

ELECTRIONIC BOOK

By Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami

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Every Day, Just Write

Volume 33

Prabhupada's Gift: Stay In Ireland

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Also by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

Srila Prabhupada Lilamrita

Handbook for Krishna Consciousness

Readings in Vedic Literature: The Tradition Speaks for Itself

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November 4, 1998, 12:05 a.m.

Before turning on the light I noticed the moonlight coming through the skylight. In my workroom I looked up and saw the full moon high and clear. *Winter moon*, I thought, although it's not yet winter.

Continuing my reading of *ISopanisad*, in the middle of the purport of mantra thirteen. Every sentence is strongly assertive, defying all other conclusions. Some readers are put off by this approach. Prabhupada brooks no suggestions, no "perhaps." "Only those who are cleansed of all sinful reactions can have such unflinching faith in the Supreme Lord." (*ISopanisad*, p. 72)

We are supposed to accept a spiritual master after knowing him for only a year (I knew Prabhupada for only about three months), then never again doubt him and do what he says. I've stopped initiating, although every year I initiate three or so persons, but still, even among these three some go away and I never hear from them again. Is it youthful determination that makes them want to get initiated? Once they achieve it, they think of what else they can do with their lives. I thought of some of these persons this morning. I wait to get letters from them. O Srila Prabhupada, you are my eternal guru.

Please don't read so fast. Those who read my reading notes are taken over rocky ground. I can smooth some of it for them by omitting material, but I can't fill in all the potholes. My reading notes are like the old Gita-nagari road. When I write them, I feel like a wild man dragged off the streets or out of the jungle to sit down to hear the perfect spiritual narration about worship of God. Gradually I know I'll warm up to it all.

But I have a faithless streak. I know that too. Srila Prabhupada gives a batch of quotations to prove that everything and all gods come from Krishna. A learned person decides to worship only Krishna when he reads such things.

I decide
to write it down.
As if to convince someone? I
write it
chant it intone
it and
Rock myself
into a meditative trance.

A devotee is convinced when he hears "the transcendental message from the undisturbed *acarya* with faith and love." (*ISopanisad*, p. 73)

O Krishna. I predict that this volume of EJW will be written while it's peaceful "the last deep quiet of the year. After this, I'll begin traveling. It's close to the end of the millennium. O Krishna, I look for peace mostly within myself.

The faithless are *mudhas* (see Bg. 9.11): "One who is disturbed by the whirlpool of material energy is not qualified to become an *acarya*." (*ISopanisad*, p. 73) After Arjuna heard *Bhagavad-gita*, he was no longer affected by the whirlpool of family attachments. He was a fixed worshiper of Krishna, a pure devotee of the Lord. I ought to regularly hear *Bhagavad-gita*, where Lord Krishna says He is not a dead stone but is fully conscious of past, present, and future. No one knows Him fully. Therefore, we should

feel awe toward Him, and we should become attached to Him and serve Him. Dedicate ourselves to him.

We suffer from repeated birth and death. In human life we can get out of this dilemma simply by reestablishing our lost relationship with the Supreme Lord. *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam* are more directly Krishna conscious than the *Upanisads*. For example, *Srnavatam sva-kathah Krishnah* "the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* asserts that if we chant and hear the glories of Krishna, He will clear our hearts from within. *Bhagavad-gita* 10.10 confirms this. "By knowing the science of God one gradually becomes free from material attachments and one's doubtful mind becomes crystal clear by the grace of the Lord." (*ISo*, p. 77) Then we can see Krishna at every step.

* * *

4:25 a.m.

Dissonance because he had to go, the prophet had to die and the message he left for the world couldn't be taken by them. So many ignorant and ugly people, *manda, sumanda-matayo*.

Talking in sad tones, Krishna, in the disguise of a demigoddess, came into the courtyard of Srimati radharani and Her *sakhis*, and played a great prankish *lila*. But he was serious in His interest. He wanted to hear Radha speak of Her love for Him in uncovered terms. I'm starting to hear again our reading of that. I'm able to hear some of it by Srila Prabhupada's blessings. After so many years.

So the goddess said she beheld how Krishna betrayed Radha, left Her alone in the forest "so how does She still love Him? Radha says She will tell the secrets of Her love for Krishna if the goddess will stay in Vrndavana and live with Her. When I heard that I thought, Yes, if She asked me, I'd want to do that "leave all else, all responsibility, and live with Her and Her friends in that Vrndavana. Srila Prabhupada, if I get that call, please inspire me to do it.

But here I am with the ink splashes, talking in my ordinary tones. Krishna! We have to know what is best. That's called discretion. Yeah. Mostly you stay in ISKCON and behave and be ordinary. Be sad, be ordinary. He's willing to let you know how daring he gets. He's *talking* through his music, he uplifts through his tears, but really experiences the soul of it and speaks for everyone, not just a self-pitying trip. However, you have to get at the heart of it in order to reach "I mean the heart of your own condition before you can reflect on a general condition.

Krishna "I get porridge today. And a fresh lunch (after two days of M.'s excellent but limited *kicchari*). Yeah, blow it, man, tell us how it is. How low it gets "I'm willing to hear it t. Drink the water. And each devotee has such a story we will want them to tell in *Discovering Our Voices*. Let them write their poem or story in short "their cry and attempt at some resolution.

Krishna, Krishna, we are not even at the halfway mark. Srila Prabhupada calls the body a *yantra*, a material vehicle. Don't think *you* are a rolls royce or Tata or even black or white. You are all soul. He also said the *maha-bhagavata* sees everyone as soul and that if we're not *maha-bhagavatas* we should follow, not imitate.

Blue and wishing I could do it better "want to be reaching out for some sound or form that's my utmost to give to Krishna. The experts in the science of *bhakti*, especially in Vrndavana, offer so much pleasure to Krishna in the various arts they know. I know so little. Krishna wants our earnestness.

Krishna Krishna "I said give
me porridge, give me a little
time and deep
peace to create songs
directions of a Krishna conscious
sort. Give me three weeks and
inspiration to love the Lord and
chant His holy names.

Devotees went to Vrndavana. Now they'll come back by planes leaving from Delhi with their memories and flowers in reticules. They'll return to the same place and the same problems. I didn't go. I stayed here with everything, so have no sense of returning, disappointed or cleansed. We don't want for anything in this movement. We learn so much no matter what we do. We cast across continents and beyond the modes to find Krishna

on barefoot lanes alone but
not preoccupied
with monkeys stealing
standing before Narottama dasa Thakura's tomb
his radha-Krishna Deities the *sadhus* speaking words
I open to.
Austerities.
Vrndavana.

Let your mind travel there.

Don't fall asleep at the switch. Keep walking, working, converting energy. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. Nervous energy is meant for sewing garlands, drawing pictures on the first day of a new book. The moon may hide, but I don't.

* * *

5:26 a.m.

The moon was behind clouds during my entire circumambulation on the boards. The whole time, that is, except for about five seconds. Suddenly it appeared, a pale presence, then gone again. But even from behind the clouds it brightened the sky, and I was able to walk around the house by nature's light. Pinching cold. No rain. No loving attention to the holy name, but at least I was warming myself by it, knowing that I was safe in a Krishna conscious realm.

Things I like to do: walk on these boards around and around, as monotonous as that would be to someone else. And even though these boards are far from Vrndavana, I know that I can be in the *dhama* with the devotees if I keep a proper attitude. These last weeks are my chance to stay quiet and meditate in an unbroken way. Then when I spring

out of here and enjoy more variety in my life, my main focus will be to return here with renewed appreciation.

But I'll have to be ready for whatever Krishna wants, too. He moves everyone around just like chess pieces on a board. He's free to do as He likes and to show His special care for His devotees. His actions are always purposeful.

* * *

9:00 a.m.

I received the 270-page manuscript of PMrB, Volume Three, in the mail. My editor sent this note with it, "Although I hate telling you we need something right away, if we get the manuscript back from you soon, it will probably be possible to get it produced on time to go to India for printing with devotees traveling there." Maybe I will suspend my intended twice-daily *lectio divinas* sessions until I read PMrB. reading it will probably affect EJW in certain ways, but EJW will have to contain whatever wants to enter it.

* * *

We hereby scroll you the feverfew award for four days in a row for needing meds after you awoke from your post-breakfast nap. And we award in handwriting this message of congrats to readers for following such an insider line and for caring. We care for you too. Migraineurs are typically sensitive to their bodily triggers, the environment, and may be sensitive to others as well. I was glad I noticed Narayana-kavaca's attempt to sit on the floor and that I offered him a chair in time. Then I noticed his arm was twitching, but I don't know why. I want to care for such devotees. I am blessed to have the opportunity.

My purpose is to get through each day peacefully. I'm unabashed about that here in this November volume. I want to extract the juice from the devotees as winemakers extract the juice from grapes or the sweet Italians from olives. But I know that Italy isn't *all* sweet. The devotees there have suffered a crisis in their faith and wonder why I'm not coming to preach to them "preach by lecturing and meeting them one after another in their temples and homes. Is it because I'm too sensitive?"

You got me there.

Sensitive, sentimental November

tasting

change

this cert to say, "I wish everyone had as mild a med as I do to quell their pains.

Wishful thinking, bud.

M. says, smiling, that he likes my gremlin. He hints that Grem is the path to self-inquiry, which I keep telling everyone is very important. I told him I see the following as tasks in my life: (1) to warn devotees about insensitive, dogmatic preachers; (2) to help them be themselves and therefore to seek out who that "self" is; and (3) in the pursuance of the above two aims, to ask, "*How can* a Hare Krishna devotee go about gaining such self-knowledge? (By self-knowledge I don't mean the quick fix, "We are spirit souls; eternal servants of God." I mean also, and crucially, something prior to that, as robert

Burns says in his line, "God grant us the vision to see ourselves as others see us." Know what I mean? Anyway, Grem can help. Do you see a shadow?

Feverfew and blessings "all to be used in Krishna's service. I have no plans to submit to robert Bly or Carl Jung.

* * *

11:55 a.m.

Blue sky, white clouds, green hills with patches of gold. I see a dirt-brown and light-green row of fir trees striped in light and shadow.

Noticing PMrB, the way it shifts abruptly from straight *Bhagavatam* commentary to free-write. I don't write like that now. Nowadays my writing blends better through the shifts. Perhaps the shifts are milder or shorter. And I no longer take the responsibility (which was over my head) of commenting on the entire *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. That was presumptuous on my part. But still, I took the reader a certain distance through the First Canto before I gave it up.

How will they feel when they see I've quit? I thought about that. Well, even Srila Prabhupada didn't finish his treatment of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I gave only a sample. I think of it as a warm-up for what I'm doing now.

Time moves quicker these days. I keep track of it by haircuts. I mean, I get my head shaved just before each EkadaSi. Each EkadaSi seems to be coming quick on the heels of the previous one. My hair grows in again and again.

M. out trying to get the brakes fixed on the van. Then he'll drive to Dublin for his Wednesday night gig. Another quick moving occurrence "my weekly shipment of mail, which he brings back late Wednesday nights and I open early Thursday mornings. I hear the voices and then go quiet, a weekly cycle.

The pole looks gray, looks
scarred, has
some tar on it,
all usually invisible on a rainy day.

The wires wrapped around it carry electricity to this house. It is an ex-fir tree. Hare Krishna.

Hans Christian. Don't drop words. Better to be a devotee. I did Prabhupada's *puja*, but my mind was somewhere else. Where was it? In my mind I was composing a letter to Baladeva, asking him to set me up with mural-sized boards when I go to Gita-nagari. In the few days before the disciples' meetings I could do a quick series of paintings, perhaps on a theme, and present them to the devotees. Thinking of that, I didn't pay attention to the speech Sahadeva gave at the rajasuya-*yajna*, where he spoke in favor of electing Krishna as President. I don't need to tell you the details (especially because I missed it), because we all know it. He was brief: Krishna is the most qualified.

I remember what he said, and I like it. We don't always have to go on and on, providing a philosophical dissertation to prove Krishna as Supreme. We already know that about Him. But sometimes it is good to hear it too, and the *Bhagavatam* often provides the philosophy just so we never become mistaken. Krishna is no ordinary cowherd boy or mythical, four-armed Visnu.

But it's unfortunate that Prabhupada's massage came to such a quick end, and even if I wasn't listening to the *Krishna* book tape, I could have at least felt close to Srila Prabhupada, my mind withdrawn from my own affairs for a while just so that I could be with him. Isn't that why I do this *puja*?

I'll try to do better. Prabhupada's *puja* is another thing that measures the passing of time in my life "it comes once every twenty-four hours. If I'm not careful, it's easy to rush through it and miss yet another opportunity to worship or especially to feel tenderness. *Puja* is different than reading. Both can give solace in my remaining days, but the *puja* is special. Dear Srila Prabhupada, please allow me to be with you.

It's getting late. M. said he'd be back by 11. Now it's after 12. My lunch may arrive before he does. I'll try not to worry about that. One way or another, things fall into place. We'll be lucky if the mechanic can fix the brakes at all and deliver our van back on time. Even if he doesn't fix them, M. will make some arrangement to get here, I suppose.

* * *

3:10 p.m.

Reading PMrB. It's very me-centered, even though I'm bouncing off *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I wrote it "back then" when I was fifty-six years old at Saranagati. I need to read it quickly since the Press has a deadline, just the opposite of how I like to read. Sure, it has its shortcomings, but those were such great verses I looked at.

Words echo in my head. I'm seeking my authentic life. Let me go out and circumambulate on the boards and chant another round of *japa*. If I could end this day by painting, that would be nice "something beyond body and mind.

* * *

5:10 p.m.

He painted in the art room and tried to come through for Krishna. He didn't know what he was going to do when he started, but he kept a steady meditation in the back of his mind: Before this is over, I'll salvage it somehow and offer it to Krishna. Maybe that's how we serve in many activities. Hare Krishna.

The green paint wouldn't wash off the brushes. Why, does it contain oil? *Something* sticky. My hand is freezing under the mountain-cold tap water.

Alone in the house, but Srila Prabhupada singing slowly, *Sri-Krishna-caitanya-prabhu daya koro more . . .* Sanskrit, Bengali, harmonium. I restrain my emotions. I'm a *brahmacari*. I swim along in water that may be deep, but I'm not sure *how* deep. In a dream I asked someone to measure it. He did so, then responded in a measurement with which I wasn't familiar.

Even if this isn't explicit Krishna consciousness, I can make it Krishna conscious with my consciousness directed. Imagine: a person posted as a *sannyasi* and initiating guru did this, declared this, stuck a stake of art into new ground in the name of the Queen "and I don't mean Elizabeth.

You want to do it for Her. If it's permissible. But more important than being a great artist or a Lord Brahma (creator) is humility and recognition from the *parampara*.

* * *

5:50 p.m.

Up to page ninety in my reading of PMrB. By then I was writing at Gita-nagari, where I gave a one-week writing course. Now writing this longhand in an empty house. No monsters or ghosts please. I am still praying to Lord Hari. I learned how to write, to pray, pray, pray "and kept asking, as if they could know, the Christians how to do it. I even asked the Zen Buddhists, who act as if they "know" everything in nothing. read *Prarthana*, rupa Gosvami, *stotras*, more prayers. Lord, help me. Tried to speak in my own words from my own yearning. Prayed for protection in *bhakti*, and especially sincerity.

He keeps getting the van fixed. I hope it doesn't break down with me in it. We're getting such use out of it. Hare Krishna, Hare. The PMrB world is okay. I especially like the "little life" "the story of the flight from Canada to the Eastern United States, writing in the car, the plane, on a walk, the classroom. I want to write *everywhere*. I called those pieces "Present Writing." Then I returned to the structure of commenting on the verses, what Narada was saying to Vyasa.

Tomorrow is Thursday and I'll have both the PMrB ms to read plus the mail to answer. That will create a burden on this writing. Forget it.

Quiet is a place where I can work. Every day for the past four days headaches have come and been banished with feverfew. What to do with the rest of tonight: choose clothes for Radha-Govinda's dressing tomorrow, go downstairs and look at the paintings I painted, make peace with them all "greet and welcome them. Then fill up the water bottle, set the clock, warm the hot water bottle, confess confusions. List offenses "the same ten every day. resolve to do better.

These words have to fit into a space and have meaning devotees can relate to. Vaisnavas all. We want to see a slice of life in a life of *sadhana*. Anything I try and experience can be shared if I make it truth by being true.

November 5

Couldn't sleep after 10 p.m, so I heard the two gunshots at 10:30. Probably neighbors after foxes. M. returned at 11 p.m. I'm up, the mail is here, and I'm thinking of using my midnight hour to answer it.

* * *

I like how in PMrB 3 I take long breaks from the verse-by-verse format and say what's going on during my stay at Gita-nagari. I like those parts even better than the commentary. Temperature, conditions, flight, progress.

Opened two letters so far, one from Kirtana-rasa, which contained pages ripped from an L.L. Bean catalogue. He wants to get me a warm winter jacket. The other was from a devotee "Archeology" organization in Poland. They want to translate and publish *readings In Vedic Literature* but can't pay for it. They describe the Polish

government's anti-cult war and perhaps even exaggerate it a little to encourage me to help them. I don't own the copyright to that book. They will have to approach the BBT.

Some of these letters will be warm and some scary, some real, some exaggerated, someone caring for me, and someone trying to get me to care for them. Lalita-manjari sent a new *cadar* for Srila Prabhupada and some of her father's *Bhagavatam* overview tapes.

"Whatever you desire to describe that is separate in vision from the Lord simply reacts with different forms, names and results to agitate the mind as the wind agitates a boat which has no resting place."

We'll go over our itinerary today. Then Madhu can book our January travel.

My book can function as scripture reading. PMrB is good for that. Straight preaching. Now on my back in bed trying to review the lecture I'll give Sunday on knowledge. But I wonder who cares about it. I'll try to convince them that gathering knowledge is relevant. I want to give an introduction to the eighteen items of knowledge. I hope to have fun with them.

Studying why Vyasa didn't write *Srimad-Bhagavatam* immediately. Was he a process writer? An interesting, unique case. Him and Narada, the other *Puranas* and literature. Don't read other books. But I admit I do.

Wrote a reference to T. Monk's "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance with You" in PMrB, then walked in the Canadian snow and worshiped Srila Prabhupada, whom I had carried with me.

Time to go to my beads. I had a dream I was with a Godbrother. We left the temple and someone offered us meat. My Godbrother ate some, but I refused.

* * *

4:10 a.m.

Just finished dressing Radha-Govinda in Their beautiful brown (can't find the words, the defective English is entangled in my mind) but my gold radha speaks of Krishna and how He arranged the *rasa* dance at Her request, then took Her apart. She wanted Her *gopis* to be with Him too. He was so clever in the way He arranged to fulfill Her desire.

Can anyone appreciate such love? Yes, but we shouldn't talk too much about it. What is mundane and what is Krishna conscious? When is color and music mundane? It depends if the person making it or receiving it is in Krishna consciousness.

I want to cut off ties. I want to be with Krishna. Can I write something I actually mean? Ordering a warm coat and thinking I'll have to be stripped bare on the coldest day and laid out on a rock "that's what death means. *Tapasvis* are aware of the body's final end, so they strip bare now to prepare. We Vaisnavas (am I one?) don't strip bare. We use our warm coats to serve Krishna "the coats and the sweets and the hot milk and the verve and beat of our lives

the joy

all offered at Krishna's feet

for His pleasure.

Radha told the demigoddess (who was actually Krishna) what love was.

Will I be protected by Them at Gita-nagari?

How many homeruns can I score? How many *Bhagavatam* verses memorize? Getting older and passing through *aSramas* into a new millennium of stress and change, he said. Where are we now? Where are the carrots and beets and potatoes? In the 1840s, the Irish suffered a famine. People are still trying to make up for it by applauding performers and the devotees giving what they have to the Lord and I can't say any of this evokes only material feelings.

All glories to Krishna "I make that toast, then fumble for words through incoherent dreams. But I feel upbeat. A devotee told me he had to catch his bus to get to work. Someone else hit a deer, and it made me think of deer-eyed *gopis*. Only Krishna's confidential servants know ultimate truth. The rest of us are too intent on matter to care. We need a pure devotee, our Srila Prabhupada, to lead us out of ignorance. He knows Krishna and can give Him to us.

* * *

4:30 a.m.

Words written around a Bristol board drawing of a devotee man with his head bent forward and his hands extended as if he were about to play the piano, pensive, considering, praying.

Another day and I have another chance to become a devotee by following my spiritual master. *Vaidhi-bhakti* leads to more, so we should not minimize it.

Really use your mouth to chant and sign your name in earnestness when you write *Krishna-katha*. There are so many things we didn't know a few years ago. Where is this knowledge coming from now?

O Krishna, please allow me to be respectful to all living beings and to continue uttering Your holy names. Caitanya Mahaprabhu gave that advice to us. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare

* * *

I tried to cluster on the words "EJW Volume 33," but it broke down into this:

Last full quiet. Van comes in at night. I sleep in bed. Follow the routine. I want to stay here. I'll leave, true, but I'll come back. This volume is about savoring the present, storing them, promising to return to this place of moments. O Krishna, I desire You. May my life take its assigned course.

* * *

3:45 p.m.

I pushed so hard with both reading PMrB and answering mail that I'm now without words. I see how important taste is, and how it might be exhausted or taken away. It's possible to get sick of things, but Krishna is in control of that too.

November 6, 12:03 a.m.

I did exhaust my taste for reading my own writing yesterday. I didn't treat it respectfully as a book but began to glance through the pages and rush through the manuscript. I am tired of reading and want to get back to the quiet routine of reading Prabhupada's books and writing. Anyway, my editor will be responsible enough to see that my book is right before it is published. Srila Prabhupada didn't reread his own manuscripts after his typists and editors produced them "at least not carefully "or before it went to print. He concentrated his energy on his current work.

Anyway, by afternoon I felt exhausted. I need to feel that writing and publishing is good, not crazy or useless. I'm especially talking about writing "in process." Anyway, again it's midnight and the clock is already racing. Here's the *ISopanisad*:

"One should know perfectly the Personality of Godhead and His transcendental name as well as the temporary material creation with its temporary demigods, man and animals. When one knows these, he surpasses death and the ephemeral cosmic manifestation with it, and in the eternal kingdom of God he enjoys his eternal life of bliss and knowledge." (*ISopanisad*, Mantra 14)

The slow, prayerful reading I proposed to myself means I can't speed through the material. Let me find a middle path for now. Srila Prabhupada calls the scientists' bluff when they say death can one day be stopped. We're all living according to the six stages of transformation, which end in death. "Therefore the entire material universe is called *mrtyu-loka*, the place of death." (*ISopanisad*, Mantra 14, purport) There is a deathless realm, although modern man is adverse to hear about it from the *Vedas*.

Reading this, I feel myself throwing off what the nondevotees think of the Hare Krishna movement. Put aside the fact that ISKCON has huge faults. Just be a devotee. Just practice and yearn for the eternal realm. Hear with faith. Everything else is *asat* "this world of temporary people, demigods, and animals. We might ask "How, just by knowing of God in a temporary world, do we gain God's eternal kingdom?" If we are devotees, we read with faith. We have no immediate proof of anything. We cannot argue about things that are beyond our sense perception. In former ages, faith was simpler. People accepted *Sruti*.

Anyway, I am trying my feeble best. I feel my power of taste and my desire to write returning. Krishna's mercy. I'm a tiny, vulnerable creature who is always trying to escape pain. I seek eternal taste. I also seek the simple, physical taste of eating, sleeping, and so on. I am content to live the life of my own definition of *sadhu*. When I walk in my yard and see the mist roll over a nearby hill, I think how ISKCON leaders and brothers around the world don't know me or what I am doing. I especially think of those who might live in Vrndavana and whom I might meet if I went there. For now, I know it's better for me to stay here. Out of sight, out of mind. I can't handle the judgment of others right now. I don't want it to disturb my flow, as it inevitably will. Still, I have to be careful not to think my cloistered life is too slow to be vital. That needn't be true. Let me savor these last days of November in Krishna consciousness.

Even when all the material planets are vanquished, the spiritual planets continue to exist. Let's go there and live with God. Let's hear about it now with faith. I write to remind us and to tell my story of the here and now. "The predominating Supreme Person residing within the spiritual nature is Lord Sri Krishna." *ISopanisad*, I come to you

Satsvarupa dasa, raging, impudent
god I was.

* * *

Prabhupada's book blesses me
his answers pacify my mind
and heart.

* * *

The teachings you contain, *ISopanisad*,
surmount envy of the
Supreme Person Krishna
and allow me to go to Him
after my death
when death shall be conquered.

* * *

4:12 a.m.

Wow, those guys are too much! I'm speaking out of control. I dressed the Deities while listening to *Prema-Samputa*. It's so sublime "the love secrets Radha tells there. I have read it before and want to enter it again. I don't have to memorize anything in it, and I certainly can't realize (experience) it, but I listen with faith. Thank you, Vishvanath Cakravarti Thakura and Srila Prabhupada, for allowing me to take part.

Yesterday's *yajna* now deposits me back into blessed routine. I can be here throughout the day, adding to this "monumental work." I know it's a myth "the idea that November is my last shot here.

Krishna consciousness in the park.

Krishna consciousness is a lark.

Is hard work.

Is what it is so far

beyond me. Hare

Krishna

salt and pepper

and, "My doctor told me to get off wheat and dairy."

I want apple pies, crumb pies, whipped

creams I'm

eating up a storm.

But if Krishna told me right now to renounce all that, would I be able to do it for Him?

A pure devotee doesn't want poetic, beautiful women or wealth or followers or even whipped cream. All he wants . . .

Not even liberation!

All he wants

is to be a faithful devotee of Krishna.

This *is* the story. Don't wait for something else.

Someone wrote, "I took your description of your chronic disease and wrote it in reverse. I hope you don't mind, but here it is." It came out as a stark, vulnerable me afraid of pain, a me who lived with pain and claimed it could nourish me, but changed my mind.

* * *

Krishna, Krishna, whose pastimes are far more enchanting and beautiful than Lord Narayana's, Krishna, the source of the sixty-four qualities of His expansions "did I say that wrong? Krishna, my God, let me preach Your message. The devotees will outlast the millennium along with everyone else. Tell them to chant, and chant yourself.

Now if you will believe me, Prahlada said, you can give up your demoniac ways. That's the way. Hare Krishna. Now worship Him in ink, that Lord who protects us at all times and places.

* * *

Words down the right side of a Bristol board: Krishna conscious persons are faithful and lucky to hear rare confidential scriptures. They learn that *bhakti* is the only way to know God. It begins with hearing.

You might say that my artwork is a strange mixture of *parampara* paraphrase and buffoonery/ risqué cartooning. I don't intend sacrilege, but I do let my hand go free. Please forgive me. The man and woman in this painting are not lusting after one another, or if they are, they have subdued it by their Krishna consciousness. That's my intention too "to subdue all lust by chanting the holy name. We already know that Krishna's holy names and pastimes will triumph. Hare Krishna in back of mind all the time. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare.

* * *

Message written across a Bristol board drawing of a guy and a girl:

"Ain't it true that I love you?" A guy tells his girl that. That's *maya*. He moves into her flat and smokes dope and has sex, then tells his guru about it. His guru wants to be clear of hearing about mundane sex life, but aspiring, neophyte disciples tell him anyway. They are so sincere in their own way, and truly want to be free of *maya*, but don't always know how to do it.

Anyway, I'm writing this to say I love Krishna consciousness because it can free us all. Krishna consciousness can make us sane in a crazy world. Those who spread its teachings are doing wonderful service. I want to serve the preachers and also serve the cause in my own way. Let *everyone* do that, so we can spread auspiciousness and transcendental sound vibration through the ether.

* * *

Calligraphy cert: I, Devotee #345 (born December 6th, 1939, in Queens, NY) am writing this cert, which may be spoof-served on any ransacker or scavenger at the discretion of his GBC man or TP (or other authorized rep.). It could be used to recommend someone for initiation or to admit one to the *aSrama*, provided he passes all other tests. It's a decorative scroll, and the paper resembles parchment, but it isn't, because genuine parchment is very expensive and anyway, it's made out of animal skin.

Now let us preach:

If we pray Hare Krishna mantras, our homes will be sanctified. Even if we commit offenses to the holy name, it's better to keep chanting. The holy name is powerful. It's medicine. It works even if we don't know how to serve it. Be submissive. Hear the message: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. read Srila Prabhupada's four books, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, NOD, Cc., *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, and the others too. These books will make us happy.

Served November 5, 1998.

Witness: Supersoul (unseen)

Satsvarupa dasa G.

* * *

5:29 a.m.

In a letter, one Godbrother called me a "regular guru guy." This was his play on words from when Prabhupada said that after his disappearance, his disciples would become "regular guru." I have accepted this service to Srila Prabhupada and the movement. Despite all the falldowns and schisms in ISKCON, I maintain this service. Am I wrong? I'm doing my best. Trying to anyway. Trying to purify my impurities. At least let me function for my disciples as a conduit to Prabhupada. With this in mind, I've been thinking ahead to the end of the month when the devotees in Northern Ireland will celebrate my birthday. What kind of a chair should I sit on? Should I allow the disciples to offer *guru-puja*? Speak homages?

Questioning myself while walking on the crunchy gravel and chanting *gayatri* and cold *japa*. Also reviewing some of the more startling letters I received yesterday. When I answered them, I put them in the garbage. Madhu happened to be burning trash yesterday, so they are already gone. At least on paper. Some of them live on in my mind. Like the one from the devotee who was present in Russia when the "bomb" hit, his guru left, and the shock wave spread. There were their little bombs in the mail too.

Walk and crunch and feel good. Aim for quiet in weeks to come in a mythical life. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare "these friendly boards. Less than full moon this morning. It looks almost shy.

* * *

8:38 a.m.

You should desire to read *sastra*, shouldn't you? And is it wrong to want to write things like, "Every day I take a nap from 7 - 8 a.m., exhausted because I have been up since midnight"? No, it's not wrong, but don't push it on the readers as if it were literature.

Read a little aloud, hooked to a microphone. Prabhupada writes in the *Bhagavatam* that we should always think of Krishna as Arjuna did. "There is nothing to doubt about this eternal truth. Because Arjuna was His confidential friend, the secret was disclosed to him." (*Bhag.* 1.15.30, purport) I believe him, but not because it's the religion I was born into. However, if I had been born in India as a Hindu, I might be an atheist, nearing the end of my *karmi* life. I did better by being a spoiled and soiled American, because I was given the opportunity to meet with the Swami on the Lower East Side. Where am I now? I do feel a weakness in that Krishna consciousness is not my culture. I didn't reject it, but neither was I born into it. I grafted it on and tried to thrive despite the obstacles.

"Because of his possessing spiritual assets, the doubts of duality were completely cut off." He was free from the *gunas* and was transcendental. "There was no longer any chance of his becoming entangled in birth and death . . ." (*Bhag.* 1.15.31) We continue to hope.

Writing and reading, trying to record my proof of having engaged in good activity. Did I call out to Krishna this morning during *japa*? Almost, but with an impish attitude: "Come on, Lord, can't You show Yourself to me? I've been trying to reach You for such a long time. I'll never get anywhere without Your mercy. I will always face a brick wall. I can't comprehend anything about Your holy name. Please reward my good faith."

Was He silent?

Pretty much. So I had to say that any shortcomings in the communication were my fault.

But did I believe it?

I don't know. At least I don't *blame* Him. I do get tired of hoping sometimes. It seems I'll never get through this mechanical stage.

Is your experience of reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* similar? Does it directly hit you in the heart?

I read. I try. I get tired physically and mentally of going through long purports, through the philosophy, the examples, the analogies, the exposition. All bodily designations are illusory. right. The enlightened person knows Vasudeva Krishna is everything. right. (But *how* does he know it? Just by reading *Bhagavad-gita*? Serving guru? Yes.) Arjuna realized . . . and I peter out. I can't push myself closer.

* * *

10:30 a.m.

The rest of the house is cold, so I'm moving my operations into one room. Watercolors set on floor in one part of room, Bristol boards and ink and pens in another. Deities on altar, work on desk, an easy chair ready. Thinking about my birthday at the end of the month. Bit by bit I'm agreeing to allow my disciples to honor it. It's only once a year, and after all, am I a guru for them or not? In my heart I must say no, I'm their servant. Even that tells me I should allow this function to be observed. My service is to accept their service and offer it to Prabhupada.

Therefore, I may let them speak homages. It's a way for them to witness to one another their realizations and love. Not that they should sit passively while I do all the

talking. Let them speak. If they are sentimental or excessive, I'll listen, appreciate their affection, and go back to my quiet routine when it's over.

I wrote M. that I don't like him leaving me alone all the time. He wrote back that he will try to get a helper "Caitanya-candrodaya perhaps "so that there's always a man on duty. But many women stay all night alone in their houses, I know. I should be braver. M. mentioned to me quite out of the blue that he'd like me to quit eating wheat. He thought it could be causing my headaches. That seemed preposterous after all I've been through with diets and natural cures. I don't even see wheat on a list of trigger foods for migraineurs. But "someone" told him. Anyway, I love scones too much to consider it.

Set up and did my first watercolor in this room. The paints aren't warm enough yet to turn into liquid. Still, I got a passionate red sky and added a stick man walking toward a small house. I felt good drawing the house. It served as a symbol of home, as in "going home," back to Godhead. Or the hermitage I crave.

What else? First shadow of a twinge barely flickering. Cheek bones of my mother from portraits when she was young. End this.

* * *

Noon

This is a good time to write with your belly empty and anticipation building for lunch. Some days I get a lot done during this half hour. For example, in recent days I clustered quite a few lecture outlines.

Here are some results from clustering on the theme of EJW 33:

I write within a quiet life. I'm being especially deliberate about celebrating the quiet this month. It could be said that this is a literary pose, but I hope to get beyond it. It's natural that I want to savor quiet. It's also true that I can't have it all the time. That's part of the poignancy for me "the fact that this is my last fully quiet session until next year.

Soft-shoe dance. Headaches almost every day now. I'm not playing only standard tunes, though. Looking for surprises. Poems.

God gives me the desire to do this. I thank Him and try to make it Krishna-centered. I don't want to write without remembering the actual person, Krishna. For example, I heard again today the most amazing thing about the rajasuya sacrifice "that Krishna washed the feet of all incoming guests. I want to chant better rounds so I can write better books.

And I'll have to die. But I love to live. So I'm writing while I can. I have a desire to develop art. It's a long haul, because my method is to write as much as possible. That takes discipline.

I sacrifice to write. It's my vocation. It's ego-centered, so I cry to Krishna through this process, praying to be absolved of the false self.

Reading Prabhupada's books and taking notes is an important element in my writing. I want the *sastras* to appear in quoted form, paraphrase, in preaching and in a mix with other things. I admit again and again that although I'm praying, I have not yet learned to take the *sastras* completely to heart. Still, I'm thanking Krishna for whatever He is giving me.

* * *

12:40 p.m.

Hang in there. Twinge flickering, but lunch may quell it. Or an Esgic. If not, I'll accept it as Krishna's will for me.

* * *

2:35 p.m.

