

VISITORS



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Satsvarupa dasa Goswami



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TO HIS DIVINE GRACE
A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPADA





CHAPTER ONE

BITTERSWEET SWAMI LIVES MOSTLY ALONE in his private health facility. It is a lovely cabin isolated in a northern California pine forest. He lives like a hermit, primarily for health purposes (slowly recovering from anticipatory migraine nervous disorder), but he also takes to semisolitude, like a duck to water. Sweet Swami is a guru, also a senior citizen, and a somewhat wealthy disciple-friend-counselor-brother bought him the cottage. That's Nanda dasa prabhu, who is still trying to retire from the construction industry and live on the same one hundred acres where Bittersweet's cabin is and where Nanda and his family (wife Mukhi and two boys Keli and Narada) live.

Sweets doesn't like visitors. At first his doctor and his counselor backed him up one hundred percent on that. Visitors triggered headache. Ah, and the northern California location was beautiful, hard to get to, a three-hour car drive from San Francisco. But people insisted on visiting him, just to see if he was still all right after taking all that medicine and moving out of the loop of his religious society. His disciples wanted to see him out of love. And he was advised to reciprocate with their desires. "But I get headaches," he protested. "There are more ways than one to receive visitors." And that was true. He received dozens of visitors in the form of their writing letters to him and his answering those letters. That was active (or if you like, proactive) visiting.

And on a less frequent but significant scale, Bitter took phone calls and spoke tête-à-tête for as long as thirty to

forty-five minutes or longer with brothers, sisters, disciples. They could catch him. At first he had hid out with a secret phone number, but gradually he let it sneak out in the interest of compassion. "They want to talk to me; I should reciprocate."

These visitors stole from his private time. He likes to write, alone. More than once he had been interrupted in the middle of a poem by a phone call—and he had not told them to call back when his call was over. His insides sometimes cringed when he heard of another visitor, sometimes a heavy one, one who wanted to physically visit, and for a substantial number of days. When too many requested, then he and Nanda could just put their feet down and say, "No, too many are scheduled, come next year." But right now at the prime of July-September '05, the visits were piling up, and he had accepted the maximum. He'd have to live with it, and the little staff of caretakers at the care unit would have to bear the burden with him.

July 25

applesap@monad.com

Dear Bittersweet,

Thank you for forgiving me after those two unfriendly exchanges of letters we had. When you're out of touch for a long time, it's easy to misunderstand where another person is coming from. I had a little dream. I just visited my ex-wife in northern California. I'm now traveling with my twelve-year-old daughter. My dream is if I could stop and visit you and your team for Janmastami and Vyasa-puja. I know you probably have lots of guests, but that's my dream, if I could just see you somehow. I would come without any expectations and be happy with whatever Krishna gave me.

"Nanda, I'd like to see him too."

“Don’t you think you’ve got enough visitors already?
Who is this Applesap?”

“Yes, we already have people on Janmastami, but when
you have so many, it’s like it doesn’t matter if two more come.
And he’s an old friend. We had a misunderstanding.”
Visitors.

He likes to be alone with the
personal God. Seeking for love
of the personal God. He’s often
lonely in devotion.
You do it in groups of *sankirtan*
before the Deity and dance in ecstasy,
that’s true,

but sometimes you need
to listen for Him alone.
No visitors to your cell is preferred.

The opposite is also true:
here comes a pal. “Would you
like to chant with us tonight?
It’s the appearance day
of Gopal Bhatta Goswami and we have
been invited to chant with a
crowd at the Radha-Raman
Temple. Our group brings
out the young Bollywood
group of boys and girls dancing
together.

Or would you rather stay
home in your *bhajan kutir*?

The electric power is out at 4:00 A.M. Swami sits naked with his notepad between two tall Virgin of Guadalupe candles on his desk. They were probably trying to install his A/C, and that knocked off the power. He is tempted to go back to bed. Thinking of today's arrivals, a family of three from Guyana, Purushottama, tall and lanky, loyal and soft spoken. He's intelligent and likes to live as an independent *grihasta* with his wife and few children in a white house on stilts. He is a natural leader but tries to stay out of the national ISKCON politics. He is willing to pick up an ISKCON celebrity with his car and host him in his house, but doesn't want any management positions or bickering. Just a family man with a little business. He likes to keep up on meetings of Bittersweet's disciples, and reads his books. He plans to stay here two weeks, I think, with emphasis on service, his wife cooking and he helping out when needed. I'll have at least one substantial meeting with him. I hope it can go deep, but my own *sadhana* is not deep, so how can I urge him? I will be anxious that he's engaged and satisfied while he's here.

How pleasant it is to sit here in the predawn, before even the birds have awakened, all by yourself, even without electrical power. Nobody to bother you yet. If only you could pray.

Dora and Brent and their three children are residents at the clinic. Brent is in charge of all maintenance. Dora runs our Web site and does other artistic things and takes care of her children. Her parents have been visiting her for a week. They wanted to see Bittersweet, so he had to host at his garden and cottage last night. The mother was a savvier, more wrinkled version of her daughter. The dad was gentle with me, and he had a spare tire around his belly. They said

they liked my found object-outsider art in the garden. My art figures are mostly like men and women I made years ago in Ireland and that we had shipped here. We have a big totem of several logs leaning against a natural tree at the entrance, a Garuda, various beggars, and whimsical little people. They are all a bit dirty and worn from their trip across the Atlantic, but still lovable, and they give fresh life to Deepak's peopleless garden. I was left alone with the dad for awhile. He said to Bittersweet that he was not very articulate, and then he asked, "You're a spiritual person and you have to give out directions, but what do you do to find the energies within yourself? Do you find that difficult?"

Well, that's not so inarticulate after all, but hard to answer. I admitted it was daunting and that I was praying for the same spiritual solutions and confidence that my students were inquiring about. He seemed to like that answer but wanted more. He wanted masters who had actually achieved their perfections and who could sustain power and give perfection to others.

Inside the house we drank guava juice. A disciple of mine had written to me that she'd gone over to Christian Science and is not chanting Hare Krishna anymore. And so I had ordered Mary Baker Eddy's book. As soon as Dora's mom and dad heard this, they told me they seriously pursued Christian Science. They spoke positively about it but said, "You know the saying about Christianity—the only thing wrong with it is the Christians themselves."

Well, they became disillusioned with the power politics within the Christian Science church and prefer to practice it on their own. He is now following someone they listen to on the radio who is a practitioner and a master of many things, Christian Science included. And many wonderful things have happened to them by listening and following him, financially

and in their health. He clearly said that Mary Baker Eddy does not teach a personal relationship to Christ, just principles of a good life that have to be strictly followed.

In the end, the metaphysical or divine powers went out over the field of the material elements on a molecular level in the body that can give you disease. Something like that, I think. I will try to read the book. But they frankly said it didn't seem that my disciples could carry two religions at once. I told my disciple she was living very near many Krishna devotees at a big ashram Villa Vrindavan, in Italy, and it didn't seem right that she could forget her friends, the cowherd boys and girls, or chanting, or the form of Radha and Krishna.

OFF! mosquito repellant. Writing this by
Andy's Creek just three minutes
from my house but
no one could find you here.
Govinda found it for me and brought me here.
We write together until I ask him
for a little privacy so I can do a
poem out loud.

OFF! Come on, you're no Stone House,
you want people in your life,
the warmth and vivacity of
good friendship—because
they may give you a tip into
a more inner room of
the internal castle. That's
right, it's not found out all
alone but with the best of
superior friends.
What was that you heard the other day?

In a Vaishnava book at
a reading—can't remember
it now but I can hear it again
and new gems, in the company
of the Vaishnavas, that you
won't get alone.

But superficial visiting
kills the spirit, they are
prajalpa and you should
avoid it much as you can.

When someone comes it's your
duty to *uplift* the
talk and not just complain
about visitors.

Simply waiting for the next visit or the one after that is a drain of energy, an anxiety. It stops you from doing anything in the now. I think of things like, what clothes should I wear when they come? Should I just make a blanket policy of wearing my *sannyasa* clothes for all the visitors for the next month? No, that would be artificial and too difficult to manage. What about those *white* comfortable yogi pants? At least I'll always wear *urdhava*, Vaishnava *tilak*, even if I can't do it so perfectly. One excuse for not doing it is that I sometimes immerse my head in stress head baths, and I still occasionally do that. But "a Vaishnava is supposed to wear Vaishnava *tilak*, especially on the forehead." I get caught sitting at readings where that's said, and it's embarrassing.

Swami Bittersweet thought to himself, the most embarrassing thing in my life right now, socially speaking, is that I have urine accidents as often as three times a day, requiring

me to change my clothes. I have to go so quickly that I can't reach the toilet before *it* comes. I take a medicine called Flomax, but it doesn't control it. When the swamis are visiting, will I be able to keep up a change of *sannyasa* clothing? He decided that if he ruined more than two sets of *sannyasa* clothes a day, he'd just have to come out with a pair of regular pants and admit what it was due to. You see what I mean about becoming anxious thinking in advance about visitors? That urine thing is definitely going to happen, because it's become extremely chronic, and so you'll just have to face them with ordinary civilian clothes and tell them the reason why, but try at least to start the day with *sannyasa* clothes. Maybe after wetting one pair, you can switch and tell them the truth. At the end of the day you might have another pair of *sannyasa* clothes ready to go back into action. And what about leaving their presence to go again to the toilet? Meals taken together are going to be over at their place, the guest house, because they have the best table. But at my house, I have extra underwear stashed in the bathroom. I don't have that stashed at their house. I think I'll have to visit them with a book bag and carry extra underpants. Let's be realistic. Underpants and a pair of regular pants.

Is he anxious about appropriate talking? Less than about bathroom accidents. You can always find your way. We have been with Prabhupada long enough to remember something. We've been hearing the books recently too. And we have enough humility to ask and to listen. Yes, listen. That's the food for your talk. Listen to what they say and ask about that. Go deep on that and try to be happy as a lark. And if tears can come, that's good too. "Crying is a great transcendental pleasure. That they cannot understand, the poor fund of knowledge. Chaitanya Mahaprabhū was simply crying. That is love. So that they do not understand, how crying can be

pleasure. That is *Mayavada*.” (Srila Prabhupada, Vrindavan, July 19, 1977) Laugh and cry with your visitors, now that’s real association.

Bittersweet’s first meeting, an evening “*darshan*” with Purushottama, Vrinda Devi, and six-year-old Vraja. I felt self-conscious about my green pants and gray T-shirt, since they were all in devotee dress. But I shrugged it off. I wasn’t even aware that I had a heavy goatee until afterwards when I looked in the mirror. They were very cheerful and glad to be here. Vrinda was overflowing with expressions of how they wanted to come and serve me here, and Purushottama dasa said that it didn’t matter as to what they did for service. I told them that when Nanda came tomorrow, he would be the one to best figure out what they could do, because he was the manager. I know they will want Vrinda to do some cooking. That’s her specialty. She wants to cook for me. She smiled so infectiously, and I smiled back. She’s a simple, pure woman, and not afraid to speak up, too. I tried to coax Vraja to speak a little too. I asked her who made her nice tilak on her forehead. She said, “Mommy.” And I got her to say a few other things. But you just can’t get into your own deep things.

None of them once mentioned my trouble or how they feel about it. They don’t need to bring it up because they’re completely loyal. There’s no need to mention a sore. It’s not a sore to them. They have full faith, and no loyalty was broken.

