement for me to read them.

* * *

I remember reading the chapter of Diti imploring KaSyapa when I was a householder living in Boston. I was typing and editing the tapes. Sometimes I Xeroxed some of them at work, and once I was discovered and told not to use the machine for that purpose anymore. I also used to doze at my desk because my day began so early. Good days dedicated.

KaSyapa should have refused his wife's request with strong words, but it appears he was already inclined to enjoy her. Therefore, he pacified her instead. She had already defeated his resolve to continue his *yajna* at that time.

* * *

Oh, write little man with red rashes on your arm. Write your way through the impasses.

The exchange between the wife and husband about her desire for children. A *gurukula* girl once wrote me saying that the *Bhagavatam* seemed to contain sections that were sexually agitating to read. No, the *Bhagavatam* frankly discusses sex, but to dissuade us from indulging in it whimsically. By giving into sex desire at an inauspicious time, Diti and KaSyapa conceived demon sons.

Srila Prabhupada married couples, but didn't give *so* many detailed warnings about how to live together free of lust. He didn't, for example, tell them not to share the same bed, or even the same room. I guess our falldowns were almost an inevitable part of our growth. But he did write in these purports that lust always leads to tragedy. If we were intelligent, we'd take the warning seriously. Don't have sex at inauspicious times when the minds are not ready to receive the best child.

* * *

Ink flow, please, into a story worth hearing. The *Bhagavatam* gives me plenty of range from which to write.

But he wants to tap the inner world too. Witness being alive.

Everyone is already living. You don't have to remind them with words that can be nothing more than a pale or sketchy reminder of a real sunrise.

Then I'll witness to life experience, not just as a reporter of what everyone already knows, but in a deeply personal way.

Anyway, it's all a rehearsal for the end.

A bed, a candle perhaps (because there's no electricity in Vrndavana), and a white-washed room. A few friends helping you, if you're lucky.

I once asked devotees in a writing class to imagine their own death scene. Someone said they collapsed on the kitchen floor in the temple. A man named Paul actually died in the temple room at radha-deSa. Hairs stand on end.

* * *

The wife is not an agency for sense gratification. "Marriage is actually a duty performed in mutual cooperation as directed in the authoritative scriptures for spiritual advancement." It's not a come and go arrangement based on physical attraction. When the attraction is gone, there's still no divorce. I can repeat this (see *Bhag.* 3.14.19, etc.) to the *grhasthas*. As for me, I have only ghosts of attachment left. Nearing the finish line.

KaSyapa says the wife is like a fort. Srila Prabhupada says *grhasthas* are on the safe side. We took advantage of that purport. Fall down within the fort, it's okay, we are better off than the *sannyasis* who have no safe place to express lust. The Wife was the fort commander. Gradually we learned by training and higher taste that we could become our own commander and keep lust away from ourselves. We learned to pursue a simpler life, reading and chanting and engaging in a little service.

* * *

"So much glorification of a woman by her husband indicates that he is henpecked or talking lightly in joke." He warned her that Lord Siva was wandering with his ghosts, and he gives them birth in the wombs of women who have sex at inauspicious times under the wrong conditions.

* * *

5:30 a.m.

Just spoke about friendship with Srila Prabhupada and serving him as a soldier. Nice points. Then by the open window, saw dawn and the hill bluish as I exercised. The topic of the guru-disciple relationship, and its limits and new opportunities, is on my mind. We are each alone in finding the truth about our own relationship with our own guru. Hare Krishna.

I'm getting old. I feel it when I stretch my body. Today I said something to the devotees about my writing and wanting to get my books published. And they responded. I thought, "I'm getting old, but I don't have a sublime writing assignment like Srila Prabhupada had." He was entrusted to translate and comment on the *Bhagavatam*. He was willing to be a humble servant. He didn't think of himself as an original writer. Am I claiming that I need to be an original writer? If I am, is that something separate from the mood of the simple preacher? I tend to think I can serve humbly by writing in my own way too. It's a cultural weapon. I only hope that a few of my acorns eventually learn to serve as oak trees.

* * *

8:30 a.m.

Bright sunshine for the walk, but cold enough that I have to wear a coat and wool cap, especially when I'm facing the wind. Carl Jung said if you take the well-known path, you're as good as dead. I have to take to the logging road instead of the uneven forest ground because of my ankle. All my unknown paths are taken with the pen.