Lectio Divina means to take only a bit and go deeply into it. Pray first that Krishna may speak to me. I may not be successful at reaching Him, but I read anyway. I want to hear what He is saying as clearly as possible, and not just with my intellect.

An *emotional* session "asking, feeling grateful, coming out from under the material covering. *sastra* can penetrate the material covering and fill our minds and hearts with remembrance, the *ahankara* forgotten.

But it's a fact I tire quickly, sometimes within moments. The mind tells the intellect it doesn't want to try for intense hearing. If the intellect insists, then it at least doesn't want to sustain the effort. It becomes too much for me. Then I think of the statement in the *Bhagavatam*, "One can see Him, one can feel His presence even in this present life . . . through the process of devotional service, which begins with hearing about Him." (*Bhag.* 1.15.31, purport) I can't avoid the hearing process. I don't.

Still, I don't experience what he describes: clearance of the material conception of life by chanting and hearing. Or maybe I feel *some* of it. Also, what I feel or experience may be spiritual, but here I am, claiming I didn't feel anything. I can imagine Prabhupada telling me, "What you felt is spiritual. Why are you asking for something more right now? More will come when you are ready and when Krishna is ready to give it to you."

But that just makes me restless and rebellious. If it doesn't happen soon, I might leave the path and join another "church." Silly boy. It's probably good for me to be posted as an elder and even a guru, because it forces me to tell the youths, "Hold your horses!" and to do it myself.

The purport states that when God endows us with this vision, we will feel His presence in all situations and reach *viSoka*, freedom from grief and misery.

Then technical details of how Maharaja Yudhisthira merged the material elements of his body into the universal elements and liberated the pure self. He was already *jivan-mukta*, so he wasn't going to be reborn in the material world. In *Bhagavad-gita*, Chapter Twelve, Lord Krishna says He takes care of bringing His devotees back to Him. We don't have to be expert *yogis*.

* * *

3:27 p.m.

Joking with M. that he's too lazy to start a fire in the stove in his house. Am I too lazy to take the rare opportunity to sit on the bench today? It's sunny and not too cold. red holly berries on the ground, like Vrndavana's *gunja* berries. Caranaravinda is cleaning the art room and the other filthy rooms. Yellow-rust-green foliage "I think these are ash trees in our backyard. Just now I see bright sunlight playing through them. On distant

hill, small groves of deciduous trees show a peak of autumn rust. The hill's crevices are in sun and shadow. Govardhana?

I can't go there.

Crunch on the gravel, always walking while my pink *dhoti* flutters in the breeze. Sent out a message and now waiting for a response. Intimation that a person could increase his *japa* if he had nothing else to do.

But I keep busy. I get well with extra pills. I'll climb the hill of the afternoon. resisting words that beg to be said "Saratoga, shadow, finger. I told you, I keep engaged. "Unless he's engaged twenty-four hours a day in Krishna consciousness, how can he be a spiritual master?"

Plan to speak on the eighteen items of knowledge. "The next is . . ." Will their eyes grow bleary? In anticipation of that, will I try to entertain? Worry that I chose the wrong topic? I don't have to dwell on each and every item, but I want to tell them enough to capture their imaginations.

* * *

4:30 p.m.

We read more *Manah-Siksa* aloud and invited Caranaravinda to take part. But it was a heavy section, quoting Rupa Gosvami's prayers and his meditation on Srimati Radharani's form. I felt it wasn't right somehow to be reading that in mixed company. Better Madhu and I read such things along. But we meant no harm.

What else? Maybe I can prepare a little more for the Sunday lecture. When I talk, I want to lead the audience through feelings, not just assert philosophy. The topic is knowledge, and I have to be careful I don't trot quickly through all eighteen items without getting them to feel anything relevant. We want to feel the pinch when we study Krishna conscious teachings. If we don't feel the pinch, we won't appreciate what Prabhupada has given and we won't feel the need to advance.

Because *we should lead a life of knowledge*. We should appreciate what we have been given. We should not be impressed by material knowledge. That's what the purports are saying. Bhaktivinoda Thakura calls material knowledge a waste of time. I will mention various kinds of material knowledge and explain why they are dangerous. I want to caution them and say we should pursue spirit. Okay?

Okay.

But *I* don't feel it yet. Maybe when I get there. Remember Srila Prabhupada saying that ratha-yatra is a "feeling festival" for Vaisnavas?

Blue sky "I appreciate it more in Ireland because it's so often misty. A long, white cloud over the hill. Rupa Gosvami's prayers to radha were way over our heads, but some day we will learn to relish them. How can I appreciate Her worship? She is the beautiful woman who loves Krishna. He loves Her too, of course. They thrill to one another. It sounds like paramour love, and people mistake it for sinful activity, and therefore neophytes are advised not to discuss it. My dear Lord Krishna, please forgive me for reading these prayers with so little understanding of them. I do wish to please You. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna.

* * *

What I began writing at 4:30 p.m. is "pole penance," but I didn't label it as such. The pole is already in partial shadow. The sun is gone from this side of the house, even though the sky is light blue in the distance. I can't see the intricate tar or scar patterns on the pole at this time of day. It's upright like a *yogi's* back or a vow that keeps us on the Krishna conscious path. I pray never to be ruined by misbehavior.

PMrB contained a lot of lists. Can I make one here? Sure, why not.

1. List of items to purchase.
2. List of books.
3. The fireplace or the oven.
4. The free-write items appearing in no logical order.
5. The enumeration of Radha's worshipable parts from head to toe by Srila Rupa Gosvami praying, and us hearing it, unworthy, squirming.
6. The reasons and *anarthas* listed as long as our arm for why we are not qualified to practice *bhava-bhakti*.
7. The hundreds of thousands of dollars, the *millions* of dollars, misused, although they have passed through the hands of devotees.
8. The dozens of fair and unfair news articles and programs on the Hare Krishna movement which cast us in an unfavorable light.
9. The time I dreamed and decided not to record it.
10. The fact that I was into dream work for two years, but no more.
11. The collection of books I have written and the boxes in which I store them.
12. The energy waves that carry me through the day with a desire to make another ink drawing, another this or that: work.
13. The sense of duty. Looking forward to the lecture. Hearing a Godbrother lecture. The little signposts throughout the day that tell of the passing of time, such as lunch or taking Hajmola.
14. The declaration that I shall live in a certain way for the next twenty-one days. Seeing what actually happens. Waiting for mail, for the hairdresser, for the Pac-man and the *brahmana*, for Godot, for the angel of death. Especially, waiting for the holy name to reveal Himself. Noticing how quickly day turns into night. Even a young girl says it's scary how fast her life is passing by. All vulnerable who have died "we see their photos in books as if they still exist. I guess they do in spirit, although their bodies are burned or buried. Can you face that? Can you pray to be taken back to Godhead?"

* * *

5:40 p.m., Night Notes

Realized I have not been rocked hard on the head repeatedly by rockers or police. In *Iron John*, Bly speaks of male initiations and the need to go through ashes and hard times. At first I thought I had had no hard times. Then I remembered the U.S. Navy, my LSD experiences alone on the Lower East Side, crying all night, jumping out windows, breaking heels, moving back to Suffolk Street and the whole world of starving desperation to which I had become accustomed. Yes, I have tasted the ashes.

Good night, then, Cupcake. You have it easy now, at least for the time being. We all have to cry tears, not like those I cried on Suffolk Street, but the kind that speak of our yearning to become devotees of Krishna's devotees.

November 7, 12:03 a.m.

The *ISopanisad's* Mantra 14 says that when we know perfectly the Personality of Godhead as well as the temporary manifestations, we can enter the eternal kingdom of God. This reminds me of *Bhagavad-gita* 4.9: If we know the meaning of Krishna's appearance and activities, we will not be reborn into this world but will go back to Godhead. We have to choose what we want to understand. That's the same as choosing eternal life or death-bound existence. In *mṛtyu-loka* we ask to become predominators; in the spiritual world we happily accept eternal servitorship under the Supreme Lord. Krishna's conclusive teaching in *Bhagavad-gita* is to surrender to Him. He will free us from material reactions. But people avoid this instruction and choose to misinterpret Krishna's words. They use their energies to work in the world, "but not to educate themselves to enter into the spiritual kingdom by devotional service." (*ISopanisad*, Mantra 14, purport)

It's nice to read how Srila Prabhupada stresses the need for God consciousness and eternal life. We can't solve problems with temporary patchwork. Srila Prabhupada believes in the eternal. We want to believe too. Krishna is an achievable reality, and practical and intelligent persons should work toward attaining Him.

A sound downstairs. I'll ignore it and go on reading. I'm reading aloud, which makes me more attentive. I don't want to avoid the eternal. I'm on the side of knowledge.

Now pause and dictate a quick letter to that disciple in India who hasn't written in such a long time. Then back to reading, the eternal.

Mantra Fifteen teaches us that the Personality of Godhead is beyond the *brahmajoyti*. Worshiping His form is far more relishable than merging into His impersonal rays. I know this philosophy so well it seems tedious to go over it again, but Srila Prabhupada is a determined and enthusiastic preacher. Those who follow him shouldn't find this material tedious. It's a crucial area which many people misunderstand. So many of the world's would-be spiritualists are snared into impersonalism.

The Supreme Lord is the basis of Brahman, and by His plenary expansion (part of a part of the original person) He appears as Paramatma to maintain and support the universe. His fully blissful form is the original Personality of Godhead. Thus when Krishna appears to enjoy His *lilas* with His pure devotees, we see Him in His best feature, beyond the controller, sustainer, or impersonal effulgence. When I call out His primary names, Krishna and Rama (the all-attractive, the enjoyer of Radha, as in Radha-Ramana), and especially when I address Him by calling on the names of His internal pleasure potency, Hara, I have the potential to cut through all ritual and find the heart of self-fulfillment and mystical presence. But I don't do it with full attention. Hardly ever. What else can I do? This is the best process. O Lord Hari, please protect me. I aim my mantras at Your lotus feet and aspire for pure devotional service.

Lord Krishna never leaves Vrndavana but does the enormous tasks of creation through His expansions and energies. That makes sense. I am not going to become an

enemy of this tiny self and disbelieve what Krishna says about Himself. I am simply praying that all the coverings will be removed so that I may see the Supreme Lord as He is. When I see Govinda, I'll see everything else in relation to Him.

Hare Krishna. Back to the ticking clock. On with my day before I get a headache. I've had headaches for six days in a row, although I've been able to subdue them. But I feel weak. Let me chant while I have some energy. All I want to do is add the major elements of attachment and devotion to my chanting. Is that asking too much?

* * *

4:20 a.m.

Tired from my blessed labor of dressing Radha-Govinda in red and gold and Srila Prabhupada in his *cadar*. On the verge of a headache? I hope not. Listened to the end of *The Love Locket*, then began Rupa Gosvami's poem about Lalita talking to a swan.

Thinking of my Godbrothers in Vrndavana. One, two, three, four of them. What are they doing? One is translating an esoteric work, then editing it, and living at sacred Govardhana. Each of them is walking the bare earth with their bare feet. I'm sure they discuss sometimes how ISKCON can improve. I am so far away from them, but I think of them.

How sad we have all become. And angry sometimes. I am trying to avoid anger. The *gopis* have transcendental anger (*mana*), which they direct toward Krishna or His messengers. Lalita asked the swan to fly to Mathura to tell Krishna about radha's condition. She was not wrong to speak to a dumb bird. She promised it that if it carried her message, it would earn the title *paramahansa*. She even described the route the swan should follow "that universally famous road to Mathura, past the place where Krishna climbed the tree when He stole the *gopis'* clothes, past *rasa-sthali*, and on. Lalita was concerned that if the swan were to stop there, it would be struck with ecstasy and thus unable to continue. I like that part.

Krishna. Suddenly saw the open body of Hiranyakasipu with its gory innards. I'm not like that when I go into myself, not empty physically but in spirit. I can't describe it. Hare Krishna.

Pushing against the tide. rounds over nine minutes, but I pushed and pushed "against my mind and the cold Irish weather and even the happiness of spirit under the guidance of Krishna and Prabhupada. Didn't want to stop.

I seem to resist when people say we have to give up all material desires and concepts, because our senses will lead us to hell. I control myself in my own way, and it's true that we have to be willing to accept strictures, but we need our senses and feelings if we are to find any measure of surrender and renunciation. So I do what seems right. There is always risk involved. The man who crumbles under group pressure may later break away because he felt repressed rather than realized. Or worse, he may become inhuman, cruel, cold. A fellow like me runs the risk of becoming proud and not consulting his brothers. We have to become humble in one way or another. *Trnad api* "and then chant. Chant humbly. Talk to yourself, to your God. Be guided out of the dark. Be happy. Want to please Krishna, even if you are unable to do it. Krishna promises us shelter at His lotus feet. We have to believe Him.

* * *

4:55 a.m.

I get sick of programmed words, yet I seek shelter. May my heart truly turn to Lord Krishna, free and willing to write as it pleases Him, my Lord. He is my beloved.

* * *

5:27 a.m.

Extra tired today. It's an effort just to walk outside. All right, I admit I'm doing things my way, having my druthers. That doesn't mean I can't serve Krishna. And you, whoever you are, aren't you trying to do things your way too? Maybe not. Maybe you are a pure devotee.

I feel like I'm lurching. That's yet another proof of the limits to the body and the limits to my surrender. The bottom line is dependence on Krishna and guru. Just bounced against the wall. The electric light bulb is casting strange shadows on the rocks in the garden. They are filled with porous cavities and have rough surfaces, and the light penetrates their depths and gives them color even in the semidark. We should notice where we live. Krishna is the Paramatma and the *brahmajoyti*, but best of all, He's Krishna. See Him in starlight, hear Him in *Sri Hamsaduta*, feel Him as you stumble into your house.

* * *

9:13 a.m.

Been in a groggy, foggy state since I awoke from my nap at 8. Took feverfew and feel clearer. I feel like writing as soon as possible. M. may come in and ask if I want a massage. I'd rather write. And slow down to read *Bhagavatam*. Spin your wheels? No, I'm ready to make tracks. But there is nowhere to go.

Not true. Find the offering here.

But it's true that words and waves sometimes feel worn out. They begin to seem always the same. That's because I carry the burden of an imagined audience. I'm supposed to please them. Better I go forward as a student, a pensioner, and make the best use of the remainder of my morning.

I'll show two slide shows, one short, as part of a lecture on my birthday, and another about thirty minutes long. My art.

Let's look at *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. "The devotees of the Lord are accustomed to licking up the honey available from the lotus feet of the Lord. What is the use of topics which simply waste one's valuable life?" (*Bhag.* 1.16.6) That's a good one.

Every day I tune in during lunch to a Godbrother speaking *Bhagavatam*. He often tells us (as does the *Bhagavatam*) to pay attention, because the message is so important. I find that nice.

Topics about Lord Krishna or His devotees are equally good. Befriend yourself. Nourish and care for body and soul. Don't think that's selfish. When you feel stronger, go out. Perhaps tomorrow.

Actually, I would like a head and neck massage. It's part of my *Bhagavatam* life, because it keeps me reading. I might lecture on something like that to the devotees "how caring for ourselves responsibly is part of being a human being practicing Krishna consciousness. I know that can be misrepresented, but it's good topic.

Srila Prabhupada: "There is no need to eradicate politics, economics, sociology, etc., which are mundane to the mundaners." (*Bhag.* 1.16.6, purport) I could add, "There is no need to eradicate literature, writing, art . . . humanness, self-discovery, self-care." Those preachers who want to keep these things beyond the province of Krishna consciousness are mundane. "To a pure devotee, who is actually related with the Lord, such mundane things are transcendental if dovetailed with the Lord or with His pure devotees."

Later Srila Prabhupada says life is short and we don't know when we will be asked to leave it. Therefore, we shouldn't waste even a moment on any topic not related to Krishna. Yet in the same purport he says there is no need to eradicate things that can be dovetailed. It really takes discretion. Dialogue on these topics is useful.

Those who have dedicated their lives to the transcendental topics of Krishna are always remembering His lotus feet and "do not run the risk of having misconceptions even at the last moment of their lives." (*Bhag.* 1.18.4) Srila Prabhupada writes, "By scientific adaptation" we will be able to remember Krishna at the end of life (the final exam), when remembrance is usually slackened "due to derangement of bodily membranes." The language may be quaint, but the point is clear: Lord Krishna will help us. We are never alone in the struggle. Srila Prabhupada asserts this throughout his books. We simply have to be earnest.

If the afternoon is clear I'll go into the art room. It's clean and stocked and ready to go. Painting is good therapy for me. I'll try to make it Krishna conscious expression. That doesn't mean to tack on *tilaka*, but to hold your heart in your throat, to pray, to hear Srila Prabhupada's *bhajana*, and to really feel Krishna conscious.

The best part of hearing is to hear *Krishna-katha* "Krishna's personal acts. They are all transcendental, even when done in this world. The more we hear of Him, the more we progress back to Godhead.

* * *

10:00 a.m.

Calligraphy cert: This is to certify that I am okay. It's on parchment, so it must be true. We hired a calligrapher to make it look like a diploma. I know you've lost all your diplomas.

And you have no other certs.

Just a U.S. passport and an Irish residency booklet.

I could get something made up for myself to prove my ISKCON standing, but I know one receives only a limited number of such papers in a lifetime.

Anyway, put it on the wall, even though it's an ongoing assessment. It doesn't allow for laurel-sitting. We are meant to flow like air, pleasing guru and Krishna fresh every day, remaining true.

"This man is a certified agent of Prabhupada because he's chanting his rounds." We feel the Lord's certification, verification, in the heart.

He is independent and can say He's not pleased with us, though. He may even correct us. Strive to be better, always better. And be generous with the certificates *you* give out: this Folk member cooked feasts and gave donations, attended, heard, was patient with us, supported us. Give to many others too.

"I certify that the world is miserable and temporary," said Krishna in *Bhagavad-gita*. He also certifies the process of *bhakti* as the only one that can reach Him. By quoting the *Brhad-naradiya Purana*, Lord Caitanya certifies that there is no way to attain God realization in this age except to chant the Lord's holy names.

You look good with certified boots and your official organs and artificial limbs. I see you have some prescription drugs (rx) and a smile. A cement wall? A vulnerable self. *We are all spirit souls eternal*. What could be more true and authentic than that? Krishna loves us; we are His. We simply have to realize it, and no mundaner can do it for us. We will have to take true shelter ourselves. *Krishna Krishna Krishna*. This eternal spirit wants to jump back into the fire.

* * *

11:44 a.m.

The noon bath water wasn't hot. I prefer it hot. I can't have things my way always. The rajasuya sacrifice is like crossing an ocean of other people's desires. To be successful, a person has to fulfill an enormous amount of desires. Who can hope to achieve such a thing? Yet Maharaja Yudhisthira was able to do it, overcoming all difficulties by Krishna's grace. When I heard that, I thought how Krishna is fulfilling *my* desires to live peacefully in this house in Ireland. Is this the full extent of my desires? Don't I want to save humankind, or at least bring about the complete well-being of the Krishna consciousness movement?

I put the seeds of my desires in my books. Krishna lets me publish them. If they have potency, they will do something for ISKCON. Even Srila Prabhupada, who was incredibly potent, cannot overcome the changes that have taken place in the years since his disappearance. I mean, he cannot control the free will of each of his disciples, all of whom pledged to follow him faithfully and to cooperate peacefully among themselves but who may or may not have been able to follow through. Maya has appeared with her lures, new and old, and her bewilderments, and we have shown that we have not always been able to handle her. Srila Prabhupada's shelter can save us, and ultimately will, but still we have chosen to be washed away.

Even Lord Krishna cannot save those who are determined to be damned. That's the way it is. I know that most of Prabhupada's disciples will not choose damnation, and Krishna and Prabhupada will save us all. But for me to say I desire that everyone take to Krishna consciousness and that ISKCON be pure and potent to facilitate that "and to say I am capable of doing much to bring it about "that's too much. I want to do more than pray for a real hot bath and two hot meals a day, but I want to be realistic with myself. Change begins with myself, as does surrender.

Talk about warmth because the season is changing. We say Ireland doesn't get as cold as the Northeast U.S., and that's true. But it does get cold. We have frosts and even snow, but especially an almost constant, chilling rain.

Oh, struggle to hear your spiritual master. By noon each day, I have usually heard him lecture twice. I also listen to his *Krishna* book dictation when I do his *puja*. During lunch I hear a Godbrother lecture. By now I've also had two reading sessions in Prabhupada's book. I hope to keep this *sadhana* up as long as I can, even through my mind's complaints. I know this is the good fight.

I also know I have gained something important since the time I withdrew from thinking of hearing from a *Siksa-guru* outside ISKCON. I have gained faithfulness, for one thing. Newcomers to ISKCON may think it's easy to maintain affection for Prabhupada, and so it may be for them, but it hasn't been easy for me. Yet I struggle to maintain it and feel good that at least my *sadhana* is Prabhupada-oriented. I no longer have interest in Gaudiya Vaisnava sources outside of him. I do like to hear Radha-Krishna nectar while I worship the Deities in the morning. But I take what I hear as a special gift from Srila Prabhupada. By serving him I'm allowed to hear from the Six Gosvamis. I hope I'll be able to think of Radha and Krishna at the end of my life, but I want to think of Them on the solid foundation of serving and hearing as Prabhupada's *Sisya*.

Hare Krishna. A very dark blue-gray day. reminds me of Confederate gray. The hill darker today, the pole gray-silver. It's not raining, but it won't be long before it is. It's cold. I feel like I'm moving through daily mileposts, over terrain. A truck or bus driver has to cover a certain route and keep to his schedule if he wants to reach his destination by nightfall. Moving now to noon and onward on schedule. Nothing heroic going on here, but I'm meeting my most basic obligations in *sadhana*.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. Could I chant an extra round? Yes, if I like. I expect I'll fall into thinking of something other than Krishna. I could then go and do that thing instead, stopping the beads. It's probably better to stick it out with the *japa*. Chant for the sake of chanting. Hare Krishna.

He told me that people wanted to be with me, so I could give of myself to them. Yes, I could. I think they want to be with me because they have faith that I'm a medium for Prabhupada. It takes thought before I see them. Then I can more guarantee that I'll be able to be that medium for them.

A dialogue:

You sure are a homeboy, an ordinary guy.

You don't like that? Want me to go to a pub or what?

You might go out and take some chances. Do *bhakti-vrksa* preaching, for example.

And you might just shut up. You say things without responsibility or thinking out the consequences. I don't have to listen.

* * *

2:44 p.m.

I wrote something good earlier? Then that's because I was out there trying. But I'm still ashamed to admit my littleness and sameness. Woke a little late after post-lunch nap. Maybe no time and energy for the art room battle later on. At least now, priority space to read *Bhagavatam*.

He said one of his favorite verses is the one in the First Canto about how we never tire of hearing about UttamaSloka. Is that true for me? What if we get tired of hearing *him* and his enthusiasm?

You want to be a spoilsport.

Here it is, the mountain called *Bhagavatam*. Climb.

But I also want to tell you that lunch was nice today, finished off with a slice of apple pie with whipped cream. I never tire of my lunch if it is well made. Today, *dal*, rice, scones, carrots, broccoli, and karela.

The sages said that while performing ritualistic *yajnas*, the smoke blackened their bodies and they remained unsure of their spiritual benefit, but when they heard the nectar of Govinda, they knew they were pleased. "One can feel this practically, as one can feel the result of eating food. Spiritual realization acts in that way." (*Bhag.* 1.18.12, purport)

Please stop doubting whether you feel anything. We are certainly becoming purified by our service, "and there is no loss of energy."

Association with worldly people is, of course, condemned. The value of associating with *bhagavatas* is so valuable that it is beyond compare. I'm sorry I can't give that touch to others. I often wonder if I'm getting it from them. But no man is an island, and we certainly need one another, even if our tendency is to prefer the wind buffeting the trees on a gray day like today to human companionship.

The in- and out-pigeonholes for letters are empty. I try to be efficient with the mail. read a little more now. The devotees who write me are in my thoughts.

"O Suta Gosvami, you are a learned and pure devotee of the Lord because the Personality of Godhead is your chief object of service. Therefore please describe to us the pastimes of the Lord, which are above all material conception, for we are anxious to receive such messages." (*Bhag.* 1.18.15) The speaker should be single-minded.

* * *

4:55 p.m.

Painting talk. Looked at sign: "What would you paint if you allowed yourself to feel?" Did a guy clamped, then finding himself feeling and preferring to chant on his red beads. Superimposed a frightened face over bright colors. Wrote "USN" vaguely in the lower right corner. He looked as if he had been blinded by the lights.

Painted some propaganda. "What can they know?" I'm not sure what I meant.

Did one that looked like a cartoon. The character had red hair sticking out all over and sat against a blue circular background. I collect them, my pictures. They are my process, what I wanted to do today, and quickly. I like peering into the unknown swirls of color and pulling out what I see. In the end, all the colors resolve themselves.

I like to think my friends will be pleased with me, but in this house, my friend M. couldn't care less. So these are for me. I made an effort today to transcend the normal quiet around here and splash and smear and apply color creamily from soft brush to wet page while the wind howled and I occasionally glanced out at the angry sky.

* * *

5:55 p.m.

Read *Manah-Siksa* with Bhaktivinoda Thakura's commentary all the way to the end. Many verses glorifying the residents of Vrndavana. While I read, the house creaked in the heavy wind. *Govardhana-Sila, sakhi-seva, conjugal love* "all are over my head. I thought of the ISKCON temple at Govardhana and what would happen if I went there "who I would meet and what I'd have to talk about. I'd be uncomfortable there, away from my haven here. One friend told me that from ISKCON Govardhana you get "a twenty-four-hour *darsana* of the hill." But if I don't have the eyes, what will I see? Monkeys? People? Both will make me worry.

At least I heard something and can try to think of the essence of Vrndavana while I place my Radha-Govinda in bed. The wind is playing a primitive flute tonight.

November 8, 12:08 a.m.

I hesitated when the alarm went off at midnight. Why not grab an extra hour's rest so I'll be more likely to be headache free when we go to Dublin this afternoon? But I got up. I'll try to take a nap later.

The devotee prays to the Lord to please remove His effulgence "so that I can see Your form of bliss. You are the eternal Supreme Personality of Godhead, like unto the sun, as am I." (*ISopanisad*, Mantra 16)

It's our duty to fight impersonalists. Some brothers may like doing that more than others, but it's everyone's duty. We can be personalists in small ways ourselves, like remembering to give Srila Prabhupada his Dictaphone and shutting the door so a draft doesn't come in over Lord Jagannatha in His bed.

The Supreme Lord is in His spiritual planet, Goloka Vrndavana (*cintamani-prakarasadmasu*), and the *brahmajyoti* is the rays emanating from that planet. The impersonalists are blinded by the glare and cannot realize the Lord's personal form or residence. The Supreme Lord is the most auspicious form of the Supreme Truth.

I must not forget in my lecture today (if Krishna allows me to give it) to reach the ultimate point of loving the Supreme Lord and going to His planet. I'll be talking about the components of knowledge as well as deriding false knowledge, but I shouldn't stop short of Govinda and knowing Him in person.

In this verse, the devotee prays to the Lord as the maintainer. (We pray to Lord Caitanya as the maintainer too.) "The Lord fully maintains His unalloyed devotees, and He guides them progressively on the path of devotional perfection." He gives Himself to his devotees. He helps them reach His planet. This is different, more personal than His maintaining the *jivas* and the cosmos, which He does through His Visnu expansions and various energies.

The Supreme Lord also allows *jivas* who desire it to act as little lords of the material world. I wish to pray to Him to free Me of that mentality. My life is temporary. I need Him. I'm part of Him "His tiny servitor. I want to work in this world to help others come to Krishna consciousness.

Lord Krishna helps us come to Him. The nondevotees can't understand the devotees' activities or why they spend so much time praising Krishna. That's because they don't have His mercy. *Nayam atma pravacanena labhyo*.

Now I am reading the last two mantras, both of which contain prayers at the time of death. I think I don't need these mantra now "that I can study them later "but I know I need the practice to focus my mind on Krishna while I'm still strong enough and lucid enough to do it. Death is difficult. Better we make our prayers in advance while our consciousness is clear. But if we talk of death to the living (either a group or to yourself), you'll be called morbid. "Why is this guy always dwelling on death? He's spoiling our good time."

But when I look in the mirror and see my white face and sunken cheeks, I realize that this is the advance warning of my death. We may think we'll get seven days like Maharaja Pariksit, but actually we have more "we have our whole life to prepare. So pray to remember the Lord now and at death. Get your affairs in order, as they say. The *Isopanisad* says, "Let this temporary body be burned to ashes, and let the air of life be merged with the totality of air." (All of this will happen whether we plan for it or not. A devotee meditates on letting go of his little compartment, the body.) "Now, O my Lord, please remember all my sacrifices, and because You are the ultimate beneficiary, please remember all that I have done for You." (*Isopanisad*, Mantra 17)

Srila Prabhupada will explain this mentality, and how God remembers us even if we don't remind Him. It's nice that the devotee has the presence of mind to remind Krishna that He was the one for whom he sacrificed, offering all results to Him. We hope by guru's grace that we somehow succeed in making those words true. And we pray that our mistakes will not be held against us.

I'll read that purport later just as I plan to die later. It appears I have another morning of *japa* to live through. Call to Him and ask Him to remember you always. He knows "it's you who needs to be reminded "but it's a human hope to approach Krishna like this. As Krishna doesn't want to be forgotten by us, we don't want to be forgotten by Him.

* * *

5:50 a.m.

Top-of-head pressure. I can't escape it. But I want to be in shape for the afternoon lecture. That might not be possible. It's always that way with me: I may have to cancel a lecture, a meeting, a car trip. Of course, plane travel can't be canceled. You travel with the pain. But it's still early in the day. I'll wait to see what develops.

A digger dug into the earth. A writer went searching. The clock tells me the hour. I can't find a suitable word.

The gremlin is an enemy if it breaks your faith in guru. M. says the gremlin (inner critic) is useful, but that one isn't. The term "gremlin" was introduced to me by that Texan psychologist, who described him as the voice inside one's head who hates your happiness and loves your misery. His feedback is always negative.

* * *

Porridge is my friend,
offered to the Lord.
Recent times have shown
Roaring is allowed.

Inside each oak seed
dwells the mighty tree;
God is the design,
ending all on time.

* * *

Porridge hot is fine
offer it and don't expect
Ravings of delight
Rending you in two.
In the porridge bowl
dwells the simple lesson:
pleasure is gone in seconds,
and only emptiness remains.
What was it, anyway?

* * *

9:20 a.m.

Who are you? I'm a Hare Krishna. I am many persons. I contain many subpersons, each of which could be developed or neglected. They are each part of my conditioned self, temporary visitors. I'm an eternal soul, after all. I even have a *sthayi-bhava*, although I don't know which one it is.

All I have right now is memories from life in this body. Others also remember past lives. I remember eating hot cross buns as a child and later hoping to write at least as well as Proust-Miller-Sideburn.

Sideburn? Is he a friend of Swinburne?

Ernest Dawkins. I went to Chicago once, Evanston it was, with Sri Govinda dasa. The next TP after him was UttamaSloka. He thought I was irrelevant. Didn't think the *brahmana*-typed devotees were worth much in terms of getting things done. He wanted wrestlers who could pack revolvers and head out to O'Hare to tumble with the police. Oh my. Oh my. I prefer to talk of the *gopis*.

Who knew me? Who loved me then? It doesn't matter, because those devotees are gone. I'm still on this slow boat to China.

Pumpkin seeds, the doc said, could shrink my swollen and benign (nice fellow) prostate gland. Okay, give 'em over. What about morning glory seeds? Do you think you'll ever wake up and see the Lord?

M. out seeing a long-gone devotee whom others thought was too proud. This devotee likes Madhu; Madhu is a real person, not a stereotypical devotee.

I can't get enough of that Gaudiya sweet poetry. We have been making recordings of it and playing it back when I do my Deity worship with the sounds of Vrndavana in the background. This may be the closest I ever physically get to Vrndavana, but it contains the essence "Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, Rupa Gosvami, Vishvanath Cakravarti, Bhaktivinoda Thakura "and we read it and touch Their golden forms, dressing Them in clothes from the Vraja markets. Isn't this perfection?

The closest I'll ever get . . .

Saw the bio-data of George Shearing, "born blind," and a picture of him and his group from 1949. He played, with the "locked hands" technique, piano, guitar and vibraharp, which would then all strike the same notes at the same time in different octaves. He enjoyed commercial success far beyond what jazz musicians usually see.

My editor with her red pen hunts down my mundane lines and removes them, unless they "have some weight" or something. My job is to tell you what I loved, what stuck to me like bubblegum or lint. But some things are just too embarrassing, and even if I write them out, and even if the editor lets them stay, the copyeditor or proofreader might redline it and add the protest, "Too much!" I hear about it. That's how we recently lost references to Kerouac, Olsen (the theorist of deep poetry), condoms, and Mrs. Mulligan, my seventh and eighth grade teacher at P.S. 8. Of the above, I would have really liked to keep the information about Mrs. Mulligan and how she made fun of Robert Hoffman's falsetto, how armpit sweat soaked through her dress when she played the piano, how she had proud, hawklike features. My guess in hindsight is that she lived without a husband and raised three children. Mrs. Mulligan was tough. She could control anyone "even Charlie Henry. I forgive her for cutting Bob Hoffman's pride.

Now Lord Krishna, He's the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I will not forget to say that *ISopanisad* Mantra One tells us that ISa is the proprietor of all. If we forget this, then we have no knowledge. Sometimes a sage may acknowledge that God is the controller, but the sage goes on to emphasize other topics, such as the gradual process of reaching God "*dharma, artha, and kama*. Most people are more interested in that. Compromise. That's not good. I'm guilty of doing that myself sometimes. I mean, catering to an audience and not remember God. But when I hear a tape in the morning, ISa is right before me.

In *Sri Hamsaduta*, Lalita gives the swan a message. I love hearing her version of what Radha is going through. She says the demons returned to Vrndavana when Krishna left. She mentions them each as aspects of suffering caused by separation from Krishna.

* * *

11:43 a.m.

Football weather today. Clump on his hands, cut his jaw, smack him to the ground, and pile on top of him. Good old footballers. Good old skinny poets with eyeglasses and girlfriends. Footballers' girlfriends, hefty cheerleaders . . . What's all this got to do with ascension to the spiritual world?

This: sooner or later we have to wake up and accept this knowledge. We are souls, and life is meant to realize that and to take that knowledge to its conclusion. Other knowledge creates a glare that makes true knowledge impossible. That's what Bhaktivinoda Thakura says. Look it up again. Brush up so you can make that point in your lecture. This is not an intimate talk to disciples, but a public lecture. Knowledge. I want to know Krishna.

I looked up "knowledge" in the Collins dictionary. "Krishna" was on the same page. The dictionary informed me that His life story is told in the *Mahabharata*. But that's not true. Only a small portion of His life is told there, and indirectly. The real source of His

life story is *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Of course, *Bhagavad-gita* is good too, but who will understand it? Therefore, knowledge has to be gained from the right person or we'll be misled.