I asked him what he’s doing in Guyana. He said he has a better job now where he’s working on “export” wood. He takes orders from Bermuda for people who want Guyanese hardwood, which is in great demand. He then goes to manufacturers and picks out different kinds of furniture and gets it boxed and sent to buyers in Bermuda. It’s less time spent

for him, and more money. He doesn't have to go around and do the usual door-to-door selling he's been doing by selling different kinds of religious trinkets and such. It gives him more time to work in ISKCON. He used to be aloof, and now he's involved in the temple in the Crane district. He's one of the main managers. It's a well-constructed new building near Georgetown, so it draws the most sophisticated Hindus, 150 to 200 people a week on Sundays. Good cooking, well-dressed deities. He's one of the main people on the board. It's good for him to be part of ISKCON because he's one of the elder Guyanese devotees, and he likes the role of teaching the younger ones. Vrinda was also assuming the role of an elder Guyanese woman. She's teaching the younger women how to cook, so they're passing on the legacy. She said they feel they're doing it to represent me. How sweetly she said it, and sincerely. What I thought then—as if it's true—the passing on to others. And then she said, "And now we've come here to serve you and take care of you."

Sweet sentiments from sweet people. I was a bit overwhelmed by it and kept alluding to the fact that I didn't know what we had for them to do here. I kept saying, "Nanda will be here tomorrow, and he'll help arrange for your actual service."

I asked Purushottama if he had his laptop with him. No, he said, he didn't bring it. Hmm. I thought he might do something like that. He said he could work with a computer, but he didn't bring his own laptop. Well, I'm sure we can get something for him to do. We'll just have to see what it is. What about philosophy? Is there something I'm supposed to teach him to bring him close to me? Enliven up a controversial subject just to see how he feels about me? I don't think I have to, but maybe I should, just to go over it once. I can ask him how the others in Guyana feel. But when he

was telling me about Guyana, I felt I'd never go there. Such a long trip, Trinidad and then Guyana. And I don't like the place, the tension between the blacks and the Hindus. He doesn't talk about it, but they live with it every day. He just lives in the Hindu world. No blacks come to his temples. But they live on the same streets, and sometimes in bad political years, there are riots. He told me the next bad potential year would be '06, when there's another election. He told me that two years ago. Tomorrow I'm going to start wearing my *sannyasa* clothes because my calendar says Prema is coming, and all of Nanda's family is returning. And I can also show Purushottama's family my "regular" regalia. I'm not a tennis player or California relaxer. I'm a Chaitanya Gaudiya *sannyasi*. All of these arrangements are for the visitors. You're not really yourself. You're on parade. You're in the fish bowl. Yes sir, yes ma'am. No time to write a poem..

As for going back to the doctor you've gone to twice for this problem, he first recommended one medicine and then recommended another. I just don't feel confident to go back again. He said I had no urinary infection, just a slightly enlarged prostate, so what can you do? Perhaps I should get Mary Baker Eddy's book and pray to God, "Please, Lord, stop this frequent urination." Obviously I'm being facetious. I haven't even read that book, and I've already got my God, and I don't pray that way. Don't pray for material amelioration. If it's going to flow, it's going to flow, and I don't pray to God to stop it. It's just some token reaction to my past misdeeds. One of my many old-age maladies coming to bear now. So on with the nice saffron, and look forward to a happy day, warding off, playing ping-pong, meeting with—visitors. Why don't you add the word, "embracing"? Yes, dodging, evading—fully embracing visitors.

Gayatri

You have nothing to worry about,
all your friends are coming home
or coming to visit.
A Vaishnava must be clean,
must love their Lord, and he must
chant the Lord's names.

He doesn't have to do his brahmin
diksha with 150 *shilas* and be thinking
of *rasika lilas* as he does so like
the times Krishna came to Radha
in a female form as a barber's daughter
and He was trembling so much He could not
write Her name on Her feet or when
He came as a Shaivite-like figure singing
lovely songs, because how can you
easily enter those moods until maturity?

And what's this saying the *gayatri*
many times a day like *japa*? Let's do it
three times the way Prabhupada
showed us and with the meanings he taught
and are taught again in this new book
The Gayatri Book, by Sachinandana Swami.

But certain *gayatris*
said by any *sampradaya* are a sacrilege,
so keep attentive for approximately
five minutes
of prayer to guru, Gauranga, Krishna,

Who tends the cows and attends the *gopis*,

especially Radharani, and you may
pray to be a *gopi manjari*
from the paper he gave you
but all sober and not *sahajiya*.

Show your guests you don't
forget three times a day and
you don't get drowsy during
the five-minute chant.







CHAPTER TWO

SWAMI BITTERSWEET HAD A DREAM. I'll make it short. He was exploring a fantastically large project that ISKCON was just at the end of constructing. It had many levels and concepts to it, and he very speedily and riskily zipped around with great agility, exploring all the places in it. Just to be able to go to all these places was dangerous and proved he had great dexterity. He zoomed up steeples and entered under roofs and went among the workers at the different places, and the actors and artists that were performing in different places. They all welcomed him and talked with him, reciprocating his interest, but he got to higher and higher places, where he wasn't so much welcomed. Finally he reached a place that was so dangerous to reach, like the top of the Empire State Building or the top of Mt. Everest, something like that. He opened a hatch and went in via a rod that only the construction workers used. He saw them conversing. One of them said, "You're not supposed to be in here. We have to change the inside of the roof because some alien people have been here and done some vandalizing and changed the names in here. Now we have to change it."

So Bittersweet retreated and went to the outer door. But then he saw there was no way down or out. He had gone to a place from which there was no return. A woman worker who had escorted him to the edge now was about to shut the door. But he pleaded with her, "Please don't just leave me here in space. There is no way out here but a fall into endless space." She was unfriendly and not about to give him any guidance. She now took it personally and said, "Well, you are one of these big gurus in ISKCON. Why should I trust you? You're

just another *pada*, like this *pada* and that *pada*, all with your big egos, claiming to know so many things, and in the end you fall down, and I can't trust you."

She spoke with such savage sentiment. Yes, she was a disciple of a particular *pada* who was still holding the flame for her. Then she focused on him. "What did you ever do? You wrote that book *Prabhupada-lilamrita*. It is not very close to Prabhupada. It just says "as if...", "as if...", "as if..." It is not a good book."

That criticism struck Bittersweet through the heart. He tried to think in defense of something good he had done, but he couldn't. He felt she was far too cruel and could shut the door, sending him out into space. He searched his soul for something true in his defense and said, "I had *laulyam* for Prabhupada, for his service. I truly loved him." She was taken aback. His crying out from *laulyam* was startling and woke him up from the dream.

Was it true that he ever had that *laulyam*? Certainly it was true that he wanted it at the moment when he cried for it in a dream. And is that what it took to drag it out of him? Unless we are about to be hurled into space by the merciless order of a tyrant woman on an elite work crew? Because he had gone too far in exploring into uncharted activity. How was Krishna about to answer his claim? He thought of all his years put together in service, and felt some confidence, especially under the kindness of Srila Prabhupada, he who finds some *guru-laulyam* in even a speck of service by a disciple. Isn't that the way he is?

Bittersweet's mail is so backed up that he's still answering mail from December '04, so it was very special when he received a letter from a person who he thought had rejected him because of his mistakes. At least she was not silent but was thinking of him.

“Hare Krishna! All glories to Prabhupada. It is currently Karttika, and I want you to know that I’ve been praying for you at the lotus feet of Sri Gaura-Nitai Chandra. It is Karttika, and I have endured a year of *annus horribus*. I’m still not ready to share my anguish, my shock, my fear, my insecurities with anyone at this point of time except Their Lordships. I am taking this powerful time of Karttika to pray and try to understand what direction to take in my devotional life. My heart is unfortunately hard and dirty and black and unwilling to shift. I desire to have faith, and if I desire to change, then I can expect the desired changes to manifest. To accompany that process, I must endure with patience, and I’m willing to do so. I try to adhere to the process of awaiting the plan that Krishna has in store for me....”

Bugs and heat, your limbs lethargic,
greet you at 3:00 P.M. and you can’t pick
up a live visitor like a letter, sitting
in the overheated writing shack.

Earlier Arya phoned on behalf of a
shy disciple who was donating
\$1,000 but won’t do it directly.
I’m not exactly sure of his name,
but his generous help is clear.

He doesn’t even write or want to
visit, appear before me, feels he’s
not worthy. So donations
of thousands occasionally and never
a visit. You bless him and use the
money wisely. I think he’s
Jai Radhe dasa.

A whole batch arrived in the late afternoon. I got to talk to Nanda and told him I was in urgent need of a wild goatee trimming. I have a morning appointment with Prema, at which time I'm supposed to receive a Tulasi plant and instructions on how to treat it, but I fear my beard is too wild.

My appointment with her is at 8:00 A.M. He said he would be willing to come over at 7:00 A.M., but he doesn't know if he can get up that early. He's so tired from traveling. I may just have to go through the meeting with a wild beard and I don't know when I'll squeeze breakfast in. The one who can really trim my beard is Nara, but he's still in Mexico and doesn't expect to get back for a few days. Anyway, it's really something to look forward to, receiving the Tulasi plant and finding the best place to put her in this room so she'll get maximum light and have the best place for reverence.

The first night Purushottama and Vrinda and the little daughter Vraja were sitting with me, we came to a pause, and nobody could think of something to say. Then the wife said, "It's so quiet out here, Gurudeva." She hit the nail on the head. I tasted it too. I recalled their place is in Guyana—taxis going by the main road, cows bellowing, cow bells clanging near their window. It's countryside, but noisy there because of that stretch of superhighway. Out here there are no roads, just pines, and very quiet. You're not likely to get any visitors. Some people particularly pick out places like this to live. There's a poet, David Budbill, who lives like that:

From here it's five miles to the blacktop,
thirty-five in any direction of the compass
to a traffic light. People say it's way out there.

I say, yes siree. Far out, man, say I. Far out

is what it is. Just snow and cold and isolation
and nobody to see for days and days. People
get

scared by so much emptiness. So much silence
is frightening. Better not come here if you
don't want to fall in upon yourself. Better yet,

better not come here at all.

(from *While We've Still Got Feet*,
by David Budbill)

Tulasi devi is not a visitor but a new permanent resident. She takes more care than an ordinary deity. Of course there's no such thing as an "ordinary" deity, but she's so sensitively alive in the plant form, requiring daily sunshine, being placed in the right situation, bathing, examination for bugs, temperature change, and so on. Prema, who gave her to us, said you have to be thinking of her all the time to make sure that she's not in a wrong situation. So far she seems to be doing all right.

Yesterday afternoon Nanda surprised me by asking me to come over to the big house and hold a reading with all the many people who are here. I said, "Sure," and picked out the book *Under the Banyan Tree*. To get ready for it, I read many of the classical Japanese haiku and took the book *Spring Haiku*, by R. H. Blythe. I was reading the haiku with his commentaries on them. I wanted to just keep reading those, but I stopped and read my own. They were haikus about coming to surrender to Prabhupada. My poems are rather weak, but they are in a book that is a very straight story about how I came to surrender to Srila Prabhupada at 26 Second Avenue. The book was even reviewed in a few

American haiku journals, and received some faint praise. Last night I read from R. H. Blythe's book, and I can't help but say that I really love haiku as a literary form. When I was studying and writing haiku, however, it was not particularly good for my Krishna consciousness. They are indirect codes, and they're not personal worship of God. But oh my, what lallapaloozas of literary delight.