In a morning meeting, Madhu and I are going over the GBC resolutions a little each day. I'm trying to keep from commenting. Often new programs, such as a series of educational courses that are now required for each department of service, seem borrowed from the world's management systems. I told Madhu how St. Francis lived in the beginning with his first disciples, intimately sharing the same living space under the leaky roof, and preaching spontaneously, living close to Francis's extreme ideals. They were ecstatic. Francis saw within his lifetime his movement spread internationally, becoming well developed in England and other European countries. Finally, Francis became an anomaly in his own movement, and decisions began to be made contrary to his will.

I am not trying to relate that story too closely to ISKCON, and I certainly don't mean that the GBC is doing something different than what Prabhupada wanted, but I just remember those early days with Prabhupada, the days before we had courses in management and education. We were happy, although less organized. I sometimes wonder if I would have joined the movement as it is now. I guess a lot of old devotees face that, the prospect of Krishna consciousness becoming an "organized religion." In any case, here I am. I realized, as I returned from my walk today, that I have to continue reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

* * *

9:15 a.m.

KaSyapa could not protect himself from his own sex desire. Then he warned his wife that they would be punished by Lord Siva for engaging in sex life at the wrong time. In other words, he knew better. In his purport, Srila Prabhupada compares him to Haridasa Thakura, who was tempted by a prostitute in the dead of night but who avoided the allurements because of his perfection in Krishna consciousness. "Thakura Haridasa used to chant the holy name of the Lord 300,000 times daily." (*Bhag.* 3.14.31, purport)

* * *

Listen, I walked toward the house and heard him singing, accompanied by his bouzouki. I tried to sneak up so he wouldn't stop playing. I stepped off the gravel onto the grass on the front lawn, but my shadow fell into the house through the front window and he saw it and stopped playing.

Okay. Surely a package will arrive today. I already have a piece of mail from Praghosa.

Saw some thin, tan shells Maybe they were snail shells. Daisies open. Bright light in the open aisles between trees, but dark deep into the woods where I don't walk. No bears in this country, as far as I know. I wouldn't take a walk like this at Saranagati.

Gross creatures and subtle "ghosts. Keep away from them. Be a *brahmana* who behaves. Call out to Krishna for protection at all times. The dangers in this world are all

real, even if they're simultaneously illusion. Our attachment to personal safety makes them more real. Wish I knew the full reality of the spirit in devotional service "Lord Krishna in Goloka, Lord in the heart.

Srila Prabhupada says devotees don't pray for protection, but because Krishna is anxious to protect them, He descends.

Itch in my throat. Always some misery in this ill-fitting suit. KaSyapa blesses Diti that her grandson will be the highly fortunate Prahlada.

* * *

"By the force of the pregnancy of Diti . . ." (*Bhag.* 3.15.2) When I first heard that on the Grundig dictaphone early in 1968, I misheard "force" as "pores." I asked Srila Prabhupada what he meant by it and he corrected my mishearing.

Allen Ginsberg is dead. We saw him yesterday on the 8mm film showing Srila Prabhupada's arrival in San Francisco. January 1967. I was in New York City at the time. Rayrama had long hair and a beard. The Swami carried flowers.

KaSyapa could foretell the future. Diti was pacified that her sons would be directly killed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. She knew this meant they would be liberated. And to have such a grandson! Still, those sons would be the scourge of the earth, killing and torturing innocent souls.

* * *

Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishnaloka. Now the narration will go to the Kingdom of God and we'll hear how the two gatekeepers were cursed to descend to this world as Diti's demon sons.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

"The demoniac influence of the sons in the womb of Diti expanded darkness throughout the universe." (*Bhag.* 3.15.2, purport) The demigods asked Brahma what was happening. He replied with a narrative. One time the four Kumaras entered the spiritual sky and went to a Vaikuntha planet . . .

I am free. How to use it? How to find the best quality reading? I'm reading at leisure.

But do you read with faith?

Yes, whatever faith I have.

Do you read with devotion?

Whatever I have.

Do you mean to say you don't bother to estimate it? You just accept it as you accept your freedom?

Yes, that's what I mean to say. I have to commit myself to the possible, not the impossible.

"In Vaikunthaloka there is no occupation but the service of the Lord, and this service is not rendered with a purpose." (*Bhag.* 3.15.14, purport) In Vaikuntha the residents don't

aspire to fulfill their own desires; "their desires are fulfilled by rendering transcendental loving service to the Lord."

No one strains in Vaikuntha. No one serves simply out of duty. No one worries what's best for them. They are beyond such penance and dutiful execution of life. They have already passed all those tests.