* * *

12:11 p.m.

Starting a new notepad. Heart pumping. Souls go from one body to another. Sober persons wouldn't mind, knowing that Krishna is in charge and that they go where they deserve. But I ask Krishna "as the great devotees do "to please allow me to remember and serve Him as early as possible in my next life. I want to complete this business of dealing with attachment to pleasures and fears. I'm not yet one hundred percent a devotee. I still identify with the world and the four animal propensities. Of the four, Srila Prabhupada says that fear is most prominent. Chanting scares fear away.

* * *

2:15 p.m., Wicklow en route to Dublin

Copper-leaved trees with nests of color in them, some red, some yellow-green. We're driving along a narrow, twisty road. There's an oncoming car pulling a horse trailer, so we have to slow down to pass one another. Sky gray as usual. Hills. Thinking that lecturing is just a ritual.

But seeking the link that will connect one piece of my life to another "and to EJW "so that I provide a completely accessible reading experience. But there is no avoiding the crunch. I have to seek the link constantly. It's all valuable.

Dangerous bend in the road! Now we are at the place where I can lie down in the van because the road has stopped twisting so much. M. is speeding up. Knowledge. Got my pill to help me hold up. I need His grace.

* * *

3:55 p.m.

We are behind a large Eirebus. Leaves on trees now orange and yellow. Then a parking lot selling tractors and earth movers, also orange and yellow. I muse on the colors in the jars in my art room and how they look when I apply them to canvas. Celebrating Krishna's colors. Be confident. Try it for Him.

He'll pull into the city and pull the curtain so I can be private before I come out. Yes, Uddhava, I'll take a *bhajana-kutira* as you offered it to me. I want to chant *japa* and be able to write. Seeing how I might improve. Writing is part of it for me.

Green light. Long traffic lines. Light blue sky. Street lights not on yet. It will be dark on our way home. rehearsing the lecture. Their faces, my aplomb "the little but sufficient wall (veneer) of distance and politeness between us as I speak and which is retained even when I ask, "Any questions or comments?"

Real knowledge is to chant Hare Krishna and to depend on Him. Who needs to know this other stuff, or even discuss it?

Get in lane. City Centre, Firhouse (right turn) "Dubliners know what all the signs mean, but I don't. I'm too busy wearing red, American, low-cut sneakers. When I give the lecture, can I lean against the wall? Drink water from a cup? Templeogue.

While he pauses at a red light, I apply Fixodent, then tie a knot in my *sannyasa* top piece. Here's the Shell station, but we won't stop now.

Entering the city and the billboards. Go ahead, have your furtive fill. Stone walls cemented in place. Brick row houses, the cold look. I prefer the country, but for preaching, a devotee chooses to go to hell if necessary. remember how Srila Prabhupada left Vrndavana for New York City?

* * *

5:05 p.m.

Lecture went okay. That's it for me until I lecture again in Belfast on November 25th. Back into the deep quiet. It's not *so* quiet in Wicklow, because I have head fog every day and thus lose so much time, but especially because I'm always churning. Do you know what that feels like? But outsiders leave me alone.

Just see the pressure and noise of Dublin. So many people struggling in so many ways. I don't have to face it or live it. I already gave my lecture.

Now heading home in the dark. String of cars, red rear lights, whoosh of traffic like in the old days.

I'd like to get into that routine where I take in *sastra*. One of the items of knowledge is to live in a secluded place away from congested cities. Praghosa asked me about that. I replied that we still have to do it, in the temple, within ourselves. Don't be part of a hectic life. Hare Krishna.

For me, I'll return to Wicklow and seek solitude and prayer.

November 9, 12:00 Midnight

Humble, prideless, nonviolent . . . I read and discussed all eighteen items. Very well. Now it's the next day, so let's face it and learn about God. Krishna consciousness has to be known, experienced. We have no choice if we wish to move deeper into it. But if we can't move forward, we can't. Advancement comes by grace. Therefore, we shouldn't be proud if we can chant Krishna's names. A proud *brahmana* could be thinking, "I know Krishna consciousness," while another person could be lamenting, "I'm not able to practice spiritual life and truly know God." The second person might be more qualified by his humility and yearning. Less *ahankara*, and perhaps less attachment to family. He might even be living renounced in a clean, simple, quiet place. O Krishna, where are Your unalloyed devotees? I have a bona fide spiritual master from whom I can inquire, and that is Your greatest mercy.

Blow, rainy night. It was hard-driving rain on last night's return journey.

My dear Lord, please remember all I have done for You. One elder lady (with dangling earrings) asked, "If we enact no new karma in this life, would we still have karma from a previous life?" We have to surrender to Krishna and He will remove our karmic reactions. Then we will get a spiritual body. Otherwise one lifetime accruing

good karma will elevate us to the higher material planets. *ISopanisad* Mantra 17 shows a devotee praying at the time of his death, hoping to become free. (Another item of knowledge "*janma-mrtyu-jara-vyadhi-duhkha-dosanudarSanam*).

We continue to exist after the body's annihilation. A Mr. Singh, a Sikh in turban and hair, was present last night, an official from the Indian Embassy. He looked at me and I glanced back quickly. He may have seen . . . how I am obviously so non-Indian! But I was dressed as a *sadhu* and I spoke Vedic philosophy. Maybe I'll be a Mr. Singh in my next life and become used to living in India.

" . . . the material bodies of all animals and men are foreign to the living entity." (*ISopanisad*, Mantra 17, purport) I'm still thinking of blueberries and whipped cream and yeastless scones, hot *sabji*, good *dal*. You rascal, don't you know you can't enjoy like that? " . . . one should give up this material body, which will be turned to ashes, and allow the life air to merge into the eternal reservoir of air." (*ISopanisad*, Mantra 17, purport) We have to give up the material body by not desiring sense gratification and by desiring a body in which to serve Krishna with no hindrance. No death or change.

It's not so hard to get a preliminary "handle" on Krishna conscious knowledge as it is contained in the *ISopanisad* or *Bhagavad-gita*. Then we can spout it and even practice it. But we also see how hard it is to attain in full. At least *I* see that. It takes incredible desire to get incredible realization. How strongly do we want to become pure devotees? How fervently do we hear the *sastras* when they are spoken? Study them? What's the quality of our chanting? When we read how the *jiva* must transmigrate and suffer through the material species, why don't we become more single-minded in the attempt to escape that fate?

The devotees develop love of God by their practice of devotional service. "Even if a devotee dies not remembering his godly service at the time of death, the Lord does not forget him." (*ISopanisad*, Mantra 17, purport)

* * *

4:15 a.m.

Well, here I am facing the crunch to write about Krishna. Don't want to be worldly. I got a book on the Jesus prayer, but I know it won't ultimately help. In the introduction, the author says nothing in the book has been concocted. She got everything she said from scripture, the desert fathers, or her spiritual directors. Then this: "The only thing which is truly mine is the experience of 'failure' "my ability to pray 'well' "and the gratitude for the grace of perseverance in praying it 'badly,' for the glimpse of the life to which the practice of the Jesus prayer may lead those who embrace it."

Radha-Govinda in purple with silver trim. Govinda has a curvy silver walking stick and a flute. I listened to *Sri Hamsaduta* while dressing Them. Lalita wanted to tell Krishna what Radha says and does in Her grief.

Can't help but be part of that world when I hear this, yet part of this world too. I want to reduce this world to its simplest essence. I can only do that by using whatever comes my way in Krishna's service and avoiding Dublin's billboards. They only create illusion in the mind. For example, one showed a small cupcake with strawberries and whipped cream on top, and next to it, the whole strawberry shortcake with whipped cream. The

caption said, "There's a difference between an ordinary pension and an Eagle pension. retire and get the whole cake."

Man, you are not so pure. You answer letters "yes, and ask to build a *bhajana-kutira*, yes, and tell people you're glad they're caring for their children and that I noted their attendance at my lecture, but you are not so pure. Did you say you were trying your best?

Wind raging outside. Hare Krishna. Lord, please help me approach You. I always wanted to be Your devotee. (Making this part up). I had a lot of dreams that told me to become a devotee. My friends and I had to endure hard times, but You never forsook us. Hare Krishna. Distribute a book. Tell people about Krishna so they can think of Him at the time of death.

Now the man I love . . .

Krishna, if You are determined to be hardhearted and not return to Vrndavana, then there will be no point in trying to maintain Radha's hope. All She cares about in this world is that You will again be by Her side. Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Krishna. "We were chanting," she told me, describing her dream, "and armed men came and took over the temple." She interpreted it as a symbol for left brain, right brain predominance. I spoke in my lecture, but left this one point out: the knowledge *jnanis* gain after many, many lifetimes is simply *vasudevah sarvam iti*, that Krishna is everything. Whoever understands this has real knowledge. If you know a lot, are austere, wear "red" cloth, beard, mustache, but don't love Krishna, you are not a *sadhu*.

Now to live it. I failed, but offered what I could find to God. Krishna is my Christ, my Hare Krishna in my

Jesus prayer.

There's no need to experiment with new prayers

just keep going with the old one

all the way

to the end

and then begin again.

* * *

4:45 a.m.

Calligraphy cert: I hereby wring out my best penmanship, although my eyes are tired, on this parchment that resembles the real thing, that someone had a falsetto voice, wore imitation leather, and knew how to cross reference. I have been told what to write by authorities, so if you have anything to ask, don't ask me. I liked the leaves and stored impressions of November scenes "orange-yellow-green leaves blown down. Of rain and wind beating down last leaves.

Poster advertising Donovan and U2 uptown. I hereby give you notice that you have been a citizen in my parochial dream. Nothing can save you but One.

I present you with a scroll for having a good college average. May you be happy with it.

All glories to Srila Prabhupada. Now you have enrolled in the *bhakti* college, which begins with a study of *Sraddha* and moves through *sadhu-sanga*, *bhajana-kriya*, *anartha-nivrtti*, all the way to *prema*.

Now let me melt wax for this cert and make my seal, then tie it with a silk ribbon so it can look good on the wall at Grandma Doty's house next to all the faded portraits of people I no longer know.

* * *

5:25 a.m.

Half moon. Saw it for a moment. Now only a dark yard and Madhu's thatched roof dimly illuminated by the electric light attached to the outside of the house. Walking around and around with my little thoughts, counting days, noticing new things entering my life, feeling the steady presence of Krishna and Radha in Their purple and silver dresses.

I want to honestly tell you of my failure to attain Krishna's mercy, because right now, that's the only truth. If I could only realize Them.

* * *

8:50 a.m.

"Thus please narrate to us the narrations of the Unlimited, for they are purifying and supreme. They were spoken to Maharaja Pariksit, and they are very dear to the pure devotees, being full of *bhakti-yoga*." (*Bhag.* 1.18.17)

Don't have much taste? Don't have much physical strength? No sooner do you open a book than you feel a twinge (behind the right eye?). You try to think of ways to easily ingest the *Bhagavatam*.

Yet you want to write during your best "up" times. Heard Srila Prabhupada in a remarkable '72 lecture in Bombay after he'd completed speaking on NOD during Karttika in Vrndavana. The text mentioned how Sanatana Gosvami escaped from jail. Srila Prabhupada gave an entire lecture on how a devotee may transgress morality to please Krishna. Arjuna broke *ksatriya* etiquette to kill Karna, Maharaja Yudhisthira should have told a lie, the *gopis* and everything they did, etc. Do any damn thing according to material calculation in order to achieve your end: giving pleasure to Krishna. You know what I thought while I was listening to that? Writing. I thought I wanted to make it lively, Krishna conscious, and that I was willing to work for that in whatever way required. Don't stop short just to remain conservative. Be radical, revolutionary, cross boundaries "but only to please Krishna.

"Srila Suta Gosvami said: O God, although we are born in a mixed caste, we are still promoted in birthright simply by serving and following the great who are advanced in knowledge. Even by conversing with such great souls, one can without delay cleanse oneself of all disqualifications resulting from lower births." (*Bhag.* 1.18.18)

* * *

9:40 a.m.

No writer's book can help me now. Don't want to imagine myself a Thoreau or whatever, but to be calm and spiritually fixed. I feel gentle. No, I mean fragile, stripped of armor inside my head. I need to do whatever helps to keep me going. I told that sweet, bespectacled guy yesterday that (1) it's okay that he can't surrender beyond his present capacity; (2) that he has to practice self-scrutiny to understand to what degree he *can* surrender, because it's very individual; (3) that maybe he can find devotees who can help him with his attempts at surrender; (4) that he should maintain a margin of effort that takes him past the point where he feels comfortable; and (5) that within his present "safety zone" he can learn to dovetail. That is, he can use pieces of straw to keep his devotional fire going if he's not yet ready to add logs. I will apply these points to myself too.

Srila Prabhupada attacks our self-serving attitudes toward God and everything else short of pure, devotional, selfless service. Mayavadis seek liberation by merging with Krishna's bodily effulgence. *Yogis* are after material perfections. *Karmis* want only material benefits. We even criticize pseudo-Christians who don't follow their own commandments (such as "thou shalt not kill"). That's fine. But sometimes we also criticize what we call the "Christian position," which may actually be a nice position. I saw this and liked it in the introduction to *Living the Jesus Prayer*, by Irma Zaleski:

"I had no habit of prayer and no clear understanding of what the mystical spiritual life really was. Above all, I had very little understanding of the infinite, unconditional mercy of God, and therefore I had no way of relating to my own poverty and weakness without being crushed by guilt. I kept trying to justify myself, to be 'good,' to appear blameless 'before God and others.' As my inability to do so became clearer and clearer to me, the temptation to discouragement and despondency was very strong."

Then she tells how she took up the Jesus prayer. "At first I thought it was boring and wondered what the point was, but somehow through the grace of God, I kept going. Eventually, I began to realize that the essential truth of our faith, the Good News " . . . was not that we were suddenly made perfect and free from all danger of sin, but that the infinite source of God's mercy and love had been open to us in Christ."

* * *

10:15 a.m.

Stay on track. A little *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Maybe learn to take snippets, intravenous shots or feeding. I'd have to line it up beforehand. No, I think there is no especially easy way to absorb *sastra*. We simply have to read it. But we could learn to accept small amounts and digest them.

I want to write what I digest in my commonplace book. What's the harm? I'm not trying to write an elegant collection of artsy, collage-hang-together-mobile moments from a day. I just want to say something Krishna conscious to inspire others.

* * *

11:20 a.m.

When I say I'm now living in full quiet, I mean externally. That is, I'm not traveling, lecturing, or entertaining guests. Having those items off my schedule allows me to sink deeper into the silence. But I'm still affected by doubts "I call them mosquito bites "and they include indecision, shadow talk, indiscretion, headaches, and so on. When I lose the external quiet and begin to travel again, my life will become more demanding. I know I'll be looking forward to returning here.

Let me be aware in these few precious days that even external quiet "I wish I could think of a better, more dynamic word than "quiet" "is rare and valuable and should be utilized according to our capacity.

* * *

11:45 a.m.

I usually don't write about my little irritations with Madhu. Why not? First, because it's personal, and anyway, my editor will probably omit it to save Madhu's feelings. Second, I spoke a little of my irritation to another devotee. I knew I was venting. Now why bother repeating it here? Third, it would expose me as petty. I want people to think of me differently. I'm supposed to be concerned only with spiritual, inner, literary things, headaches, aloneness, and so on. Why should I be a guy hung up that he's not served better by his disciple?

In other words, it's an embarrassing subject. But I have to hand it to old May Sarton, who lets her petty, bitchy nature come out so often in her writing.

Some objective points, as I see them:

I get irritable when the twinge or near-twinge is coming on or is already present. At those times I am more sensitive to Madhu's shortcomings in his service. For example, I've sent him repeated notes asking him to put up drawing sheets in the art room so I can work. He still hasn't done it. He's leaving immediately after lunch for his weekly acupuncture appointment. He spent a good amount of time "I'm not sure how much "sitting in the car outside with Manu. That seems a luxury to me. When I wanted him, I repeatedly pushed the intercom, but he did not respond. Just on a hunch I went outside, looked over the wall, and saw him with Manu in the car. I had to go out and shout to get his attention.

Today he's cooking *kichari* for lunch. Another sign that he has too much to do. Given the fact that he has varied interests, I think he needs some help here. Maybe when Caitanya-candrodaya comes, this problem will be alleviated.

In the meantime, I feel if I complain either to him or *just to myself*, I sound like I'm nagging. Then I feel guilty. Who am I to complain? Why am I demanding *anything*? So many people in this world have to struggle, and I have it quite easy. Okay, I *am* grateful, but does that mean I have to be gagged, that I shouldn't ask for drawing paper to be taped to the wall so I can paint? Is it wrong to want to live efficiently? When things don't get done, I use up almost all my energy in my relationship with M., especially in resenting him, which I keep to myself most of the time. Since I don't usually write about it, it creates another block; it means I suppress real energy (disobeying the edict to go for the jugular) and assume a false persona that is not concerned with petty things.

The objective solution will be to get help. M. and I are compatible when things run smoothly and the job is covered.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

Chanting the Lord's holy names under the direction of great devotees without offense frees us from the disqualification of having taken a lower birth. When Lord Krishna says at the end of *Bhagavad-gita* that He will deliver the devotee from sinful reactions, this statement is equally true of the holy names: They can protect us from the effects of sin.

Hurry up, keep writing *sastra*. I have to be done by 3 p.m. so I can take a walk. And hey, don't get attracted to other religions. Don't feel tired because you've read all these Vedic descriptions before. Just move along.

When we engage the purified senses in the Lord's service, that's called *bhakti-yoga*. Devotees don't take more sense enjoyment than necessary (for health).

"O *rsis*, who are as powerful as the sun, I shall try to describe to you the transcendental pastimes of Visnu as far as my knowledge is concerned. As the birds fly in the sky as far as their capacity allows, so the learned devotees describe the Lord as far as their realization allows." (*Bhag.* 1.18.23)

Then Sukadeva Gosvami tells the story of how Maharaja Pariksit was cursed by a *brahmana* boy and how the king repented but accepted the curse. He saw it as the Lord's doing, so "that only out of fear I will detach myself from the world." He became free of fear of death, surrendered to the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord "which was a sign he was ready to go back to Godhead. He prayed that if he could not attain the spiritual abode after this life, in his next life he would be completely attached to Lord Krishna, have friendships with His devotees, and become kind to all.

The king then asked the question which is the heart of the entire *Bhagavatam*: "Please . . . tell me of the unalloyed duty of everyone in all circumstances, and specifically of those who are just about to die." (*Bhag.* 1.19.25)

* * *

4:40 p.m.

Pretension to be a primitive arty, primitive *bhakti* painter is the failure. I guess I failed, but unless I fail, how will I be able to keep going with a glimpse of painting *without* pretension? Failure gives me the chance next time to stick in the word "Krishna" in earnest. If I feel devotion when I write it, maybe I can't ask for much more than that. The rest "judging whether it is good or not" is mostly out of my hands and out of everyone else's too, except Krishna's. If someone is touched by what I have written and the feeling behind it, then that means I managed to write free of pretension.

M. should be back soon. Then we'll read some sublime literature. Don't be moody and refuse to read. Almost every good thing I do I have to push myself to do it. I don't feel overwhelming inspiration all the time. Still, I'm happy to get things done one after another. Now I want to choose in advance the verses in the Second Canto that I'll stop and read tomorrow morning. Hare Krishna. Leave behind what I did today and face this

moment. Face your prow in the direction the spiritual master wills you to go. Be afraid of the unknown if you must, but be obedient.

* * *

6:15 p.m.

I think of increasing rounds or chanting with new intensity, think of reading with more devotion. These things may be possible, but the one thing I already have is the desire and ability to set down thoughts and feelings in writing. Let's not abandon that. We don't hear it described much as a way of prayer or service, but I know it is *Sravanam kirtanam visnoh smaranam*. Accept it gladly as a way.

But I have so much to learn. I think of myself before I think of serving Krishna, for example. My writing could be better. It delineates failure but doesn't glorify God. Hare Krishna.

Radha-Govinda in Their night outfits of emerald green with golden trim. He holds His long flute. I thought of two of my disciples in Vrndavana, a man and his wife, who never write to me. They are devoted to Vrndavana, and their attitude seems to be that if I visit Vrndavana, then only will they relate to me personally. They imply by their mood that *until* I am physically in Vrndavana, I don't really exist. All the mercy they need is in Vrndavana. They seem to know what they are talking about, and I admire their good fortune, but I don't think they understand certain things.

We started reading *Navadvipa-bhava-taranga*. I got the impression from that book that the holy *dhama* is not a physical place but the inner vision of a great soul. It gave me hope. It reminded me of how I feel about 26 Second Avenue. Whenever I go there, I'm reminded that for me, that place exists in memory more than as that present-day preaching center. It's a mental-spiritual place I can visit at any time. When I hear of Vraja and Navadvipa, it can be similar. Anyway, it's the best I can do for now, although I know there is special benefit to physically living in holy India, accepting the penance, and tasting the dust of Vrndavana.

Hare Krishna. Time to put the Deities to rest. I don't love Them enough. I don't love *any* devotional practice enough. What's real for me is my breath, heartbeat, and my aches and pains.

The book on the Jesus prayer said that God is best found in silence, when the world and mind noises are quieted. I think that too. I want to pray the Hare Krishna mantra I need to overcome distraction. I'll pray to Him for that overnight. Hare Krishna. Seeking rest so I can greet the word of prayer printed in *ISopanisad*. It will be waiting for me, given by my master. I'm initiated. I have a spiritual master. That makes life simple.

November 10, 12:00 Midnight

A dream in which I was discharged from dangerous military service and left with only a small amount of clothing and money. I returned to 125 Katan Avenue, but there were many people, men and women, occupying the rooms. They were holding an all-night party. They said Narottama (a devotee I knew) was living in my room. I was glad to hear that at least *only* Narottama was in there. I decided not to *do* anything for society now

that I had been discharged from military service. At the end of the dream, someone suggested that eating sweets wasn't good for me. When I awoke and decided not to unravel the details of the dream "and I especially decided *not* to give up sweets "I simply washed my face and began to read about *bhakti*. Dreams come like waves crashing against the strange beach where the unconscious and the conscious meet. I won't absorb myself in them.

I prefer to make the most of my waking state by practicing direct Krishna consciousness. *Sri ISopanisad* Mantra 17 is about what to do at the time of death. Srila Prabhupada writes that the same topic is covered more elaborately in the *Bhagavatam*. Srila Prabhupada adds that everyone is about to die. Sukadeva Gosvami's recommendation, given in the Second Canto (2.1.5), is to "always hear about, glorify, and remember the Personality of Godhead, who is the supreme director of everything, the extinguisher of all difficulties, and the Supersoul of all living entities." Engage your life in godly activities without wasting time. Then you'll be able to remember Krishna at the end.

In Mantra 19 the Lord is addressed as fire because He can burn away sinful reactions. I don't need a new coat. I can get by with the one I have. I don't need boots either. I'd prefer to have more *bhakti*, if someone wants to give me a gift. I want to stay absorbed in godly activity and to enter a quiet where I can hear Krishna. During *japa*, I hope to pray to Him to enable me to praise Him. I'll beg Him for service. *Just hear*, Prabhupada said. Hang in there with that delicate frame.

A soul gradually gets promoted from one life to another. We hope to be born into a better situation, still human. Surrender can help us bypass all stages of material development. Surrender means "adopting the devotional attitude." If we do that, Krishna will take charge of us. What would we lack after that? Krishna directs the devotee on the right path, "even if he desires something else."

Dear Lord, I make mistakes. Please guide me. Please take charge of me. You respond to this prayer by appearing as the spiritual master and answering us from within our hearts. "Thus ends the Bhaktivedanta purports of *Sri ISopanisad*, the knowledge that brings one nearer to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna." I have not decided what book to read next.

In a dream a book distributor had a special edition of Srila Prabhupada's writings. It had not been published, but printed privately. It consisted of the translation in bold print, followed by Srila Prabhupada's commentary. I was excited to see the book and asked the devotee to send me a copy if it ever were to be published. I was intrigued, because I tend to get tired of reading Prabhupada's books presented in the same format. This one has something different about it.

Let's go to the shiny, red, worn beads. I hold them in a white-gloved hand and stay awake as I chant. Even when I'm distracted I strive for attention, hungry to hear the holy name. There's nothing else we can do but push on.

* * *

4:13 a.m.

So many disciples have left. I can't even remember all their names or faces. But Radha-Govinda are here. I used to worship Lord Jagannatha in Boston, a picture of Hanuman, and other Deities. Time drags everything down the river and over the falls.

Before then, a little traveling music. *Laulyam* is the only qualification, he said. The *gopis* had it. We must give up all else and surrender to Krishna. Then we are devotees.

To whom do I belong? Want freedom to be dedicated to Krishna. That way I'll obey Him and yet be myself. An ecstatic preacher could claim, "I have *laulyam* because I give everything to Krishna." Or he could convey that Radha and the *gopis* have *laulyam*, and he gets carried away telling me that. Does it make me think he is on to something? But I don't have either *bhava*. I talk about how we can be real people. I seem to bring up our conditioning and say it is important. We shouldn't forget or ignore it. We are trying to come to terms with surrender, so we can't leave out personal conditioning.

But that might not inspire some devotees, especially those who want to hear direct, transcendental nectar.

Radha and Krishna wearing cream-colored *cadars*. Hare Krishna's oaks and ferns in Eire. Oak Street. Oak-lined Katan Avenue in my dreams. You, Krishna, had the nerve to abandon the *gopis*. They complained. Said Radha was like one who has given up his guru. But You cheated Her (as You cheated Bali when you appeared as Vamana). You tore out Her heart, as You tore out the innards of Hiranyakasipu when You appeared as Nrsimha.

* * *

5:28 a.m.

Very cold this morning. I think I'll start wearing two pairs of gloves. I could also use some layers under my winter coat. It's a clear, dark morning, with twinkling stars and a half-sliced moon beaming over all. The moon is very far away, very cold, and I can see the distressful-looking open mouth that makes it look like an old man. Two cavernous eyes. Around and around for exercise this old man walks, and by Krishna's arrangement he can look at the moon and the moon looks back. Krishna nurtures transcendental yearning when we look at the moon "if we want it. Although I'm cold, I wish to cup my hands around the flame of desire for pure devotional that grows within my heart.

* * *

5:40 a.m.

Calligraphy cert: With cold hands we present you with a noble token of our appreciation for your tending of the fire. We were going to give you an honorarium of a first-rate kettle, but changed our minds. You have too many defects "many and deep. Imagine thinking of yourself before thinking of God?!

Anyway, this is supposed to be a positive piece, so let that drop. But we did mention that you never learned to drive a car or work a computer, a sewing machine, or a gun. You don't know how to order in a restaurant or pay bills or flag taxis and you can barely cook. We did acknowledge that you could learn.

Seal affixed and waxed this day of our Lord, November 10, 1998, in Tiffin, MA, while lying down in the van after a sleepless night.

O save me, Lord, from a great fall. I hope to survive my spiritual freefall with faith, but nothing too rough, okay? I dreamt they jumped off high walls in Jagannatha Puri. People were encouraging them. It showed their faith.

* * *

9:15 a.m.

Reading a book with gilt pages. This is the seventh printing of the Second Canto. It came out in 1977. "O my Lord, the all-pervading Personality of Godhead, I offer my respectful obeisances unto You." It's glorious to ask questions about Krishna and especially to want to hear the answers. If we hear from a bona fide guru with rapt attention, we will develop love of Krishna. What's holding us back?

It occurred to me that lately, we ISKCONites have begun to think of our stages of attainment not as standards but as *ideals*. When Srila Prabhupada first presented them, it seemed to us that he thought everyone had to right then to move from the most fallen to love of God. Gradually we're admitting, both publicly and privately, that love of God is a far-off goal, something for which we should aspire but should not expect to attain immediately. This is supposed to save us from being crushed by guilt and hopelessness. Does it work?

I have to choose sections of my books to read for my birthday lectures on November 30th. What would I dare read? A few poems from *Waves*? What still feels exciting to read? I want to have all my lectures prepared ahead of time. I thrill to improvisation when I write, but somehow not when I speak.

Here's something I read on quiet:

True silence is a great gift of God, and we should pray for it every day. It allows us to experience and hear God who lives in our hearts and is speaking to us. He is always there, and He is always speaking to us, but the outer and inner noise that usually fills our lives prevents us from hearing Him. True silence is not merely an absence of noise "an external, physical silence" although of course, that it also very important and at times necessary. True silence, the silence of which the Jesus prayer seeks to establish in us, is above all an inner silence, a silence of the heart.

"*Living The Jesus Prayer*, Irma Zelesky, p. [note the missing page number.]

Stay with me, reader, and hold my hand. I'll hold yours too as we walk through the dark. To hell with the critics. We'll be obedient and Krishna conscious, as Prabhupada wanted. We will find a way to read his books that awakens love of God. I have one of his books open now, and the feverfew I took a while ago has revived me. The desk lamp is on, so what am I waiting for?

"Your question is glorious." Maharaja Pariksit had great powers. I don't. It's Kali-yuga. We tend to be cut-down versions of devotees. I'm cut down more than most, and *I accept that*. I can't sit through someone else's *Bhagavatam* lecture, but (self-defense, exoneration) I listen every day during lunch to my Godbrother's presentation.

Any question about Krishna is "original and perfect." That would include neutral questions, like, "Who is Krishna?" or "How could Krishna be God?" or anything that is not challenging or offensive. Whatever our questions, we should use them to absorb our mind in hearing about Krishna. Aside from asking questions, of course, we also have to withdraw our minds from things that are not about Krishna. Even though material things can be used in Krishna's service, we want to dexterously avoid entanglement by them and go directly to the source.

Things I'd like to talk about if I had an intimate friend:

1. Self knowledge.

2. Burning up material desires through devotional service.

But even more than talking with a friend, I need to talk to myself. Even better than that would be to hear from Krishna and receive His strength and mercy. We have to push forward to the higher stages of *bhakti*. "It is very auspicious, therefore, to hear always about Krishna."

We goodie two-shoes lecturers "do we practice what we preach? Even if we do, do we *love* it, love to be with other devotees, with our questions and doubts and emotions and tears? If we followed the example of pure devotees, would we become happy? Would we later find out that even pure devotees are hiding material desires? We say no, but we don't know.

Krishna-katha purifies the speaker, the hearer, and the place where it is spoken. "Those persons who are materially engrossed, being blind to the knowledge of ultimate truth, have many subject matters for hearing in human society, O Emperor." (*Bhag.* 2.1.2)

We're mostly guilty on the call of hearing many subjects. Who among us sticks to this one (or these four) best books? Still, we're not *grhamedhis*. Sukadeva Gosvami is about to lambaste the *grhamedhis*. It's easy not to take these verses personally. We're devotees, right? We don't have illicit sex or spend *all* our money on family members. O Krishna.

Crapshoot. Henry Grimes. Work out. I write notes to Bala in America, such as, "Have a digital clock with large, see-in-the-dark numerals on it for me. I'll be arriving in my classy boots and the coat with the warm lining." A real *laddu sadhu*. That's me. But I have my lecture outlines and all my enemies and friends. Got two letters today, one calling me a *maha-bhagavata* and the other a *guru-druha*, someone who has offended Prabhupada. While answering them, I itched and scratched and planned to write until doomsday my rough books.

* * *

11:34 a.m.

During Srila Prabhupada's *puja* I heard him narrating the story of Krishna killing sankirtana by singing, dancing, serving refreshments, and teaching the philosophy.

And culture. He wanted us to spread culture too.

While we're doing that, we sit around and listen to stories about Krishna cutting off the demons' heads. When Sri Krishna stood against Salva with His SudarSana *cakra*, He resembled a red sunset against a mountain. Both demons, after their vituperative speeches, were quickly killed.

Now waiting for M. to heat the water for my bath. He'll be late, because he was over talking with Praghosa and lost track of time.

* * *

2:45 p.m.

"O descendent of King Bharata, one who desires to be free from all miseries must hear about, glorify, and also remember the Personality of Godhead, who is the Supersoul, the controller and the savior from all miseries." (*Bhag.* 2.1.5)

Yes, good advice. Create an atmosphere to hear and chant *Krishna-katha*, whether it's in the temple room or at home. Don't spend vital energy in sex, earning money, "and maintaining a band of relatives who are to be vanquished in the air of oblivion."

Eating cake. It has a carob icing layer, strawberries, and instead of whipped cream, something resembling it made from soy. Listen. A lady in the former Soviet Union wants more seclusion to chant and hear. Her authorities tell her it's not available in the temple, and if she lives at home, she won't find it there either because she'll have to go out and make money. She took her problem to the Orthodox Christian representative and he said, "You are right to want seclusion. Join one of our nunneries and you shall have it." She went back to her ISKCON authority and asked permission! He told her to write to me. As if I'm an authority on seclusion and can figure out how she should find it in Russia. As if I'd *dare* feel free to consider it honestly, since whatever I would say would be criticized to the hilt.

But we have to face the truth: whoever desires to be free from all material miseries must chant and hear the glories of Bhagavan ISvara Hari. We don't have to do that in seclusion; we can chant and hear in a group, on the street, but somehow or other we have to find a way. That way will depend on who we are as person.

We are meant to act on behalf of the Supreme Lord, the Supreme Proprietor. We can't remember Krishna (*smaranam*) until we are sufficiently engaged in hearing and praising Him. "The highest perfection of life . . . is to remember the Personality of Godhead at the end of life." (*Bhag.* 2.1.6) The *acaryas* have warned us about the directions we tend to take. We also have to have at least some experience of the difference between material and spiritual consciousness. We know as we get older that death and illness make us more preoccupied with the body, not less so "unless we make an endeavor to get free by absorbing ourselves in Krishna consciousness. Better we practice while life is easy. Don't be caught unprepared at the end.

* * *

5:05 p.m.

The nicest thing to possess is affection for Srila Prabhupada. I noticed my own affection for a moment while I was listening to him sing. Actually, I hadn't noticed that song before in quite the same way, but it came clear while I was painting with colors and forms. His voice was so sweet, and my hearing felt more complete than usual.

What came out of it? A painting of Radha and Krishna, one of a man with a calf, a close-up of a red-eyed attack dog, the words, "Caitanya-Nitai," and a portrait of Srila Prabhupada. Aside from that, the moment lives on within me, and I'm grateful for that. O

my Lord, please remember all that I have done for You, and I thank you for allowing me to hear my master sing.

Regarding the Russian girl who is looking for seclusion in which to pray: it occurred to me that I have such an easy life. What kind of seclusion do I have? I paint, write, answer mail, read a few times a day "and I do all this alone. But I don't live in the desert, and I lack the desert intensity to seek God by again and again calling upon Him, bringing His name into my heart through sixty-four rounds of *japa* a day, emptying my self, fasting. This girl spoke of extreme seclusion, hoping for bodily transformations of ecstasy, the state of deep relaxation and warmth in which virtues will attend her. Yet she felt it escape her even as she tried to speak of it.

Hare Krishna. Search for the authentic self. It's never over. Find life on the page, life on the ranch. Stutter and hesitate. Offering the heart.