In the center,
Mt. Fuji towers up:
Spring in our country.

I fell in love
With the wings of the birds,—
With the light of spring on them!
(Chora)

Suddenly thinking of it,
I went out and was sweeping at the garden:
A spring evening.
(Tairo)

There's a comment to this one by Blythe:
What a peculiar thing poetry is, coming and going like the wind...valueless, fortuitous things, mere trivia of a life suddenly sink down to the very essence, the soul of existence. In such moments of vision the poet describes in the above verse. All you can say is that in the very useless, the unpremeditativeness, the casual inevitability lies the secret of the mystery, the connection between the sweeping of the garden and the evening of spring.

Lighting one candle
with another candle:
an evening of spring.
(Buson)

An evening of spring:
Ownerless, it seems,
This abandoned handcart.

A comment by Blythe:
The cart had been left by someone at the roadside, among the new grasses. It is not without any owner, of course, but looks so. And in some remote way we feel that this spring evening is abandoned and ownerless, and we ourselves as we glance for a long moment at this uselessly useful cart. It epitomizes the spring evening in its melancholy waywardness.

One evening in the spring:
In a corner of the Hall
A mysterious suppliant.

Looking carefully—
A shepherd's purse is blooming
Under the fence.
(Basho)

Blythe has this to say: "In early spring the mazzuna has a small white four-petaled flower. The point here is the "looking carefully," which does not mean the inquisitive or scientific eye but with Wordsworth's eye, Goethe's eye, Agenbgebung.

*While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things."*

Blythe says, "What is this 'harmony' that quietens our eye? It is the humanity of the flower and the floweriness of

our own nature. But the really important thing is the way in which this 'looking carefully' has come down through the poets. Shiki evidently remembered Basho's verse when he wrote,"

Looking carefully—
The buds of a cucumber flower
And the grass."

Blythe says, "This 'looking steadily at the object' has been accredited to the very soul of the Japanese."

At people's voices,
the cherry blossoms
have flushed a little.

Blythe has this to say:

This is a remarkable example of personification. Issa thinks of the cherry blossoms as if they were a pink, bashful girl, who at the voices of visitors will become pink and embarrassed. This verse is different from the conceits of the metaphysical poets. It represents the tenderness of color, the youthfulness of blooming, and the delicacy of the attraction and grace of the cherry flowers.

What pains I took,
Hanging the lamp
On the flowering branch!
(Shiki)

"This seemingly subjective, egocentric verse is really not so. The intense absorption with which he was hanging the lamp upon a blossoming cherry tree is not only purely objective, but is used to praise the beauty of the flowers."

(from *Haiku Spring*, Vol. 2,
by R. H. Blythe,
Hokuseido Press, Tokyo)

All right, all right. I'll go, crazed as I am by attraction to these poems. I must call Hari and tell him what kind of breakfast I want. I must speak in a Krishna conscious way and chant Hare Krishna instead of haiku. As I've told you before, it was Basho who regretted at the end of his life that he sacrificed salvation for haiku. But if I completely made it into Krishna conscious poems...as I did in *Under the Banyan Tree* and *The Dust of Vrindavan*, so many wonderful things can be done in the *yukta-vairagya* spirit. We should be eager to find them out and not be morose, thinking we cannot break through and do beautiful things for Krishna. Just use the beautiful poets and painters as stepping stones. Step on their heads and go into Krishna-land. You'll be so much happier yourself, and you can enlighten others. It requires daring, but balance. The farm is filled with visitors now. Last night the room was packed. But if they ask me to read again tonight, I don't think I'll do it. Why should I?

Yesterday we pulled out the long, thick ropes that Shila dasi gathered from the beach of the Irish Sea as part of our Wicklow Krishna Visionary Garden. I want to put them in two long rows down the dark gravel path and have it lead to a grocery shopping cart with a steering wheel manned by a stuffed dinosaur, with lots of animals in the cart. To brighten it up, we're going to use spray paint on the ropes and cart figures. We worked on it yesterday, and we'll do more today. Deepak has a good idea for looping the ropings and keeping them in place with washers and nails. He insisted that I paint the ropes first, so I'm waiting for him to shop for paints and masks and gloves. Purushottama will help me.





CHAPTER THREE

VISITORS GET SICK, AND ONE THINKS ANOTHER is being a fault-finder, and the other sees he *is* and says, “I will write you a letter.” The woman is fried from too much work and is going to take a vacation. But Bittersweet is over here in his solitary cottage and doesn’t take much flak, he doesn’t see much of it. He just has to eat a too-spicy meal and then say it was too spicy, and the *mataji* makes it at least fifty percent less spicy. He asks for workers to help him paint ropes, and he gets two men to work three hours spray painting. Today they may be nailed up like bunting, except that they are thick ropes floated in from the sea.

Put together Sweet’s wheelchair. During *japa* he was daydreaming the Navy called him to active service. That would be absurd. But he’d have to get his medical records to prove that an MRI scan shows his ankle is smashed beyond repair for normal walking. That doctor in New York kept the MRI in their computer. And I would have to produce all of Dr. Singh’s records—are they good enough?—I have an anticipatory migraine nervous disorder. What if they say, “We want more than this? You seem to be functioning anyway, and you’re not taking too many meds.” I say, “I’m sixty-five and a half, and don’t blame me, I can’t do more service.” They say, “All we want you to do is scan the skies with a big searchlight to see if enemy planes are coming too near the White House. “F_ _ _ it,” I say, “I can’t leave California. I have to stay here and do my prayer meditation where it’s most conducive.”

Pandit Swami’s odalisque feet stretch out from his *dhoti* as he lies down on the couch in the guest house. This was

after an hour and a half of our being together. When they took away the plates of our food remnants, Nara said, "This will help remove the flies." "Yes," said Pandit Swami, "now they will concentrate on us." I said, "That sounds like a Dr. Johnson line: 'Sirrah, if you'll remove the plates of food, then the flies will not go to the food, but they will go to our flesh.'" He told me the legal case was over. I told him my hopes to give second initiation. He told me about his seminar about heresies and things like that. He told me he was not traveling as much as before, which he had told me the last time I met him. I believe he is traveling less, but still traveling a lot. I told him I am feeling better but not traveling at all. I told him I am feeling that I am healing from my *aparadha*. He thought that was good. I told him my *sadhana* was very bad and that I worried Krishna was not pleased with me, and yet I thought that He was pleased with me, because He is so forgiving. I told him part of my poor *sadhana* was due to the medicines I'm taking. He said he had no excuse of taking medicines but that his *sadhana* was just plain lousy by itself. He heard in a seminar a man say, "Don't interrupt your *japa* by stopping to do something else." Nara came to get me, and I surrendered and went with him. The question is whether I will go see Pandit Swami twice a day or only once. I went back to the house and fell asleep and I dreamt I was under the control of some people who I had to work for. As soon as I came back from work, they captured me under a machine and threw me down, pinned me down to the ground and counted out my money I earned from work, eighty dollars. I thought if that's how they're going to operate, then I won't come back from work so early. In fact, I won't even come back at all.

Visitors sitting in rows at Nanda's house while Govinda gives his *Bhagavad-gita bhakti-shastri* course. Bittersweet

Swami sits next to Pandit Swami, two honored guests who when they speak are down to earth and are not taken by the others as anything extraordinary. Ishmael rode home, the soul survivor, on a coffin. It's nice to digress. But no one did it last night. We were docile to the *parampara* about Arjuna and Krishna. Straightened out people who did not understand. What is the wrong application of *shastra*? When you take "what good will repression accomplish" and do any damn thing you want. He put on his orange hat. Someone took the baby so that Dora could be peaceful and take part in the class. Deepak was there for the first time, but he skipped the chance to read, pleading that he didn't have his eyeglasses. He's a good reader with his British-Scottish accent.

Oh youth, where have you gone? Oh answers to all the questions, where have you gone? Oh memory, where have you gone? It would be nice if we were so relaxed we could ask Pandit Swami to come see a movie. It would be nice if we were so intimate we could relax and let our little hair down. There's nothing to do after admitting you can't chant. What is the point of admitting it? Cry some tears before him, and then tell him that you're being patient. Yes, you are being patient before the end of your life.

He doesn't know what you mean when you say you're chanting isn't so good. He thinks maybe that you're being inattentive. He doesn't realize that you're not even chanting your quota. But that's your private business. Some things are private. There's no need to share them. Then what else is there to say? He can come over to this house and see all the books and videos. Tell him about your frequent urination. Tell him about how you wear your casual clothes instead of your *dhoti and kurta*. Get on a hobbyhorse and play jazz. But you don't want to do that because at the time of death you may be listening to jazz. You keep a check on that. You don't

paint either. It petered out these days. And you've told him that already. There's not much more to say. Report on each other's maladies, that's what you do when a visitor comes. Your cupboard is empty. There's nothing to share. He wants to talk about Prabhupada. There's not much to tell. It's all in the book, the biography. You have nothing to add. You have no dreams.

"No dreams," he said. "No dreams."

That's not true. It's not true. Anyone who says he has no dreams is lying, or he simply can't remember them. He has so little interest in his dreams that when he wakes, he can't collect them. But a keen collector watches for the dreams and is more likely to catch some coherence. He's more humble and puts down at least a fragment, knowing that they're important, knowing that they are visitors in the unconscious space. Those visitors he likes.

Then there are visitors from the past. When he spoke with Pandit Swami, much of the talk was of lapsed visitors, like Paul, a person who served Prabhupada for nine months. Paul turned up when Pandit Swami was manning a question-and-answer booth at the New York Ratha-yatra. He stood on the outside fringe for the whole time and then introduced himself. Pandit Swami barely remembered him, and a person who was listening asked, "Who are you?" and he said, "I served Prabhupada as his servant for nine months." The person was so amazed he wanted to get down and bow at his feet. Paul was headed for greatness, but he gave up and said he couldn't believe that Prabhupada was true when he said people didn't go to the moon. He became a Christian again and had a radio show for awhile, but now he's gone down and has a nondescript job, but he was friendly with Pandit Swami.

At the same Ratha-yatra, Pandit Swami met K. Swami,

who is out of jail and has shaved his face, sits in a wheelchair and seems to be normal, wearing Vaishnava clothes and talking straight, at least to Pandit Swami in the few minutes they conversed. So lapsed people are visitors too. And they can visit you just in your mind, not just when you meet them at the Ratha-yatra. You can suddenly think of them, like thinking of Mandal or Madhu. They come into your mind and they're with you, visiting. Stop and have a cup of tea. Would you like a cup of tea, Madhu? You were such a great driver in our Renault. There's a picture of you on the cover of *Photo Preaching*, and you're mentioned in so many of my books. Madhu, sweet Madhu. Madhu, whose neck used to get red when he was angry. Madhu, who played the little accordion and the Irish bouzouki and sang those songs. He started a new life and had a child and is happy, as happy as you can be. My Madhu, my old friend. I should phone him more and not let it just be lapsed, but I don't have the courage to do that, I don't have the love and compassion to take more advantage of lapsed Madhu when I remember him, but I will, I promise I will. It's easy to telephone if you've got the number, and I don't have his number, but I just visited with him. Now I hear footsteps because it's time for breakfast, another sort of visit.