* * *

Sadaputa Prabhu explains why so few accept the *Bhagavatam*. The "enlightenment consensus," as he calls it, began in the eighteenth century, and it established the view that the only reality is gross matter in three dimensions. Nothing else exists! *Ipsa facto*, the *Bhagavatam* with its descriptions of Vaikuntha must be taken as mythology. Any concept of God must be extremely abstract for the materialists. Actually, it must be formless.

We are reading of the spiritual world where everything has spiritual form. It's the *Bhagavatam* consensus.

* * *

The many flowers in Vaikuntha are conscious of Tulasi-devi's austerities and that the Lord prefers her so much that He garlands Himself with her leaves. Thus the Kumaras saw that even the birds and flowers in Vaikuntha were appreciative and not envious of great devotees.

Stylized pink lotuses in the painting above my desk. Krishna and Balarama standing on the shore of the Yamuna. The trees are ecstatic behind Him. Peacocks sit on their thick branches. Krishna holds His flute. The painting can give you an idea.

* * *

4:35 p.m.

Am I supposed to do something now? Is it late? I could watch some more "Images of Srila Prabhupada," but M. is talking at the front door with Praghosa. They've been at it for over an hour. What have *I* done in that time? read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and wrote. Oh, and I chanted an extra round and got part of a second done, then added some notes to the appendix of this book. Nothing wild, although a thunderstorm would be nice.

Vaikuntha is a demanding subject. Are there poets there? Yes, they are Krishna-centered, Radha-centered, and compose their glorifications on the spot in the presence of the Divine Couple.

Or on returning from the fields with Krishna after herding the cows:
Krishna and Balarama killed the
duck demon today.
He was as big as a hill
but Krishna broke his beak
as if it were a blade of grass.

* * *

Is Prabhupada too warm? All day cars have been passing, but no parcels arrived.

At 5 p.m. I could chant more. Ashamed I have so little to do. I'm not really ashamed, but embarrassed in front of you. I like the feeling of an afternoon winding down.

May 17

12:08 a.m.

The Kumaras reached Vaikuntha by performing yoga, and they discovered the unprecedented happiness there because the Lord was predominant. All living entities were engaged in their prime duty of serving God. They also found out that the liberated souls have airplanes. Who can understand it? I don't quibble about it, even if I can't silence the questioning voices in my head. Vaikuntha is reality and this world is illusion. What else can I have to say? But I like to think of the unprecedented happiness (*mudam apurvam*) the residents of Vaikuntha experience. "The transcendental happiness exhibited in the spiritual world and all other spiritual manifestations there are made possible by the influence of Yogamaya, the internal potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead." (*Bhag. 3.15.26*)

Finally, we will have to accept *brahma Sabda*. Dear ViSva-guru (Supreme Lord), dear Caitya-guru (as He is in my heart, the internal guide), dear *diksa-Siksa-gurus* (Srila Prabhupada and the *acaryas* in *parampara*), please allow me to hear with faith. I too want to enter that region of unprecedented happiness and become free forever of this material world. I want to become eligible.

The Kumaras entered through the six gates of Vaikuntha Puri without feeling bewildered by the decorations. They were so eager to see the Lord in Vaikuntha that they didn't look at much else. Let me also not become distracted by preliminary art. Go to the heart of every experience, poem, art, moment to Krishna, the Person within. *Hari-nama* allows this entrance, if you chant purely. Oh, let me go there without being deterred by songs from this earth.

* * *

Whenever I doubt something I read because I haven't experienced it, I think that there are *many* things I haven't experienced from my earthly point of view. And it was possible "and *actual*" that Swamiji, a pure devotee from Goloka Vrndavana sat before me on a little rug, his head shaven, and smilingly spoke of Vaikuntha. It wasn't only possible, it happened. It makes me remember that I can only get there by the words of realized sages. Expose yourself to Prabhupada.

* * *

The gatekeepers appear agitated. Srila Prabhupada sent me the tapes of this section to type. I was the only one to hear it at the time. In a letter he told me to note that the Kumaras were later sorry that they cursed the gatekeepers. Sages are humble. Everyone is under Lord Narayana and wants to please Him. Bend to the will of the spiritual master and trust that he can guide your life, even in particulars.

Srila Prabhupada explains it from the inner logic of the narration. The sages lived like eternal children. They had no conception of "No Trespassing." They entered everywhere freely. Thus they were angry when they were checked at the seventh door. Watch the exchange of anger between Kumaras and gatekeepers. Then see how Lord Narayana deals with it.

The Lord considered the doormen mistaken (although He arranged their mistake so that they could be sent to earth. He wanted to fight.) They should have allowed the saints entrance.