* * *

6:45 p.m., Night Notes

Here's a true story. While dressing Krishna in His night clothes, I thought of something M. had told me about some innocent guy who had wandered into a massage parlor. I began to picture the scene even as I dressed the Deities, then abruptly turned it off. It was not *my* desire to follow that train of thought. I shut it off and turned to Radha, removed Her crown and placed it in the box. Then I went downstairs and leafed through a color booklet I found on M.'s desk. It was from the phone company. They always use women in provocative poses in their ads. You get the idea that if you had their telephone, you'd get to talk to such a woman. Now back up here, counting out tomorrow's medication. Death is always a constant factor "that and faith in Krishna, His gift "and the mercy of His magnanimous servant.

November 11, Midnight

Oh, that was an important dream. At a science conference, I got separated from other devotees and the doctor. I didn't want to attend the lecture, so I wandered into the adjoining mall. But it was a dangerous place, as usual. If I'm not careful, I'll be thrown into the material world. There were military police and regular police and thieves and rogues and no one of whom I could ask directions. Someone stopped and wanted my to see my ID, but I didn't have any. Couldn't get back to the science conference. Spoke to a woman seated at a desk, saying, "I need to get reinstated." She appeared helpful, even looked up my name, Guarino, but something was wrong. And so it went. I tried to leave the dream, but kept reentering it.

Now here. "O King Pariksit, mainly the top transcendentalists, who are above the regulative principles and restrictions, take pleasure in describing the glories of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 2.1.7) The Lord is a person, but not the kind of person we find in the material world. Topmost transcendentalists wouldn't be interested in hearing about an ordinary man. The Lord is engaged with His innumerable devotees in the spiritual world and simultaneously present as the Supersoul in all beings and all matter. Inconceivable! Yet He is always a person. Why don't I think of Him more? I dwell so much on myself. I

really can't tell you why, except to say that I'm fallen, egocentric, and don't want to be picked on.

Sukadeva Gosvami studied *Srimad-Bhagavatam* from his great father, Srila Vyasankirtana, and the silent-to-myself *japa*.

Prabhupada is still present in his books. My spiritual master is still here! "If you want to know me, read my books." If you want to know Krishna, study *Srimad-Bhagavatam* with the person *bhagavata*.

I know all this.

If we want to be *bhagavata* writers, workers, sleepers, chanters, we have to be Krishna conscious. It is that comprehensive. We also have to read "regularly. "That very *Srimad-Bhagavatam* I shall recite before you because you are the most sincere devotee of Lord Krishna. One who gives full attention and respect to hearing *Srimad-Bhagavatam* achieves unflinching faith in the Supreme Lord, the giver of salvation." (*Bhag.* 2.1.10) Once again, the *Bhagavatam* itself stresses quality hearing if we want our conviction to become fixed, our appreciation blissful, and our service devotionally active. Don't be dull.

But so much depends on the guru's mercy. If he is pleased, knowledge will automatically appear in us. It won't come by electric charge, but by the sincere inquiry and loving service we render to our beloved guru.

* * *

4:15 a.m.

Put yourself on the page in any form "poem, prose, or picture.

But why? What's so great about yourself?

I already feel the typical heavy drowse that occurs at this time each day. I'm such a limited, limited being. I have troubles with headaches, lust when provoked, envy, fear, mistakes, and I like a good dessert. Why paste all this "myself "onto the page?

'Cause it's all I have. And I'm linked to Krishna and Prabhupada.

Here come the circus elephants. One is lifting a log while a lady in pink is standing on the curved trunk of another. Here come the spotted horses and here, Toulouse-Lautrec drawing them in brilliant poster colors, advertising the event: *Kirtana* at 8 p.m. Friday night. Bring musical instruments and incense. Free feast.

Here comes the dour-faced, saffron-dyed, long-johns-under-*dhoti* prancing heretic. Here comes the obedient slave. Here comes the good listener who has also memorized thirty *Slokas* and lives without beef. See him watering Tulasi-devi and circulating the flame, incense, and flower? He never looks more meticulous. Doesn't seem bored "never fidgets.

Here come the rescue meds, the tyrant to inform us, and the heavy drowse to assail me. Raghunatha dasa Gosvami says Sri Krishna is most beautiful and attractive in His original Vrndavana pastimes. He asks his mind not to be attracted to mundane talk nor to contemplation of the impersonal aspects of God. He doesn't even want his mind to think of Lord Narayana in Vaikuntha!

* * *

You hearin' this? Is it authentic for me to do this? Is it the right dare?

Maybe not. But we have to ask ourselves. We shouldn't ruffle a saintly man who is better off in solitude. Don't make him a jivey listener. He has to always be asking himself what is best for his Krishna consciousness. That answer isn't always the most dogmatic one.

Rules and regs thrown away in the higher stage doesn't mean we give up the *bhakti* basics. What *does* it mean? Things that are unfavorable.

If you don't need something, don't go for it. Hare Krishna.

Geez, I'm tired. The spaciness I don't want.

Krishna consciousness is to hear of Govinda, from whom everything emanates. There are people in the sun planet, did you know? Krishna is their source. He told Arjuna, "I spoke the *Bhagavad-gita* forty million years ago." I once said that in front of Professor O'Connell and he flipped out in disbelief. Arjuna believed Krishna, but he still asked for an explanation.

* * *

5:25 a.m.

Letter from Kdd saying that the austerity of years of writing timed books has paid off. How? I found the EJW format and my voice. Now we have to go forward in a detached mood, knowing that there must be more austerity and more good result. We may not publish everything, because not everything comes out right. But I am risking something here to attain Krishna.

The word "risk" is a tricky word. Prabhupada sometimes used it negatively, saying that if we commit sinful activities, it's risky. In that context he means not that it's risky but that it comes with a guaranteed visit to hell. For him, risk seemed to be synonymous with "condemned."

But Prabhupada has also said that devotees should take all risks for Krishna. In that sense, he means that devotees should risk bodily injury and even death while preaching Krishna consciousness.

I want to know if there is a risk we can take that requires risking our spiritual well-being. I mean, what if we're willing to give up peace and all kinds of comforts to share Krishna consciousness with others? We feel safe doing that if we are guaranteed by guru and Krishna that we will attain love of God. But what if the risk is so great "what we have to give up so great "that we might even fall down spiritually? What if we're too weak? It seems that so many ISKCON leaders risked on that level and lost. Now we are careful to make the gamble. Anyway, gambling is forbidden. But I'm thinking of this question in terms of my writing art.

What it means for me is that I am risking writing in this formless, diarylike way, not rewriting but living with whatever appears on the page, living alone to support the writing, and it all could come to nothing. risk means we try despite the fact that we could lose everything. Loss is painful. One devotee tried to create a Krishna conscious farm but he ended up losing all his money. What does he have now? What if all the book distribution suddenly went down the drain? That doesn't seem likely, yet people turn devotees away every day.

We have to console ourselves that nothing is lost if our attempts are sincere. It does seem more and more that materially speaking, there is almost constant loss in this risky, temporary world.

It's cold out. I neglected to wear a scarf and two pairs of gloves when I went outside to chant. I went out to walk just after painting. The art room was overheated, so going from hot to cold exhausted me. Added and added to a silly looking picture until it finally began to sankirtana and the other advertising GNP books.

* * *

Calligraphy Pad, 5:50 a.m.

Congratulations! You have won the Outdoor-walking-cold-hands-paint-on-your-fingers award. You took a risk for Krishna and kept your head.

But be careful. Don't be envious "ever. Statistics prove it dangerous. When preachers fall, they usually go with a tumble and drag millions of dollars and thousands of followers and buildings with them.

Sertifized "I mean
Satsveroop dasa Gerswaimini
is gnomed and free
from gores but this is no guarantee that he won't be called
I mean, killed
while serving Krishna.

* * *

9:16 a.m.

Dear diary, I'm deciding not to make my annual visit this year to the U.S.A. If you want a reason (and I know you do), it's that the headaches make travel and lecturing harder. That's that. I intend to stay here and be reclusive. I hope my writing won't suffer as a result of this protracted stay. Thoreau and Merton say it's good to stay in one locale and to become familiar with it. I'll have to trust them, because I don't want EJW to become static.

Winter solitude is known to Oriental hermits.

Shut the door
(it's already shut)
and stay in warm room.
Read Prabhupada
a little at a time and
get serious.

"That very *Srimad-Bhagavatam* I shall recite before you because you are the most sincere devotee of Lord Krishna. One who gives full attention and respect to hearing *Srimad-Bhagavatam* achieves unflinching faith in the Supreme Lord, the giver of salvation." (*Bhag.* 2.1.10) Hear from a bona fide spiritual master. It's even enough to ask, "Please tell me about Krishna." That question will make us glorious. But read regularly. That in itself is an attainment of sorts, because it brings us within the magic circle. repeat aloud or in writing or mind whatever helps you feel. I think of how the *Bhagavatam* was

spoken during Maharaja Pariksit's last seven days. Imagine knowing you had seven days left and hearing only the *Bhagavatam* "having that opportunity and the consciousness to absorb it. Maharaja Pariksit attained perfection by attentive hearing. I like to think of that.

We shouldn't be afraid to feel something when we read *sastra*. When the *acaryas* describe ideal behavior and states of consciousness and advise us to adopt them, we don't have to detach ourselves from those descriptions just because we can't yet attain them.

Hare Krishna. We have eighteen thousand verses worth of feeling to find. Don't play with the *Bhagavatam*. really hear it.

"O king, constant chanting of the holy name of the Lord after the ways of the great authorities is the doubtless and fearless way of success for all, including those who are free from all material desires, those who are desirous of all material enjoyment, and also those who are self-satisfied by dint of transcendental knowledge." (*Bhag.* 2.1.11)

Devotees want only to satisfy the Lord. We should learn how to do that by hearing from authorities.

* * *

10:00 a.m.

Deciding not to travel to America for health reasons gives me an excuse to do more of what I want to do. I was going to America because I'm obliged to my disciples there. But I'll stay quiet here. This won't be the last full quiet of the year. After the weeklong visit to Belfast and Inis rath, I'll be back for a relaxed December with the prospect of facing all winter and spring in one place. read and chant; read and chant.

* * *

12:08 p.m.

I'm trying not to get heady or excited by my decision not to go to America. Neither do I want to feel regret. I know some of my disciples there will be disappointed, but those who love me will share with me during this separation through books, correspondence, and service. They will also accept my decision.

But still I don't want to get excited: "Oh boy, I get to stay here and play *sadhu* all winter." I can also be free of the pose that going to America would have taken; I would have tried to make myself look like a frontline preacher. Still, travel adds excitement to my writing "or at least colorful details. Now that's denied me, so I must learn to live and write from sameness.

But it *will* be nice to stay with Radha-Govinda and Srila Prabhupada. I wouldn't have taken them with me. Mahamantra dasi will be returning from Vrndavana in November, and she will be bringing everyone new clothes.

Anyway, let me not worry about living a flashy life or writing a flashy book; just make it true.

* * *

1:15 p.m.

Out the skylight I can see crisscrossing tree branches. I also see a magpie sitting on one. That's the way it is in Ireland. O Krishna, we can't always come together when we want to. People and events spoil our loving exchanges as we anticipate them. The *Bhagavatam* says we come together and then part like straws at sea.

He's not coming.

I'm not going.

Staying here. Now facing a writer's winter ahead. Out of aloneness, bright colors and I hope some poems to go with serious and simple Krishna consciousness. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna.

Between us, we have only the books and the same service in separation. A little joy light goes out inside and we have nothing left upon which to rely except the actual substance.

* * *

2:15 p.m.

I woke up from my nap feeling sorry I'm not going to America. The house is empty and the wind is loud. I've read the *Bhagavatam* so many times before, but here I am again. ". . . the chanting of the holy name of the Lord should be loudly done, and it should be performed offenselessly as well" (*Bhag.* 2.1.11, purport) The ten offenses have been listed in the purport. If I did go to America, I would speak on *japa*, reading Prabhupada's books, my books, we'd hold *kirtana*, I'd answer questions "the same things I do *every* year. My first lecture was going to be partly a report on what I've been doing this year and partly a description of how to lecture in a way that conveys love. Actually, that was the main reason I wanted to make the journey: I was going to show them love. But health is preventing it. Caution tells me not to go this year.

There are ten offenses in chanting. I'm not going to repeat them here. But I want to mention the second offense: When we do not accept that the Lord can be addressed by different names in different places (and religions), we are committing the second offense.

I hope they don't think I lack the dynamic will to overcome my physical illness just to be with my disciples. "What is the value of a prolonged life which is wasted, inexperienced by years in this world? Better a moment of full consciousness, because that gives one a start in searching after his supreme interest." (*Bhag.* 2.1.12)

The easiest way to achieve spiritual success is to chant the holy name of the Lord. "One should, therefore, utilize one's life in glorifying the Lord by all means, without any offense." (*Bhag.* 2.1.12, purport)

It's a dark sky, and rain is now splashing on the windowpane. I shouldn't try to create effects in writing "special moods "as haikuists do, moods of sadness and loneliness. Don't personify the inanimate world. Keep it as it is. Imagination calm. Hear your own voice crying out to *hari-nama*.

* * *

3:35 p.m.

We can't always recharge that glow of personal exchange on schedule. But you disciples are in your area and I am in mine, and we can both go on serving. For example, this afternoon I read a little bit about the holy name. What did you do? I also went into the yard to chant a round. A strong wind was up. It had blown the half burnt pages of the Viking Office Supply catalogue all over the garden. I went around stooping and grabbing them and shoving them into a bag, "blessing" Madhu for having created such a mess by starting a fire on open ground and then not finishing it.

And then I came inside and rued and wondered. Hare Krishna. I still have time to do something this afternoon.

* * *

4:18 p.m.

Dark blue sky. I see a few crumpled leaves left on the tree as I face the penance pole. The pole is mostly in silhouette. I'm feeling more what it means to have canceled my U.S. visit. I can't really tell how I'm feeling about it. Sometimes I think about those folks who come once a year to say hello but who don't keep in touch otherwise, and I realize that it's not really for them that I go. I go because that's my duty, my life, and because there are others there with whom I have a more active relationship.

Anyway, the main thing is that I keep myself in good standing. I couldn't go and sit before them or publish my books or anything else without that. I can maintain my Krishna consciousness in Ireland. I don't have to go to America to do it. Let me remain quiet and fill my days with *sadhana*. I don't want to forget my friends; I'm chanting for them too.

Today is the first day in the last twelve that I haven't had to take pain medication. I have to face that reality too.

I'm speaking on behalf of Srila Jiva Gosvami and our Srila Prabhupada. He says there are ten offenses in chanting the holy name. They're listed in the *Padma Purana*. The first is to blaspheme the devotees who have dedicated their lives to preaching the names' glories all over the world.

In Calcutta during a *pandal*, some Naxalites sent Srila Prabhupada a note that said, "Fly or die." He went on lecturing and did not fly. Later, he spoke to some of the Naxalites and quelled them. That's India.

The rains, the rains. Left alone in the house with a bluing sky. The electricity is on, so the government infrastructure must still be in place for now. My body also appears to be functioning, running, operating "everything. I wanted to go inside Madhu's house, so I dug for the hidden key he keeps outside his house. I dug and dug, but couldn't find it. Felt sour grapes: didn't want to go in there anyway. Tinkle on the skylight, tell me something. Chant to me. Bring me closer to Krishna, Lord Caitanya, the sublime and beautiful teachings.

I have to choose things to read and discuss in upcoming lectures because I'm expected to be a little special, yet on my own I'm not special. I don't expect it of myself. Although I'm a *sannyasi* and elder, I don't have scholarship or understanding or devotion. Wrote some poems, if you want to call that something.

* * *

5:00 p.m.

When you are alone in a house with a light rain tinkling on the skylight, and there's no one to see or speak to, you can begin to feel fear of the unknown. But isn't that really Krishna's presence assuring you? How else could you be alive and protected? You can blame your safety on the law and order and piety of the Irish, on the Irish electric company supplying light and heat, but Krishna is their source. And beyond that, none of those things really provide shelter. O Krishna.

Let this *haribol* man walk with a cane and not be afraid. In past ages sages meditated and called their age "golden." Now is the age of fear. There are so many madmen out there. We have to walk one way or another, facing danger at every step, but he who takes shelter of Murari, Krishna, will always be safe.

November 12, 12:01 a.m.

Woke at 10:30 last night when Madhu returned. I felt a somewhat strong pressure in the head and took a feverfew. Now I'm here, a few minutes earlier than usual. But first I stayed in bed, trying to think about how to increase taste while reading the *Bhagavatam*. Increase? I should say, "Open the jar for the first time." I have such a short attention span, but I pray to hear submissively whatever I'm able to read. I pray to be free of offenses. I know my lack of attention is due to my offenses. Anyway, let me think positively. The *Bhagavatam* door is still open for me, so let me enter it and hear whatever I can.

One *lectio divina* advisor said it's important to pray before reading: "Lord, please speak to me." We're asking not only to *read* but that Krishna, who is coming through His own words and pastimes, will speak to us and touch us.

In his purport to a verse on King Khatvanga (*Bhag.* 2.1.13), Srila Prabhupada writes that acting to gain life's immediate necessities isn't everything. Our prime duty is to prepare ourselves for the next life. That's hard. Most spiritual advisors recommend moment-to-moment existence rather than planning for the future. Most of them think that the moment is all there is. Well, they're partly right. But let's act in the present in order to ensure that our future moments will be with God. Hearing that he had only a moment to live, King Khatvanga returned to earth and took shelter of the all-safe Personality of Godhead. His prayers will appear later in the *Bhagavatam*. You go to where Lord Krishna is and try to be His eternal servant. Ask to be kept by Him.

"At the last stage of one's life, one should be bold enough not to be afraid of death. But one must cut off all attachment to the material body and everything pertaining to it and all desires thereof." (*Bhag.* 2.1.15)

M. brought back my week's mail and left it in a bag at the foot of the stairs. It includes a compilation of world news for October 1998. At the last stage it would be better not to have anything to do with the news. It is filled only with catastrophes and predicted catastrophes and boasts and sufferings, all of which agitate the mind. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* describes how topics not connected with Krishna put us into a boat without a rudder. At least let me hold off from looking at the news today until I finish my *japa*.

"And yet the foolish materialistic men do not care about what is going to happen in the next life." (*Bhag.* 2.1.15, purport) It's a change of body for the spirit soul, whether you know it or not. A change of clothing. I concern myself that I want better rain gear, a warmer sweater, plenty of knit caps and gloves on reserve, and what about my boot with the worn heel? Change my body? Am I going somewhere less worn out? Am I trying, by my activities, to put in a request for the best possible garment?

Whatever we aspire for at the end, we'll attain. Practice now to aspire for *bhakti*. Don't wait for the end. Transfer your present material attachments to devotional attachment. If we develop the desire to return to the spiritual world, our other desires will diminish. Everyone is serving someone. "The perfection of such a service attitude is only attained simply by transferring the desire of service from matter to spirit, or from Satan to God."

Read poems, write poems. Clear away stuff and concentrate your energies on the creative flow. Let everything come out. Let whatever it is be my gift to others.

* * *

8:50 a.m.

Caitanya-candrodaya is here to become M.'s assistant. We hope he will have a stabilizing effect on our operation here. Caitanya said he wants to become a menial servant in my art life "not an art teacher, although he is well trained in art, but someone who will set up and clean up for me. It's wonderful to have an enthusiastic painter in the area, but I must not become diverted from my main occupation as a writer.

Still facing up to my decision not to go to America. It's decided. We have already told the devotees, so there's no changing my mind. M. and I have spoken once more about it, and now I'm living with the decision. I didn't want to disappoint them, but for me, I will be content to spend the winter here and hope to enter bit by bit into a blessed routine, with emphasis on at least regular increments of reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* throughout the day. I really couldn't ask for more. These practices should bring me my heart's desire.

But this is a helter-skelter day. I'm answering mail, behind on my rounds, and working hard to remove the persona "those pretensions.

* * *

12:55 p.m.

Very late lunch today. Trying to stay calm. I'll get through. *Everyone* gets through. The Staten Island ferry, Grand Central Station, impeachment, Congress. Who won the election? Did you hear about China? India? Kosovo? Our little warped world? Our immediate needs are not all in all. Prepare for the next life.

* * *

3:00 p.m.

No self-pity, alas, that you are not going to be the center of a big show. Wanting to try only for minimum necessities "while in the world of names." Everything is really made of temporary matter in its various combinations, but we doll it up and call it "Ford van," "new house," "two-car garage," "America," "meds," "war," "President," "science," and

so on. It's just sea froth crashing against a beach. People and kingdoms come and go, so devotees don't bother to get caught up in them.

We certainly don't want to flatter materialists for our provisions. Krishna provides for His devotees. Srila Prabhupada discusses the ideal *sannyasis*, the Six Gosvamis, who lived with minimum material provisions but produced great books filled with devotional knowledge. "A *sannyasi* should always live alone, without company, and he must be fearless." (*Bhag.* 2.2.5, purport) Krishna is in his heart.

If you want to end the cause of conditioned life, worship Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. "Therefore, a pure devotee who is in absolute harmony with the Lord does not create perplexities but worships the lotus feet of the Lord at every moment, taking them into his heart." (*Bhag.* 2.2.18) The devotee tries to engage everything in the Lord's service and doesn't claim to be the proprietor.

* * *

3:55 p.m.

Showing Caitanya how to wash the paintbrushes. He's tacking up drawing sheets in the art room. I won't work in there today. Tell him not to expect me to be first and foremost a painter. Madhu leaves at 6 tonight and doesn't sing before his audience until 10:30, but at least I'll have someone here. Caitanya will stay in Madhu's house. It's rare that M. would allow anyone to use that place, but they get along well. He has also seen me in my green rain gear and using my clicker when I walk outdoors. He won't tell people of the details of our life behind this wall.

Hare Krishna. He strokes his chin.

Kr sent me the cover story from the *Atlantic Monthly*, "The Kerouac Papers" "telling of Kerouac's huge collection of unpublished notebooks and letters. Viking Press will print his diaries in multiple volumes. They say his diary is obsessed with religious themes "drawings of Christ crucified and prayers to God and Jesus. It's a portable Confession, the editor says. But JK is so much the novelist, and he considered himself the greatest writer in America. Kerouac had lots of bravado, and for all his talk about cutting through fiction, he does use basic storytelling devices. Sums up his life in a narrative. Doesn't publish diary; doesn't speak in the recent past. Capote made the famous mocking comment about Kerouac that what he did was not writing but typewriting. Many have come to revere that "typewriting" as much as Capote's writing.

As for me, I write like neither of them.

Clicker wicker. He decided nothing. He decided to remain a *sannyasi*. But when that man asked him if he thought *he* should become a *sannyasi*, he said, "Think about it first." Being a *sannyasi* in an institution means you may to dance to the GBC's tune. Does this man want that? Is he willing to do what is required? It's not just about renunciation but about institutional life and participation.

I hope devotees don't sue this movement. We are now a delicate, minuscule, but strongly rooted association, meant to practice Krishna consciousness together. We exist on the map, but we're tiny. We could be wiped out by their estimation. They know exactly how many members we have, where we are located, and everything else they need to know. We tend to think we have divine inspiration, but we have already proven

that we can easily be wrong, faulty, and split up. As it is possible for the economy of a developing nation to suddenly be torn asunder, so the material or external manifestation of ISKCON could be torn asunder by its own past. Then we would have only the essence as Prabhupada describes in his books. We would have to learn to exist inside ourselves as devotees.

* * *

5:10 p.m.

Calligraphy cert: This is for the boy-man who is not going to America for his Christmas party and who will eventually read JK's diaries, printed only forty years after the fact.

This is a cert to celebrate your own joy. You want to be a devotee, so read *Navadvipa Bhava-taranga* and hear peacocks.

A stay-back cert for Stevie

so be not embarrassed

and glorify Krishna wherever you are.

Read the Jesus prayer? You want to be intimate with God in heart. It is really Sri Krishna I want.

Someone told me to keep away from evil. Does he mean Eric Dolphy's bass clarinet? Some would say so.

Don't gamble away your spiritual life just for better writing. Writing comes from life and life means devotional service.

November 13, Midnight

Tell the truth. It's five minutes to midnight. I woke up at 10 p.m. with a sharp pain in my chest. It felt as if something were stuck in there. I tried to drink it down, but couldn't. I tried reaching for an extra pillow with which to prop myself up, but knocked over the water bottle. I turned on the light to wipe the floor, then couldn't get back to sleep. Pain just now ebbing.

Now what about the *Bhagavatam*? This room is almost too cold. Let me force myself to read despite my discomfort. Even a little is good for me.

In what way?

I mean, I will feel better later in the day, so why waste time feeling so bad now that I don't meet Krishna in the *sastra*? Add to eternal service. Imagine life without that opportunity.

In a purport, Srila Prabhupada describes three stages of chanting. He says not only should one chant the holy name "or systematically the sixteen names, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, etc . . . but one should also read and hear *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam* in the association of devotees." (*Bhag.* 2.2.30, purport)

Boy, the one big preaching event of the year that I'm known to do I've canceled. How to make up for it? By writing to those who would normally attend? By writing *for* them in this book? I feel affected by the article on Jack Kerouac in the *Atlantic*. His persona plays on my mind, and I adopt one of my own "Satsvarupa, the writer for some of the

Hare Krishna people. I imagine myself being better appreciated after I die. Then they'll line up my notebooks in an archive and decide what to print. If that's the case, then there is nothing lost by my staying here and writing.

But we hear how JK went out and had adventures, "gathered material," as he put it, so he could write his legend and capture the spirit of postwar America. I will just have to try repeatedly to capture the spirit of the rathdangan wind and tell you how we are breaking in a new assistant servant and what I'm doing with the watercolors and tempera. Will it be enough?

I'm not a Kerouac-type writer. *Na dhanam na janam na sundarim*. Then what am I? Servant of my guru. One who worries the Hare Krishna movement may be sued or attacked by demons or even by the well-intentioned.

Watering the *bhakti* plant will cause it to grow beyond the universal coverings, through the *brahmajyoti*, and finally to reach the innumerable Vaikunthalokas. "Above all of them is Krishnaloka, or Goloka Vrndavana, wherein the growing creeper enters and takes repose at the lotus feet of Lord Sri Krishna, the Original Personality of Godhead." (*Bhag.* 2.2.30, purport) Then the tree produces the fruit of love of God, which the devotees taste even while living in this world.

Srila Prabhupada lists the dangers in caring for the *bhakti* plant, such as the mad elephant offense, Vaisnava *aparadha*. We are told to build a fence around our creeper so that that doesn't happen. We are also told to uproot the weeds of material enjoyment that grow alongside the creeper. Those weeds appear in the form of the desire to merge the self with God and varieties of material pleasure, disobeying scripture, "unnecessary engagements . . . hankering after material gain, prestige and adoration."

"The highest perfection of life is to enjoy life constantly in the association of the Lord, and one who can relish this does not aspire after any temporary enjoyment . . . "

Maybe I should stop and preserve my energy for *japa*. Yesterday I really had to force my way through the rounds. Today, like yesterday, I only had a few hours sleep. I may get tired. Yesterday while chanting I began to think of things I wanted to do *after japa*. That's not good. I should dwell on the holy name in intimate prayer. Krishna is in my heart and is waiting for me to join Him in Krishnaloka. All plans can wait "answering the mail, the Kerouacian literary plans, and anything else that seems vital but isn't "while I chant my rounds. While I can.

* * *

4:17 a.m.

Don't be after honor. Don't be deceitful, appearing as a renunciate but hankering for material things. Raghunatha dasa Gosvami warns his mind to watch out, you S.O.B., you *mudha*, you prostitute dog-eater, you drinker of donkey urine. I know you. You are a cheater. Now I'm asking you to go straight and be humble.

Dressing the Deities in pale green with gold trim. It was fairly easy to do today. My fingers cooperated, although my mind was absorbed in thinking of changing my mind about going to America. Then I switched back. All right, I accept what must be. Better I seek out my inner resources here than travel all over the United States.

* * *

Mad goat, yawning poet. Now I have two small desk lamps blazing, one on the left and one on the right. Caitanya-candrodaya just came in. He'll bathe, then arrange for a breakfast of fruit.

Quiet flows the Don. I'm tired too. I can't figure it out.

* * *

Dreamt of Bhakti-rasa as a U.S. Marine going out on duty with other Marines. Some of his front teeth were missing.

* * *

4:45 a.m.

Krishna killed Salva and wasn't aggrieved. I will, by walking outside, search for a title for this book. Krishna may give it or not. Things are often decided by forces outside ourselves. How to express that in words? I grope.

* * *

5:32 a.m.

Circumambulating the house, hands cold but scarf keeping my neck warm. Caitanya-candrodaya is in the kitchen on his own for the first time making breakfast. I have already chanted sixteen rounds, a hasty *gayatri*, and tried to come up with a title for my book "one that conveys that I wish to be with the devotees in America but that fate as decided otherwise. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Why don't I just think of Krishna and make myself fit? That's what's important. The sky this day or that is always changing. Today just a little smudge of light behind the clouds. That means the clouds are low "I can't see anything above them. Hare Krishna.

* * *

8:23 a.m.

My energy ebbed but is now slowly rising again. Let me look at the *Bhagavatam*. Prabhupada is explaining how we may be drawn to impersonal oneness, but even if we attain it, our inner self won't be satisfied. We'll have to return to cycling through the species in the world of birth and death.

A devotee who enters Krishna's kingdom never returns to the material world. Only the devotee attains full and permanent *Santam* and *anandam*, peace and satisfaction. " . . . if one wants to attain the stage of love of Godhead, he must give up all desires for material enjoyment . . . " (*Bhag.* 2.2.31, purport)

"For those who are wandering in the material universe, there is no more auspicious means of deliverance than what is aimed at in the direct devotional service of Lord Krishna." (*Bhag.* 2.2.33) There are other methods, but they are not as easy or direct

as *bhakti-yoga*. Lord Brahma studied the *Vedas* three times and concluded that attraction to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, is the highest perfection of religion. (*Bhag.* 3.2.34)

Srila Sukadeva Gosvami then recommends hearing, glorifying, and remembering Sri Bhagavan. Srila Prabhupada comments that there are nine ways to practice *bhakti*. "But out of all the nine different methods, the first one, namely hearing, is the most important function in the process of *bhakti-yoga*." (*Bhag.* 2.2.36, purport) Vyasa compiled the Vedic literature so we can hear it. When we hear it properly, we will come to praise Krishna.

* * *

9:03 a.m.

Calligraphy cert: I hereby certify that you are feeling a spasm of blue notes because you are not going for your annual reunion, which is usually successful and the only time you visit America and actively preach and be with your disciples. You make points when you go. In a few short days, so much is accomplished. On the other hand, I can't help but feel that my visit is a little external. I satisfy my ISKCON image and authorities (in case they ask what I did all year), and I think I satisfy my disciples, but it's not that my relationship with most of them continues in active and enlivening exchange throughout the rest of the year. Better I stay fit and write. And deal with the headaches.

But what's my point in bringing that up again? Am I lamenting my own decision not to go? Am I trying to work myself up to changing my mind? I have already decided that I can't go because my health is so weak.

This certifies that I am uncertain.

Then again, I am used to living with uncertainty.

This scroll certifies I have misgivings.

So what?

I live wishing some things were otherwise.

Don't we all?

* * *

11:37 a.m.

Feel like I'm not writing much today. I want to pump it out. M. injured his leg. He was running passionately last night to fetch his aunt and uncle to bring them to hear him sing in Dublin. He ran in the dark across a field and hit a metal rail set thigh-high in the ground. It's probably not broken; maybe he ripped a muscle. He's gone off limping to the doctor. Good thing Caitanya is here.

Last letters of the week I'll answer them. Then the cubbyhole will gleam with emptiness.

Explain to CC how we do things here "how warm Srila Prabhupada's bath water should be (not stinging). But *my* bath water should be *very* hot. M. likes it that Caitanya doesn't repeat the details of our life to others, which M. says devotees sometimes do when they boast. Radha and Govinda wearing green *cadars* in this cold room. Will I try to paint this afternoon? Either way I am not going to write so many pages. Painting helps

me move into emotion. One piece last night expressed disappointment, others fear, anger. Then I received a rush of explicit, Krishna conscious imagery.

Hare Krishna. Picture of New York Giants, Willie Mays and Leo Derocher in a *New York Times* article reprinted in a book on baseball. Such images stick in the mind. Both players were greatly talented. Willie and Leo the Lip, forty-six years ago "Willie Mays used to be SureSvara's idol in center field. I don't want *that* snapshot popping up at the end. See Krishna and Radha? They also see you.

* * *

At noon a man wanted to be a devotee but had no idea how. He had to read *sastra* to find out. Otherwise, he was a blank, felt spider stuff in his gut. He recalled Baladeva on tour killing Romaharsana and the sages asking for atonement. Baladeva then killed Balvala as part of His atonement "that huge black demon with red hair that resembled a mountain of carbon topped with red oxide. Balvala was evil and used to pour puss, stool, and urine on the heads of the saintly. Balarama dragged him down with His plough, then fractured his forehead with His club. Then he blessed Romaharsana's son Suta to become an empowered speaker.

The enemies were staked out and fired guns at us. All-out war takes place when you retaliate. NATO says they will bomb, but don't. They *plan* to, but the other side concedes and the first side cheats and attacks again. And so it goes. Tired out.

Here comes *hari-nama* man. M. back from doctor. At least he can move on his own now. Better he spend his time sitting, so he'll use the telephone and allow Caitanya to be his legs. I got a letter from a young lady disciple who says she feels distant from me but that she read my book and was blown away. People with children suffer and struggle and undergo unbelievable complexities and wounds, she says, and husbands and wives work hard to stay together. In Puerto rico, most of the wooden houses were blown off the hill.

* * *

2:18 p.m.

The Deities are up from Their rest and so am I. Out of thousands and thousands "most people have no knowledge of the spirit soul. They are not in touch with the realized spiritual master, so cannot know the self. Very few know Krishna in fact, even among the more intelligent who know something about the self. *Relationship* with Krishna is *bhakti*. A thoughtful person (*manisinam*) must take to *hari-kathamrta*.

This will look good later, like rows of cemented bricks. It will be my wall, you could say. "It appears that reading Srila Prabhupada's books is very important to you." Krishna-kṛpa wrote that to me, then added, "so it should be important to me."

Yes, that's the idea. I must have it every day, at least a little. There is ample literature left to us in English. Don't think we have to seek out something new. Even if I don't read it as if for the first time, greet it and meditate on it. Christians read Christ's few words over and over, trying to enter them in mystical trance. Why not us?

Sukadeva Gosvami gives a list of demigods we could worship if we were after specific material desires. "But one who desires nothing of material enjoyment should worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead." (*Bhag.* 2.3.9) Again, the perfect standard

(*anyabhilasita-Sunyam . . . bhaktir uttama*). I can't claim to have attained it. Even if I am not perfect, however, I should worship Krishna.