I dreamt I was riding wonderfully on a pöny, and that it was being done for Prabhupada and Krishna. I was a creative rider and rode swiftly in great bounds. I did it alone, my way. But then T. Swami came in and interrupted me. He kept diverting me and wanted me to do something else. I said, "Leave me alone, this is authorized. This is pleasing." Without using words, he insisted that I stop, and I knew that he was very dear to Prabhupada for his early distribution of books, and that Prabhupada had taken him into great

confidence and had shown him great favor, had taken him into his room and shown him favors. Had he ever done that to me? Maybe not. But it wouldn't work for me to follow T. Swami. He had intruded and visited my dream, and so I pulled away from him, but then I couldn't pull away. I tried again, and finally woke from the dream, the nightmare, by not being able to do it my way, to ride freely on the black stallion my way on the open plains. When I woke, my hand was gripping an imaginary bead bag. Oh Prabhupada, let me ride free, grasping a bead bag. Why must these visitors come and insist that I have to do it their way?

Now I am awake, and Nara has said I should call him on the radio and ask our Guyana visitor to come and show me how to operate a new contraption, a computerized mechanism for dictating, and then later I will meet with Pandit Swami again. All the days and nights are being taken up with visitors. There is no time for writing except when a dream comes. A dream is certainly a visitor, and a most welcome one. But no conscious writing inspiration can come, because all the time is gobbled up with visitors, just the way T. Swami came and gobbled up my concentration and confidence in my way of riding the horse.

In a dream I was spastic. I was sitting on a seat of a ferry as the ferryboat quickly came toward the shore. My dilemma was to put together a number of parts and assemble them in my briefcase. My briefcase was half open, and I had my watch in there, and a Deity of Krishna, and various other things that had to be assembled. I had to assemble them all, and then I expected to look up and see my sister or mother and go with her about our business. But how could I do it since I couldn't even move things in the right way, and I couldn't cooperate with the law of gravity? Anyway, I tried my best.

I dropped the suitcase to the floor. It just crashed there. But then a little boy dove at my feet and helped. He assembled the ring and put it on my finger. Then my Deity slipped and crashed to the ground. He took that and assembled it in the little box where it belonged. I let go of a dictaphone from my hand, and it crashed to the ground, but he picked that up and put it in the right place. Each time he bowed to my feet as if I were a worshipable person to him. Other people in the ferry looked on as if the whole thing was ridiculous, but this boy was not shy to treat me in this way. I patted his head and thanked him very much for being so helpful to me for recognizing me somehow as someone who should be helped. He did not want anything in remuneration but just wanted to help me on my way. He stuffed in some extra leaves from trees, unfortunately, but anyway, at least things were in order, and he clipped my briefcase shut. I then stumbled to my feet with a cane and anxiously looked up for my mother or sister, whoever that persona was supposed to be, but I did not see her. And that was the end of the dream. At least, by the aid of that boy, I had managed to pull myself together and could walk with all my possessions in order. But there was big disappointment in not meeting the person I was supposed to meet, my dear relative. This was another visitor missing, and another visitor dream.

I am hanging around not doing anything this afternoon, trying just to avoid the extra people at the farm. The weather's very hot. I have to go to supper soon. Just before going to Pandit Swami's house, I tumbled through a book by Kierkegaard, a very difficult book to read: *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*. It's a book that I read once but would find very difficult to read through again. But it's a favorite of mine in its purity, and I am an admirer of his from a distance. When I brought it there for Pandit Swami, he said he had

never been able to become attracted to Kierkegaard. Anyway, I read him the one page by the translators that I wanted to read. It was mainly because of my own vocation—if I can call it a vocation—that I wanted to read it. I'm writing this book *Visitors* with such a tepid energy, just a little bit at a time, inventing visitors or saying a little bit about visitors when they come, writing only a tiny bit each day. But here we see that Kierkegaard was afire, at least for a few years, when he wrote prolifically and with great devotion.

"Seldom in the history of literature has there been seen such productivity as was released in him between the years of 1842 and 1848. In the single year of 1843, he published in February, his long *Either-Or*; in May, *Two Edifying Addresses*; in October, three of his works, *Fear and Trembling*, *The Repetition*, and *Three Edifying Addresses*, appeared on the same day; and in December, a further volume of *Four Edifying Addresses*.

"He found in his writing a form of worship of God, and in the exercise of his calling as a writer whose every page was composed as under the scrutiny of God, he found his healing. If one is as weak as he is, and has so much to do, he will soon learn what it is to pray, he suggests. And he describes his vocation as a writer as literally living with God, as one lives with a Father. He rises in the morning and gives thanks to God. Then work begins. At a set time in the evening, he breaks off and again gives thanks to God. Then sleep. So he lives. The twelve-hour day of writing when his production was at its height is broken only by a midday walk among the common people in the Østergade. This keeping of sorrow and remorse silently between oneself and God keeps a man humble and acutely aware of the service he owes to God. Buried in this center, the sufferings release light that has no fear of darkness. And rarely in religious literature has suf-

fering been treated with such delicacy and penetration as in Kierkegaard's own writings.

"His vocation, his calling, is not your calling. No one could be more faithful than Kierkegaard in pointing that out. But do you know what is your calling, what is your vocation, and have you accepted it? It is these questions that he asks again and again in the closing sections of *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*."

(From the translator's introduction to *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*, by Soren Kierkegaard, translated by Douglas V. Steere, Harper Torchbooks, pp 22–23.)

When I go to visit Pandit Swami in the little guest-house, he says, "Is there something you want to talk about?" I say, "No." He extends his arms and says, "Just hang out." I think I've been very slow and dimwitted, have nothing to say. Other people he meets are probably are more peppy and energetic and have ideas. This time he's meeting me, and I'm devoid of ideas. I just sit lazily and don't have anything to say. That's what I'm like. That's my normal status. So I can't lie, I can't make up gripes or conversation. He's seen the true Bittersweet, a person who can just sit in a chair and say nothing. But it's disappointing to me, so I try to go through my mind and think of a topic, a remark or funny line, but most things I think about are not good enough or are too secretive. He finally comes up with something to say, and says it, but I don't connect it to a report of my own. Time goes by. Silent Bittersweet comes out with a remark. There are many devotees who would be delighted to talk with him and come up with questions to ask him, topics about ISKCON. I don't say anything. Dimwitted. I'm going through a quiet period because I'm not writing so much. And what I write he doesn't read. I think he'll go away thinking that Dumb-wit is slowing

down and that it was a slow visit, not so exciting. Bittersweet thinks that way too.

Nara's take on it:

The swami loves you, he used
to look up to you with admiration
but since you have grown less mainstream,
he's disappointed and hurt,
the natural critic in him is aroused

and he's frustrated to let it come out,
doesn't want to tell you he thinks
your art is junk, your new writing
is less than wonderful, so what
kind of a friendship do you have?

Better face him with it before
he leaves. Get some honesty in it.
Bittersweet likes the guy, he's a
character, an ally, a sharp mind,
a funny person, friend from way back
and there aren't many like that.

Hug and talk. His BBT. Bittersweet's GNP, ISKCON's straight and narrow, 'Sweet's staying in it, one's private health care. Swami P.'s traveling all over the world, meeting and teaching. Bitter's poems and prose by which he serves the movement in a third-stream way.

The friendship will last
the institution will last
and Bittersweet will remain in
the institution, there's no option
like leaving. He just needs some
fresh air and stretching room
of freedom suite—hopes his
brother likes it.

P. Swami asked Bittersweet, "What are you writing?"

"A book titled *Visitors*."

"Am I in it too?"

"Yes, a fictional version of you."

"A *fictional* version!"

I phoned Ollie in India and told him about Mexico. He said, "Every one of us should visit the holy dhama of Vrindavan at least once a year for several months."

I said we couldn't afford it, and the whole idea of the care place in Mexico was that it should be an affordable place that people could easily get to. But then we were reading *Jaiva Dharma* at suppertime, and it spoke of the great piety of *dhama parikram*. So Ollie is right, but then it's hard to get there. I told Ollie I was more interested in going to Mayapur than Vrindavan. It's cleaner there, and there are no monkeys. The tall, majestic Deities, Radha-Madhava and all the others, and I heard the authorities will leave you alone—which they also will do in Vrindavan. But I have no great stirring to go anywhere. But the Mexico thing depends on my going there, visiting. Visiting. I have to visit for several months of the year.

The swami and I talked of various swamis and recluses who don't go anywhere but are part of ISKCON. It's become commonplace. But the point is do they *receive* many

visitors?

Changed their minds. Not going to relocate in Mexico. They'll live here in Philo. Take our visitors here.

Krishna conscious yogic powers. I sit in the water and paddle like a duck. I wear kind of a Chinese costume. Many hostile groups pass by, everyone knows they're threatening to me, to the Hare Krishna movement, but I am not afraid. I defy them. Just one single person, or are there many? There are different groups too. Some of them wear many clothes, some of them are naked. Some of them are armed, some of them have wrestling techniques. Sometimes I stay on the curb and float. Sometimes I follow them into deeper waters, keeping time with the music made with the tambourines and instruments like that. How joyous to be fearless. There are some supporters from our side singing. They're glad for me. And there are some neutral people. And of course many other dangerous people. I get entirely wet, and it may be dangerous to do that. One may catch a cold. I think about that, and after awhile I wake up in a chilly room. I've passed so many dangerous people alone, and Krishna has protected me. Sometimes we get visited by great adroitness, we get empowered to fill out a task—another kind of visitation.

Pandit Swami said according to the orthodoxy, people think Bittersweet Swami wasn't transparent enough or reliable enough for any responsible post. And that stigma was permanent. Oh, and he had mental problems, too. Hearing this, Bittersweet's friends wanted to remain working with Bittersweet and not enter a larger field with the orthodoxy. In a separate session, Nanda thanked Pandit Swami for being a catalyst in his own life for describing the operations and

politics of the orthodoxy. He also thanked him for being a catalyst for the community and for changing their views and their lives. What he really meant was that they decided to stay more loyal to their Bittersweet rather than to venture out into larger projects, which might entangle them more with the institution, such as their proposed large health care facility in Mexico, which they now saw as too entangling and too big for them, too diverse and too distracting. Also, since it had been suggested to them that their own leader was unfit in various ways, it immediately made them want to stay with their “unfit” leader rather than venture off into some area of being subservient to more “fit” leaders in the broader realm of the institution.







CHAPTER FOUR

BITTERSWEET IS OVERCOMING THE SWAMI'S VISIT, his criticism of me by the orthodoxy—not transparent, not reliable. These remarks hurt. In a sense, I don't *want* the responsibility of management, being held responsible, transparent, in charge, but *I am* as good as they are, as pure and honest and transparent, etc. Bittersweet is, however, in *shock* and doesn't want to deal with power, institution, and might. In shock. He wants to stay apart. In shock at his remarks.

There is probably a tad of truth in their criticisms, and therefore the shock is, "the truth hurts." It was unlikely that the swami was even being malicious in the GBC executive statement.

The navigator gui
get us through this lonely day
guided by the Navigator.

Can you get back to *Visitors*? There aren't any new ones right now. He enjoys just lying back, doing nothing. It's too hot to go out and walk. He felt inspiration to do physical exercise but got a twinge of an exertion headache. He needs time before another visitor comes. Gnats visit the compost of the Tulasi plant. Other "harmless" gnats visit from leaf to leaf, and the plant trembles slightly because it's sitting on the office writing desk. We definitely don't want to be supervised and conducted by the mainstream-recognized managers. Prefer to keep our smaller "ranch" in Philo and do what we can from here. It was touching to see them step down from their larger ambitions in order to stay with me.