And the Kumaras were angry, but not out of personal interest. They wanted to see the Personality of Godhead. Anger is not always inappropriate. I might have preferred to "humbly" accept the gatekeepers actions (while other divinities looked on) and accepted their behavior as fate, but Srila Prabhupada says that sometimes we have to have a fighting spirit. To fight you need some sort of anger. ". . . they were angry because they were restricted in their service to the Lord."

It's not always easy to distinguish when to use anger and when to accept whatever happens as inevitable fate. I've seen ISKCON leaders become angry when their service is restricted, and I note that I tend to back down against opposition. Still, anger may live within you, the younger brother of desire.

Anger's red eyes
the frustrated sage curses.
My anger at not being adored,
not being allowed,
not attaining my goal "
Vaikuntha for my own satisfaction.
I see my anger as an ego trip.
But perhaps cowardice
covers me and anger is a higher calling.
I can't always distinguish.
I chant and pray,
a helpless creature.

* * *

5:44 a.m.

Took rest instead of pushing to work with typewriter because of a cold in my chest. My voice sounds deep and distorted. If I push myself too much, I'll probably get sick. Dreamt last night that I was talking with Gaurahari Prabhu about the last bit of a letter Srila Prabhupada sent me in 1971. It was the story of how CitSukhananda was going to Mexico . . .

I used to feel it was *nice* knowing so many people. I remember one time after the morning program at Gita-Nagari, when I was still zonal guru there, I went upstairs into Gaurahari's little room to put sweat pants on under my *dhoti* for the winter walk back to the cabin. While I was changing behind a partition in his room, I apologized to Gaurahari for using his room in this way. I said something like, "Some people say that they want more privacy. They didn't join this movement thinking they'd have to live all packed up, with people suddenly coming into their room to change their clothes . . . "

Gaurahari smiled and said, "No, I joined this movement *because* of this." In other words, he wanted a loving communal situation. He claimed we had it at Gita-Nagari. Did we? Is it gone?

I remember meeting Gaurahari when he was on his way out of Gita-Nagari. He was feeling a little bitter and even confused about his identity, as many devotees were at that time as the changes at Gita-Nagari increased. He said, "I never thought I'd have to do what I'm doing now, getting medical insurance for my family and thinking about a mortgage on a house." He really felt he had joined ISKCON in his youth and that this movement would free him from those obligations. Now, relatively late in life, he suddenly had to face them. I didn't really know what to say.

I wonder how many issues from those days are unresolved in me? We tend to *say* they're resolved, or we offer sociological explanations for why things happen. For example, these two issues "what happened to the people that I used to know? And what happened to the feeling we had that we would always be together? What about the promises we at least thought ISKCON made, which ISKCON later said it couldn't make? What even happened to that concept of ISKCON? Maybe these are all ways of asking what happened to our youth. Is that what happens as you grow older, that you see the activities of your youth, which you took as completely real at the time, as something more like illusion?

These issues live in me just as they live in others who survived those days. Is there something I could do to integrate my past, present, and future? It's probably futile, whatever it is. You can't go back and resolve your life.

I remember when a devotee would leave, we would think that if we could just see him again, he would probably come back to Krishna consciousness. We thought it was our duty to try. Surely that devotee hadn't lost his eternal identity as Prabhupada's disciple. Surely we could remind him of the good times we had all experienced, and convince him to continue his Krishna consciousness. Often such persons were blasphemous. That was a tough fact to face. There was nothing we could do. We weren't wanted anymore. And we didn't want them either, not as they were now. Things like that are part of growing up. You wouldn't want to go to a high school alumni meeting, would you, and try to make peace with all the old kids who exist now only in your memories? Would you want to preach to Erna Fritsch or Phil Backoff? Ned Finley? Charlie Henry? Would you want to hear from all the orphans at Mount Loretto about how they felt in those years? No, it's not possible.

When we joined ISKCON we thought it was going to be different than high school, college, the military, or the families where we grew up. This society was like the society in the spiritual world. We were all eternal and full of knowledge and bliss. At the very least, it was a sample Vaikuntha. Now we know more what work lies before us. But Prabhupada remains our anchor and the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* our book. Our goal hasn't changed either, nor our means to attain it.

* * *

8:30 a.m.

9:07 a.m.

The Kumaras accuse the gatekeepers of being impostors. Srila Prabhupada says that there is harmony in Vaikuntha. The material world is the criminal department for those who do not wish to abide by the Lord's order. This may be hard to accept. We think we are better than we are. At least we can be bent on improvement.

* * *

3:55 p.m.