Head a little stuffed today, so I'll stop now. I'm begging off. I want people to think I am well-intentioned, even though my *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class notes are so brief. I acknowledge, though, that *Krishna-katha* is the best thing, and only a few people want it. *We* want it because Srila Prabhupada teaches us to want it. We feel proud that we are better than others, or at least that our process is best. Worship Krishna and reduce material desires.

* * *

4:37 p.m.

I had some goodies to tell my disciples in America this year. Maybe next year. Or I could write them into my books.

Took feverfew at 3:25 p.m. Head calmed and I went into the art room. Drew M. with his hurt leg. Also, expressed my fear of someone with a green head. How could I be afraid of such a person? Then some ordinary shapes. Went past thinking, "Will Caitanya admire the color contrasts?" Didn't mix in words with the painting as I do on the Bristol boards. Two different worlds.

Rain on an Irish skylight is as constant as the waves at Jagannatha Puri.

Facing the void. Child Jesus in the synagogue held his hand in the *jnana-mudra*. I copied the painting and applied Vaisnava *tilaka*. Where is our Madhu? Gone again to the Tallaght hospital. No doubt his friends who live nearby will visit him "Abhaya dasi and Prabhupada dasa. At least they'll feed him.

Krishna can take away words and purpose and everything until we totally forget who we are or what to do. Felt the immediate moment shallow and tried to fill it with the *maha-mantra*.

* * *

6:28 p.m., Night Notes

Going through my book for something to read to devotees on my birthday. I favor the light stuff, admissions, free-write, but with Krishna conscious punch lines to it. For an aloud reading it can't be too long or heavy or silly or embarrassing.

Ink running low in bottles and there are other signs of dwindling. A millennium gone. What about Brahma's day? How absurd to think this life is all there is. This body with its moles and impressions, scars and psyche, remembrances and forgetfulness. There has to be more than this.

Do we want to be different persons? The Christian Bible has a strange theology: our current body is eternal, but it dies. Then on Judgment Day it is "glorified," (spiritualized). Then what? Are you Joe Jones for eternity?

Oh, don't mock it. At least they shouldn't think that only humans have souls or that God condemns souls for eternity for one poorly lived lifetime.

November 14, 12:10 a.m.

Two long dreams and mostly sleep during the five hours. In the last dream we put on a little drama for devotees and children, something about the passing away of Madhavendra Puri. It involved eating. In the first dream a man and his wife had committed a serious crime but had escaped and were living in their motor home. The man who allowed them to escape thought, "Let them have a little temporary happiness." In the scene before I awoke, another man and I were naked in public (it seemed to be the equivalent of Hare Krishna dress) and I couldn't cross against the traffic because the oncoming cars were unrelenting.

I'm a little late now, but can read something. Everyone (*akama*, *sarva-kama*, *moksa-kama*) should worship the Personality of Godhead. Even if we have mixed desires, we must take up *bhakti-yoga*. The *akama* person has no material desires. "This means one should feel happy only by experiencing the happiness of the Supreme Lord." (*Bhag.* 2.3.10, purport) This may sound self-effacing, but it is our constitutional position, the way the hand's function is to serve the body. Whenever we reach beyond our selfish interests, we are indicating a partial manifestation of the original emotion to feel happy in the Supreme Lord's happiness. Do what He wants me to do. And more. Assist Him in His pleasure pastimes. The *gopis'* love for Krishna, without expectation of reward, is perfect *akama*. "As the unmixed sun ray is very forceful and is therefore called *tivra*, similarly unmixed *bhakti-yoga* of hearing, chanting, etc., may be performed by one and all, regardless of inner motive." (*Bhag.* 2.3.10, purport)

"And this spontaneous attraction (*bhava*) to the Supreme Lord can be obtained by association with the pure devotee." (*Bhag.* 2.3.11) Human life is meant for solving the four miseries: birth, death, old age, and disease. We accept the knowledge of Vedic authority. The gross materialists have no access to transcendental knowledge and either disbelieve it or speculate on it. Some worship demigods. Therefore, we say that people have to learn about the Supreme Lord from sources such as *Bhagavad-gita* and only in the association of pure devotees.

It's good to read regularly and affirm these important points: The necessity of *bhakti*, the nature of the *akama* spirit, the prevalence of the four miseries, the power of *bhakti* and the Lord's pure devotees. Now I need to make this information more than simply a peek at a book but a way of life.

"Transcendental knowledge in relation with the Supreme Lord is knowledge resulting in complete suspension of the waves and whirlpools of the material modes." (*Bhag.* 2.3.12) I'd like that. If we are transcendently situated, we won't worry or fix our consciousness on temporary mental or physical pains. Great devotees rise above material concerns. Then out of compassion they preach: "For the Lord's satisfaction He may play the voluntary part of a preacher of the Lord's glory and dovetail all into devotional service, even mundane interest, just to give the neophyte a chance to transform mundane interest into transcendental bliss." (*Bhag.* 2.3.12, purport)

* * *

4:20 a.m.

Pray before writing. Beg for help. I don't want to stop. But most importantly, I don't want to displease Krishna or Prabhupada. I want to bring them pleasure by assisting their cause. Make a personal testimony, "This person attempted Krishna consciousness despite the odds. Whoever you are, may you persist in spiritual life and be kind to others. May this book help you."

So you want to go to America as you've done year after year? You don't know when you will go again? No, cancel the meetings. It's all right. It was a high profile thing "once a year, four days, intensive seminars. I could go in an easier way later. Skip the fanfare.

* * *

Winter in. It's decided. O Krishna. I pray for winter solitude and a strong voice to use it well.

But what if I'm displeased with myself? Isn't that a spiritual position too? Didn't Srila Prabhupada say we should be anxious to improve our service and think that we didn't do well?

Yes, but a devotee is meant to be happy in service, not morose. Figure it out.

* * *

4:35 a.m., Words written on a Bristol drawing board:

Tim Crachet writing longhand on a high stool in Scrooges's office, getting near Christmas. Is ISKCON deplorable or do people just bad-mouth it? Both? A compromise? It's good in some places? It can't be stopped because it's Lord Caitanya's movement? Tell me more. We want to hear what you emphasize and what you omit. You sound like an interesting character.

Now tell me some *Krishna-katha*. Let's hear from the pure devotee in disciplic succession. Be interested to hear it so you can become detached from material desire.

Caitanya should be here any minute with the tapioca. We'll offer it to the Lord and honor His remnants. If I don't go out for a walk, I'll collapse in sleep.

But *haribol* men don't give up. Preachers welcome challenge. Devotees need spunk (backbone) to succeed in pleasing Krishna.

* * *

5:30 a.m.

It's so cold my fingers are tingling through two layers of cotton gloves. Still no word from Madhu at the hospital. Poor guy running around so blindly at night to play his music that he runs into an iron rail. Sweet guy wanting to distribute *Krishna-bhakti* through his music. I hope everything's all right. The bare trees are freezing, but they know how to tolerate. Gravel crunching. We don't eat it. Prabhupada said peacocks can eat stones. It's a matter of digestive power. Well, I don't have much of that, even if I am a vain peacock.

* * *

Calligraphy cert: I hereby certify that this man can walk along with no hobgoblins to stop him. He can dream and write poems. He can write *everything* down. He can go to America later. He can live through whatever providence has ordained for him.

That's Part One; here's Part Two of his certificate: Don't be afraid. Wear the red badge of courage because you are a preacher in Lord Nityananda's footsteps under Srila Prabhupada. You have to die sooner or later anyway, so do whatever you can for Krishna's service. Be conscious. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

This certifies that you have rendered service to Krishna and His pure devotee.

We all know that.

But how much we can't say, or how purely.

Could do better.

* * *

5:50 a.m.

Madhu back from the hospital. It wasn't as bad as we thought.

* * *

9:15 a.m.

Fog, twinge, feverfew, lie on back propped up by pillow (never as comfortable as you anticipate or later remember) thinking of writing a series of poems. How about writing about life in Krishna consciousness in informal language? And thinking of going to America on a low-profile visit later this year, not for the big meetings. All these thoughts float through my mind.

If it works, we can use the mundane in Krishna's service. Because the *audience* is mundane, that's what they want to hear. Vyasadeva wrote it into the *Mahabharata*. But why not give the most direct *katha*? Where are you at, writer-giver-preacher? Struggling to read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* three times a day, and to feel it, direct it to my heart, be disciplined, and learn to contain the gems of transcendence. Is official *bhakti* better than something heartfelt? Of course not. But it may be all we have for now.

For example, M. likes to play his melodeon and harp and sing for an audience. He does it, but dresses as a devotee. It's fine *for him*. My equivalent is improvisational writing.

In the *New York Times*, there was an expose on ISKCON boarding schools. Burkerocheford said people don't trust ISKCON leaders. "We" pretend, but much faith has eroded. Someone attended a festival and two ISKCON gurus sat on a stage outdoors and answered questions. The person who saw it was enthusiastic and said, "It was like the old days." People like to see these leaders onstage knowing all the answers, even when their answers are similar to, "I don't know. There is no answer to that question. We simply have to pray for mercy."

Hip hip hooray! Steve in his closet praying as Christ did. I read M. the Christian's statement that she felt crushed with guilt when she couldn't pray. She said she felt hopeless that she couldn't be better "until she realized that *God's love is unconditional*."

We usually deride this statement, but more ISKCON devotees have been thinking like this, and I think that's good. M. liked it too "the forgiving Lord. His forgiveness doesn't condone our sinfulness, but we have to be realistic. Whom among our biggest ISKCON leaders (and their clones) who for over a decade said, "We are not sinners like the Christians who say it's all right to sin," didn't turn out to be a sinner himself?

I love this movement. I love to be at peace. Don't dig me out of my foxhole. I'm winter-planted.

Hare Krishna. Don't feel up to reading *Bhagavatam* right now? How about one verse at least before the morning is gone. "O learned Suta Gosvami! Please continue to explain such topics to us because we are all eager to hear. Besides that, topics which result in the discussion of the Lord Hari should certainly be discussed in the assembly of devotees." (*Bhag.* 2.3.14)

The Lord is not ultimately impersonal. He has *lilas* and descends "to reclaim the fallen souls." Wake up! Krishna wants us back. "Men have inclinations for studying . . . mundane literatures "stories, fictions, dramas . . . so let them be dovetailed with the transcendental service of the Lord, and all of them will turn to the topics relished by all devotees." (*Bhag.* 2.3.14, purport) *Paramahamsas* lift milk out of a mixture of milk and water.

* * *

In a dream, I was Prabhupada's servant. He was sitting down in a place that reminded me of the breezeway at my parents' home. He was waiting to be taken out on a late-night engagement. I was supposed to take him. He told me it would take an hour and a half to get there, and he wanted to leave immediately. But I didn't know the people we were going to see or how to get to their place. Prabhupada remained calm but became sarcastic, and it seemed that if I didn't spring into action, he could become more demanding. I ran upstairs to get Madhu. But we realized that there were so many forgotten details that had to be dealt with before we could go. None of them were easy to do. I have to find the car keys, my dentures, and at least a phone number for where we were going. But we couldn't look it up because I didn't even know the names of the people. We decided to call Jaya Gaurasundara. His son told us that the man who had invited Prabhupada was known as Shlet. It was a mild put-down of the man to call him that. Suddenly we became angry. Why were we being dragged out so late at night to a place where Prabhupada would be wasting his time? I don't remember much more of the dream.

I woke with a feeling that it was good to see Prabhupada again in that dream, and to be positioned as his servant. Later, when I had had time to think about it more, I realized that I have been thinking of rendering Prabhupada more direct service. He was demanding and wanted his followers to give up all personal proclivities, it seems, and sometimes that felt unjust. But I know that's the price I would have to pay to get close enough to Prabhupada to become his personal servant again.

* * *

12:15 p.m.

Tell my truths and the sincere reader will follow. I'm not sure what my truth is. Is it elevated character? That is, Vaisnava *siddhanta*? I imagined Srila Prabhupada might say that there is no truth except *satyam param*; all else is illusion. "What is this 'truth'? The only truth is Vyasa and Krishna." But my truth also means being true to experience. I am not one of the swamis on the elevated wooden platform answering questions at a festival. The truth right now is that my eye is aching despite the fact that I took both feverfew and Esgic. What will happen to my afternoon now? Can I tell that to you without exaggeration or an abundance of dogma? I am dedicated to that "relative" truth and feel Srila Prabhupada will accept it as my offering "my cry of pain.

* * *

1:35 p.m.

Pain. Expressed my irritation to M. and Caranaravinda for being so late with lunch. I heard the car arrive at 12:30 and waited and waited in my room. By 12:45 I wondered what was going on. I left the house in my slippers and called them to bring in the offering. It arrived cold at 12:50. More sarcastic, hurt words from me. I guess I have a right to be an irritable old bastard. I'll explain it to them later. The official good *sadhu* or spiritual master should always be grateful for whatever he receives. He shouldn't complain if his lunch is late or his right eye aches.

* * *

3:30 p.m.

Notes:

1. Ah, relief "for now. The Imitrex must have taken hold. Now I have a big board to write on, it's a Sunday, or maybe Saturday, and no other duty. Except I want to walk around the house later.

No duties? What about reading the *Bhagavatam*?

Oh, give me a break. My afternoon reading time has already gone by. I'm still weak "just recovered from the worst headache day of my week. That headache took three meds to quell.

All right, you don't have to be so Krishna conscious. I release you. Go darn your boots.

2. Armchair guy speaks out about how the world should be: Leave me alone. I hurt.

3. He don't own a dog or cat or woman, so he drew a totem as a joke. They call it a "private icon," and I think of ISKCON icons, idle idols for a bloke.

Now over here, folks, is exhibit number 4. It's made of words, and I hope you'll give it your partial attention. God created everything in the cosmos. This is an electronic diorama that shows the stage of evolution uniting *bhagavata* and Darwinian models (the latter defeated) with fireworks and math worked out to the one ten-thousandth. Our artists made the dolls. Free food not served here; donation required.

We worry for our beloved master's beloved but bedeviled worldwide institution. Ugh, who could love an institution? We could love a puppy or maybe a farm, maybe even a barnload of cows, but an institution? But that's what we have to do.

November 15, 12:05 a.m.

Dream: Hridayananda Maharaja was a well-placed scholar at Harvard. He was giving a lecture that was being piped out all over campus. He said he had been there twenty-seven years, and he spoke about what it takes to succeed. I caught glimpses of other bona fide, hardworking scholars in the cafeteria and other places. But in the dream I also saw cheaters, people wandering around campus and eating at the cafeteria who had never enrolled in the college. They were taking advantage of the photocopying and other facilities by pretending they were students. Sometimes they were caught and arrested.

Which group did I identify with most? Why a recurring dream of Harvard? Is it that I see it as the topmost place "rare and difficult to enter" yet one in which I would not be happy?

Woke reluctant to rise. Thought maybe I should revise my schedule and get up later than midnight. But here I am, scrambling for a few crumbs of the *Bhagavatam*.

"Please continue to explain . . . because we are all eager to hear. . . . [T]opics . . . of Lord Hari should certainly be discussed in the assembly of devotees." (*Bhag.* 2.3.14)

Maharaja Pariksit used to worship Krishna even in his childhood. He imitated the worship of the family Deity. "That is the way of all lucky Vaisnava families."

There are two kinds of *maha-bhagavatas*, the *nitya-siddha*, eternally perfect, and the *sadhana-siddha*, who may be lowborn but rise to perfection through association. "Everyone can become a *sadhana-siddha* . . . simply by association with the pure devotees." (*Bhag.* 2.3.14, purport)

Which kind of pure devotee can *you* become? Not a Willie Mays, not a Harvard student. (In his Harvard speech, Hridayananda Maharaja emphasized the importance of maintaining strong physical health as a way to become a successful student. He said men had a considerable advantage over women in that respect.) I am too old and in poor health to do much beyond what I have already done. I reminisce over the high points in my past association with Srila Prabhupada and my preaching, but I am more satisfied now, more relaxed, and more realistic about myself. I see these years as a gift of *bhakti*, giving me what I have "earned." But the real gift of *bhakti* is eternal life with Krishna in the *sat-cid-ananda-vigraha* spiritual world. I can't seem to make what I would see as a superhuman effort to reach the perfect stage; I have so little of my life left. What *about* that, Lord? Will You accept what I am doing as my best?

Both Maharaja Pariksit and Sukadeva Gosvami were great devotees of Krishna. "So there must have been discussion of Lord Krishna, who is glorified by great philosophers and in the company of great devotees." (*Bhag.* 2.3.16) The principle topic of discussion is Krishna. Tell me about Krishna. Yes, I will speak about Krishna as I have heard from my father (or spiritual master). Thank you for asking such a glorious question.

Ayur harati vai pumsam, "Both by rising and by setting, the sun decreases the duration of life of everyone, except one who utilizes the time by discussing topics of the all-good Personality of Godhead." (*Bhag.* 2.3.17) These are the verses to keep with us and to act on. Don't be interested in mundane authors, books, viewpoints, or whatever, because they will take us away from God. Simply absorb the rhythm and words of

these *Srimad-Bhagavatam* verses, even before you analyze their content or discuss them. Let them make us transcendental.

I cannot attain material perfection (Harvard). Neither should I cheat to use their facilities and get punished. I'm a well-placed *bhakta*, student of Srila Prabhupada and the Gaudiya sampradaya. I am accepted here. Let me worship the lotus feet of the gurus and Deities "even if I'm like a child imitating. Let me savor the *Slokas* early in the morning and chant the Hare Krishna mantra. I don't need any other place or occupation. And let me "go" "either physically or through writing "to the homes and gathering places of those who are interested in practicing Krishna consciousness. I want to serve as a preacher and not to displease my mentor. I want love between us as I serve him, and I want to feel the flow of his mercy.

* * *

4:24 a.m.

It could all dry up. I could run out of words or inspiration. "Good!" some beleaguered readers might say, and certainly some critics. Good old enemy critics inspire me to keep writing just so they can't have the last word. I'll keep going until the last breath. Radha-Govinda in brown and gold. Hearing a prayer by Rupa Gosvami, *catus puspanjali*, in which he compares Radha's braid to a cobra. That was a metaphor that caused doubt for another Gosvami until he had a vision of Radha-Govinda that confirmed it. rupa Gosvami had written correctly.

Now let's see you get something out of this. They are finding within themselves something to say that comes out of a part of themselves they don't know much about. How can I deny it? You were talking to someone about this? If he can talk like this, why not me?

But it's not Vraja, Govardhana.

Oh yes, it is. It's me there. If you put me at Govardhana, I'll play my horn.

But how do you know it pleases Srila Prabhupada?

I can't say. I only hope.

I read that one ought to be born in a Krishna conscious family *and* have a spiritual master. You were not lucky enough to get a devotee family, but you have a guru. Why, then, do you remain in the West and in Western consciousness instead of running off to the Vaisnava "family" at Radha-kunda?

I am crying to God from here. I talk to Him. Don't you see me? I sing and cry in a broken voice. When I think of brothers who also play their horns, I hear the natural sorrow in their voices too, even when they sing upbeat songs. Their voices reflect our actual situation in the world. We are lonely without Krishna. Someone once wrote about Frank Sinatra, "As an artist, he had only one subject: loneliness." That's true for all of us. What other subject do we have? Without Krishna, nothing can satisfy us.

I am learning to think in music, in devotion. Ha! But I don't really know how to do it. I feel-think my shortcomings and fears and face my isolation. I cope to keep going. Please don't be sad that I didn't come to the American meetings, your summit conference. I have burrowed in here instead.

I did my winter planting because I wanted a spring garden. We gardeners know what that means. We Chinese hermits get close to the stove and write our best poems. This hand can still move. Hare Krishna.

My rounds, however, slowed down. I was tired. Pain recovery is like that. I have to live it, and it is the ground upon which I take my risks. Srila Prabhupada has assured me that Krishna is kind. He also said that if I do business like a crocodile, I'll be born as a crocodile in my next life, but if I become a devotee of Krishna, then even if I were to fall down, I will not have lost anything of the devotion I managed to offer. That's Krishna's kindness. Hare Krishna. Converse with the spirits of this world, but bring it home to Krishna in His service.

* * *

Still indigestion from yesterday. I shouldn't have asked for tapioca. Nature keeps a tight grip on my eating. "At any moment!" Srila Prabhupada said, we may have to die. I don't think about it. I don't think I have to switch to the eternal as soon as possible, because I have so much time. He said there is a next life, but people live only for this one. They lack this most primary knowledge: "I am not this body. I am qualitatively the same as *sat-cid-ananda* Krishna."

I am the guy who knows what he is doing and doesn't need a counselor, art teacher, shrink, doctor, another guru, or anyone else to tell me. My eyes are as heavy as window blinds sliding down a window. But I ain't dead yet!

The dancer will not forget Krishna, and neither will the poet, the businessman, the *ksatriya*. They'll remember and serve by regularly hearing His teachings, which they have heard from their guru. Sad eyes. Then he said, "I'll simply have to make a dash for it," and he did.

* * *

5:27 a.m.

Cold and dark. The moon partly hidden, then emerging as a silver disk, a toenail glowing in the early morning sky. Radha's shining toenail puts the moon's beauty to shame. For us, toenails are ugly, and a sliver is something we see when we cut our toenails "something dirty to be thrown away. But everything is beautiful on Radha's body, and completely personal.

Completely beyond us.

The first dim outline of a hill. After all, it's nearly 6.

Wild golden weeds in my garden, brown dirt, cement wall, all illuminated by the small electric light outside the house. O Prabhupada, I don't want to judge any of your disciples. I pray to avoid that. *Aim gurudevaya vidmahe, Krishnanandaya dhimahi, tan no guroh pracodayat.* I don't want to rush ahead to a "*gopi-manjari*" understanding of my spiritual master, yet I know he's something more. We are meant for more. However, first you have to do the basics.

* * *

8:55 a.m.

Everything gets wiped away at death, including wealth and relatives. We get a new body. Don't hurt anyone in this life but help them come to Krishna consciousness. Wait a minute, write what's on your mind, not just words. remember how they brought me my lunch cold and late yesterday, and while I had a headache I scolded them, partly as teacher and partly out of lack of control? I wasted time on that. *All* time is wasted unless we use it to realize truth. Time can never be bought back. It's simply gone.

When we come in contact with the Supreme Lord through His name, form, qualities, and pastimes, we know we will eventually attain perfection. Just by hearing from a pure devotee we can get total realization. "And thus the sun fails to rob the devotee of his duration of life in as much as he is constantly busy in the devotional service of the Lord, he purifies his existence." (*Bhag. 2.3.17*, purport) I am not going to let negative thoughts defeat me, such as, "Oh, you can't read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* because you don't preach enough and so you don't earn it. You made a big mistake." I'll have to make the best of my situation. At least I'll fight for attention during my reading times, because I'm fighting for each of us. If I do well, everyone else can too. Don't let your mind defeat you when you go to read by telling you that you are unworthy, unqualified, unable. This may be the only time you'll get to read in the day, so use it and give it your best.

"A devotee's old age or disease in the present life is but an impetus to such guaranteed eternal life." (*Bhag. 2.3.17*, purport) How is that? Because he knows he doesn't have much time left, a devotee decides not to waste any of it. He sees miserable conditions as lessons that point him toward his spiritual body. He sees the scriptural teachings being enacted in his life. He develops faith in the enduring quality of devotional service and grabs at the opportunity with greed.

Sometimes feeble greed.

Sukadeva Gosvami condemns people who have no inclination to praise Lord Hari. He compares them to dogs and hogs with ears that resemble the holes in which snakes live.

Become a devotee of the Lord's devotee. Oh, I was when Prabhupada was here. I still am, but it's harder now. I read his books and proclaim his teachings. Is it enough? I hope so, because I can't seem to do more.

I have been through this before. Why do I harass myself about it?

I'm going to Belfast in a week and a half. That will probably exhaust my spirit for travel and lecturing for some time.

Cut, cut, in a good sense cut. Cut away the fat and waste, the fog and grime, and situate yourself as your spiritual master's disciple. Don't let the heebie-jeebies tell you that you don't love him just because you are limited physically and spiritually. Certainly don't let your mind tell you that Prabhupada doesn't love *you*.

Prabhupada, I want to serve you, and not only by writing my thoughts. But this writing is my service. I dreamt that Ravindra-svarupa Prabhu told me that his father was suing him for twenty million dollars. Ravindra's children were sympathetic to the grandfather. As a result, Ravindra was going to go back to college and teach. We each have to survive adverse situations.

In Vrndavana the devotees pray for Srimati Radharani's mercy, the "tender-hearted feminine counterpart of the Supreme whole." If She recommends us, Krishna will accept us. The spiritual master's pleasure with us provides a similar guarantee.

"Certainly that heart is steel-framed which, in spite of one's chanting the holy name of the Lord with concentration, does not change when ecstasy takes place, tears fill the eyes and the hairs stand on end." (*Bhag.* 2.3.24)

* * *

10:52 a.m.

Chronic indigestion is the reaction to eating tapioca and two sweet balls on any EkadaSi. Thirty hours later and I'm still suffering. Why don't I learn? Conditioned fool.

* * *

12:25 p.m.

I wrote a letter to Hare Krishna dasi about winter planting and she just gave me a reply which is important to me, so I'll quote from it:

You are right in thinking that winter planting is done just before the winter. right in deep mid winter there is very little practical gardening that can be done (if any) . . . but just before winter . . . below the soil there is a burst of activity. For example, this particular time of year is the best for planting deciduous trees. The tree has no leaves on it, so it is not putting any energy into them, but under the ground the tree puts its remaining energy into the new root growth. If you plant a tree now, it will repair any roots that may have been damaged by its being moved, and it will strengthen its existing root system. Thus in the spring the tree gets a good start because its roots are in good condition to draw up nutrients and water to feed the new leaves which are unfurling. If you plant such a tree in the spring, then it must divide its energy in repairing damaged roots and putting out new leaves.

. . . Now is also a good time for planting herbaceous perennials. These are non-woody plants, which have a permanent rootstock, which lives on year after year. Shoots come up in spring from these roots that flower and then the whole plant apparently "dies" (though in fact the rootstock is fine, just asleep) and then the whole process starts again next spring.

She goes on to describe another meaning of winter planting as preparing the garden to look good in winter by planting things that come out in winter like heather, winter-flowering pansies, and evergreen. right now in November is also the time to plant your spring flowering bulbs.

You ask in your letter, "Would such a decision, say, for a writer-recluse to not travel but to stay in one place and write, which would be a kind of planting, correspond in any way to what the gardener does in terms of the time when winter planting is done and what actually happens in the ground with the plants when you plant them then?" My response would be yes, you are doing your winter planting in your service. You are making preparations for your "garden" to cope well with the winter and to be beautiful. There may not be much activity above the ground (you are not traveling, but staying in one place), but there is constant activity underground. And that is producing the beauty of the garden, which we can see even right through the winter (your books and monthly "Among Friends" installments) and in the spring, unexhausted by not having traveled, we will see further flowering of your garden.

If one went into the garden in the middle of winter and did serious digging and caused complete upheaval among all the resting plants, switching them around, and so on, come the spring, the plants would have to use all their energy in just setting themselves to rights and coping with the disturbance they experienced at a time when they could do nothing to heal themselves. I might say, to suddenly travel halfway around the world this winter, at a time when your roots are settling into a satisfying routine of spiritual practice, which enables you to bear fruit for the benefit of yourself, and us, your disciples, would be against the best interests of the garden and the gardener (if that is not presumptuous of me to say so).

I drew a picture on Bristol board to send her in reply. It's just a simple sketch showing bedraggled plants above ground with luxuriant green root systems shooting below. To the left of them, in a house within a house, I drew an orange-hooded, orange-dressed man sitting at a desk. From his feet and the floor, growing downwards, are the same green root systems. At the end of them (a little bit like the upside down banyan tree but I hope different) are labeled EJW, *bhakti*, poems, pictures.

I also wrote her this letter:

Dear Hare Krishna dasi, that was a beautiful and inspiring letter. It was also informative about winter planting and what it means for plants with their underground growing "if they are planted now "so let's plant them "and how it corresponds to the "writer-recluse" I asked about. I was thinking of the classic, ancient hermits of China-India-Japan who meditate or write poems in such settings. (In Vrndavana one stays indoors often during winter hours.) But I was also thinking of myself. I hope it's true. Somehow it appears I cannot travel as I planned. I may do as you suggested. I do hope I can dig those roots in, writing better, even as the world around us freezes and slows us down. At least you have described it in a way that appeals to me and I hope my imagination and plain truth writing right arm (and reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and chanting *japa*) will respond that way too.

* * *

1:10 p.m.

I didn't choose winter staying in one place. It's been my custom to travel. But it was forced on me this year. The metaphor of growing roots, following spiritual practices in one place for the cold months, is arbitrary. Nevertheless, I will follow it. The plan has been planted, our travel halted. What else can I do but sink roots?

* * *

2:30 p.m.

I am described at the end of my BTG column as one who "travels extensively and lectures." Even a turtle goes further than I do.

Go ahead, heap it on. You know you'd rather stay here anyway. Why keep talking about it?

"Certainly that heart is steel-framed," that doesn't feel ecstasy while chanting Hare Krishna. I could work this winter to overcome offenses.

Visnu worship, as recommended in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, should bring about a change of heart. We should become fixed as Krishna's eternal loving servant. We should no longer hanker for matter but increase our desire to serve the Lord.

But what if the body engages in mechanical service and the mind or heart doesn't change?

Some rascals imitate ecstatic symptoms. We know it's best to be real. At least we can aim for using all our time for Krishna's service, even if sometimes we're mechanical. At least we can develop the eagerness to glorify Him and to gain attraction for His holy *dhama*. O Krishna, please help us. We need to become prideless to become your servants.

M. is scheduled to leave for America around December 4. He has an appointment to get a hernia operation there. I hear him inquiring about a cheap ticket on Virgin Airlines. Could I go with him and sneak around to a few places without holding a big meeting? I *could*, but do I want to? Do I have the strength? What is the purpose of doing anything? I'm somewhat mixed, and my energy seems lower than normal. Maybe it's the new medication I'm trying.

* * *

4:28 p.m.

Don't know what to do. Walking around the outside of the building, energy low. I decide to paint. Caitanya opens the jars. I paint with feeling, asking myself what I want. I want to do what I feel like doing. Is there someone with whom I could talk this out? I doubt it. Can I suspend my dutiful, daily readings of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*? Why would I want to do that? I need the discipline to stay on course. But I think I want to let loose, perhaps even beyond EJW, to find a fuller expression.

Out came a painting with the word "poems" on it and rich, bright, wet colors. Another said, "*caitanya devam*," and another, "*murtaye dina tarine*." That's what I heard Srila Prabhupada singing. Figures, heads, people "one holding a long-stemmed flower.

Get the feelings out! Don't be afraid of it. But keep a basic, decent, modest *sadhana* as befits a *sadhu*. It would be nice if I could pour out another long poem like "Songs of a Hare Krishna Man," but such things don't come on my command. Serendipity. Krishna.

* * *

I told Madhu he learned a lesson (or should have) from his passionate accident. He looked at me and I could see he was thinking, "Don't say that. I don't *want* to slow down." I said, "It's like the Chinese proverb: Man who runs blind in field will hit iron bar." He laughed. My mail is answered. I'm thankful. Creative juices of old guy who doesn't want it to slow down in his winter hacienda.

* * *

5:43 p.m.

Finished reading *Navadvipa-bhava-taranga* with Caitanya and his "defective" Russian accent. When I hear it back on tape I'm sure I won't understand some words, but I'll catch the sweet essence. In that book, Bhaktivinoda Thakura reveals his eternal identity as Kamala-manjari, devoted to Ananga-manjari and Rupa-manjari in Lalita-sakhi's group. He's introduced as devoted to Gauranga. He attains direct service to Radha and becomes expert at it. But then his "dream" ends and he weeps. Was it a dream? We read to the end, receive the benediction he offers to all who read his book with faith, and pray for our own realization of his words.

M. is out attending a dance competition in which all the Wicklow Hare Krishna girls are entered "Irish traditional, of course. It's being held at a pub. The teacher said they'd all get a medal for participating.

They smiled on the banks of the Yamuna, my Radha and Govinda. Let me choose Their clothes for tomorrow. My simple tending to Radha-Govinda could be a tiny fragment of a hope to attain service to the Divine Couple. I am only a child in the home of Vaisnavas who imitates what the adults are doing in earnest. I place Them in bed, then go to my own bed, praying Hare Krishna.

November 16, 12:05 a.m.

"O great sages, the great soul Maharaja Pariksit, constantly rapt in thoughts of Lord Krishna, knowing well of his imminent death, renounced all sorts of fruitive activities . . . and thus fixed himself firmly in his natural love for Krishna and asked all these questions, exactly as you are asking me." (*Bhag.* 2.4.4) I've often thought this is the perfect theme and situation for literature, Maharaja Pariksit hearing from Sukadeva. The topics are surcharged because Maharaja Pariksit is facing an imminent death and they are devoted to Krishna. Krishna consciousness is not cheap, nor was it recently invented. Srila Prabhupada complains that India's leaders (political as well as religious) attempt to "kill Krishna." If they don't completely ban *Bhagavad-gita* from the schools, they want to make it "minus Krishna."

Maharaja Pariksit was able to give up everything because (1) he was about to die; and (2) he received Sukadeva Gosvami's association. Srila Prabhupada quotes the prayers of *maha-bhagavatas* who gave up everything for Lord Krishna's service. For example, he quotes the eighth verse of Lord Caitanya's *Siksastaka*, which is Srimati Radharani's declaration of unconditional surrender, whether Krishna reciprocates or not. He also quotes Rupa Gosvami: "O Lord of the poor, do what You like with me. Give me either mercy or punishment, but in this world I have none to look to except Your Lordship." Madhavendra Puri also bade farewell to all *karma-kandiya* obligations and was willing to face all criticisms. He was satisfied to simply remember Krishna: "My mind does not budge an inch from the determination to serve the lotus feet of Govinda, though I be unable to do it."

I am not so bold. I flatter myself, don't push myself. Well, we followers of Srila Prabhupada have at least *some* determination not to give up the path he gave us. That determination is an important requirement. Don't give up, even if you are unable to get the desired result.

Maharaja Pariksit told Sukadeva Gosvami, "Your speeches are gradually destroying the darkness of my ignorance, for you are narrating the topics of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 2.4.5)

I don't want to torture myself with doubt. Confidence begets good art and good acts of surrender. The doubter "or at least the doubts "should be slain by the weapon of knowledge. I'm thinking, for example, that my midnight rising and everything I do in the first six hours after that "reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* while taking notes, chanting *japa*, bathing, *puja*, more writing, a quick walk "is potent and should be maintained as long as I can keep it up. Again worried about not traveling. I will have to travel and preach sometime. But I want the confidence to live this life. I lack it right now. I hope to become so practiced to it that I can live out shortened versions even when I'm on the road. Lord Krishna has given me something here, and I want to use it to help myself and others.

"The crucial test of hearing *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is that one should get positive enlightenment by such an act." (*Bhag.* 2.4.5, purport)

Maharaja Pariksit first inquires how the Lord creates the material worlds. He didn't go at once to the *rasa* dance. We should first appreciate the Supreme Lord's greatness. When we are convinced of that greatness, we can place our full faith in Him and not think of Him as an ordinary man.