You know common signs: “Posted; No trespassers.” How about, “No visitors unless screened by Nanda and I and according to prearranged commitments.” This is a family, not a big visiting camp. A number of places around here are closed. Museum, Free wine tasting. “Closed.” Private entry, no visitors. Visits arranged strictly by appointment. Phone 895-2142.

The books we are reading heartily and repeatedly recommend *sadhu-sanga*. You can’t do it all alone. You need association with pure devotees. That’s what I’ve said—a family, not the U.S. Marines.

As a result of that last heavy visitor who gave Bittersweet the picture that he’s viewed as not transparent and responsible in the institution, Bitter Swami is going to shave off his goatee and wear his *sannyasa* dress every day. But he’ll have to purchase new *kurtas* because his present ones are all too tight across the chest and are very uncomfortable. What else? Better posture. More straight quoting from the *shastra*. *Manusyanam sahasresu...* right face, about face, oblique face, forward march, come to a stop....

Don’t write that the family is moving to Mexico. That’s too far off. You could write of shaving off goatee and forehead looms up and chin sags, becomes prominent.

“But you look five years younger. You could get a chin tuck in Mexico for \$100.”

Still small voice inside
says don’t stop, even if
your progress is slow
you can scale this height.

You’ll do better in a year,
your head will come into

a better shape. Just
shaved his goatee for
the sake of appearance,
so they'll lay off with
their remarks that he's
not transparent and reliable and out
of their right-wing anger they try
to drag him down.

Prove your effervescence is still
bubbly, your motion fresh
and true. Original. Something to say
that sounds different
because it has come from your
own confessional heart
not a manufactured part
handed you from the institution's scriptwriter.

Water off the beach
baton bouncing freely
off the double bass.
PSSH the oriental cymbal—
is this *parampara*? Yes because he
means it. He's praying to Radha-Krishna
all day long from their
prayer books and pictures of Lord
Gauranga in the mood of separation
from Krishna.

Don't tell secrets:
Sing.

The main reason for avoiding a revolving door of visi-

tors is to be alone with God, solitary much of the time so that you can search Him out within yourself. Look within. Pray with the great saints, such as Sanatan Goswami: "Oh my Lord, I do not have any love for You, nor am I qualified for discharging devotional service by chanting and hearing. Nor do I possess the mystical power of a Vaishnava, knowledge, or pious activities, nor do I belong to a very high-caste family. On the whole, I do not possess anything. Still, oh beloved of the *gopis*, because You bestow Your mercy on the most fallen, I have an unbreakable hope that is constantly in my heart. That hope is always giving me pain."

What is that hope that is giving him pain? It is the "hope against hope." Bittersweet doesn't qualify, no *adhikara*, but he doesn't give up hoping. The golden grain of hope remains. It hurts because he's a wretch, he doesn't even cry tears, his heart is stone, he is so dead he doesn't even hurt. He doesn't melt to the chanting of Hare Krishna, he doesn't become joyful on seeing Vaishnavas. And yet he has an unbreakable hope. Is that hope some kind of arrogant presumption? Does he think he's going to be saved just by some cheap claim of connection to Prabhupada? Why is he so proud? And yet he does claim, "Oh, I was there in the early days with Prabhupada." There are many photographs of me with him. I did much service. He will not forget me. He will come for me at the end. Krishna will force Himself into my attention. Prabhupada will come for me. He'll grab me by the hair, whatever hair is left. He'll grab me by the limb. He may not take me back to Godhead, but He'll take me to some eternal service.

But that would be heartbreaking. I want to go to the spiritual world. I want the best thing. I don't want to be disappointed, but I'm not working with qualification. Then why this unbreakable hope? You are so stupid. You know what it takes, how rare it is to go to the spiritual world, go to Goloka.

Why do you claim unbreakable hope? You do not even go to the holy dhama to visit. You have so many material habits. It does not seem good for you, stuck in this material world. Why do you say being alone helps you? When you are alone, you listen to jazz. When you are alone, you listen to your mind, and you don't chant extra rounds. But somehow you become silent and you think. Your mind moves around like a snake coiling, and you come to this conclusion again: I want Him. I need Him. I'm failing. But I want Him.

In *The Wisdom of the Desert*, Thomas Merton emphasizes that the desert monks of early Christianity ran away from civilization not out of a hatred of humankind. They lived in little communities where "charity and hospitality were matters of top priority and took precedence over fasting and personal ascetic routines. The countless sayings which bear witness to this warmhearted friendliness should be sufficient to take care of the accusations that these men hated their own kind. Indeed there was more real love, understanding and kindness in the desert than in the cities, where, then as now, it was every man for himself." So the monks positioned themselves as solitaires in order to concentrate on God, and simply because being alone was their vocation, but if someone chances to come by, they cheered the visitor with all courtesy, and if you were an inquirer they'd answer your question, and if you were just a chance wanderer, they took care of your needs. Is this a model for Bittersweet Swami?

FW

Solitaire, so they don't start a party and bring girls and start horrible rock music and tell you to dance like the others, facing the girls and grinding your hips. Alone, pick a book. Alone so you are not subject to a military voice telling you,

“Get up!,” and forcing you to march and pointing you out among the others because you have done wrong, singling you out and berating you, sending you to the principal’s office and putting you in jail or whipping you and putting you in with the ne’er-do-wells, the tough ones, where you are like a rabbit, prey for the bigger animals. In nightmares you struggle in the claws of others, trapped officially and no one to free you so that you have to get out on your own. You try to scale a tall wire fence with barbed wire on the top. You have good prowess to get away, but they are always after you.

Finally you have escaped, you escaped them. You seem to have gone into a hole and they ran past you in a dream. Now you are faraway in a safe, lowdown dwelling place with sparse but sufficient amenities and a few like-minded monks living in charity. You give each other space to live, but sometimes come together for group prayer. They say it’s good to come together. Even if Bittersweet Swami doesn’t like it so much, he sits through it because he wants the security and approval of the pack.

And when *he* has to make a presentation, like a free write, he wants their attention and approval.

Sleeping is nice because he’s alone. He should not look at pictures of women or they will revisit. Keep the mind clean so you have a clean and productive solitude. Hear *shastra* while you eat. Hear the mantra, the *gayatri*, and adhere to regulations even without visitors. The rule of the hermit. This is your austerity, doing something you may not like but doing it because it’s for the higher good.

Habit is second nature, so practice. Eventually he remembers the syllables of the *gayatri*. Could being alone ever be for the miracle strength in mantras? That would be like heavenly snowflakes accumulating in winter time or in spring/summer the fields filled with wildflowers, or in fall the

crisp red leaves falling to the ground. Not barren. Barren is like a crazy man who uses his solitude to stare into space—no thought, no calling, no nothing.

Waiting for dinner, for your pants to dry
waiting to grow up. To die. Don't have so
many years to go. Brothers dropping like
summer flowers. Don't let them get you down.
"Tell him he's got my back and my head
at his feet."

Some people out there love you, say you're
ahead, still he shaves his beard as a
gesture to conformity. Too tired to paint.

Bittersweet slurps soup each night in the
semiodoriferous men's ashram for
solidarity and to hear the latest book read.
There's a solitude there. Just three men
in a far-off cabin. Stale bread.
Hurry up and eat tonight because we're
attending the *bhakti-shastri* class.

One cat never comes in the house
but his odor is there, three nonkill mouse traps
gather twenty mice in last two months.
Little child is always praying on my desk.
Every day a new picture of Prabhupada
and a new saying. Today he's emphasizing
worldwide preaching.
Can a solitary help with that?





CHAPTER FIVE

THEY WILL FOLLOW A MAN WHO SEES the world as beautiful. He wanders through the city, crippled and hallucinogenic. Everywhere there is chanting of Hare Krishna by nine hundred schisms. One prominent one is chanting and singing, "*Sri krishna tad arjuna, sri krishna tad arjuna.*" He has a little wheelchair and he maneuvers about on it. He's not aware of the time of day. Although he has a wristwatch, he cannot see it clearly. He asks someone to help him. They are amazed at him because he has agilities and wizardries and because he can sustain and weave throughout all the different schisms in a friendly way, not being offended by any of them and not causing them to be angry with him. But it is not a very satisfying religious world where all these different mantras are sung. And yet it *is* satisfying because at times, if you listen carefully, it is all resounding as Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. And that's when it is best. And then they serve out cream cheese. He would like to get off the train if someone would help him get off at this stop. Then he could push his wheelchair. But they do not let him off. They do not have the intelligence to let him off at this stop, and so he stays on and maneuvers within the train car while his teeth fall out. He manages to chant the most bona fide of all chants, the original one, and while he manages to be tolerant of others, understanding that they have theirs and the original mantra, and although they do not mean so well and have gone astray, they're still chanting, and that cannot be faulted.

They are as ugly as pygmies and aborigines, but one is willing to work with them out of compassion, to show

them the light, even though it is they who think they have the light. This is very trying work, working with maniacs who are actually of the lowest intelligence. It takes patience, great patience. One would rather be simply alone and not live with such arrogant brutes. That is why we want to be alone, and we need to be alone sometimes, apart from these trying circumstances of singing with the *tad arjuna*s and the skippity Radhas and the boo-boo gurus, who look like deformed idiots. But I think they are the true gurus and sadhus who have little beards and whose girls have hot mouths and saris and who are four feet tall. One wants to be alone and not save them in a mission for saving lost souls. But the Lord wants them saved, and though sometimes you go to their huts or you go to their city where you know they will show up. Suddenly they will appear in a long train, snaking around, singing. They will appear in a mass crowd, playing *mridangas* and *karatalas*, singing *tad arjuna*, *tad arjuna*, just like a bona fide *sankirtan* group. If you don't distinguish well, they will seem to be the same, but of course they are not. They are actually horrid, and a *sankirtan* group is actually beautiful when it comes in the right way, so you have to stay alert and distinguish that which comes from God and that which is crazy. But it is hard to do when you yourself are in such difficult physical condition and tired. But you push on, try to make yourself more fit and more willing to take on the *tapasya*, and not more willing to enjoy.

Walking alone he surmises Krishna has treated
him
right. Some people may have treated him
wrong
But wise men don't resent that. He walks alone

and seems the body is starting to sink into
the ground. But that's just a process of
assimilation, time function, and nothing to
be resented.

Bring your mind up to lead control
loving devotional service is the
highest truth enacted, how can
I reach it? At least I
know what it is.

That's the target over there,
that's the bull's-eye, detachment
from ego, material enjoyment,
steady fixation in faith
on God. God is real.

He is walking alone
surmising the absolute truth.
It's an enjoyable thing,
a swing, a ring-a-ding
and don't tell me different.

He is walking along
surmising the forest and
the little children and
wishing he knew better the value
of the teachings of the holy masters
and was less attracted to the effluvia.

We don't need visitors, colored or white, scarred or
unblemished, Ph.D. or uneducated. Yes, we knew softhearted
sadhus of Radha-Krishna, but right now my neck and head

hurts too much to receive even them. Sitting along surmising that things are okay. No matter how he will suffer, Krishna is watching over and will claim him as a dear one soon.