I'm having trouble breathing, not bad, but enough to make me not interested in reading more right now. Hare Krishna.

May 18

10 a.m.

A rainy day. I couldn't sing but asked the others to lead the *bhajan*s we chose. "You've got a bad cold there."

Rain, rain.

Someone sent me unsolicited a tape of a Carmelite nun playing the zither.

* * *

"One may speak very nicely with ornamental language or one may be expert at controlled grammatical presentation, but if one's words are not engaged in the service of the Lord, they have no flavor and no actual use. . . . The *tulasi* leaf has numerous good qualities, but if it were not offered to the lotus feet of the Lord, *tulasi* could not be of much value or importance." (*Bhag.* 3.15.49, purport)

* * *

The Lord came with the goddess of fortune to give the Kumaras the *darSana* they desired. Okay, write this in your book. Hey, *bolo*.

They drove me in the car. Gorse is wild, and milkweed. Hare Krishna dasi knows about it. Praghosa said they sell gorse in Dublin at a high price. Narrow roads have to be pushed back at sides like rolling back a carpet of turf. Oh, it's raining, but quiet, and I have nothing more to say for now.

* * *

3:10 p.m.

I'm getting ready for next Sunday morning when I'll spell out to aspiring disciples what "no illicit sex" means. Wish somebody'd spelled it out to me. Oh, I knew. Everyone knows. But we look for loopholes. *Api cet*.

"We'll get over it."

I'll tell them gently that they can't get initiated unless they are free of this. They can't do it with husband or wife because it's against the rules. Hypocrites beware.

He said, "O me, o my, let's go down to a lower society, where they allow it."

* * *

Lord Visnu said that the wrong His doormen had committed was as if He Himself had committed the wrong. "Therefore, I seek your forgiveness." He praised the *brahmanas*. He said a true *brahmana* knows Brahman, "and a Vaisnava is one who knows the Personality of Godhead." These personalist *brahmanas* were true and dear to the Lord.

This is my creed, my Apostle's Creed. I believe in the soul, the Supreme Lord, the process of transcendental loving service, the particular processes of chanting, hearing, and remembering Krishna. I believe Srila Prabhupada wants us to preach and it's very important to help the people of Kali-yuga by spreading the *sankirtana* movement. I realize there are impediments, but I ought to try to persist regardless.

Impediments? The apathy of nondevotees, or their basic opposition to Krishna consciousness; the anti-cult movement; the fighting and institutionalism within ISKCON; my own body and mind; the sometimes too-narrow definitions of preaching. Hey, I don't have to list them all. Krishna simply wants to know what we have done for Him and what we have held back.

I toe the line. I will not leave.

The morning is harkening.

A knock on the door: "Will you take a *brahmastra* drink?"

"Yes, and let's watch more "Images of Srila Prabhupada."

I'm just a doctrinaire fellow. I'm not a poet *sportif*. You can expect me to repeat what I have heard from Srila Prabhupada.

* * *

Lord Visnu says His greatness is due to His affection for His devotees. He's famous as *bhakta-vatsala*. He likes best the food that is offered to the mouths of the *brahmanas* dedicated to Him, and who are always satisfied with His *prasadam*.

Three different kinds of potato preparations at Ekadasi lunch today.

I'm trying to make you smile. Jokes along the *bhakti-marga*.

Hey, did you hear the one about the Hare Krishna who got tangled in his orange *dhoti*?

No, them is holy people.

Then I'll make fun of myself (self-humor). That's allowed, isn't it?

* * *

5 p.m.

Madhu spoke for the goat's point of view. He said that apparently the goat was living in Dublin, but the owners decided to let him loose in the countryside. He's domestic, and wants to live at this house. He has a right to live and we shouldn't think we're the proprietors of this land and the goat has no rights.

All right, but don't let him into the house.

We're only here for a few weeks anyway. Then it's Daruka's decision what to do with him. We don't feed him though. It's late May, so he has plenty to eat on the lawn. O Krishna.

O master, please accept my offering. I can't see what it all adds up to on my own. Swami, I read your book. I typed it. I keep wanting to insert myself in the picture with you. To save myself. I am one of yours.

* * *

M. phoned GD and told him we will stop in London in July and can we stay at his apartment. He said, "Yes, of course." While there I'll go to the Manor to lecture, record what wildflowers I see along the way, and mention whatever Srila Prabhupada says in his lectures. Little life.

This morning I could not vibrate the mantras in my chest because the phlegm kept making me cough. I had to chant my rounds in a whisper. I hope to be well enough tomorrow to chant with energy. But I'm grateful to be alive and furthering my cause. I can only lament that I'm not doing better, and seek purity in that lament.