Now go and chant your freight train *japa*. This is the prayer to recite as often as possible. Hare Krishna. If only I could *pray* when I chant, be personal, open, feel the desire to serve Krishna and Srila Prabhupada. If only I could pay attention to the sound vibration. At least let me never give up trying.

* * *

Crazy dreams during the night. In the first, there was a traveling group of punk Hare Krishna bands. I met with them several times while we were on the road. Some of the band members were angry with me for some reason. They wanted to put me down, saying I wasn't completely honest. I admitted it. I could see that these men were living with sharp commitments and weren't compromising themselves by living with capitalists, etc.

Other dreams too, but I can't remember them. Filled with hard times "I remember that.

* * *

2:20 a.m.

For my first hour of *japa* (1 to 2 a.m.) I became fixed on the idea that I would go to America with Madhu, who is scheduled to leave for his hernia operation at the beginning of December. I would not tell many people I was coming, but would make swift and practical visits to Gita-nagari, Baltimore, and Towaco. I thought about the details "where my Deities would stay while I was away, how I would want to bring the small typewriter, and so on. It seemed right. Then I would return to Ireland for a year of hermit life.

Of course, I should have been chanting and hearing. But as I began to dwell on some of the inevitable scenarios in America, I thought of how I would rather make myself available to individuals who wanted to see me rather than hold meetings. I wouldn't hold

a big disciples meeting, as I do every year, but would give a few lectures and meet with a few people. I began to think of who I would meet and what we would say to one another. Then I let out an exasperated laugh and realized that I didn't really *want* to go. How deep would those personal meetings get? Wouldn't it be better to maintain a private and strong correspondence than have one superficial talk? Better I stay here.

* * *

4:20 a.m.

Will I plant or uproot myself?

Oh boy, I'm happy when I can write a story. Will you be happy too, dear reader? O personal ode, may I offer you to Lord Giriraja, the lifter of Govardhana Hill. He is great. In his last days, St. Francis, Brother Leo, and a few others sang "Canticle to the Creatures," and Father Elias asked him to stop considering it an ordinary song or fearing that the neighbors would.

Me and my song "rhythm and romp of Dolphy and company. They are aspiring *bhaktas*, they cry so much to God, but they don't know where to go with their music. O Krishna, let me be rapt in your pastimes. I know I seem sober and white-faced (ashen?) enough, but I have a secret bubbly joy. The *gopis* hear Krishna's flute and run to be with Him. I wonder what rhythm He plays.

He's happy, happy and sankirtana with them. I have to decide for myself. When that strong voice of decision comes, what will I do with it? Shall I hang a ring at the end of a string and dangle it over my nose to tell me what to do? Or I could write "yes" and "no" on two pieces of paper and place them before Srimati Radharani. I could mix them up and chose one with my eyes closed.

No, no . . .

Fine. Let the music of life flow. Radha-Govinda in purple and gold this morning. Lalita is a *yuteSvari* (group leader) but longs for the mood of serving her beloved Radha. Heard the last of *Manah-Siksa* with Bhaktivinoda Thakura's *Bhajana-darpana* comments.

* * *

5:28 a.m.

So cold I want to go inside as soon as I finish my one outdoor round and bleary *gayatri*. But it's a very clear nighttime sky. Twinkling stars and, low on the horizon, a brilliantly bright toenail sliver of a moon. The toenail is beaming at the bottom, and I can see the faint ring that completes the circle of the moon's full shape. I can also see the low hill in silhouette and hear way out there in the frigid dark the sound of a mountain stream. If I look long enough, I'll see the stationary lights flickering. Maybe one will flash and fall. I'm not going to stick around to find out.

Excited by breakthroughs in painting. When I work on canvas, I can paint one layer after another. It may not have the particular feel and fun of wet paint on paper, but it has its own possibilities of wildness and layered creativity. I plan to explore it.

While walking I imagine many things. I often daydream. This morning I imagined an older Indian man in America who would not understand why I didn't want to come and

socialize with his family. I imagined telling him, "After all these years, you still don't understand me." I would say it in front of others, and it would startle them. I would be confident enough to speak like that. The others would feel assured and know it was true, I have shown my colors as a solitary person, and it's part of my spiritual standing too. I can serve them by writing books alone.

If anyone went to the moon, he'd have to wear a tremendous amount of warm clothes "probably designed as some fantastic suit "but maybe I'm just cold out here.

* * *

5:55 a.m.

I have to award you a cert today for bouncing back and forth all morning. I guess you need to do that. Can't come to a decision regarding when to go or when to stay, but I see you need to write through it all. Therefore, this award is for writing under all circumstances. It's also an award for past achievement, and equally a wish and a serving of notice that we expect more in the future. I've seen you write while sitting on a moving ratha-yatra cart traveling down 5th Avenue. I'll want to see you write in a hospital, and of course I won't mention jail, because I hope neither happens to you. If, however, you find yourself in the last few seconds of a descending plane crash, don't write but pray. Don't worry how it may sound to your fellow passengers.

* * *

9:12 a.m.

I think I will call this volume, *Last Quiet of the Year*. Yet I'm hoping to be back here before December is over for more quiet.

Now we decided to make a two-week trip to the U.S. We'll arrive in Baltimore, go at once to Gita-nagari for just under a week, then back to Baltimore for a few programs at Jaya Gaurasundara's house. I won't hold any seminars or big meetings. I'll also keep it confidential. I'm going because, although I have declared myself a recluse, I do have commitments to people. Not only that, but America is where my GNP friends are.

Now daring to get out there. A trip in both senses of the word. I have been quelling headaches with feverfew, but that probably won't be enough for this travel. I'll need Esgic, and more than three a week. I don't really want to go to America, but I'm accepting that it's best to fulfill commitments. I won't stop writing while I'm there. Writing is a different kind of travel.

* * *

11:55 a.m.

Now worrying about transatlantic travel details. We can no longer afford to fly business class, and even our economy class tickets have to be bargains. So there are complications. The "best" M. offers is British Airways, which means driving two hours to the Dublin airport, flying to London Gatwick, *waiting five hours*, then catching a plane to Baltimore. I thought it might be possible for someone to meet us at Gatwick with a van so I could rest in warmth and privacy, and perhaps even have a hot meal.

Otherwise, five grueling hours at the airport is too much. But our ticket doesn't allow us to break our journey. At least we are thinking of the realities of travel, which makes it feel irrevocable. My most recent mood swings haven't made me think of canceling again, so I guess I actually wanted to go all along.

I started packing cabin luggage: fifty Esgics, an unopened container of forty-five feverfews, a *suci* kit. We have nine days before we leave, but I needed to start packing so I can do it gradually. I chose a notebook and began writing notes for lectures I'll give in the U.S.

* * *

2:23 p.m.

It would be good to read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and leave traces of it in my book by way of notes. I see a bit of turmeric on my right thumbnail from lunch. Time spinning. Every time I see M. he has a new travel alternative to stretch my brain, but basically it will be a haul to get there no matter what we choose. That's budget tickets. We'll be back by mid-December (before the rush holiday season jacks up the prices).

When Maharaja Pariksit asked Sukadeva Gosvami to describe the Personality of Godhead's creative energy, Sukadeva first offered prayers to the Lord. The purport to this verse (2.4.11) is one I had once had carried around on a laminated card. But I never could practice it. It's a remembrance of the presence of God and asking His permission before acting in any way at all. I saw that laminated card on M.'s desk the other day. I'll look at it again and maybe carry it in my breast pocket. Dear God, let us make this travel successfully, be with devotees, return here, and at each step remember You. "No one is free to act freely and independently, and as such, one should always seek the permission of the Lord to act or eat or speak, and by the blessing of the Lord everything done by a devotee is beyond the principles of the four defects typical of a conditioned soul."

I know travel will make me write on the surface. The calm of a steady place to stay allows me to drift down into deeper levels of awareness and concern. Both modes have their advantages and disadvantages.

"He is the Supreme enjoyer of both the material and spiritual worlds, yet He enjoys his own abode in the spiritual sky. There is no one equal to Him . . ." (*Bhag.* 2.4.4) I can't escape the fact that I'm expected to speak transcendental knowledge in *parampara*. When I get together with the devotees at the Gita-nagari cabin, I will probably say something personal first, but then this about the Lord. Maybe they'll already be tired of hearing it "the same old Krishna conscious talk. But we both know I am meant to speak it to them and they are meant to hear it from me. I could season it with remembrance and personal experience and examples of things Prabhupada personally said or did. But I also have to be careful of that; it should never look like I'm boasting that I had some association with Prabhupada.

Of course, in one sense I have nothing about which to boast, because despite my meeting Srila Prabhupada, I'm still on the lower rungs of *bhakti*. At least I can be honest about that and simply speak in *parampara*.

Mundaners cannot reach the Lord. He remains "a myth or a mysterious problem to them." I gladly take in Vedic knowledge, even though I cannot see it. We are . . . who

we are. We are not impersonalists or atheists or speculators, but wanna-be Vaisnavas, sometimes frustrated *bhaktas*.

* * *

4:35 p.m.

I noticed that I am usually afraid in physically threatening situations. Nowadays I face that fear when I paint. Even though we have only eight days left here before the deep peace (an illusion?) is removed, I can still paint. I painted a threatening figure and some figures to protect against it "one with a strong right arm for *japa*. Srila Prabhupada was singing as I painted, and that made me feel protected too. Hare Krishna. I wrote some battered near-Sanskrit alongside one painting. A man inside an A-frame house "he's in the center, shelter. Krishna petting a cow. A small gnome, a devilish character in his own space, a bigger force for good ready to counter him, and orange column. The last figure was calling out to my master.

Did some on canvas and some on paper. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. If M. gets back on time, we'll read Raghunatha dasa Gosvami's poetry.

* * *

6:35 p.m., Night Notes

We found out that it's Caitanya's twenty-ninth birthday. Caranaravinda baked him a cake with carob filling, pineapple, and whipped cream on top. M. added a barley cup to it, and while M. carried it in, we all sang him "Happy Birthday." I didn't eat much. I told you how I can't eat at night or I get indigestion. But as we sat together I felt sobered by the fact that we are definitely going to travel. Everything is up to Krishna.

November 17, 12:00 Midnight

Before speaking about Lord Krishna, beginning with His control of the material energy, Sukadeva Gosvami prays to the Lord. A pure devotee asks Krishna's *permission* before doing anything. We are not independent. I'd like to ask Krishna to please allow my hands and brain to function and to be absorbed in remembrance of Him. I pray not to be interested in anything outside devotional service. Let me go deeper into Krishna consciousness, for Krishna's pleasure.

There are many things in the *Vedas* that seem impossible by material estimation. Darwin's theory, the Western concept of history "we have to face these things. Sadaputa Prabhu and other scholars remind us of what we are up against. We may, however, go directly to the *Vedas* and accept them as our real source of knowledge. We have to accept *some* authority, so whom will we believe? We have to choose. Nothing is impossible for God. His *svadhama* is self-illuminating, so why should it need separate light? O Lord, You are the maintainer of everything both material and spiritual, and everything flourishes by Your mercy. Your devotional service, or *bhakti-yoga*, is the actual principal of religion, *satya-dharma*, and I am engaged in service. So kindly protect me . . ." (*Bhag.* 2.4.14, purport)

Yat-kirtanam yat-smaranam yad-iksanam, yad-vandanam yac-chravanam yad-arhanam: "Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto the all-auspicious Lord Sri Krishna, about whom glorification, remembrances, audience, prayers, hearing and worship can at once cleanse the effects of all sins of the performer." (*Bhag.* 2.4.15)

I wake before midnight, turn on the bedside light, sit up, put my feet on the floor, and feel the cold. I remember one by one that I am going to travel soon, that there will probably be danger, since there is danger everywhere, and that I will have to remember Krishna. I remember the verse that states that whomever Krishna wishes to protect, no one can harm "and vice versa. It's up to Krishna whether we live or die "whether here or somewhere else. I have nothing else to do but absorb myself in Krishna consciousness. It's not me who can encourage or nourish others (although that's why I'm going to see them), but a me enriched by Krishna consciousness, me the carrier of the *Bhagavatam*. I should desire to present Krishna to them.

Kirtana can be performed in many ways, through melodious songs or by speaking or writing on scripture. We shouldn't be disankirtanam visnoh smaranam. Don't forget that. It's for your own purification.

"Let me offer my respectful obeisances again and again unto the all-auspicious Lord Sri Krishna. The highly intellectual, simply by surrendering unto His lotus feet, are relieved of all attachments to present and future existences and without difficulty progress towards spiritual existence." (*Bhag.* 2.4.16)

I feel by this little bit of reading this morning that I have focused on the real purpose of my travels and lectures. Maybe I can read one more purport before I quit. It's sometimes hard to sustain attention, because things seem to scramble in my brain after a while. That's what happens in Kali-yuga "we have short attention spans.

I wonder if we can fit in a visit to England on our way to or from America? I go to read more *Bhagavatam*, but such thoughts come. Yesterday at this time, but during *japa*, I was preoccupied with the decision to go to the U.S. At least today I shouldn't have to worry about that since it's already decided. Instead I can beg for shelter in the holy name.

Sukadeva Gosvami and the devotees who follow him ask for permission before acting. If I do something impure, how can I ask permission? I can at least remember Krishna and ask Him to help me. Don't let me stray too far, O Lord, but bring me closer.

But in a nice way! Let me know Your love and protection. Now let me be with you and not just with my mind.

* * *

4:20 a.m.

Hearing again *Vidagdha-madhava*. I know Lord Caitanya gave Rupa Gosvami His special mercy and asked the great Vaisnavas to bless him too. Therefore, he was able to write such transcendental literature describing radha-Krishna nectar.

Sadaputa Prabhu said that there is scope for future revelations of Vedic literature, and he gave the example of *Caitanya-caritamrta*, which appeared only five hundred years ago but has the stature of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Wow! I hadn't thought of it that way. Maybe my writing . . . Then I put that idea down. I am just a little worm. The works of

the Six Gosvamis and the *Caitanya-caritamṛta* are certainly later manifestations of the eternal *Vedas* and in some ways are superior to anything that came before. *Namo mahavadanyaya Krishna-prema-pradaya te.*

* * *

Proofreader sent me a note: "You mention a river Don. We can't find reference to it." I told her that when I was a teenager, I read *And Quiet Flows the Don* and *The Don Flows Home to the Sea*, both written in the former Soviet Union.

Pack up. Go for it; go at it. I didn't know you had it in you. Spent *japa* energy imagining a man in America saying how I disappointed him by not visiting his house and me answering, "You should understand what is good for *me* and what I can do."

Trying to save money. Madhu's friends are going to buy him a harp, yet we are pinching pennies on the air ticket. I won't resent it but I'll mention it here.

* * *

5:00 a.m.

I certify that you don't exactly know what you are doing, man. You chant one way and your mind goes another. I give you a C plus, IQ 108. How's that? Not high, but attempted devotional. You read *sastra* on the level of an *idiot savant*. Your sage replies are full of hot air. You yearn for aloneness to come with a big cushion. You want the best fruit available, and that means it has to be imported from Egypt (figs), Italy (olive oil), China, and Greece.

Condemn and exonerate. You may live until you're seventy and reap some rewards. Your destiny is fixed, so you might as well use your time to serve Krishna, as did Sudama Vipra. And don't bother Krishna with material requests, okay?

* * *

5:26 a.m.

Of course, every day now my mind will be running with one travel detail or another. This morning I wondered whether we could fit in a visit to Towaco after all. I would go because they want us to go. Talking with Madhu will help steady me so that I can read a decision.

I also thought that temple managers and even my disciples might complain that I canceled the January meetings, which were convenient for them, and now suddenly appear during the Prabhupada marathon, which is not convenient. It's all so last minute for them, too. These thoughts are not fitting for one who needs to relax. Anyway, let me make a decision, be who I am, and live with the consequences.

O Krishna, yesterday as I walked around the house, I remembered parts of Krishna-Balaram Mandir and how I was there with my Western mindset under a dark sea sky and a cold wind. Where is the answer to my prayers? Where is the end of knowledge? It's You, Krishna, and You are my dearest friend if only I could wake up to it.

Around again. I have more time. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare. Swing around the corner, around the bend, the only racer in this race aside from your mind.

Did you hear who left the company of devotees? Did you hear who came back? Did you hear the latest? No, I died. I left before it all happened.

Yeah? But you came back too, didn't you? Where did you come back from? If you didn't want to be with devotees, then you left them to grow up hard. Gradually, gradually, you will return to finish attaining pure *bhakti*. Our spiritual master was right.

* * *

8:45 a.m.

My head could be clearer. It might just be a matter of mind over matter. The crows, dozens of them, madly attacked the jackfruit still hanging on the tree. We watched and commented, "How come they didn't come yesterday? Were they waiting for just the right stage of ripeness?" But that was a dream. In the same dream, a big *sannyasi* Godbrother wore a flannel shirt and jeans. He arrived just after I had tried to convert another now ex-*sannyasi*. I said to the newly arrived, "You've lost weight."

Sukadeva Gosvami is praying. I could read what he is saying, but I'm writing instead, because I'm waiting to see which way this headache is going to go. Perhaps I should give my head a feverfew. I have to keep telling myself that Krishna will protect me. I ask Him to hear my prayers. And I pray regardless of how He answers. I'm not interested in artificial results. I agree, I agree "the way of pure devotion is best. I advocate being a person and at the same time not giving up the *sannyasa* or Krishna consciousness.

When I had time and a little space at the bottom of the page, I thought of my spiritual master again. When they ask me to speak, I can assume the role of a Krishna conscious lecturer, either by taking a *Bhagavatam* verse and commenting on it with little or no preparation, or speaking more formally on a spiritual topic. I may have prepared an outline, but the basic preparation is deep and regular *sadhana*. We have to draw from that. Without such *sadhana*, we will be tongue-tied or incommunicative, like a person in a dream who is afraid to speak.

* * *

9:05 a.m.

All great sages and other powerful workers cannot get any result "without dedication of such great qualities to the service of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 2.4.17) I am timid. I don't take life as it happens with an adventurous spirit, as Madhu does. But let's hope I can learn to turn to Krishna in my worries. At any moment something bad may happen to me, because the world is full of *adhyatmic*, *adhibhautic*, and *adhidaivic* miseries. For example, some inimical person may attack me, my body may malfunction, I may collapse in one climate or another, from one cause or another, or I may experience a catastrophic event "a plane crash or hurricane. Turn to Krishna at each step and leave a clear-enough inked record of the path so far.

As I write I hear heavy thumping. Maybe it's the people who are supposed to deliver and assemble Caitanya's shed. I doubt they would come so early.

Unless matter is employed in the Lord's service, we cannot attain perfection. It's hard for me to exert myself to come out with some deep realization on that. I'm no rock of dependability. I have nothing wonderful to say beyond what the struggling young woman was able to think up on her own. I admit it, and participate in the preaching process. Share what you know "what else can you do?"

Self-interest needs to coincide with Krishna's interests. Otherwise, even something as simple as bodily maintenance is animal life if we do it without God consciousness. I study a purport; it makes comments similar to other purports. If I can, I remember the others and cross-reference. No harm in that. I make my points and that's it: session is over. We all go back to our lives.

Members of fallen and wild outcast races, such as the Kiratas, Hunas, Andhras, etc., can become purified "by taking shelter of the devotees of the Lord, due to His being the supreme power. I beg to offer my obeisances onto Him." (*Bhag.* 2.4.18)

We have chosen the British Airways flight. Bhakti-rasa will meet us for the five-hour layover with a van, a warm sleeping bag, and some hot soup. We'll kill time, maybe write or doodle, and rest. Then catch the plane for our 1 or 2 p.m. departure to Baltimore.

The Lord can accept anyone regardless of caste. He's above all castes. As Lord Caitanya, He declares that He doesn't belong to any *varna* or *aSrama* "but that He is the eternal servant of the servant of the Lord who maintains the damsels of Vrndavana (Lord Krishna)." (*Bhag.* 2.4.18, purport)

* * *

11:55 a.m.

Pole penance. My penance is nothing compared to Caitanya's, who is out in the cold and rain carrying loads of sand in a wheelbarrow. He is bringing them to the site where they are supposed to assemble his shed. He is wearing a rain jacket, but he's dripping wet. M. is cooking *kicchari* again for lunch. He and I continue working on the strategy for our U.S. visit. I like his ideas. I know things can't work out exactly as we plan, but it's good to have plans anyway.

The reader of this narrative will no doubt notice the change I underwent in the last few days since I have decided to travel.

Cuneiform, ideograms "I like to combine words and pictures. I did some of that this morning. I use my doodles as adventures to get me to write. I alternate lines of text with ideograms. Or maybe I should call them decorations. They're something like *deva-nagari*, something like Chinese, a little like hieroglyphics, a little like Philadelphia graffiti.

Heavy gray mist. Everything is different because my mind is different. I'm not speaking of only small differences in the day but facing the fact that we will soon travel. I took out my passport and made sure it was still valid.

Pole penance. I didn't want to come here to write. The pole is dark and wet out there. It seems to be making a creaking sound. I'm not sure whether it's the pole or some kind of bird I haven't heard before. Or maybe it's neither, but Caitanya's wheelbarrow going back and forth. Soft me, keeping dry. Let me make my way as softly as possible through

life, but accept any hardness that comes of its own accord. We'll each have to face bitterness and pain one day or another. To attempt to cushion ourselves too much misses the real point of life in the material world.

The *brahmana* Sudama lived in poverty. His wife trembled from weak health. He wore rags. When he went to see his old school friend, the Supreme Lord, Sudama carried a handkerchief containing four palmfuls of inferior flat rice as a presentation. When Lord Krishna saw Sudama approaching from a distance, He rose from His bed and went forward to embrace him. Everyone in the palace was surprised that Lord Krishna treated this poor *brahmana* with so much affection. Material riches are not what impresses Lord Krishna. He's impressed by devotion.

What will we do this afternoon? Will we draw pictures in the art room or return here for more concentrated writing?

At least I'll read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and take a walk. Hare Krishna anyway.

* * *

2:26 p.m.

May the Supreme Absolute be pleased with me, prays Sukadeva Gosvami. He's worshiped by those with pretension. The devotees have no desire for self-satisfaction. It seems that Srila Prabhupada is equating "pretension" with possession of any desire other than the desire to serve Krishna. That's a difficult standard to meet. It means that conquering pretension takes more than being honest with yourself or removing the differences between one's appearance and activities. It's pure "ouch!" service, wanting only what *He* wants. And He wants more, more, more, as in the *annakuta* pastime when He kept demanding more.

"May Lord Sri Krishna, who is the worshipable Lord of all devotees . . . the leader of all living entities (Prajapati) . . . and the Supreme incarnation . . . be merciful upon me." (*Bhag.* 2.4.20) Pray as the rain comes down the hill. The shed assemblers are hammering away out there. Tall, thin Caitanya watches. M. is inside his cottage, probably on the phone. Pray to Krishna. I keep saying it, reading, it, but I don't quite know how to do it. Still, whenever I say it I feel a little emotional turning toward Krishna. Ultimately, we can't escape Krishna. Do we pray to the Lord for protection from the Lord Himself in His fiercer aspects of Time and Death? O Krishna, please come gently to me. I want to see the cowherd boy. Come to me in the form of my spiritual master, who already led me away once from the material world.

"It is the Personality of Godhead Sri Krishna who gives liberation. By thinking of His lotus feet every second . . . the devotee in trance can see the Absolute Truth . . . May the Lord be pleased with me." (*Bhag.* 2.4.21) The Lord favors His devotee with pure intelligence so that the devotee can understand Him, as stated in *Bhagavad-gita* 10.10. He does this when He is satisfied with the devotee's service attitude. He demands full surrender.

(I read in the news that last month the Pope canonized a new saint, the ex-Jew Edith Stein, who was martyred by the Nazis. What does it take to become a saint?)

Sukadeva Gosvami wanted to be able to speak with realization and to convince his audience.

* * *

4:00 p.m.

Oh boy, I'm sitting here and avoiding medication. Still, I don't feel inclined to go downstairs. Sounds like Caitanya and Ani are working in the art room or somewhere nearby. I want to be a little bit alone. Ordered two books on St. Therese, which have just arrived. I don't know if I'll read them. One is about her youngest disciple, Marie of the Trinity. It's natural a person will have a follower, at least for a while. It's natural one will *be* a follower. Some followed Srila Prabhupada for ten, twenty, or twenty-five years, then stopped. I intend to go all the way.

But the important thing is the inner nature of it all. We care whether it's show or truly sincere. I think of the story of the woman with jangling bracelets.

Now I hear more people talking in the house "the one disadvantage of Caitanya moving here.

When I go to Baltimore, I will also hear people in their house. Jaya Gaurasundara has a baby granddaughter. At Gita-nagari it'll be quiet "except for the mice. But I'll type over them all.

I feel such a sadness mixed with a desire to be joyful and a desire to be obedient to God. I may learn something devotional from the Christians, but the complete absence of radha and Krishna makes their theology empty for me. I hope Jesus understands what I feel. He is the attractive center of Christian devotion; he rescues them from impersonalism. We admire him. But we can't substitute him for our Vraja cowherd boy. Anyway, how many paths can we follow at once? A scholar can dip in here or there, but a devotee must be fixed.

* * *

5:00 p.m.

I did three quick watercolors, then quickly showed them to Caitanya and asked him to clean the brushes. He was tired from working on his shed. He said, "You like bright colors. I like just the opposite." That remark caught us both off guard. Should I try to please him and not paint with bright colors? Do I need his praise? Is bright childish? Am I not a great artist, a great (little) saint? Not a dark Rembrandt? And so the mind goes.

Three color pieces for myself. I may take them to Guru-seva in the U.S. Maybe she'll receive them in a more accepting way, as child's work. Children and naive artists and sophisticated persons who love primitive work are all part of one family. But as Michelle Cassou says, don't demand praise or criticism. Paint for the joy of painting. Don't even assess it. I want to write "Krishna" on two of them, and "Krishna will protect you," on another, because that's how I felt.

Now invite them up to read Raghunatha dasa Gosvami. rain tinkling, but it sounds less comforting somehow. I can't relax indefinitely here with rain on my roof. rain usually lulls me into that illusion. But life is temporary. Our neighbor said she looked out the other morning and saw the field covered with frost, How brilliant it seemed, and beautiful.

* * *

5:58 p.m.

I finished reading the National Headache Foundation newsletter. Then this thought-feeling came to me: "Why do I have to travel just to meet a few people in America? Why can't I just stay here forever in this house? I mean, for the rest of my life?" They can come to see *me*. I don't want to go. The GNP workers will remain dedicated, and if not I'll stay here anyway. When I get to America I'll regret having left here and only yearn to return. I thought of calling M. in to tell him that I had changed my mind, but then remembered the reasons for the visit. They also have merit. I'm just tired.

November 18, Midnight

I had a doubt last night about whether to go. Felt unwilling. (Canakya says when in doubt about travel, don't go.) But mine was an unwillingness to *ever* go. That is my general tendency, and I can honor it. I'm slowing down. (Dreamt last night of T. Swami organizing a discussion on the last stage of life. I said I could be a consultant if he liked, but not an active member. He wanted the active groupthink.)

Go, then, go. It's important to give myself to others. Think of it as a sacrifice. People work hard for my projects. I should reciprocate. So this book can be called *Last Full Quiet of the Year*. I'll lose the silence and won't regain it quickly when I return in late December. If I do make it back here in one piece, it will be with a sigh of relief.

Sukadeva Gosvami ends his prayers before speaking, "I offer my respectful obeisances unto Srila Vyasadeva, the incarnation of Vasudeva, who compiled the Vedic scriptures. The pure devotees drink up the nectarine transcendental knowledge dropping from the lotuslike mouth of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 2.4.24) receive the nectar one way or another, as Krishna passed it on to Vyasa, as Sukadeva or his representative gives it or as it's passed in conjugal humor from Krishna to the *gopis*. We can learn that when we are competent and under the guidance of our guru.

Maybe Canakya should have said, "If you're going to go, then make the best of it." Go where you have friends, there's a Deity, and a sacred river. Go for Krishna's purpose. Otherwise, yes, it's better to stay home. Go to give association. That may not always be appreciated. Krishna may ask more of you than you anticipate. You can never know when you set out whether you'll be allowed to return, will die en route, or, if you stayed here in rathdangan, whether you will see tomorrow's dawn. There are no guarantees to anything. We can only think of Krishna and do what He wants us to do.

Sukadeva Gosvami prayed for permission to speak well. I pray for that too "and to be able to come out, inspire others, then return. It's no big deal, really "this whole trip. It's only meant to last two weeks. I'll be back before I know it.

Sukadeva Gosvami mentions that Brahma received knowledge from his very birth from the Lord (*tene brahma hrda*). Vedic knowledge must be learned in disciplic succession and explained by one who knows, who accepts the *parampara*, and who has gained understanding of Krishna in disciplic succession. Sukadeva prayed to speak in *that* line, faithfully and knowledgeably.

He will first speak about material creation. It's technical. It will impress us that God is great, so we won't think Krishna is an ordinary man. I recently heard Bhurijana Prabhu

speak on these chapters. This time through for me, I'll be looking for select verses that fit my needs. I also want to spend time reading selections from the *Caitanya-caritamṛta*.

I feel calm for one who is resolute in purpose. (Once Arjuna became resolute, he remained so in thought.) I'll often be asking myself why I left my ideal home in the hills. If things go wrong and I feel turned inside out, at least I may tell myself I left so that I could give myself to others. But is that a foolish, unreal notion? In general, I can best give to others by staying here and writing. This will be a more physical gesture.

* * *

4:17 a.m.

He asked if when he recalls "*karmi* songs" he can Krishnaize the lyrics. He had been thinking it was okay, but a devotee told him to let those songs go. He said he didn't want his mind cluttered at the time of death. He often mentions that to me in letters "that he's growing older and doesn't want to be reborn into the material world.

I think it might be all right to Krishnaize the lyrics if the song is already coming into his head. All the world's romance is actually a perverted reflection of love of God. But the sober words about not wanting to clutter the mind are important. I admit I debate that point myself, sometimes thinking I want to be dynamic and boldly seek Krishna conscious connections even in somewhat unsavory places, and sometimes hoping to become starkly renounced before death. Hare Krishna.

* * *

Is there another way to write? Yes, I could reminisce about the times I was an American, a lost soul. I could tell the reader how cold it was in the temples in the morning at *mangala-arati* and how we faced so many fears each day, yet served Krishna with real feeling. We felt we were maintaining the temples for Srila Prabhupada, and so we were. Sometimes decades can go by like that and suddenly we find ourselves too tired to carry on in quite the same way. So many temple administrations came and went, and things that seemed right and sincere at the time have been judged wrong. All that sincere surrender you offer to Srila Prabhupada is suddenly not appreciated, seen as corrupt. I have seen devotees wonder what the point of it all was. Gradually, we all learn to become diplomats, for better or for worse, or more likely, private citizens. But the Hare Krishna mantra is still melting the snows of our hearts.

This kind of writing is justified if I can place it at the Lord's lotus feet.

The Lord's
lotus feet.

Time to unclutter the heart and head and face the deathbed.

Yankees won the World Series in four straight games. We're from New York after all.

My desk blotter absorbs spots and stains and turns various colors. I'm like that too, I think. My book is neither pretty nor pure.

It contains snickers and asides.

It is about itself.

It would like to reach to Krishna,
the holy face of God

contemplated by His devotee,
the holy feet of Krishna
delighted in by His devotee.

Hare Krishna. Cheese, wine, and chocolate are on the off-list because they might cause headaches. Find out when it's a devotee's birthday and give him/her a treat. recognize them, all those you think are special.

* * *

4:45 a.m.

The travel agenda seems all right. I imagine myself as the British Airways captain responsible for flying Satsfer's plane to Baltimore. He's not aware he has such a spiritual person on board. The flight goes unnoticed, untroubled. The stewardess hands out fruit. The captain remains in his cockpit, sailing through the five hundred miles per hour headwinds. It seems to take a long time to fly over the sea. When planes do crash "which they do rarely" practically no one survives. At least not their bodies. The souls are all eternal individuals. We have to remember that.

He was saying he could Krishnaize lyrics, so what about, "You ain't nothing but a hound dog/crying all the time?" Would we change it to, "You ain't nothing but a hound dog/stuck in *maya* all the time"? Too tired to work out the rhythm just now, but you get the idea. We can make anything preachy or devotional if we try hard enough. But I like to make my own words and not steal from pop lyrics.

* * *

5:20 a.m.

Not as cold today. Completely black. No stars, no moon. Wet mist falling on face. Caranaravinda is supposed to arrive at 5:30. We invited her here on some pretext, but when she comes, we will give her a few gifts for her birthday and show her a video. For that reason I came out ten minutes early to chant and walk. I really like walking around the house on these wooden boards with their bounce. Is it the holy name I like? Sure, I wouldn't be walking otherwise. And the *gayatris*. When I got to the *sannyasa-mantra* asking for *gopi-bhava*, I sometimes catch myself *desiring gopi-bhava*. Then I saw that my attitude was competitive. That is, if I attained *gopi-bhava*, I'd outdo other devotees. What nonsense. Better to concentrate on being a better devotee in a basic way, because there are no envious *gopi-manjaris*.

Walk, walk, and pray to Prabhupada. Travel in his service after the last quiet of this year. Although there are no stars, I see yellow lights in the distance "some kind of traffic markers. By the electric light outside our house I'm able to see the smoke issuing from Madhu's chimney. He normally wouldn't heat the place, but Caitanya-candrodaya likes to keep it warm. Water glistening on the thatched roof. The cement so white in this light. Time to go inside.

* * *

5:58 a.m.

In his previous life, Madhu was the lead singer of a punk band called Threat. He played on stage and gave an interview that put down all "show bands." His band had something to say. Other bands were aimed at bringing people together; the music was secondary. Obscene talk. We played the twenty-year-old video of the interview, the three of us, as a way to observe Caranaravinda's birthday. Afterwards, I thanked her for her service. I realized as I spoke how Srila Prabhupada had saved M. and I from Threat lives. "It's a pity so many others *didn't* get saved by him," I said. Seemed an odd thing to say. Did I mean it? Already assuming the lecturer mode. Felt a center of emptiness inside.

* * *

10:10 a.m.

Steady indecision to go to the U.S. M. said I could cancel even after he buys the tickets. At least I have decided to carry a much smaller piece of cabin luggage. I have already transferred stuff from one bag to the other. The travel might even be mentally refreshing for me. It's good for me to endure strain sometimes and to write through it, see the different things that occur in the mind, and write them down. It's not the same as reporting what comes through the senses on a trip to Vrndavana though, but even there I spend most of my time lamenting that I did not find Krishna.

Srila Prabhupada says Krishna is everywhere and that it depends on our eyesight whether we can see Him or not. *Premanjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena*: the pure devotee can see Krishna in the Deity, for example. Were the *acaryas* all fools and rascals that they installed Deities in millions of temples? We can see Krishna anywhere if we have pure love. A pure devotee doesn't see cars and highways; he sees the world void without Krishna. *Govinda-virahena me*.