All quiet on the Western front. A sniper marksman kills an exposed artilleryman, who thought there were no more enemies and he was strolling the battle line, picking a flower and reading a letter from home. A visitor called Death came suddenly. You never know when. Michelangelo. He said if you go to Firenzi he wants to go with me. But I have no plans to go there. Not to see David. Doris [my college mentor and mistress] sent me a postcard of David, but I did not answer because I was already deeply into the Krishna consciousness movement.

The ancient monks didn't receive or write letters. They prayed from morning until night, but some worked a little during the day to finance themselves. Weaved baskets. Baked bread. Literature of their discourses is preserved, questions and answers. No useless talk. Better to practice. Don't talk if you don't have anything to say. Stay in your cell and your cell will teach you what you need to know.

A scarecrow in the field near the entrance: NO VISITORS. "Trespassers will be shot."

What do you plan to do today? No plans. Just plan to sit around. Maybe try to write or chant more *japa* in the wheelchair. Breathe deeply. It's hard to do. You are bored by the man who comes and reads to you while you eat. Would rather eat in silence, but it is an etiquette that has developed. Recall back to the last swami's visit with sting and burden.

What about the idealistic plans for the future? If not, you can stay here. Bittersweet doesn't paint anymore, lost his swing and confidence to approach the blank canvas and make shapes. Too many critics, inner and outer, benumb him. At

least this locomotive is still running on the tracks.

It's about being alone daily with a few family members and the enjoyment of a slow life, mostly going progressive in northern California, with big talk of moving to Mexico. But if we don't move, that's fine. Slow trails, tired health, slow-down *sadhana*, slow improvement.

Bittersweet was reading the story in the *New York Times* about the troubles NASA is having with its shuttle flights in outer space. The current troubles were making them postpone their projected flights for more robotic landings on the planet Mars to sometime in the future, past 2006. In fact, the president was going to retire space discovery if they continue to have more and more fumbles in their space programs and concentrate his spending elsewhere.

Sitting at his desk looking out at the evergreens, Bittersweet Swami began to daydream. He imagined that the Americans actually did have a manned landing on the planet Mars, and that much to their surprise, they found advanced living beings there. They were met by these tall Martians, who spoke in English as well as many other languages. The Martians told him that the human beings with their expensive suits could not really live on Mars because the atmosphere was unsuitable for them, so they would have to go back soon. But the Martians were friendly to them and showed them a little of their advanced technology there. They said that they planned a visit to the earth soon, just to show their goodwill and show that they would never intend to have any kind of interplanetary wars.

The Martians were far advanced in all ways, even with military rockets and things like that. But since the humans could barely make it to visit Mars, they should give up their attempt for further visits, and each planet should just keep

to themselves, because they were made to live in their own place and not to venture into the others' space. The Martians showed them a scripture which said that to each planet, a person was given a living space, and one should not venture to live in another planetary space. That was the only reason that the Martians had never come to the earth. But now that the humans had come to Mars, the Martians would return the visit to the earth, where they had originally come from, coming from the holy place of India. They would soon make a visit to the holy river Ganges and some of the other power places of the earth as a gesture of peace. The American space shuttle returned with this sensational news and spread it around the media for a few weeks in a most sensational way.

After a few weeks, a Martian space craft landed in the river Yamuna. At first no one knew it had actually landed because the landing had not been observed. The Martians landed in a small ship. But then the humans detected its landing, but not before the Martians had time to bathe privately in the Yamuna and make their religious offerings there in private and in ecstasy. They then went and saw some *sadhus* and had exchanges with them before the politicians got to them. In other words, they had not come to become contaminated with the exchanges with the politicians but to see genuine holy men, which they did in the area of the jungles and holy places of the Yamuna, where Krishna is worshipped. But then they came out of hiding and went to see the president of India, and then went to see the president of the United States, and had their pictures taken, and assured the heads of states that they were in fact in existence and that Mars was a planet of billions of people with an advanced technology and advanced military weapons, but they had no intention of coming to the United States, and they warned the earthlings not to make further ventures into Mars, since it was not really possible

for the earthlings to live there.

The demeanor of the Martian was very pleasant but firm, and he gave a message of peace and Godliness wherever he went, telling the earthlings that they had all the religion and goodwill they needed on their own planet. They just had to develop it and give up their materialism. There was nothing that they needed to get from Mars or from their outer space program. They needed to develop their inner space and their purity, which they had in abundance on their own planet in their own holy places.

The Martians then displayed their space craft, which everyone was very interested in, and made a takeoff after about two weeks on earth. The rocket was amazingly subtle in its movements and appeared far more advanced than anything NASA had developed. It left NASA very sober about their message not to make any outer space travels. Should they take that message seriously or go on trying to travel to Mars or elsewhere? Don't visit, was the message of the Martians. Stay at home and develop your inner knowledge.







CHAPTER SIX

YESTERDAY, IN THE EARLY EVENING, Nanda phoned me. He said three men had just arrived at his house. One of them was my disciple Upendra, of Puerto Rico. Two others were local men from California who had driven up with him from San Francisco. What was it all about? Upendra had come to visit me, but how had he found the way? Nanda was as puzzled as I. He was sleeping when they came. Part of the trouble was understanding Upendra's heavy Spanish accent. He had mentioned Mukhi, so Nanda phoned her in Washington, D.C. It turned out she was the culprit. She had given an intricate map showing how to get to Philo to Upendra's wife. She gave her the map on the condition that it could not be used until there was an agreement sometime in the future that Upendra and his wife could actually visit the farm. Upendra, however, didn't need any invitation. All he needed was the map and his greed to see his spiritual master. So after attending the Ratha-yatra in San Francisco, he picked up a couple of men down there and convinced them to drive him up to Philo.

Now they were standing in Nanda's house while Nanda swung between fuming and being hospitable. Nanda told his son to start making supper, and then he phoned me. He asked me if I wanted to see them. I said yes, they could come right down to my house, and then they could have supper with me and the men in the ashram, and then they could leave. So they did that. The whole pack of them came down to the house, along with Nanda, and we sat and talked. Upendra is now the president of the Puerto Rican temple. We talked about the heavy mortgage that the Puerto Rico temple has and the difficulty that Upendra has in meeting it, how they have had a loss of manpower. Nanda offered him different business strategies for dealing with the bank.

I couldn't think of too much to say, but sat smiling at Upendra and encouraged him. I encouraged him to go on with book distribution at the airport, which is his natural love. He said he feels separation from the temple, now that he's on a tour of the *ratha-yatras*. He yearns to return to his daily *sadhana*. He also told us about the joy he feels in cultivating his own farm. He raises plantains, pumpkins, avocados, and other things. It all goes for his own family's consumption, the temple devotees, and the congregational members. No cash. And he has to do it all himself. That's his spare-time hobby. Otherwise he's in the temple or at the airport.

There we were, our room packed with visitors. But I knew it wouldn't last long because after about half an hour, supper would start, and we would have our usual reading. After that, they would have to go. The talk went smoothly, and then we went next door to the ashram, where Deepak read from the scriptures. Before he left, Upendra privately gave me a donation. It was a pleasant visit, but exactly the kind of thing we don't want—someone finding our address and coming in the night without an invitation. And yet the scriptures say that the uninvited guest should be treated with special care and affection, so we did that and hoped to receive Krishna's blessings.

The squash was too hard to chew,
I told him. He said something back.
I read through much of the Sunday
N.Y. Times, five pages of full black
and white pictures of an exquisite, thin
model, two of them quite bare
with enchanting look in her eyes.
Don't dare go back and
look at her again. Once through

is accidental, twice is sin.

A good Bush-bashing essay
and one by a Jehovah Witness apostate.

Krishna opportunists don't appear
in print except in their own
congregation where they arouse
deep commitment, pull ropes
of Jagannath carts' big wheels,
give out many plates of food,
sing and dance an easy way
to invite some participation
especially from the young
and the Hindu-Americans.
Hindu God they say, '60s sect still
going strong. Give out books
and ask for donations.
"Take a look" at books
on transmigration, Krishna.

If you visit a temple, you may see a man licking holy food remnants off the floor. You may see a daddy holding his infant son inches away from a booming microphone where three men are crashing *karatal*s and another is booming a *mridanga*. You may see tattooed men break dancing. You may see ladies dancing in the rear of the temple, and a few right up front leaping before Radha-Shyamasundar despite a frowning *sannyasi*. You may see a group of youngsters holding hands and dancing in a smiling circle.

If you visit a temple, someone may approach you and ask you to take your shoes off. You may ask, "Do I have to?" and the girl in a sari may preach to you that shoes used to walk

outside are considered dirty and the temple is sacred ground. She sounds so sincere and sweet, you do what she says. And then she tells you more and more as you ask about the statues. You like the look in her eyes, and you find it easy to take what she's saying. She sits you down *on the floor*, and brings you food and tells you it's holy—called *prasadam*—and was offered to Krishna. His remnants can free you from karma. Do you know what karma is? Transmigration of the soul? She places a book, *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, in your hand.

Some Vedic scriptures say that if you reverently visit a Vishnu or Krishna temple, you will be liberated from birth and death. If you bow down before the forms of Radha and Krishna, you can gain love of God. But the visit to the temple cannot be a casual touristic visit. It must be made as a pilgrim, as a devotee of God. One should learn the etiquette involved. When entering the temple, one should ring the bell. One should bring a gift, like rice or flowers, and offer it to the Deity or the *pujari*. One may offer money to the *pujari* for the Deities' service. When visiting the temple, it is auspicious to take the water that was used to bathe the Deity (*charanamrita*) in the palm of one's right hand and sip it. Then wash one's hand with water.

Deities hold regular visiting hours when special functions are being held, like *mangala-arati*, the greeting of the Deities when they are dressed, lectures from the *Bhagavatam* before the Deities, *kirtans*, and it's best to visit the Deities at those times. Best at those times rather than when the Deities are asleep and the doors are closed. When the doors are closed, one will not be able to get a *darshan* of the Deities. A nice time to visit is the early evening when *sundara* or evening *arati* is held. Then the Deities are in full display and a melodious *kirtan* is held. There is a year long calendar of special events when it is most auspicious to visit the Deities, like Chandan-

yatra, Janmastami, Govardhan-yatra, Jivan-yatra, etc. etc. In a place like Vrindavan, there are hundreds of Deities, and one can visit one after another, making a kind of pilgrimage to the many deities in the many temples.

If you visit a temple, you should be open-minded, especially if you are ignorant or prejudiced against the *archa-vigraha* (worship of deities or statues). Best to inquire respectfully about it in an ecumenical spirit. For God, everything is possible. This is a holy temple. In a mosque or church or synagogue, any derogatory ignorant opening remark about what is going on is also likely to be offensive to their God, and who are you to say that God cannot manifest Himself to people in this way?

If you want to visit a Christian *heshyat* (hermit) in his cave in the mountains of Greece or the desert of Egypt and he doesn't allow visitors, don't curse him in your mind. You have spiritual questions to ask him? Read the *Philokalia*. These men are doing important work and can't be disturbed. Besides, you have your own Guru Maharaja. Why do you want to go sightseeing among other monks, cells, and temples of the various religions? Respect them from a distance. Visit daily the temple, where your own God is named. Visit always, stay with the God in your heart, don't you know who He is? Sri Krishna. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Sri Sri Radha-Krishna. Try for this. Visit these temples with your offering. See them in your heart.