* * *

Swami, when you were here it was wonderful seeing you
so many places where you were loved and where you loved to go "
saw the old film of you entering Bury Place temple
and then you went to Los Angeles, San Francisco
then Dallas.

* * *

Swami, you sat on *vyasasanas* around the world.
You looked grave in face, and composed.
They honored you in Jaipur on a float
pulled by oxen
then again at the L.A. airport "
the way you taught and led us and we loved you.

* * *

Swami, we have made mistakes, but
our love has not gone in vain.

May 19

12:07 a.m.

I am sitting at desk unworthy but worthy. Who am I? Who is the *Bhagavatam-grantha*? A little pressure starting.

Last night in a dream I met a man who mugged me. It happened on the roof of the old ISKCON skyscraper temple in Manhattan. I was visiting, and had been given a small exposed place to lie down and sleep, but it was noisy and starting to rain. (A Godbrother had an office up there with a roof and a locking door. Why didn't he invite me in?) A former Godbrother wanted to interview me on how I became liberated. I began telling a long story, but he only wanted a quick version of it. Then the mugger came and took everything I owned, including my dentures. He was strong and powerfully built, but short. He looked like someone I knew.

Back to the *Bhagavatam*. Even if *brahmanas* treat you harshly, you should respond with respect.

The four sages couldn't understand Lord Visnu's intentions in His deep words, and they weren't sure whether He was pleased with them. It is nice to hear how He baffled them. God is greater than anyone. No one can understand His mind or anticipate His actions.

Please meet Krishna in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I very much like it that Srila Prabhupada speaks of Krishna even when the verses speak of a Visnu expansion. Even if he writes, "The Supreme Personality of Godhead," we know he means Krishna. When he writes, "In *Bhagavad-gita* it is said that the Lord is the source of all emanations," we know he means Krishna.

Srimad-Bhagavatam is not an ordinary "or even an extraordinary" book. The book *bhagavata* is nondifferent from the person *bhagavata*. And the person *bhagavata*, the devotee, is also as good. This book reveals Krishna to us.

The sages addressed the Lord: "You have praised the *brahmanas* and said Your own reputation is only due to Your associating with them, but You are the Supreme objective religious principle, and in our opinion You are inexhaustible and unchangeable internally." (*Bhag.* 3.16.18) Then they string a garland of eternally pleasing prayers. Then the Lord speaks again. Prabhupada writes, "By the mercy of the Lord, devotees can easily pass beyond the nescience of birth and death and attain the eternal abode of the Lord . . . everyone needs the favor of the Lord for successful understanding of His human mission." (*Bhag.* 3.16.19)

The Kumaras knew that Lord Visnu is not the object of anyone's favor; He's the one who favors all.

Thank you, Kumaras, for your understanding.

* * *

Pain building. We already know all your bodily complaints, the alarms that go off behind the eye and all that. I tell you, there's no end to it.

* * *

5:07 a.m.

Madhu going to Dublin today. This will also be the last day for this volume of *Every Day, Just Write*. This note is now on the wall in front of me:

I am back into it

read "*Srimad-Bhagavatam* as long

as you like

* * *

Write "when and what you feel like.

* * *

Have faith it's a good process and thus a good product.

* * *

Madhu will leave me with the key to the back door. It has to be locked at all times, or else the goat can slide the door open and get in. He tends to make noise during the night too. Not such a lovable character, but we have to live with him. In Vrndavana people have a "live and let live" attitude toward animals. Everything is accepted as Krishna's *prasadam*, and it's understood that animals have as much right to live (and eat) as anyone else.

Uddhava will be over at lunch time. I asked Uddhava to give me some references on Prabhupada's definition of no illicit sex. He found some things on Folio under "religious sex," and he will pull more and bring them over at lunch time.

* * *

What about those hand writs? They were made up of sandwiches, but now you seem to think it far too silly for a man of your age and stature (ten feet tall?) to deliver and bedevil. "Death deviled her eggs in womb" "Allen Shiffman told me it's good to play with words.

Oh, I said. I didn't catch his point. He had taken a line from Dylan Thomas and turned it into nonsense. Then he said my sideburns were too long. Who was *he* to tell me what to do?

O Krishna. I walked the beach with my trouser bottoms rolled up. Now I live in a different world where so many things are no longer necessary. Only the books that speak to my heart, my Prabhupada's books.