That sounds like a good motto: see as I travel from London to America. See the whole world as void without Govinda.

I picked out a section I might read from in a *Caitanya-caritamrta* lecture I'm scheduled to give at Inis rath. It's the section where Lord Caitanya meets the Sanodiya *brahmana* in Mathura. He appreciates his ecstasy and learns that he is a disciple of Madhavendra Puri. The section could end with the verse stating that true religious principles are enacted in a devotee's behavior. The ideals are not only in the books but in the actual living of the principles by those who have become devotees. People of lower birth should not be rejected. Everyone can come to Krishna consciousness. It will be nice to talk again of Lord Caitanya as He moved in His pastimes to Mathura. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna.

I like it when the devotees share in the lectures I deliver. It keeps us all humble. I can raise questions and defend our movement against charges of arrogance and sectarianism. That might come up because Srila Prabhupada says there is no religion except surrender to Krishna and that all disagreements to this are material. On the Absolute Truth there is only agreement. This is tricky stuff, and I will try to use my intelligence to both understand it and express it properly. No one wants "fundamentalists," because they tend to become violent fanatics.

Hare Krishna. Threat band, Monk's band, ban the bomb, hatband, waistband. This nervous fellow beats time with his fingers. Is there anything in the luggage that is contraband? The anti-ISKCON yellow journalists would like to dissect me. The customs officials found the cans of snuff belonging to Srila Prabhupada and sneered, "So this is what all the fuss is about." I sometimes found it stained here and there. He took it to prevent himself becoming dizzy when he worked all night for Krishna. No harm in that.

My dear Lord, let me follow my master. The essence is not exactly the person we knew when he was here. We have to find his essence now in separation and within our hearts. Others may be able to help us. Our meditation may sometimes seem tinged with impersonalism. But Prabhupada was a true person and we gave him our lives. We struggle to maintain allegiance. When we hear of those who leave him or even criticize him when they go to another guru, we find our allegiance strengthened, yet challenged.

Bluish silver over the hill. I can't look at it as a kind of naturalist whose heart is settled here indefinitely anymore, because I'm leaving. If I had six months, I could keep pretending this is my land.

I hope I'll be all right to paint this afternoon. Caitanya set up a somewhat large canvas. Maybe I'll go at it a bit carefully. It's a process. Let me do what I feel. What would I paint if no one was watching?

Pain beginning.

* * *

11:50 a.m.

During my bath I recalled that Murray read *The Worshipable Deity* and remarked on only one line which touched him. It was in a poem describing a three-day writing retreat I took in Ireland to compile a volume of *Prabhupada Nectar*. The opening stanzas described a peaceful, natural setting and absorption in literary Srila Prabhupada "*samadhi*." Then this:

* * *

But I want to come out,
carrying a new *Nectar* book,
Ready for the pummeling
of a thousand different shocks
back in the U.S.A.

* * *

Murray liked the "thousand shocks." He seemed to respect it as genuine suffering. The whole book is a flow of poems with stresses on anti-cult propaganda, a bombing, debts, headaches, travels and lectures at the height of my role as zonal-guru "a lot of strain. Why do I mention it here? Because I'm going out again to feel those shocks.

But maybe it's good to absorb shocks. As I glance at other poems from that 1984 collection, I see a distrust of going alone, a sense that I must stay on the front lines of duty. For me, God consciousness meant to fry myself in the fires of stress. There was no

other way to prove my loyalty to Prabhupada. Passing thoughts of peace or of doing things my own way were temptations to accept defeat:

Sometimes I think I should go away
to be alone, to chant and hear,
but I know I cannot do it;
I would sink in lust and perish.
There is no point renouncing real duty.

I disagree now about what real duty is. Also, the thousand shocks burnt me out, produced a health crisis. There was simply too much pain to allow myself to be pummeled like that anymore. I could no longer function with it. I could not recover from it. I had to permanently retreat and find another way to serve, like the Taoist "man of no rank," who avoided institutions.

* * *

2:35 p.m.

Back of Srila Prabhupada's head visible through the window on the second floor of his San Francisco apartment. Remember? I saw it as a Godbrother and I walked toward the house. My Godbrother mentioned to me that we should take more precautions to prevent troublemakers from approaching Srila Prabhupada. Nothing violent ever happened, by Krishna's grace. But that doesn't mean that Prabhupada didn't face danger. He was in a serious car accident in Mauritius, and once, an angry man looked as if he would attack Srila Prabhupada on the moving walkway at an airport, but HarikeSa stepped forward and intercepted him. Srila Prabhupada remarked later that he was absent when the Muslims attacked Mayapur in 1977. A newspaper reported it, as if they wished he had been present.

"A devotee's behavior establishes the purposes of religious principles." The purport deals with the definition of *mahatma* or *mahajana* as such words are understood by materialists. For them Ravana is a *mahajana*. For others, Darwin is a *mahajana*. Illusioned persons accept as *mahajanas* those who are not God conscious. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* regards such persons and their *mahajanas* as hogs and dogs. Some persons accept imitation religionists and God-imitators like Paundraka as great. The purport (based on Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura's commentary) also mentions psychiatrists, scientists, and doctors.

Big *karmis* are worshiped by other fools. Or sometimes fools worship mental speculators or even false renunciants. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* says that whoever is not progressing toward devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead "must be considered dead although breathing." A truly great soul is in line with guru, *sastra*, and *sadhu*. Caitanya Mahaprabhu followed the devotional principles and taught others to do so too.

I took a feverfew at 10:40 a.m., but I'm still fogged over. Let me go out for a walk and see if that helps.

* * *

4:35 p.m.

I was feeling fog, but painted anyway. It felt therapeutic. I felt the travel anxiety, then copied a *deva-nagari* "Hare Krishna" down. Then I write Krishna's name in my own language. Drew a brownish man.

After that, I decided to paint what I felt. I did a large jet crossing the sky. Then I defied space and time and drew a stick figure up in the sky and as big as the jet holding up the rear of the plane. I added a stick man to the top of the plane, riding it bareback.

Was this a good way to forget my troubles? Krishna, Krishna. Painted another strong orange man and thought of him as Bhima or my father. They would protect me. I handed Bhima a bow and prayed to the saints.

It's almost 5. Caitanya and I alone in the house "M. out on his Wednesday night gig. We'll read the prayers of Raghunatha dasa Gosvami and pray for the wellbeing of other souls. We shouldn't pray only for our own hides. I can't care for so many persons outwardly, but at least I can ask Krishna to bless them.

* * *

6:15 p.m.

About to go to bed. Most of the day fog persisted, but it didn't develop into real pain. Thought of someone in America who would like to hurt me. I'm afraid of him. I'm sure he'd enjoy knowing that. I ought to bless him in my heart. May he attain peace. Through his rantings, he can teach me to see the material world for what it is "no safe place for a gentleman.

Read a little from the book about St. Therese of the Child Jesus and her novice, Marie Agnus of the Holy Face. Very nice "full of dedication and yearning for eternal life. They both wanted to give up false pride and "hide" in Jesus' holy face. After reading some of it I chose Radha-Govinda's clothes and ornaments for tomorrow. I want to "hide" in the mellows of Radha and Krishna, according to Srila Prabhupada's direction.

November 19, 12:00 Midnight

The materialists have their own *mahajanas*. I think of all the literary and music heroes, sports Hall of Famers and politicians, movie stars, etc. portrayed in plaster and leading lives of degradation. O Krishna.

Srila Prabhupada: "Sometimes they consider (Krishna conscious) *mahajanas* very conservative, or they create their own *mahajanas*." If you don't follow the Krishna conscious *mahajanas*, your plans for happiness will be frustrated. I have to ask myself how serious I am to get free of the material energy and what I am willing to do. How strong is my faith? God, I hope I don't think, "These *Srimad-Bhagavatam* descriptions are all stories. We follow them because that's our religion. Besides, everything else seems worse."

Of the mental speculators who don't accept Lord Visnu (*na te viduh svartha-gatim hi visnum*), Srila Prabhupada writes, "Such leaders are themselves conservative and not at all liberal. However, if we preach this philosophy, people will consider Vaisnavas very sectarian." (Cc. *Madhya* 17.185)

We accept the twelve *mahajanas* described in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 6.3.20 and the *mahajanas* of the Gaudiya-sampradaya. "One who tries to imitate the *mahajanas* just to become an imitative spiritual master is certainly far away from following in the footsteps of the *mahajanas*. Sometimes people cannot actually understand how a *mahajana* follows another *mahajana*. In this way people commit offenses and fall from devotional service."

Some anti-ISKCON critics would say I am an imitative *mahajana* and should point people to Srila Prabhupada. They add that I shouldn't initiate, since I'm not qualified. I am weary of those debates. My nervous system can't take them anymore. There are so many implicit and explicit insults and accusations. This is not a happy society with its schisms and parties. No wonder I seek escape. But those who stay on the battlefield are to be commended, especially if they manage to do it by peacefully prosecuting Krishna consciousness without being unduly attacked by others.

Mahajano yena gatah sa panthah: Thus Lord Caitanya concludes His talk to the *brahmana* at Mathura. That's probably all I would cover in a class, or I might read a little more. It depends on how much we want to discuss. I might raise rhetorical questions to get the devotees going. Here's one: Do we really follow the *mahajanas*, or are we following only officially?

See how Therese followed Jesus and their saints? Her following was heart and soul. We have to be careful not to blaspheme those who may actually be striving in their own way to express God consciousness outside our own "church." Another rhetorical question: What does it really mean to be conservative? What does it mean to be liberal? We can turn the tables on our critics and say they are too dogmatic and conservative in their rejection of Krishna consciousness. Their concepts are too narrow.

Christ's liberal advice to love even our enemy. The radical assertion of the preachers to go among the nondevotees and risk their lives to preach Krishna consciousness "that's something taught in all religions. We are also taught to please the spiritual master at all costs. I'm planning to take my real or imagined risks. I may meet my end, but I want to meet it fearlessly, dependent on Krishna. Hare Krishna.

* * *

2:55 a.m.

Weekly mail here. My first impression, mostly by looking at BTG and a newsletter from 26 Second Avenue, is that preaching is going on as usual and I needn't be so afraid to go to America.

* * *

4:52 a.m.

It's harder, somehow, to answer this batch of letters. I wonder why. This is usually my writing time, and I love the feeling of counting up the pages. I sometimes get as many as six. At 5:05 I rush out for a walk around the house. My schedule pleases me. Although I criticize myself for being too easygoing, I have a full day. I know that whenever I put myself into a situation that requires mixing with other preachers or having to confront nondevotees, I hanker strongly to return as soon as possible to solitude. My body, mind,

and soul (if I dare say so) yearn for it. That when I have solitude I sometimes become complacent is an imperfection. I can work to improve on that.

Staying in one place, unable to travel except by animal power, was the Vedic standard. We may have to return to it one day.

* * *

5:27 a.m.

I usually think it's best to answer all the mail at once, but I can't suspend living until then. Took my morning walk in the dark. Rain hit my face while trains of thought roared by like express trains in the night. Many of the thoughts came from reading the mail. I got one letter from a woman in Russia who would like me to initiate her, but who in essence wants to be my *raganuga-guru*. She says she knows my books, but I do not. Another person wanted to know something or other. I often form mental replies before actually dictating them. And so the train tracks crisscross in my mind as my body walks around and around the outside of the house. I like to rub myself against the wall to scrape my jacket and get close to the stone, to the essence, to the *sadhana*, the holy name.

* * *

10:10 a.m.

Pushed on and answered a batch of letters. Ignored symptoms in my head. Fell into the tough ability to get a handle on what they are saying and to reply one after another. The pigeons have left the pigeonhole, except for one letter from a Godbrother.

* * *

10:47 a.m.

Hey, I heard you finished answering your letters. Well, congrats. Had enough reading and writing for the day? ready to fly?

Both M. and Caitanya have the flu. Hope I don't catch it. Also hope they recover soon. Speaking of Caitanya, I haven't read scripture since midnight. Got to do it before this day ends. Almost ready to start Srila Prabhupada's *puja*. Looking forward to hearing him dictate *Krishna* book.

* * *

11:45 a.m.

Security plans are all right, but Lord Krishna is the real protector. If He wants me felled or entangled in some way, there is nothing you and I can do about that. He'll be my friend even when I am in pain or things take an ironic twist. At all times, turn to Him. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna.

Thought of the BTG essay and how I wrote to the author encouraging him but was not completely honest. We do things like that. Honesty isn't everything. There is such a thing as kindness. But that train of thought interrupted me. I was looking out the window

but not seeing what was there "the pole, the tree's bare arms "and couldn't continue writing. I was thinking of something about security in Krishna consciousness.

Anyway, let's not skim the surface of some ever-present moment. Better to settle down to some good chewin' of relevant topics and cogent views, and review what I have learned in Krishna consciousness. The authors hone in on a three-sentence biodata that describes life in the most flattering way "the way we usually want to be seen: "He is a fifty-year-old giraffe who has escaped from the zoo and holds titles in eight subjects including inoffensive chanting. He has recently been seen scouring treetops with his perennial prose. His mother is okay too."

Or: "He recently ran for Senate and lost, but he gathers ropes of understanding and forms them into a happy course to reform ISKCON along the guru lines. He is a suitable candidate for something because he loves Prabhupada. He alludes to the pudding we must all taste. Unlike other Godbrothers, he is probably the best pizza available in Dublin."

* * *

One lady wrote me from far away that my books have helped her husband over the years, but she has always avoided them. She thought they were too arty. I wrote back and told her they were artless. I also told her I was worthless, but I was simply trying to repeat Srila Prabhupada in my own words. I stutter and have to be forgiven for that. I am grateful, however, that something comes through me anyway. No, don't expect to meet me face to face. I am becoming more of a solitude lover. You probably need a more hands-on guru. Yes, I have headaches, and thank you for the chapter from a book recommending a natural bristle brush to massage the head daily.

Another letter: "Thank you for not forgetting me. I'm sorry you're planning to hitchhike across the country in winter, because I won't be there. It's nice we're together when you read my books. Don't think that's a bluff. I will write you back, but please spare me the postage stamps. Yes, my books are too arty-smarty. You say you read *Wild Garden* and *Memories*, but you liked better reading about how I served Srila Prabhupada in ISKCON's early years. I'm glad that helped."

Ikes Sikes, this is *arty*. Oook look, this is *smarty*. May ISKCON do okay is all I can say as the millennium draws to a close. He said either we will survive by growing our own food (unless mauraders steal it at gunpoint) or we will go on undisturbed if the computers hold up. In any case, we should chant Hare Krishna and take Y2K as a blessing in disguise. Class dismissed.

Tonight we will not read together because they have the flu and I ought to do something else since my head is clear. Perhaps I'll paint.

* * *

2:40 p.m.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu bathed in twenty-four *ghats* along the Yamuna. We plan to stay at Madhava's home at Gita-nagari. I can meet people there and write how I like, including poems. I can draw and type. I think it will be okay.

When Lord Caitanya walked through the *vanas*, the does and bucks accompanied Him and licked His body. "Thus all the moving and nonmoving living entities of Vrndavana became very jubilant to see the Lord. It was as if friends were made happy by seeing another friend." (Cc. *Madhya* 17.202)

Reductionists, of course, don't believe this. In his lecture at 26 Second Avenue recently, Suhotra Swami said people believe only what their senses report. He told how Galileo saw a planet through his "cigar-sized telescope," and said, "What's all this jive about heavenly matter?" I could visualize Suhotra Swami laughing as he said that. He said Kant referred to a nonmaterial essence of an object. We believe in the *Caitanya-caritamrta's* reports of Lord Caitanya in Vrndavana.

He yelled, "Chant 'Krishna!'" and all living entities began "to vibrate the transcendental sound of Hare Krishna, as if they were echoing the deep sound of Caitanya Mahaprabhu." (Cc. *Madhya* 17.206) Then two parrots appeared in the branches of a tree. The Lord saw them and wanted to hear them speak. The male parrot praised Krishna (from *Govinda-lilamrta*) while the female praised Radha, who attracts Krishna's mind.

* * *

4:45 p.m.

Feverfew, then a walk and painting. Felt many feelings as I painted. Imagined getting through a dangerous situation. Built a brown ladder. Made a blue path from left to right, supported by orange pillars. Proceeded. Danger came repeatedly "a red fork "and I tried to avoid it. There were no direct clashes in these paintings, but I was aware that karma must act and that no strategy can protect me. Thought that out. But as Srila Prabhupada sang so nicely, all solutions to our problems are transcendental ones and reside at Krishna's lotus feet. I did that as I painted. Art? Therapy, if nothing else.

* * *

5:20 p.m.

I don't know if I will ever get better at chanting *japa*. Because I confess this in my books, some readers take me up on it and call me a punk. One said I was not qualified to be a guru because he thought I was blaspheming the holy name. Another said I was actually a *gopi-manjari* teaching *raganuga* "that's the inner nature of my books "but that I might not be aware of it yet. She offered to write an introduction explaining all this to the Russian translations. Otherwise, ordinary people might mistake me for a conditioned soul teaching *vaidhi-bhakti*. Someone else said winter is a comin' on and someone tried to figure out the best way to hide from danger.

Walk (talk) softly and carry a big stick. That's a famous foreign policy. Words trip up a bit. No sankirtana, both of which may be enjoyed even if you don't pay attention to their spiritual essence. Well said, lad. *Japa* is a formidable task. Who can practice it purely?

A mother-teacher shared her technique of injecting prayers (she gave us a sample in italics) into her stream of consciousness while taking care of her children.

I offer no easy way out.

He said he'll go two weeks into the Arizona desert to experience desert spirituality, then go back to Oregon. Yeah, that's where he lives "where the hippies congregate.

I'll stay here "or wish I could "with my rock heart and my lying-down-in-bed tendency. Bleeding words. Massage temples. Be on twenty-four-hour alert.

As I lay back waiting for the feverfew to take effect, I thought how in the latest issue of BTG, Jayadvaita Maharaja announced his resignation; he is almost fifty years old. Yamuna dasi also announced the end of her cooking classes. Yes, we are gradually winding up our achievements, whatever we were able to do. We hope others will step forward and take over the family business. Let us retire and do what we can as elders to prepare our inner lives during our last years.

"But didn't Srila Prabhupada at age seventy . . . "

Yes, he did.

November 20, 12:28 a.m.

Couldn't sleep last night. I traced it to the many letters I read and answered. Then traced it to one letter in particular in which a devotee expressed his struggle to keep the faith. It was a dark letter. I turned off the alarm so as not to feel pressured to rise at midnight. Here I am a little late "too late to read and write my usual three pages. I am fortunate to get any of the many sessions of my twenty-four-hour blessed routine. Just as one of the sessions can be knocked out by pain, so may they all be knocked out. But the *sastra* says that if Krishna takes something away from a devotee, He'll replace it with something better.

I already like what I have. I'm afraid to surrender my life if it means doing something other than what I'm already doing, especially if it's something I don't like.

Lord Caitanya heard the male and female parrots praising both Radha and Krishna's glories in an ecstatic competition. "When the Lord saw the bluish necks of the peacocks, His remembrance of Krishna immediately awakened, and He fell to the ground in ecstatic love." (Cc. *Madhya* 17.218)

Let me prepare myself for *japa*. Therese told her novice that she too suffered distractions when praying, but whenever she thought of someone, she stopped to pray for them and thus the distractions were overcome. Why not try it? Or if we think of something other than persons, we can take our plans, fears, conceptions and misconceptions and place them at the lotus feet of Nama Prabhu and ask for His blessings. We have to risk to be with those we love, and that's especially true of the holy name. I need to show my love. It's all any of us can do.

But it seems that so many have done more.

I found myself writing back to a devotee, "As for me, I don't expect to find any elder to help me at this point. I turn as much as possible to writing throughout the day and feel I can cope with almost anything that way."

* * *

I dreamt that we had a meeting of Prabhupada's disciples. Even some of the devotees who have passed away were there "devotees like Jayatirtha and others. Some I hadn't

seen in years "Syamasundara, Karandhara. At the end of the meeting, all I could think of to say was that so many older devotees had attended.

Then two *brahmacaris* took me somewhere. One of them began to tell me how often devotees were being attacked. Actually, we were all on a motorcycle. After a few adventures, it turns out that the *brahmacaris* have knives and plan to attack me. I yell for help, but we are on a deserted suburban street. They cut me a little with the knives, then wander off, not serious enough about their own attack.

I woke up feeling humiliated. Why do I have these kinds of dreams? O Prabhupada, I guess this is some kind of test to see whether I can think of you when I am being attacked. Did I call to Prabhupada in the dream? I think I did.

* * *

4:10 a.m.

Jaya Nrsimha. Dressed Radha and Krishna in cream clothes from Vrndavana while hearing about Radha and Krishna's pastimes in Rupa Gosvami's play.

Krishna is the target. If you can't focus your mind on Him, better you go back to bed and live a life of dreams.

But Kana is there too.

Oh, but just His *energy*. We want Kana, the lover of Radha.

O Krishna, am I experiencing a dark night of the soul? I'm suddenly filled with doubts.

Think quickly. We *all* think quickly. Just focus on Krishna. I just took over ten minutes to chant a round. I traveled to the strangest places. Saw a series of pictures I wanted to draw in my mind. Then I caught myself, told myself I didn't want a cluttered mind at the time of death. Then thought of turning the lyrics of a pop song into Krishna consciousness. After all, that song is Krishna too. The *gopis* pretend not to love Krishna, although they are entirely lonely without Him.

I'm here, my friend. Make your lonely cry. You are too hard on yourself sometimes, too afraid to surrender, yet you want to. I don't want to know your mind too intricately. My own way is enough for me. I'd like to encourage you and believe in the standard touch with the Absolute (reading *sastra* and chanting beads) as well as the venturing we do to find a way to express our needs, the self-cry dovetailed.

We don't want to be forced to do boring or destructive chores for the mission. Hard core. Dive. I am so timid. I am playing a close game. Why not expand it? Call as many followers or maybe-followers as you can. Let them put you in the center, bake you a cake, give you a plate of sweets to distribute, and assure them that yes, you're a bona fide caretaker of their souls.

Yes, no, I'll avoid that.

Nandimukhi went to Purnamasi with *laddus* for Madhumangala. They each had a drive to sing and say something as an offering to the Lord. In this case, they spoke in fast rhythms. It was evening. One supported the other in love of Krishna. The Lord is everywhere, within and without, if we have the *prema* to see "and if we depend on the teachings of the *parampara*.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. Trading fours. Putting dots on the i's and leaving the t's uncrossed. He shook and walked forward, a walrus.

I went down to the art room just now, but we couldn't resolve the canvas in any grand way. I just added a stick figure climbing the yoga ladder and the words, "Go 'way" around the danger dragon. Kid's stuff, you could say, but that's me, a graffiti kid from the Naples underpasses. I do want a safe pass but feel anxiety, so I painted black roots of growth (stalactites) showing where I was looking for Krishna consciousness. Then I came up for air. Chanted Hare Krishna the whole time. The time of turning to the Lord, writing a jazzy poem that Acarya dasa liked. I want to do that as well as sounding like a sober, simple-talking disciple of His Divine Grace with nothing of my own except that I said anything at all.

* * *

5:25 a.m.

My coat is soaked. rain dripping down from the eaves. Tree leaves shining in the light of the electric bulb. As I walked around, I heard the slow thump my feet were making on the boards. What was I thinking about during *japa* and *gayatri*? Nothing worth recalling now, I'm sure. But I liked Therese's advice: when I think of a devotee during *japa*, give blessings. Wish that he can attain peace. Everything is in Krishna's control.

As for the devotee who is my friend but has doubts, don't let his doubts feed my own. Armed with yoga, stand and fight. Slay the doubts that have come from ignorance, Krishna ordered Arjuna. It's not a matter of good debating skills as much as making direct contact, even briefly, with the *sastra* and the holy name. This is my solid advice to myself.

As I walked around the outside of the building, I glanced in the kitchen window and saw Caitanya-candrodaya in his *lungi* and sweater. We decided to have porridge for breakfast because winter fruit is mostly tasteless. Hare Krishna.

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8:50 a.m.

Kr was not overly impressed with our security plans for Gita-nagari. He said the safest thing is not to be there. But I am going to be there. I'm tired of trying to figure it all out. But here's a last chance to reconsider. If we decide not to go, we'll lose our five hundred dollars.

What does it matter one way or another? This is becoming a koan of contradiction. I'm beginning to think no plan of action is best, not even the one to stay back and write my quiet regrets. Anyway, it's a myth that if I did stay here, I'd be pure enough to build up my reading and *sadhana*. No safety, no purity, so what's to decide?

What about basing the decision on where it is best for writing? I'm meant to take risks, but I think I mean by that that if I go, I'll have a lot of nervous energy to burn and it will come out in raw writing. Or I could paint and write my ItMs. I can acknowledge that I'm a Westerner with Western interests, prejudices, and fears, but I trust the Lord.

This because I felt my enthusiasm dampened by Kirtana-rasa's remark that the safest place is at home. But is that what I'm seeking? Safety? Let me use whatever energy I have to practice *yukta-vairagya*.

"The *brahmana* was astounded to see the symptoms of ecstatic love exhibited by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He then became anxious to give the Lord protection.

(Cc. *Madhya* 17.225) Lord Caitanya was in ecstasy in Jagannatha Puri, but His ecstasy increased a hundred times while He was on the road to Vrndavana. It increased thousands of times when He traveled from Mathura to the forests of Vrndavana. The author of *Caitanya-caritamrta* says that even Lord Ananta could not describe all the feelings Lord Caitanya experienced in the various places He visited in Vrndavana.

At Arit-grama or Arista-grama, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu discovered Radha-kunda and Syama-kunda. He bathed there and prayed, "Of all the *gopis*, Radharani is the dearest. Similarly, the lake known as radha-kunda is very dear to the Lord because it is very dear to Srimati Radharani." (Cc. *Madhya* 18.7)

I am distracted, but some reading is better than none. A main distraction is my self-absorption. I realize it's ridiculous because I'm such a tiny, insignificant creature. Lord Krishna, on the other hand, is all-attractive, all-knowing, and all-powerful. Caitanya Mahaprabhu's preaching mission is also great; my "mission" is, I've been told, egocentric, concerned with my physical well-being and all that. Granted. But a distraction can be turned into an attempt at Krishna conscious meditation. Distractions, when they're noticed, can drive us forward to surrender. Or if that's not possible "that is, if we are unable to stop the impure distraction "we can at least persist in *sadhana*. It's called walking while crippled.

An unselfish person can give until it hurts. A selfish person can give love on a minuscule scale. I don't want to drag down sacred texts or personalities to my level. I have to trust that they won't take offense if I try to understand myself against them. I pray they see the good in what I am doing.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu marked His body with *tilaka* made from the mud of Radha-kunda and then took some mud with Him. Let me recite and remember His activities. Next He saw Govardhana Hill and immediately offered His obeisances, falling to the ground like a rod. "He embraced one piece of rock from Govardhana Hill and became mad." (Cc. *Madhya* 18.68) In the village of Govardhana, Lord Caitanya visited the Deity of Harideva, but while spending the night there He thought how He could not get the *darsana* of the Deity of Gopala raya, because the Deity was on the hill and Lord Caitanya didn't want to place His feet on Govardhana's body.

I get nervous hearing this story of how the local people became afraid that the Muslim soldiers were coming. They deserted Annakuta and moved the Deity of Gopala from one house to another. While Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was circumambulating Govardhana, He got the opportunity to see Gopala, who had arranged to come down the hill by creating a rumor of a Turkish invasion. Gopala made a similar arrangement another time so that Rupa Gosvami could see Him. Everything is arranged by Krishna for the benefit of His pure devotees.

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11:50 a.m.

When we changed our plans to go to America, the headache specialist in Baltimore said he couldn't see me earlier in the month. This frees me to return sooner to Baltimore from Gita-nagari. I told M., "I can spend my two weeks traveling and preaching. I'll go from Gita-nagari to Towaco for two days to give classes, then back to Baltimore. I'll be in American for at least two weeks, and during that time, I won't be able to live out my usual mode as reclusive writer." Even as I said it, I could hear my words falling flat. The truth is, even in America I want to live as much as possible like I do in Wicklow. Anyway, we may spend a few extra days in hiding at Madhava's. They'll supply me with writing and art supplies.

* * *

2:41 p.m.

Lokanatha dasa Gosvami did not want his name mentioned in the *Caitanya-caritamrta*, so it's not mentioned much. But he was "a personal associate of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and a great devotee of the Lord." (Cc. *Madhya* 18.49) Narottama dasa Thakura was his only disciple. He was with Rupa Gosvami along with many others when the Deity of Lord Gopala gave them audience in Mathura.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu went to Kamyavana and NandiSvara. He went to all the places of Krishna's childhood pastimes. When he returned to Mathura and saw a great crowd there, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu left and went to Akrura-tirtha. Then "He remained there in a solitary place." (Cc. *Madhya* 18.70) He also went to Tentuli-tala (also known as Amlitala). When crowds of people came to see Him at Akrura-tirtha, "Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu would go to Vrndavana and sit in a solitary place, where He would chant the holy name until noon." (Cc. *Madhya* 18.80) In the afternoon He allowed people to speak to Him and He told everyone the importance of chanting the holy name.

It was at this time that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu met people coming in from the Kaliya lake claiming to have seen Krishna dancing on the waters on the heads of a serpent. We should not attempt to see Krishna directly with our physical eyes but through the medium of Sri Gurudeva. When Lord Caitanya's servant, Balabhadra Bhattacharya, asked to see Krishna at Kaliya lake, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu mercifully slapped him, "just to bring him to a real sense of Krishna consciousness."

Then a man came and explained that people were mistaking a fisherman with a light to be Krishna dancing on the lake. This man tried to declare that Lord Caitanya, because He was *asannyasi*, was actually Narayana. In other words, the man began to speak Mayavadi philosophy. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu exclaimed, "Visnu! Visnu! Do not call Me the Supreme Personality of Godhead." (Cc. *Madhya* 18.111) The Lord then explained the difference between the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the *jiva*.

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3:35 p.m.

While on my *parikrama* just now in the rain, I realized I'll be leaving this sweet, solitary place of no obligation, this windswept rainy place not only in a few days but at some point for good. I think that's what's causing my anxiety: I'm afraid that when I

leave next week, I'll never come back to such peace. That's not the plan, of course. I am scheduled to return around December 16. But we live in a vast cosmos, and there is no way to control anything. Everything must end no matter what I think of that. I pray to become detached to what seems like a good situation here. Let me emphasize the importance of finding Krishna *wherever* I am. In this place I see Him as the kind giver of the peace I have craved. But He is present in every situation and every place.

* * *

4:40 p.m.

Four more days before we leave. I painted but wasn't satisfied. Couldn't "speak" directly and spiritually. Felt confined by the shapes and blocks and creatures that were coming out. I did "The Fight," but it came out as two creatures fighting as they would in the material world. I know they fight like that in the *Ramayana*, but it's not the kind of fight I was looking for.

Painted on a bigger canvas a blue man (as blue as Krishna?) lying down as if asleep or defeated. Above him was a large fish. Again, I couldn't break out or through.

On top of a multicolored background I sketched the head and bust of a devoteelike person with expressive hands. Someone might like that one. And I attempted a rendering of Fred McDarragh's photo of Srila Prabhupada in the Bowery loft. That satisfied me more. Although it's not much of a likeness, it carries some of the sadness around his eyes and the sadness I feel in separation from him.

Painting isn't always successful, but it's always a workout. Perhaps I'm seeking more abandon, but at the same time, more of a focus on the Krishna conscious target.

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6:23 p.m., Night Notes

Dressing Deities in night clothes. Caitanya-candrodaya a little awkward but nice. He does his last duties, fills my water bottle, a fresh set of clothes, and a hot water bottle (he calls it a "hot bottle"). As I did the Deity worship I thought of the unsatisfactory relationships I had during my GBC days with men under my authority. You can't satisfy everyone when you are in management. No one can do that, except an incarnation of God. Well, I wasn't thinking of Radha and Krishna, yet I was near Them, dressing Them, watching my fingers and hands remove Their jewelry. Caitanya-candrodaya said that what I painted today was "dynamic form." I shouldn't be influenced by his praise or criticism. Or should I? If it's in-process talk, that's good.

M. was in a hurry tonight to see his acupuncturist. He said he needed something for his weak throat. He's a real character. He may get a chance next week to sing on BBC radio, so he wants to fix his throat. "No sweets starting tomorrow," he said (again). Before he had a chance to rush out, I asked him to wait a few minutes, and the three of us sat and read Bhaktivinoda Thakura's "Radhastaka" together. As the glories of Radha and Her friends, Lalita and ViSakha, were described, I thought of the book I'm reading on St. Therese of Lisieux and her novice Marie of the Trinity. The nuns are faint reflections of the *gopis*, female saintly persons in love with Jesus and eternity, and affectionate with one another because of their mutual love of God. But the conjugal

reality of Radha and Krishna is completely beyond anything they'll learn in Christianity, although there are hints of the conjugal ""Jesus will kiss you," etc. "even there.

Now sir, now ruffian, now coward, now frog, you weren't able to sleep last night, so try harder tonight. In any case, rise for *japa* in the morning, if He desires.

November 21, 12:05 a.m.

Lord Caitanya convinced the respectable gentlemen that it was wrong to address Him as Narayana just because He was a *sannyasi*. He told them that the Supreme Lord and the *jiva* are qualitatively equal but quantitatively different. The people replied, "No one considers You an ordinary human being (*jiva-mati*). You are like Krishna in every respect, in both bodily features and characteristics." (Cc. *Madhya* 18.117)

This whole section is about when and where to correctly see Krishna, and when it is wrong to perceive someone else as Krishna. The foolish people thought they saw Kaliya-Krishna in a fisherman's light on the water. Others also wrongly thought that every *sannyasi* was Narayana. Others thought everyone was ultimately Brahman. But the real Krishna was Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, although He appeared as a devotee. It is certainly not easy to have good discernment without guidance. Even Balabhadra Bhattacharya, the Lord's personal servant, mistook things at first, and the Lord had to correct him. We need to "see" Krishna by hearing from guru and *sastra*. This is called *caksus-Sastra*.

I wonder what *Bhagavatam* verses I'll have to speak on while I'm in Belfast. I could phone ahead to find out, I guess, but perhaps it would be better to be more spontaneous about my lecturing. Perhaps I'll get a chance to speak about something I have written in this book. I want to impress the audience with my wide knowledge of Prabhupada's books, not just provide relative reflections.

The people told Lord Caitanya that simply by seeing Him the whole universe was becoming mad with ecstatic love of Krishna and that all classes of people "immediately chant the holy names of Krishna, dance like madmen and become spiritual masters capable of delivering the whole world." (Cc. *Madhya* 18.122)

I must admit I don't know much. I have to turn to my Godbrothers if I want to understand the proper conclusions on certain matters. But some of them have tried, unfortunately, to introduce their own philosophies. Every religion has its schisms, heresies, debates, and even bloodshed, so why should we be exempt? "Our sect is pure and better; yours is all nonsense." Where are those simple, pure devotees?