In a dream, I came to the Brooklyn (Henry Street) temple in the morning. I had no *brahmachari* assistant. No one greeted me there. It was very, very crowded with devotees. It was at the time of the morning program, in between any particular event. I had need, but no one helped me. Different devotees wanted to show me some of the things they were

doing. The temple president wanted to show me something that he received in the mail. I climbed up on a ladder to find somewhere to sleep in a hideaway place in the temple, but the temple stairs were very, very rickety and dangerous. I climbed down to report this to others, but no one showed any interest in it. No one had any interest in anything I had to say. No one seemed to care about me at all. Then the temple president's wife wanted to show me a book that she had laid out about stars. I asked her if I could have an aspirin. She said she didn't know about such things. Then I had my mouth full of bubble gum, which I suppose was a substitute for aspirin. I took out the big chunk of bubble gum and just shoved it aside somewhere and asked somebody else if I could have aspirin. Then there began the singing of *Sri Guru Charanam*. I asked the temple president's wife if this meant we should all gather by the Deities. She shrugged her shoulders, indicating that if I wanted to show attention to her book on stars, that would be better. Then someone came forward and said that it was the children to blame for the rickety stairs, because they had been going up and down on it too much. So at least someone had paid attention to something I had said.

I bemoaned these conditions and regretted the old days of high profile gurus who would at least travel with one *brahmachari* who could help them out and fetch something that they asked for. If I had at least one servant, he could get something for my headache and find me a room. As it was now, I had no room, and when the morning program was over, I couldn't go to a room. In fact, I wouldn't even stay now in the room but would go to my visitor's room. Where is the guest's room? I didn't even have the status of a guest. I was just an unaccepted wanderer in the crowd. But if I had a status as a guru and an exalted visitor, and if I had a couple of men, servants, I could make my way and get my needs

met. That's what I needed, a reputation, a title like Gurupada, an ability to cut the path, but all of that was gone, and I couldn't get an aspirin, only bubble gum, and people just wanted me to look at their projects and ignored my most basic, miserable needs.

Visiting the Temple

What if you enter and a pretty girl
approaches you with some breathless words?
Run the other way. What if a big
Doberman pinscher
bares his fangs and
growls, approaching?
Run. What if you
see a thief breaking into the donation
box? Catch him or call 911.

If there are no such disturbances,
sit down in a pew, kneel on a
padded kneeler and contemplate.
It's noisy inside. Meditate. Ride with
it, quiet it. See the icon
above the altar, Jesus' face
in Russian art. Talk to Him,
I've done many sins, mainly
I don't pay attention to
Your presence in my life.
Please awaken me. Allow
me to pray through the plethora,
stick to You
as the most important
thing, pleasing You
recognizing You in everything,
forgetting all else.





CHAPTER SEVEN

YOU MAY WANT TO VISIT AUTHENTIC HERMITS following in the tradition from the ancient monks who lived in the mountains of Greece and the deserts of Egypt. Approaching one monk's cave, his assistants may tell him you are coming, and he may lie down in front of his cave munching big pieces of cheese and bread. On seeing this, you may think he's a hoax and turn away. He will be glad that he has avoided your touristic intrusion into his solitude. Or you may visit another solitary old man, and when you reach his place, you find that he is not there. You may find only a group of peasants up in the trees picking coconuts. You may shout up to them, "Are there any hermits living here?" A genuine hermit may shout down to you, "No, there are no hermits here!" After you leave, the bona fide hermit may climb down with a little smile and go back to his cave, glad that he has escaped you.

Or you may actually get an audience, with a chance for questions and answers. You may observe while the monks are holding holy services. You may see one of the brothers dozing during the services in the church, and ask another, "Should I rouse him so that he can be watchful?" The monk may say to you, "For my part, when I see a brother dozing, I put his head on my knees and let him rest." When traveling from Palestine to Egypt, we visited a very gentle father. He offered us hospitality, and we said, "Why do you not keep the fast when visitors come to see you? In Palestine, they kept it." He replied, "Fasting is always with me, but I cannot always have you here. It is useful and necessary to fast, but we choose whether we will fast or not. What God commands is perfect love. I received Christ in you, and so I must do everything

possible to serve you with love. When I have sent you on your way, then I can continue my rule of fasting. The friends of the bridegroom cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them; when he is taken away from them, then they will fast."

One old man told us, "There are many in the mountains who behave as if they were in a town, and they are wasting their time. It is better to have many people around you and to live the solitary life in your will than to be alone and always longing to be with a crowd."

But we received contradictory sayings from the different monks that we met. An old man named Abumoses told us, "Go and sit in your cell and your cell will teach you everything."

And a man named Abanillas said, "The arrows of the enemies cannot touch one who loves quietness; but one who moves about in a crowd will often be wounded."

We went to one brother and asked, "What does it mean to be subject to all?" The old man answered, "to be subject to all is not to give your attention to the sins of others but always to give your attention to your own sins and to pray without ceasing to God."

We were advised to go see two old men who had lived together in harmony for many years without ever having a fight with one another. From them we could learn true peace and comradeship. We eavesdropped outside their cell and heard one say, "Let us also have a fight like other men." The other replied, "I do not know how to have a fight." The first man said to him, "Look, I will put a brick between us, and I will say, 'It is mine,' and you will reply, 'No, it is mine,' and so the fight will begin." So they put a brick between them and the first said, "This brick is mine," and the other said, "No, it is mine." Then the first replied, "If it is yours, take it and go." So they gave it up without being able to find a

cause for an argument.

In my notebook, I have a question and answer I had with a man named Abanistros. I asked him, "What should I do about my tongue, for I cannot control it?" He replied, "When you speak, do you find peace?"

I replied, "No."

The old man said to me, "If you do not find peace, why do you speak? Be silent, and when a conversation takes place, prepare to listen rather than to talk."

(From *Sayings From the Desert of the Heart*, edited by Benedicta Ward, Darton, Longman and Todd.)

Bittersweet Swami has a visitor in his room who arrived overnight. It is a mouse trapped in a Have-a-Heart trap. It is making noises, scratching and trying to get out, but he is firmly encased. Bittersweet will wait until Govinda comes and then let him take the mouse visitor away and drive him to a distant place before letting him out. Bitter is squeamish about mice and has never liked them. He considers it unfortunate that in this relatively new house they have started to penetrate. They're unwelcome visitors to him because he does not have a big enough heart to welcome them and let them share his scraps of food.

Sometimes in dreams Bittersweet is a visitor. He travels on an object which is like a milk carton, sometimes balancing it or surf-riding it at rapid speeds. He travels worldwide visiting all obscure and exotic places. Like a mole, he digs up here and there, as if looking for something, but nowhere is he given a hearty welcome. Sometimes he runs into amenities, where for a while he's hosted, but then it is entangling, as they want to make him a member. Sometimes he is pursued by lascivious women or horrible hags. He wants to end this visiting and

go home. He very much wants to stop. His clothes are torn, and his little spinning box is collapsing. All he's carrying in it is one *Bhagavad-gita*, and it is becoming dirty and falling apart. He races more now in pursuit than in search. Some people start to invite him to stop and stay, but he doesn't want to visit any longer. He wants to go home.

"Nanda and Hadai Pandit are not guests or visitors," he said. "They are family. I trust them with my house, my life. I just give them a bag of groceries and tell them, 'You take care of yourself in the guest house.' They can take care of themselves, and if they need anything, they ask me for it." They came and spoke with me for two and a half hours upbeat. I kept thinking of things to say and then forgot them. They gave me a little time and suggested what it was I wanted to say—"You were speaking of Groucho Marx?" "You were speaking of the idea of cinema therapy?," "You were saying something about not being afraid of what others thought." But I couldn't recall what I wanted to say. That seemed to be a good sign of a lively conversation. We just went on to another topic. We spoke up until my lunch was served. I'd like to see them again. But will we be able to repeat that performance?

Bittersweet hasn't learned yet how to operate the digital voice recorder. Govinda may teach him today. Yesterday, on Balarama's appearance day, Nara signed a contract for the land in Mexico. Just before the signing, he and the ex-general owner were shouting with each other over the price, but then they settled and embraced. Now it goes forward.

There will be a period of at least four days in a row of socializing, lots of meetings and visits, observances of religious dates, Janmastami, Prabhupada's appearance day, and right after that, a several-day visit by a swami. Is that distraction

or grist? It's certainly a lot of work, emoting, externalizing, sitting in a chair facing others, thinking of something to say. Not your happy repose, as you've come to recognize it. Yes, not doing anything is enjoyable. Oh, he answers letters, pushes himself to do that, and literary penmanship, but it's a relaxed routine with friendly faces popping in and out. These upcoming meetings and observances are different. They are dressing up, applying *tilak*, sitting in the car and driving to the big house. Squeezing your brain, opening your heart.

The new spiritual discovery: going out in the wheelchair at 6:00 A.M. Someone pushes Sweet Swami in the wheelchair on a boardwalk, back and forth, while he chants his morning *japa* for one and a half hours. It's too cool and fresh and bumpy to fall asleep. He stays awake, and there's no talk. The wheelchair pusher is also chanting the holy names. If the slightest drowsiness comes, you can shake it off chanting loudly, taking on the cold, the scenery, living in your body heat. And yes, your little attachment for *hari-nama*. May this practice always continue. Habit is the second nature. Practice, practice extraordinaire.

Visitors.

The redcoats are coming dragging their cannons over the hill. Don't fire till you see the whites of their eyes. They fight by standing in military rows, one standing, one kneeling, very stiff and deadly. But if you move out of that line of fire, and you move guerillalike as the Minutemen did in the war of 1776, you can pick off the old-fashioned stiff line of British soldiers. What's the metaphor? A way

to escape visitors? Ain't no way.
But maybe you don't have to face
them. You can run
around the general line of
orthodox fire and be yourself
avoid the cannonballs
talk who you are and
disarm them in their
formal limited fire range.
Just an idea.
Protocol
see what happens when they arrive
play it by ear.

Sometimes a hermit longs for a visit from a certain
like-minded friend. Nowadays we can receive them by e-mail
or telephone. This yearning was expressed in haiku by the
seventeenth-century recluse monk Ryokan, who also took
the name Daigu, or "Great Fool."

On rainy days
he really feels lonely
—this monk, Ryokan.

Another by Ryokan:

Alone at night in my solitary mountain hut,
Snow brings on lonesome thoughts.
A mysterious monkey cry echoes on the peak.
The stream in the ravine, frozen silent.
The water in the inkstone by my pillow has dried,
And the lamplight is still by the window.
The night is uneasy and I can't sleep.
Warming my brush but with my breath,

I try to compose a poem.

(From *Between the Floating Mist: Poems*
by Ryokan, Spring House Editions.)

If it's lonely and you don't get a visitor, you can always
write a poem.

What's the difference between a visitor and a host? The
visitor is not at home. No matter how breezy he is, he doesn't
feel as relaxed as he does at home. But maybe it's an exciting
adventure for a while, being in a new place, away from the
old neighborhood and faces, able to concentrate on being
with his friends, working on a vision or just hanging out.
The host is responsible for taking care of his visitors, seeing
they get rooms to stay in, food cooked, trying to let the good
times roll, talk gently and open and deep.

Here's another visiting poem from the ancient Chinese,
Tu Fu:

*9th month, 1st day, visiting Meng Shih-Erh
and his brother Meng Shih-Szu*

I invade cold dew on a cane, thatch houses
Trailing smoke out into dawn light. Old,
Frail, dozing among scattered books my limit
Now, I rest often against roadside trees.

Autumn passes. What once drove me ends.
Nothing but your friendship could bring me
Here. Sipping thick wine with you, our small
Talk crystal clear, I forget the years lost.