The collie in Geaglum, getting older by the day in its long pointy face. Jayananda riding around on his bicycle. Prabhupada says if you are five years old you are five years dead. You know.

Then why spend time writing this? I should be writing a speech addressed to a committee set up to rectify ISKCON. "Dear lords and ladies, we are gathered here today to improve this great institution."

Ho hum.

"Excuse me, but I have twenty resolutions, which I will proceed to list and comment upon one by one."

"Great, we are finally feeling some hope."

"I propose we revive spontaneity. This will bring money into the coffers and remove the threat of break-in. That's my first proposal."

"Great! I always wondered when we were going to do that. But I just want to mention that you can't change the fact that Krishna is God and that we should chant and dance in the temple room, and you know, we have so many quarrels and material problems that have to be sorted out first before we can trust anyone to be spontaneous."

Here, in this serious movement, I want to free-write. Where else in this life is there room for springing from words into being? Because you know, a too-watched kettle might blow a fuse.

A child of Krishna (raised in a devotee family) has a right to live in a temple and go to college while he adjusts himself to the larger society. Don't kick him out as long as he's polite. He doesn't have to be a full-time devotee. He has a privileged status. He can live in the temple, eat there, and go to college. All right, I understand that we should make him feel at home. Very nice.

What are some other resolutions? There is one about how Steve can become emeritus if he stops . . . oh, I already stopped, you don't have to say it.

. . . if he stops wearing sweat pants and hiding from COM and LINK. He's got to be open because he's an elder of the tribe.

He says, "Listen to your dreams, boys. You will find the answer there."

They say, "You old coot, you can't tell us anything about chanting and ranting and collecting money. You write your acerbic books. You are a curmudgeon. You're not going to get away with it."

It's true. Krishna witnesses everything.

I'm not worried.

* * *

9:06 a.m.

I'm here alone reading with some alertness. I just read the Kumaras prayers to the Lord to remove passion and ignorance from their hearts. Okay, I'll admit I'm also concerned about the mobile [or portable?] phone M. put in my room. I usually disconnect it when he's away, but he's worried that the courier company may call to ask directions to this house. I'm not sure I know how to operate the phone (*Sravanam kirtanam* in the material world via Panasonic) and I doubt I could give accurate directions to the house because I'm only an American guest here. I'll have to ask them to call Praghosa's house. Anyway, this business is on my mind along with the Kumaras and the Lord of Vaikuntha.

Twinge behind the right eye.

Don't find fault with devotees even if they make mistakes. The Kumaras and the gatekeepers found fault with each other and later regretted it.

* * *

11 a.m.

I lay down on my back and listen to Jeff Kane's tape on transforming pain. When he asked that I describe the pain as a metaphor, I thought of the words, "blind date." But that seemed silly and unreal, so I changed it to being forced into a meeting. I imagine meetings as pain because I would have to hear so many things I don't want to hear. Maybe others would be criticized, or I would be cornered into agreeing with someone's criticism that I don't necessarily feel. When Dr. Kane asked that I change the metaphor to something pleasant, I changed it to a situation of myself living alone, reading and writing joyfully. And during this time of joyful reading and writing, I imagined I was dreaming daily of Prabhupada, that he was pleased with me.

At the end of the tape Kane said something about pain that struck me. He asked me to think of the meaning of my pain images. He said I should notice whether the images often relate to colleagues at work, or images of heaviness or pressure. His point was that pain says something about our quality of life, and the more we notice it, the more capable we are of changing our lives. We may find ourselves avoiding people who increase our pain and preferring to be with people and situations that don't provoke it. Then he said this: "It may astonish you at first that the path toward a better life can begin with pain, but that apparently is one reason we have pain. *After all, why would anyone want to change if the miseries in their life were essentially tolerable?*" (Emphasis added)

* * *

I decided not to use up more than thirteen micro cassettes for this timed book. Coming to the end of that quota. Anything else you want to say?

* * *

3:30 p.m.

I wasted about a half-hour or forty minutes with Madhu's book, *The Guitar Handbook*. I read the essays (with photos) of the great guitar innovators, most of whom played rock 'n' roll. Some of them were early loves of mine "Chuck Berry, Bo Diddly" and others appeared after I had left the scene "Jimmy Hendrix, Eric Clapton, and others. I knew so little of about all this. I'd never even heard of Charlie Christian until I flipped through this book. Anyway, I admit I wasted my time.

At the same time, I did notice the dedication these musicians have, how they have sacrificed to perfect their playing. It's not a different kind of dedication you need for Krishna consciousness. "Practice, practice, practice" until you feel a welt developing on your chest from the guitar and your fingers start bleeding "then you know you're on to something."