"Apart from seeing You, whoever listens to Your holy name is made mad with ecstatic love for Krishna and is able to deliver the three worlds." (Cc. *Madhya* 18.123) Lord Caitanya granted those people *Krishna-prema*. "Finally they all returned to their homes" "I assume to practice and think of Him wherever they were. Hare Krishna. Keep the Deity form on the altar and care for Him as the Lord of the household. Be guided in all acts by guru and Krishna. If you can't do big preaching or perform wild austerities on His behalf, at least try to see whatever happens as His mercy. Turn to Krishna as a friend and chant His holy names. Don't think Krishna ever deserts you. Don't forget these truths.

Assemble a book. Look into your heart. Look to your words, sir. How are your fear, mating, and eating? Why do you keep living? Is it animal vitality? The sheer desire to endure possessed even by an ant? Something nobler? "To be or not to be, that is the question."

While Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was at Akrura-tirtha, He distributed the holy name along with ecstatic love of God. I would have liked to have been there to receive it. Well, it may yet happen. But I will have to be ready to let my life be changed. I might lose sleep, even writing time. It's hard to say what will happen when I become immersed in *Krishna-prema*. What would it do to my status as a headache sufferer and my present way of handling pain? Would I travel and distribute *hari-nama* and *Krishna-prema*?

* * *

4:20 a.m.

Hope . . . Fergus . . . word . . . altar . . . sound and sense and a gap between them. Who wants to play ball? The novice nun admitted she *wanted* distraction. The novice mistress, Therese, told her to go into the attic and play with a spinning top. But for herself, Therese (in her terminal illness) said she was too near eternity to bother with distraction. Therese also confessed to her disciple that she had doubts about the afterlife.

In *Vidagdha-madhava*, Krishna and Madhumangala, and also Radha and ViSakha, go to a beautiful rose garden. Krishna was going to make ink from the roses so He could write His beloved a letter, but Jatila suddenly appeared on the scene, "whitened by old age." Of course, we know that she appears to add sauce to *purva-raga*. Her interruptions always draw out the time before the Divine Couple can come together.

I'm physically tired. Each day is sensitive. I wrote M. this note: "It's important to keep sensitive communications between you and I regarding the trip to America and possible changes in mood, views, etc. But how will that be possible when you are off to gigs in Belfast and then to England?"

We seek words and meaning, sounds and zounds. Caitanya from the Ukraine pronounces "wounds" as if it rhymes with "sounds." I told him better he not read aloud when we are recording. He wants to at least be with us and hear, though.

Now when I am in a jungle of distractions, self-inflicted I admit, how can I remember Krishna? I'm getting stronger, healthier. Are those affirmations or truth? I'm mixing the blues with memories of a Catholic boyhood, walks to church and the Great Kills village. Later, I became a man of the 1960s and met the Swami. Now it's the late 1990s and I'll make this visit to America before the century ends. Then I'll burrow in here to grow old and write every day write in whatever color I like. My life will be saffron "my clothes and sheets and towels and walls. My clothes will become full of holes, but Madhu or someone will sew them up. In the afternoons I'll paint. Some of my paintings will contain "dynamic form."

Form. Will the computers be repaired? Oh, prayers. I never learned to use a computer, so what does it matter? I got warmed up in blue pen, then sat at the typewriter when the time was right.

I hear people talking to one another in an interesting, friendly talk, rapping and running but running down to sadness. Why do our conversations end like that? We end

up with nothing to say to one another, and no money or health, and I don't know about sex because I'm a *sannyasi*. But that's what it sounds like when I read my mail.

Dear lord and master, Srila Prabhupada, I thank you for giving me Krishna and work that can liberate me, something other people need. Yes, I am grateful.

Thought of someone: You will look back at me and there is bound to be judgment in your look. But I would like to be confident that you love me.

But the whole thing depends on how much we each want to be devotees. O Hare Krishna. Chanting should be done with a pure mind and with no distractions. Can we just once call out to Lord Hari? How long each round of crying out takes doesn't matter. O Krishna, O Radha, please engage me in Your service. I wish to be Your devotee in this life and the next. Please train me to become Your representative and to serve as You desire.

* * *

4:50 a.m.

Tired eyes can't read *Bhagavad-gita*, but I can at least remember the Swami and regret my offenses. read *Nectar of Instruction* on how to see the so-called physical (and other) defects of the pure devotee.

My own presentation will turn off my readers. Some will feel this stuff is dated. But my creatures erupt and look like animals and beaked fowl, reptiles and marsupials hanging from Australian trees, while tears of fatigue streak down faces. Someone told me they were crying because I wasn't coming for my annual gala visit. Why did I cancel? It didn't seem fair.

* * *

5:28 a.m.

Don't neglect the beauty of this place and it's dearness to you. Therefore, note the brass bell affixed to the telephone pole with rivets. The bell, however, has lost its rope. The waxy leaves on some of the vines will grow all winter, and just imagine what will happen to the holly just inside the wall. The wall itself is a wonderful thing. It reminds me of Vrndavana compounds. Only I live here. The house itself has a craggy outer surface, with lumps here and there from stones protruding through the masonry and the whole thing covered with plaster. And I like how the boards bounce under my heels. (Of course, they don't really bounce, but to my mind and ear it feels like a trampoline or the skin of a drum.) I also love the texture and crunch of gravel underfoot, and how the gravel is hemmed in on either side by the stone walls about a foot high on one side and two feet high on the other. All the flowers are dead now, although some still retain their flowers frozen in the frost. Although Hare Krishna dasi set tabs near each perennial, their names are all worn off. The sound of the mountain stream is ever-present, but it's especially noticeable when all else is quiet. I feel as if I'd pay almost any price for this quiet. remember the waves at Jagannatha Puri? The stream makes an even more peaceful sound in Wicklow. I thought it was easier to remember Krishna in Jagannatha Puri, but that's up to me.

Bench is wet, so I can't use it now. Probably won't be able to use it again until next spring or summer when there's less rain. Caitanya's shed has been set up. This is a genuine *bhajana-kutira* for my dry chanting and attempt to push myself beyond it.

* * *

8:39 a.m.

In mentioning to M. that we should continue sensitive communications even though he'll be preoccupied in the week before our departure for America, I said, "I am more like a racehorse than a draft horse. You have to be careful to get the racehorse into the starting stall so he doesn't spook or jump." Madhu replied, "Or that he doesn't race if he shouldn't."

By traveling to Belfast and then Inis rath, I'm bound to get into some new mental space. It keeps occurring to me that the people I'm going to see don't *need* me to go, but I want to see them

M. wants me to ask myself whether I actually want to go. He wants me to do only what I want to do in this case. Partly I was thinking that by going now, I wouldn't have to go all next year. Another possibility I have, however, is not to go now *or* later.

But my visit shouldn't be a show. What do I feel deeply? How would I like to share love with the devotees? If going will be the most meaningful exchange, I should do it. If not, why bother? As Canakya says, "Happy is a man who stays home and who is not in debt." However, Srila Prabhupada taught us that "happy is a man who preaches."

I wrote a list of further points leaning toward not going and gave it to Madhu, but I know I will swing back and forth between the two sides as I always do. We each have to live with our minds.

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10:10 a.m.

Do what you want.

Do what's best for you.

Don't make excuses to get away from what you should be doing "staying here (in solitude).

I'm not going to stay here forever anyway. Capitalize on it while you have it. Can I put in six uninterrupted months? A year? Two years? Whatever Krishna allows. I wouldn't mind staying here for the rest of my life or until the charge arrives that sends me out.

* * *

10:55 a.m.

Unpacking. Srila Prabhupada gave me this opportunity. It's what I want. I carry a burden here too. I have to be Krishna conscious, read, chant *japa*.

Anyway, staying or going overseas, I first have a week's tour to Belfast and Inis rath.

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12:20 p.m.

Celebrating having made a decision. I'm looking forward to the brief preaching tour of Belfast and then holding my Vyasa-puja at Inis rath. Do I enjoy this role of guru, author, recluse? What about my identity as Prabhupada's disciple? That's supposed to be eternal, although I don't know it's actual shape. Work on it here and now.

And so I will stay in this house like a sardine in a can.

No, like an aquatic in the sea of *bhakti*.

Like a barnacle on the bottom of a boat.

Like a troll hiding under a bridge.

Like a resident poet writing quiet verses.

Like a chanter of extra rounds.

A proponent of the little way?

Artist naive.

* * *

2:58 p.m.

M. suggests I could spend two weeks at Inis rath-Geaglum while he's having his operation in America. Then Caitanya could do his business in England. It's a possibility. I'm tired of trying to revise all this. I thought I was trading a trip to America for a stay in this house to read *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. "Sri Naradaji asked Brahmaji: O chief amongst the demigods, O firstborn living entity, I beg to offer my respectful obeisances unto you. Please tell me that transcendental knowledge which specifically directs one to the truth of the individual soul and the Supreme." (*Bhag.* 2.5.1.) They spoke to one another long, long ago, so long ago that people now consider Narada, Brahma, and Krishna mythical figures. What scholars take *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Caitanya-caritamrta* seriously? I'll have to stay with my spiritual master outside that mainstream. They can consider me a fundamentalist, I don't mind. I pray to read with faith.

Maybe if I went to Geaglum for two weeks I could read more and forgo the art studio, since I don't have one there. Of course, they could make one out in the shed. It might be a change of pace. I'd have as much solitude there as I have here, but of a different sort. I'll see the devotees rowing to and from the island from my window, but they'll mostly leave me alone. I stay confined to my room there, whereas here I'm free to wander around the compound. But I also don't have to worry about maintaining the house I'm living in there; it's someone else's house.

"The inquisitive student must approach a qualified spiritual master to receive transcendental knowledge by surrender, submissive inquiries and service." Then he gets knowledge of the individual and supreme souls. I cannot demand the Lord to reveal Himself to me, but I do want this knowledge. O Father, please describe to me Your essence. I don't want to know only about the material creation, nor can I jump like a *sahajiya* to exclusive news of *madhurya-rasa*. I need devotion, surrender, and anything that is possible for me according to Your determination. I want to hear how crippled people gain Your mercy. I don't want cheap redemption, but I can't seem to do anything difficult. I know I am a confused and frustrated servant with little hope.

* * *

4:22 p.m.

Feverfew twenty minutes ago didn't do the job. Where to spend the time while M. is in America? North or South Ireland "it doesn't make that much difference, I suppose. Peace is in the solitude, not in the place.

I had thought of calling this volume, *Krishna's Gift: To Stay In Ireland*. But while lying in the dark just now, I thought it would be more appropriate to call it *Prabhupada's Gift: To Stay In Ireland*. Would Prabhupada want me to do something apparently more surrendered? I do believe this place is his gift. I have a direct connection with him, and perhaps he is rewarding my service or perhaps my weakness, but I believe Prabhupada has given me this opportunity to deepen my prayer and writing life and to become a better servant. In any case, none of this could have come to me except through my service to him.

So thank you, Srila Prabhupada. Let me use my alone time in Ireland to come closer to you through hearing and chanting and representing you decently to the devotees.

November 22, 4:35 a.m

Couldn't sleep for most of the night. Took an Esgic, then later an Imitrex. No reading or writing at midnight. M. couldn't sleep either "his leg hurt too much. He said that he and Caitanya decided that because of Caitanya's business, family, and visa affairs, he should go to England to take care of things. So I'll spend two weeks at Geaglum-Inis rath and return home when M. comes back from the U.S. My mind settling on that. I'll pack books and art supplies so that I'll have what I need up there. I want to create a similar world to the one I have here "a world of winter solitude and Krishna conscious *sadhana* and writing. That's the place where EJW began, and where I wrote *Songs of a Hare Krishna Man*.

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8:55 a.m.

Packing. Don't feel like writing. Might go back to bed, but it could give me a fog. raining. I'm not reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* just now, although that would put me in touch with the Absolute Truth.

* * *

12:34 p.m.

All morning packing. Physically tired. Just for two weeks away I have to put so many things into boxes. Now Prabhupada is waiting, and Radha-Govinda. Be somewhere quiet in yourself. Chant Hare Krishna.

* * *

3:08 p.m.

In Belfast they're on *Bhag. 2.10.1* in their daily class. That verse describes the ten subject matters contained in the *Bhagavatam*, which begin with *sargah*, the first creation, and end with *aSrayah*, the summon bonum "the Supreme Lord who is the shelter of all other subject matters. In the previous chapter, the Supreme Lord explained to Brahma the four nutshell verses. Thus *Srimad-Bhagavatam* can be explained in four verses or ten subjects or expanded, never to be exhausted, into billions of verses. Verse 2.10.3 covers *sargah* and *visargah* and is the first verse in the chapter with any purport. That will probably be covered on Monday. On Tuesday they will probably cover 4, which is on *posana*, protection of the Lord and the Manus. On Wednesday we can guess they will cover verse 5, *iSa-kathah*, the science of God. At that rate, I'll be expected to speak on 2.10.6 on Thursday, which covers liberation. I'll also speak on Friday on the tenth subject, *aSrayah*.

The material nature gives the eternally conditioned souls two facilities, to enjoy and to become liberated. The act of freeing oneself from *samsara* is called liberation, *mukti*, whether it refers to impersonal liberation or transfer to Vaikuntha or Goloka. On closer examination, however, we learn that impersonal liberation is not freedom. *Ye 'nye 'ravindaksa vimukta-maninah*. I could speak for a while about liberation in the generic sense "and how people don't usually believe in the next life, so they don't seek liberation at all. *Mukti* is the real human achievement or goal. Therefore Srila Prabhupada states that civilization and education are useless since they miss this point. Without liberation, we suffer the threefold or fourfold miseries as we try to enact *dharma*, *artha*, and *kama*. When we are finally frustrated, we may seek *moksa*.

Then I can discuss the generic liberation that includes the impersonalist's goal, then specific liberation and how it requires that the candidate practice devotional service. That's it, the basic topics. Do I have the conviction and faith, humility, to preach on them? Could it be said that I used to have more faith and conviction than I do now? When I hear a preacher, whether it's Srila Prabhupada or one of his disciples, going over these same points, do they bore me? And if a preacher attempts something novel or "more advanced," do I dislike it even more? Do I dislike my own repeated attempts to speak honestly? Gosh, then what *do* you like, other than hot semolina with milk and honey? A clear head and a walk around the house are pretty good. A bushel and a peck and a hug around the neck. Being spared a beating. Some confirmation of the Lord's presence and friendship toward me.

I like it when, despite the seeming staleness in me, I manage to break through when I lecture or write and glorify the *Bhagavatam's* truths.

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6:28 p.m., Night Notes

Read aloud Bhaktivinoda Thakura's twelve vows written near the end of his life. One of them declares that he has no desire to leave his modest *bhajan-kutira* in Navadvipa even for a palace or opulent temple. I liked that one. The most suitable place for recalling Vraja might not even be Vrndavana itself for some devotees. M. pointed out, "But he also says one should live very simply." Did he mean I should be more austere?

For example, I was given a new desk chair tonight. I'm not so austere, actually. I eat twice a day, but I'm quite particular about what I eat. I want honey. I don't hate myself for that.

Esoteric teachings. Radha and Govinda together. The highest, secret teachings. We must purify ourselves through realistic service. Proceed. Hope to write more tomorrow and get up early to read. Hare Krishna.

November 23, 12:16 a.m.

Woke up to the alarm. I have things to do. Recent events popping into my mind, and I find myself thinking about them again. Is my hemorrhoid still bleeding? Do I have any dreams in the bag? What was I doing last night? What am I doing now? Dreamt something about conservative devotees denying that certain songs and music written by ISKCON devotees could stimulate God consciousness. I took the liberals' side.

Narada inquired of Brahma, his father, "You appear self-sufficient in the creation of the universe, yet I see you perform great austerities." I read and wait for faith to appear. Can we say faith (*Sraddha*, submissive hearing) descends, as Vedic knowledge itself descends in disciplic succession? The spiritual master speaks and knowledge descends. To some degree we have to supply the faith ourselves, although it is enhanced by service to guru. Faith is a gift of grace.

"My dear father, you know everything, and you are the controller of all. Therefore, may all that I have inquired from you be kindly instructed to me so that I may be able to understand it as your student." (*Bhag. 2.5.8*)

Whatever happens to the persons in the *Bhagavatam* is significant; we're meant to draw lessons from it. The *Bhagavatam* characters are not fictional. They are historical personalities. But that doesn't mean we can't learn from their lives. Often we hear of persons asking questions with *Sraddha* and hearing from learned spiritual masters. Maharaja Pariksit and Sukadeva Gosvami are examples, and there are others "Vidura and Maitreya, Krishna and Uddhava, the sages at NamiSaranya and Suta Gosvami.

"Lord Brahma said: My dear boy Narada, being merciful to all (including me), you have asked all these questions because I have been inspired to see into the prowess of the almighty Personality of Godhead." (*Bhag. 2.5.9*)

We used to ask our questions of Prabhupada in letters, in his room, or on walks. Many of his replies are recorded on tapes and are available in the Vedabase. We can't ask him, however, the many questions that have arisen since 1977. If he could answer them, would we be able to bear his responses? Could we continue hearing him with faith despite everything that has gone on? Somehow by Krishna's arrangement we are living in separation from him. Now we have to ask our questions to him and Krishna in a different way. Our "answers" also come by a new means. His leading disciples tell us what he wants, but sometimes they appear wrong. Some seek out *Siksa-gurus* or other paths. Some say they'll stay only with what he gave us and consider that for the rest of their lives. We each have to find Prabhupada in his teachings as best we can understand him.

Teachers like Lord Brahma are pleased when they get the chance to answer questions about the Supreme Lord. They are eager to broadcast knowledge of God. "This is the basic principle of missionary activities." (*Bhag.* 2.5.9, purport)

Brahma has taught us not to try to measure God's power. Also, we shouldn't think that a lesser power is the ultimate cause.

The lights are on. I'm reading knowledge from a book. Praghosa and Goloka have returned from the restaurant. M. and Caitanya are in the house next to this one. Stars far away. My little body (container) holding together for now. Let me chant. I chant because my spiritual master ordered me to chant. In that sense, too, I have a nice connection with him in faith. Stark, simple faith. We have to face our own experience of Krishna consciousness if we want to feel it. Call out in the dark.

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Chanting nine-minute rounds. Two more days before we depart. "I'm a good cook," Caitanya told me. M.'s leg injury has turned black, but he's off today to pick up a fiddler to rehearse for Wednesday night's "Fringe Festival" in Belfast. What can I say? Talk. Sounds don't have to convey *only* direct meaning. Let them come in any way they like and let their meanings and connotations sift down into your being. Anyway, I'll be staying in Ireland. The word went out. I thought about all this until it exhausted my head, and now it's settled.

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4:24 a.m.

My *japa* gets slower and slower. I seek variety. But if I am going to die, shouldn't I hear only *sastra*, chant *japa*, and not worry about variety, repertoire, or anything else?

Yes, but to dare in order to produce the best writing in Krishna's service is also within the devotional realm.

Yes siree. Think of Bartok

Wait! Check your mouth. Don't talk that run-off.

Why not? I would run off if I could. Go to *sastra* and come back to "madness." He beat the drum and played the clavichord. I want to say, I had better dress the Deities with a clean mind while listening to Rupa Gosvami's drama. Scrub your mind with brush and broom. Gotta surrender and go back to Godhead.

We are telling the *bhakti-vrksa* folks that if they're good for Christmas, they'll be promoted to the *guru-aSraya* category. Some escape our grip. They say they want only the essence of love of Krishna, not an organized religion.

In one meeting I'm expected to counsel devotees who live in the temple, but I myself don't live in the temple. These devotees are the heart of ISKCON. I could speak to them collectively or individually. We all have to sacrifice, and to sacrifice for the pleasure of Krishna "to worship the Deity and to maintain the sacred standards in order to afford others a chance to find Krishna "is a wonderful sacrifice. Oh, he opened his mouth and yawned, even while they struggled with their arguments.

* * *

I didn't know you were so capricious "spent all that money on a plane ticket you didn't use. What to speak of being so irritable toward your dear Madhu, who is, after all, trying his best despite his many troubles. riding a wave? Sister Marie of the Trinity had lupus and could only smile with half her face. She and her guru regarded the pain as a godsend. That seems to be an old idea, or one we can't face in the same way in these days of easily available anesthesia.

Moanin', complainin' and turnin' it into a song genuine. Hitting that splash symbol so hard and so often I don't know where to hide for relief. Isaiah: He hid his face from us, as one despised. They think this refers to Christ. I prepared my papers, did my duties, but breathed in deep when it was time. O Lord Krishna, O Lawdy.

He wrote down his memoirs of his days in ISKCON. He held his own and said, "Don't tell me too many of your troubles. I can't bear to hear them all. I have enough of my own." But true preachers, as long as they can, keep their doors open and their counsel free. Hare Krishna.

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5:27 a.m.

So cold out this morning that the *parikrama* boards iced up and I slipped while circumambulating the house. I'll be have to more careful in the dark. But the sky is clear and I can see a few stars. It's really remarkable here how often there is no sun or moon at night. Ireland is almost always covered by clouds. Still, I'm here and happy to be here. Now looking forward to seeing some of Ireland's variety by going to the north for two weeks.

This morning I'm feeling the bubble and verve "without, I hope, material excess "that can come to a writer in Krishna consciousness. It's our responsibility to give readers real feelings, and we can do it, by Krishna's grace. It's our risk, our duty, and our joy. Tell the truth, breaking through pious and impious coverings. Tell what it's really like to practice Krishna consciousness. We make ourselves the sacrifice in order to tell what it's like. I don't mean that we sacrifice ourselves by sending ourselves to hell, but we sacrifice the pose or the role so that we can present honest experience.

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8:33 a.m.

Check with Supersoul: how am I doing as I measure each Hare Krishna mantra? Will He be with me as I move another bead or as I drowse in any case? O Supersoul, partial representation of Krishna, or Krishna Himself in Your original form in my heart, I pray Your names.

Lord Brahma told Narada, "Whatever you have spoken about me is not false, because unless and until one is aware of the Personality of Godhead, who is the ultimate truth beyond me, one is sure to be illusioned by observing my powerful activities." (*Bhag.* 2.5.10)

As I said earlier, don't try to measure God like a frog in a well trying to understand the ocean. "The Lord is therefore a different identity in all circumstances, and no idea of

anthropomorphism can be applied to him. The Lord is always the Lord, and a common living being can never be equal to Him." (*Bhag.* 2.5.10, purport)

Tell the devotees that living in the temple is a surrendered position. I did it for twenty-five years or more myself, and who knows, I might end up doing it again one day. They should have no regrets. They'll look at me when I say that, I know. I'll add, "Do what you have to do in order to survive in spiritual life."

We're affected by matter; God is not. He is the master and controller; we are neither. "Deathlessness, fearlessness and freedom from the anxieties of old age and disease exist in the kingdom of God, which is beyond the three higher planetary systems . . ." (*Bhag.* 2.6.19) Copy it into your notebook. Only by hearing from *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and similar authorities can we know the Supreme Lord and His transcendental nature. We're in the material world and can't get out on our own; can't even reach up to Him.

We go to His world only if we are meant never to be reborn into the material world. Those who do not follow their vows of celibacy and other materialists are drawn to live within the material world.

An unusually sunny morning "or part of a morning. Visitors due to arrive here soon. I'll greet them, then go about my business. For now, let me finish my little reading session with this verse (which a Godbrother said might be applied to Srila Prabhupada because of his hundred percent faith in his spiritual master): "O Narada, because I have caught hold of the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Hari with great zeal, whatever I say has never proved to have been false. Nor is the progress of my mind ever deterred. Nor are my senses ever degraded by temporary attachment to matter." (*Bhag.* 2.6.34)

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Noon

I have a letter from a disciple asking why I'm not planning to allow them to speak homages on Vyasa-puja day. He asked some penetrating questions about how much I desire to be a spiritual master and whether I am fulfilling the ISKCON directions. He questions my statements that I find letter answering burdensome. He doesn't mean to be challenging, he said, but somehow his questions challenge me. I'll have to think about it carefully before I reply.

Hare Krishna. New clothes for Radha-Govinda have arrived from Vrndavana, all personally sewn by Tulasi dasi. She and her husband want to know when I'll again come to Vrndavana. They seem to feel our relationship is distant, but perhaps it's the same for the disciples in Florida and California.

Yes, I'll have to tell them what it means to me to be a spiritual master. I hoped I could discharge that duty by living quietly, writing honestly, and conveying to them the authenticity of my own practices. I thought that was more important than what I consider the "show" in the relationship.

As for whether I am fulfilling ISKCON's directions, I thought our society was tired of all the too-high profile guru-disciple displays?

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. Packing and moving to Belfast and Inis rath for two or three weeks is turning into quite an endeavor. It takes so many boxes to sustain my quiet life of creativity. Please accept this guru who serves his disciples in this way.

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2:25 p.m.

Lately my time seems distracted by preparing to go outward, and thus I feel dissatisfied, as if I'm not in touch with myself. This makes me prone to being irritable when things don't go my way.

We try to manipulate people and matter. If we have enough money, it seems we can make anything go how we want it to go. Of course, that's not true, but the illusion leads us to abandon our inner life. Inner life is a discipline. It's not always easy to maintain it. We have to actually surrender to *sadhana* and keep it a priority.

"O Narada, because I have caught hold of the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, with great zeal, whatever I say has never proved to have been false. Nor is the progress of my mind ever deterred. Nor are my senses ever degraded by temporary attachment to matter." (*Bhag.* 2.6.34)

Infalible knowledge coming down. *Govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami*. The Lord is a person eternally and the devotee of the Lord is also a person eternally. The devotee's plans never go in vain. Engage your senses in Govinda's service and you will find yourself on the path of perfection. "A grain of devotion is more valuable than tons of faithlessness." (*Bhag.* 2.6.34, purport)

Even Brahma cannot know the Lord completely. Only by "self-surrender and a devotional attitude" can we know the Supreme Lord to any extent. I have to go further into this. Hearing these topics is inner life. This is what frees us from the irritability of outer affairs. This is what puts us in touch. Can we feel it, at least a little? Yes.

"Therefore, it is best for me to surrender unto His feet, which alone can deliver one from the miseries of repeated birth and death." (*Bhag.* 2.6.36) This brings happiness. The Lord reveals Himself according to the quality of our devotion. By hearing and chanting, "one can certainly see within himself the identity of the Lord." (*Bhag.* 2.6.38, purport)

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4:02 p.m.

Busy day. Spoke with Madhu, Manu, Syamananda, Caitanya-candrodaya, Aniruddha, and I'm still moving along, although not writing much. Putting paintings under the bed. How is my head? Hare Krishna.

Eating, sleeping, defending, but not mating. Living on. The lecturer said old people don't like to think they are going to die. They also don't like to think they are growing old or that they are already old.

New drug, Viagra.

Ink from pen.

Chant the Lord's names. Keep packing and then move on.

Manu told me his collie, Tilaka, has moved to the island and has made a great change there. He chases away the deer who are eating and killing the young and even old trees.

Tilaka also keeps the peacocks from getting too near the temple building, where they were always leaving wet turds. All power to Tilaka, who has become useful to the Vaisnava community.

He also told me they were poor but happy, concentrating on spiritual basics. They go out once a week into neighboring towns for *harinama*. I hope I can go there to write and read.

November 24, 12:28 a.m.

Late rising this morning, because two selves within me argued. One was a dream persona. Someone had told that persona that they had traces of evidence against him. They were going to gather it and expose him "but I don't know what he had done. When I awoke I thought I would stop all risk-taking, even the risks I might take for preaching. Shook that off. Then wanted to write at midnight along with *Srimad-Bhagavatam* passages, but there was no time. ready for slow, uphill *japa* train to get moving.

"Your critics are tough," a devotee wrote on my birthday card. And, "Your body is growing weaker."

Weaker? I'm just suffering from the side effects of living in this world, that's all. Nothing that a dummy car repair shop couldn't fix.

"Unflinching wit": the blurb in an ad for a young, newly published poet.

"O Narada, because I have caught hold with great zeal to the lotus feet of Lord Hari, therefore whatever I have spoken has never proven to have been false, nor has the progress of my mind ever been deterred."

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2:50 a.m.

On this last day of EJW 33, I'd like to finish with strong, thematic writing. I wonder how I will do it on this day of packing and writing. Anyway, let me try to get something out.

I wanted to say I appreciate Srila Prabhupada's gift for me to stay in Ireland. I'm happy not to be going to America with all its demands and plans. In return I'll give Prabhupada the gift of myself in service. Krishna and Srila Prabhupada don't need me. It's I who benefit when I serve them.

Chant Hare Krishna this month and try not to resent your old servant, Madhumangala, for growing away from his menial duties. Accept a new man to do the duties. Another gift. Now a gift of going north.

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5:28 a.m.

This will be my last morning walk in Wicklow for a few weeks. I don't know how I'll take walks in those other places, but I'm looking forward to trying. If there are no places to walk, that will make me more eager to return here.

Just pushed out a number of letters. I think of that disciple's challenge. I don't know who wouldn't consider answering as much mail as I receive a burden. One woman wrote me how her husband took initiation outside ISKCON and the strain it causes her. Someone else wrote how he was resentful during the "*sankirtana*" painting and candle-selling years, and wants to know what I think. Think? Of what? His resentment or those years? Just because I call the mail a burden doesn't mean it's not a burden of love. But I can't deny it's troublesome. On the other hand, I tend to think the mail enhances my writing life. I want to be a white cloud, dropping my rain and then being free to float away, rising above the trees, but I belong to this world like everyone else. I might complain about that sometimes, but that's part of human nature. I try to turn my complaining into singing the blues of spiritual life "the Krishna conscious blues.

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8:35 a.m.

In the seventh chapter of the Second Canto, the author gives us a list of Lord Visnu's incarnations. Gajendra's rescue by Lord Visnu shows that this world is full of distress, but a fortunate person calls the Lord's name and is delivered. The Supreme Lord promised that His devotees would never be vanquished. The devotee is given preference when it comes to protection because the pure devotee is dependent only on the Lord.

The elephant addressed the Lord as *tirtha-Sravah*, "famous as a place of pilgrimage." Srila Prabhupada: "For a pure devotee, there is no need to go to the holy place of pilgrimage. He can be delivered from all sinful acts simply by remembering the Lord in earnestness." (*Bhag. 2.7.15*, purport) By always remembering the Lord, a pure devotee will be delivered even if he commits a sin *unconsciously*.

The Supreme Lord comes and acts in this world just so we will have subject matter for hearing about Him. Don't waste time on fiction.

Gajendra's prayer immediately reached the Lord in His immeasurably distant Vaikuntha. How could it do so? The Lord has unlimited power. He can hear from a distant place or appear anywhere in an instant. He is also omnipotent.

On a Post-it I placed in this Canto years ago I wrote, "reading Srila Prabhupada's purports again and again nourishes us with his *vijnana*. Without regular reading we are bound to weaken and lose sharp vision. *Nityam bhagavata sevaya*."

In the list of incarnations, a group of verses are devoted to Sri Krishna, the original Personality of Godhead. He is first mentioned in this Canto along with Balarama as *sita-Krishna keSah*, beautifully black-haired. Only the bona fide devotees can know Him by His specific symptoms. Another symptom by which He can be known is that He always appears as a youth. We never hear of Krishna becoming old and gray-haired. His pure devotees in the spiritual world are also eternally youthful. I think if there is one topic Srila Prabhupada deals with more than any other in his purports, it is the misconception that the Absolute Truth is ultimately impersonal. He is a person with spiritual traits, although the nondevotees cannot know Him.

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11:25 a.m.

Pushing to answer letters all morning. The last one was a postcard from Hawaii with a picture of Waikiki Falls on it. It started in, "Hare Krishna. I get confused reading literature saying that in other *Puranas* Siva and Brahma are Supreme. Also, historians and others say Krishna didn't always appear in ancient texts as God. How can I know for sure? All glories to Prabhupada." It was signed with a spiritual name that Prabhupada gave out several times, something like Govinda dasa. I didn't know which Govinda dasa it was. I partly resented having to field such a big question from someone I don't know, but let it go. I know I'm not a public well "as if everyone in the village has the right to come and draw what they need.

It was around that time that I started to feel head fog. I decided to go to bed. As I lay there, I began to go over how to answer the postcard. After five minutes, I sprang out of bed and dictated a response. I quoted from *readings In Vedic Literature* and what I know of Jiva Gosvami's arguments as to why the various demigods are sometimes worshipped as supreme. I also said that Brahma and Siva are so great that they are practically supreme. But Krishna is the original Supreme Personality of Godhead, the cause of all causes. Then I explained why we accommodate worshipers of various representatives of God, even those outside Vedic literature, such as followers of Christ, Allah, and Buddha. The main thing is to follow a path and not to indulge in religious comparisons. In Krishnaloka, where the pure devotees don't care whether Krishna is God or not, they know how to serve Krishna best.

The most important part of that exchange for me was that I felt enough life to talk about Krishna to an unknown devotee in Hawaii. This is what my life is meant to be about. *Variyan esa te praSnah*, "Your question is glorious because it pertains to Krishna and therefore it is for the welfare of all people."

May Krishna always give me that bubble of joy to serve Him. One might say that such a bubble is illusion or that it's "animal spirits," but if I can dovetail it in Krishna's service, then it's the perfection of all drives. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

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2:45 p.m.

Skipped my usual reading. Read (or rather skimmed) through chapters in a book about the "millennium bug." Plans: save cash, store canned food, prepare to heat homes without electricity or gas, buy wood-burning stove and have wood fuel on hand, and don't plan to travel around January 2000, especially to cities. And how do you tell yourself and others to prepare by turning within to Krishna? Become crisis-oriented. You could die before it happens. That would be your own worst crisis.

* * *

3:48 p.m.

I'm avoiding writing. Typical procrastination. I have so many things I should be doing instead "last minute packing, etc. You'd think I was going forever. But I'm not. I hope I'm not. I won't forget my beads, sanctified, because they are the most important place to be.

"Who is this 'M.?' " the printer in Massachusetts asked after reading some of my recent books. It reminds me how little my life is. I present a cast of two characters, expanded now to three. So go ahead and say it: M. is stuck "or I mean the van is stuck "in a gully on this rocky road leading to our house. He's in a patient spirit, waiting to find a farmer to come and tow him out with a tractor. This changes his plans. I don't want to even inquire. I know only that we are supposed to leave at 5 tomorrow morning. I assume he'll have the van free by then, that M. will have driven to Dublin and back, rested a few hours, and be ready for our departure.

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4:00 p.m.

Prabhupada's many gifts. Whatever I take, I ask his permission. He allows me to stamp it "*bhakti*." Of course, I can't act whimsically and call it Krishna conscious, but journaling I can do, and poems, and in my own voice. This is about my struggle to follow him. He knows I'm trying through dark nights, guided by faith. Even when it's difficult and I have to face institutionalism, schisms, mental problems, or whatever, his gifts prevail and remain matchless. Prabhupada has gifted me with permission to remain in Ireland. Krishna has gifted me with a human life and body, and especially with contact with His pure devotee. I thank them both.