Now, can I go from Bo Diddly to the Kumaras in Vaikuntha?

* * *

The Lord says the curse and punishment of the gatekeepers was all arranged by Him so He could engage in the sport of fighting with His two devotees.

Please, Krishna, don't let me write that only as an exercise. Give me the inspiration to read with depth. Give me Your grace.

Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.16 tells us not to be bewildered by reverses. Don't be disturbed. The Lord always has a plan. "That most ancient Person, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, will alone come to our rescue. What purpose can we serve on His behalf by deliberating on the subject?"

Thus ends my attempt to write this volume. I pray to Krishna that I'll be able to start another volume and keep on going as long as He likes, remembering Him in everything I do, "something reading or writing, something reading or writing." May Krishna protect us all and allow us to be happy in Krishna consciousness despite the material inebrieties. May we become more and more free of distractions, the lures that drag our minds from Krishna. All glories to Lord Krishna the Lord of the Universe, the *iSvarah paramah* cowherd boy, with the eternal, spiritual body composed of condensed bliss and the cause of all causes.

Appendix One

Notes kept while writing this volume of EJW

What I'm attempting in upcoming weeks of writing:

(1) *Confessing* "but when you do, it's already selective, not things that are inappropriate for a *sannyasi*. But confessing, for example, that I don't go on *harinama* because it's too much effort and I don't want to be insulted or attacked in public. That sort of confession.

(2) *Getting down* "accepting yourself as you are, write down thoughts that come . . .

(3) *Try (again) to beat the gremlin or tame him* "don't always bash yourself.

(4) *Writing itself* "faith in the process. Since I have not taken my stand in outward preaching, see writing as work.

(5) *Read Srila Prabhupada's books* "and so build up the writing-while-reading momentum.

(6) *Regularly free-write* "even if it feels like "more of the same."

(7) *Think and pray "aloud"* "by writing. Hope that by being alone and introspective in writing you'll be able to think things out more clearly and deeply. Go for that.

(8) *Write with no planned theme, but keep alert for whatever themes recur.*

My writing is my work, just as others have their work. It may seem unusual that my daily work is such structureless writing, but there is structure within the apparent lack of structure, and that shows in the books that are produced.

My writing is a repeated attempt at the same thing; at getting better at it.

I write *pieces*. I don't need to plan more than that. Each time it's a piece.

Be real "what your life actually is and what your writing actually is.

What about the possible conflict between time set aside for reading and time set aside for writing? To state it negatively, the writing wouldn't get off into its own unless I constantly turned back to the *Bhagavatam*. It would remain on the surface. My reading would also suffer if I tried too hard to divide the two interests.

To state it positively, reading and writing are meant to live together in my life. Either they are separated or they are mixed. The fact is, I'm weak on both. They help each other. Try to develop it more. Or else force the issue and see that they don't go together. Then you'll have to schedule separate but equal time. Let them talk to each other.

Appendix Two

Summary of my position as of May 19, 1997

Although these themes are stated throughout this volume of EJW, I've been sometimes unclear about them. Here they are, however, in a summary and decisive mood.

I will continue with my life of freedom until I am stopped either by Providence or by my own decision.

What do I mean by my life of freedom? I mean staying mainly in one place and not seeing anyone. Having my own schedule to read and write and chant.

What is the nature of my writing? What am I writing and what is its purpose? I see three main purposes that I'm trying to fulfill at once:

(1) To become purified by working out on paper issues in my life.

(2) To preach, which means preparing something that devotees can read and from which they can derive benefit in their own spiritual practices. This, of course, assumes that I am writing to glorify Krishna and to teach through my own experiences in Krishna consciousness.

(3) To create art in poetry and prose.

These purposes often overlap.

Furthermore, I don't see myself as a professional writer or an artist for art's sake. The writing goes on subordinate to my identity as a practicing devotee, a disciple of Srila Prabhupada. In *Simplicity in Irish Spring*, I said I was trying to boil my life down to three main activities: chanting, reading Prabhupada's books, and writing. Writing is only one of the three because writing has to be done within the life of a devotee, not independent from that identity.

Presently, *Every Day, Just Write* takes the form of "writing while reading." That is, I put the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* on the left side of my desk and read it. Then when I feel inclined, I write. I go back and forth between the two. This method keeps me closely connected to the *Bhagavatam* while still allowing me to free-write as much as I want.

This life of freedom in Krishna consciousness is governed by my headache syndrome. The headaches both limit what I can do in a day and provide protection from having to live in another way.