And another:

A Guest Arrives

South of our home, and north, nothing but
spring

Water everywhere, and gulls arriving day after
day.
The path all blossoms. I haven't swept for
guests.
Today, for you, I open my simple gate this first
time.
Dinners so far from market are nothing special,
And wine in our poor home is old and
unstrained,

But if you'll drink with the old-timer next
door,
I'll call over the fence, invite him for what's
left.

(From *The Selected Poems of Tu Fu*,
translated by David Hinton,
New Directions.)

There will be two days of meetings, morning and afternoon. Bittersweet Swami will be trying to keep awake and without headaches and participate, join the synergistic energy of the group. Participate. The only meeting in which he is meant to chair or dominate is the first meeting in the morning, which is devoted to "nitty-gritty." This is Sweet's only chance to lead the way. He tells which books are at which stage of production, and he tries to prod them along by mentioning them. But there's nothing he can really do to motivate the others. He's powerless. He says, "*Sanatorium* is at the printer." But he didn't do anything to get it there. He just wrote it. He heard the others did layout, editing, design, people with money paid, and liaison with the printers. They got it there. But he announces very happily after two years of waiting, "*Sanatorium* is at the printers." And he does not

know whether to believe that it's really there or when it will come out.

And the next book is *When the Saints Go Marching In*, a poetry book that's supposed to go to the printer soon. If all the books could come out, it would be like a beauty star winning the Miss America contest, the Yankees winning the World Series. Extra people have gathered here to take part in the meetings two days in a row, and the people who live here will be going to the intensive meetings, so it's all like they'll be visiting each other rather than staying alone in their places.







CHAPTER EIGHT

JANMASTAMI MORNING DREAM: Myself, Pandit Swami, Howard and Murray Mednick steal a car, smoke marijuana, and drive off fast. The difficult thing was that one car door was open and we couldn't shut it. It was causing too cool a breeze, and this was because the car was too cool also. I thought to myself, we are nice boys, but the law would see it otherwise. I hope we don't get caught. We were nice Vaishnavas. In fact, I think, PS was studying some literature to observe the holy day, and Howard was quiet. I was so sensitive that just one little puff had sent me off into this willingness to perform criminal activities.

Visitors are a strain.

Visitors relieve you from other duties because they give you an excuse to do nothing but tend to them. Yesterday I talked with visitors and home folks in meetings all day long, so there was no chance to write about visitors.

Home folks met at the table again for strenuous meetings. I was good when the meetings were about personnel, how to get more typists, how to get the books out faster. Somebody said I was pulling everyone's chain. But when the subject changed to finances, I just faded out and didn't understand what they were talking about.

I faded out.

Bittersweet therefore lasted only one day of meetings and attended the second day, but it was more or less a pooper.

He did make a contribution by thinking of the art person, and when they called her, she said, "Holy shit!," and was a very willing to take part. Janmastami celebrations will

begin with *kirtans* and talking about Krishna. Everyone is expected to cook something and bring it for a potluck feast late at night. Everyone is expected to bring some kind of Krishna-*katha*. The visitors will gather and grow in number. Yesterday, Tad joined for awhile. He couldn't stay so long, but I talked with him alone during my supper. At another part in the day, some visitors had a threesome poetry reading of Lawrence Ferlinghetti's *Americus*. The readers all liked it very much.

Visitors are like persons who hitchhiked in your truck. Visitors are standing waiting for a meal. Visitors are sitting all over your couches. Visitors are making you merry. Visitors make you sad. Visitors want you to entertain them. Visitors bring gifts. They dress up in their East Indian clothes with saris and *dhotis* and *kurtas*. Some of them dressed up in their Western Indian clothes, like Comanche chiefs and squaws, wearing tall headdresses made of feathers and moccasins for walking softly on the Appalachian Trail.

Visitors don't like to be upset by bad talk. Neither do hosts. So both participate in making merry and avoiding unpleasanties.

Visitors over special observance days make for a coming and going, like a parking lot on a busy day at a resort. "I have to go early." "Can I come early?" Some had to cancel. Some decided to stay.

The main program is chanting Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Everything else is improvisation. Some talk about Krishna's advent, some talk about the glories of Srila Prabhupada. You can read from a prepared homage. You can read from the book. You can read from your heart in appreciation of Prabhupada, whom you knew when he was on the earth. You can speak about Krishna and

Radha from whatever bhava you have or from the books, mechanically. Gathering of guests enhances the readings. Don't be bored. Most everyone's fasting, but a migraineur doesn't fast.

They lined up for a photograph, husbands and wives. I had an idea how it would look. All the husbands would be taller than their wives, but then someone pushed before the photo, and it was all disarrayed. They had to take it again. But when it was disarrayed, the men fell down on the steps, and they were shorter than their wives. That was interesting to see. The children were odd sizes, some smaller than the others. Gatherings are inevitably family times. *Brahmacharis* have to accept that and rejoice in the fact that it's not really family, it's Vaishnava. The real family is Vaishnava, not little material units. The visiting is with a larger Vaishnava family, Prabhupada's family.

Some visitors are black magicians, and they overcome your mind when they flay at you and make you think in their own way. You think you are free but then they run after you and capture you like a bird in a cage, and you've got nothing to do but follow their commands.

The best way to observe holidays is with true friends, family/community, creating a deep congeniality. No liquor, smokes, or drugs, no flirtations except maybe among the fourteen-year-olds.

Visitors stress me out. They cause nightmares of innumerable thugs on a night trail, tracking me. But I am on a higher level, tracking them before they see me or reach me.

Visitors blow you out, steal your time and inspiration. After they leave, you lie in bed with double pillows, regurgitating what they said. The next morning you wake up again, regurgitating what they said, impressed with their words of dialogue, their aggressions, their situation. They always talk

more than you do, and you think of what you might have said, but better that you didn't. What would be the point in that, to show them that you're better than they? They tell you all the books they've written. You venture to say you've written too. They say, "Oh yes, *Japa Reform Notebook*?" You wish to drag them to your bookshelf and show them the whole array. But you only thought of that after they leave. You go to your bookshelf and look. I could have said, "Look at this, and this, and this," but maybe it wouldn't be so impressive. He said, "You have a small halo." He talks and talks about his books, so you want to talk about yours. You say they are to a wider audience, but is that true? You say they are for younger people who are willing to see things fresh. They are not deep Gaudiya philosophy, but they are truthful, opening new vistas. They are English literature, they are poetry, they are breaking false masks, they are self-deprecating and holding a mirror to everyone. They are self-confessional, self-realization. They're not like your books, and your books are not like mine.

"But we have so much in common." Yes, we dress the same and have the same spiritual master and allegiance to the same philosophy. He's scholarly, he's deep into Gaudiya philosophy with no angles. I am free-write, the roadrunner.

When two sadhus get together, do they try to impress each other? Do they play Humbler Than Thou? When two sadhus get together, do they make beautiful music? When two sadhus get together, are they real? When two *sadhus* get together, who gets the headache first? Who has the shortest hair? Who gets bored? Who pleases Krishna most? Who actually cares? Who's showing off? Who's trying to bloodsuck from the other? Why did he come here? What does he want? I'm asking you, man, who's the real host? Who's the most?

When two *sannyasis* sit, are they playing affectations?

Are their memories of Prabhupada truly from the heart? Of course, of course. Do they run like rabbits? Do they tire quickly? Are they kind to each other? These two are both physically ill. Are they easy on each other in that way too? Boy, it's getting late. Look at your watch. I tell you, this theme of visitors is not shallow. It's just you that goes shallow sometimes. It can be as deep as the ocean. It's just up to you. It's a matter of your meditation. It's up to you. Visitors means the soul and the Supersoul coming together. Visitors means God, the Archangel. Visitors means my heart beating in my ribs. Visitors means I ate too much. Visitors means my skull cage, my ribs, my soul stuff, my lack of calling out, visitors is my actually calling out.

Talking with visitors can make you cry. They ask you, "How do you feel?" You say God has forgiven you and you want your due place among the devotees. Who the heck are you to speak like that and cry? What do you know of Krishna's disposition toward you? Your guest is prompted to tell a story. When the devotees completely messed up a *Vyasa-puja* ceremony for Srila Prabhupada and he said, "Your *Vyasa-puja* ceremony is a farce," and he walked out. But hours later, he telephoned the temple and said he would give them another chance to do the ceremony the next day. So he forgives. Yeah, a good example to give to support the one I just gave that he forgave me. But I said I will always carry a stigma. I gave my explanation that the thing happened because I was too proud. Whatever the reason, some people will not forgive me and will think I am not a transparent medium, guru, not a pure devotee, not a reliable student of His Divine Grace because I disobeyed him. I broke the vows I made to him. He was standing in front of me and I said, "I don't care for you, I will do what I want for material enjoyment. I will act for Maya,

choose her over your strictures. You were the army captain for *sannyasis*, but I defy you.”

Intimate guests pull these confessions out of you. You say them again. You humiliate yourself, yet you claim, despite the defiance, that he has now forgiven you. Where do you get this information of forgiveness? Why do you tell a visitor you are cleansed of sins? Why do you presume?

His cook made a better meal than yours, so today you will eat what his cook makes. But I’m sure it will be too much for you to eat. I will only eat as much as I can. Bittersweet’s eyes will itch, and he will cry all day. He lent his guests a copy of *My Search Through Books* because he wanted to see that style. They have to speak extemporaneously before “the family” on Friday night. What shall they say?

“The multitudes have arrived,” said Govardhan Swami as he entered the room. He was surprised so many family members were gathered for dinner and for hearing him and Bittersweet Swami talk. People remarked on the good green soup and other favorites. Finally everyone finished and moved into the other room. Bittersweet Swami spoke first about how Boston got started, how the Swami sent him, and he went there wearing his blazer and carrying his duffle bag, already assured of a job. The first day there, by reading the rental ads, he got a cozy little furnished room. Gradually other devotees joined him. Then Swamiji visited in May 1968.

On the second visit of the Swami, in 1969, Govardhan Swami came to a program at Brandeis University, and he never left. Govardhan Swami told the story of his becoming a member, entranced by the Swami and the devotees, who had the answers to everything.

Glen, as he was called, told of his first questions, how there are so many swamis, how do you know which one’s

the best? Swamiji replied, "Do you want to serve God or be God?" Glen answered that he wanted to serve God, although within himself he really felt that he wanted to be God. He was overwhelmed by the Swami and thought that the Swami could read his mind, thought that he could see into his apartment, into his bathroom, where he had written in flowery handwriting, "You are God." "If you want to serve God, He will help you. But if you want to be God, he won't help you to be his competition." Something like that. Glen felt exposed. The Swami had seen his desire to be God, so he bowed his head onto the floor a long time. He surrendered. There was so much more to say, but it was 9:30 A.M., so we stopped. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna.

Within the next two days, there will be a big exodus of guests, and it will be quiet for twelve days. But Bittersweet can come to life and compile some thoughts on this marathon of meetings after meetings after meetings he has had over the last six days, what it has meant, where it has sent him spinning.

I am tired out of showing
my face to the visitor,
how many times have I done it?
Another morning meeting.

Squeeze out more conversation.
Surely more will come. But
he may see I'm tired of
it and that would be bad.
I'm supposed to sparkle,
give him something he
can use. Something he can
take with him.

Worn out. Lend him a
book. Tell him something
I learned, like *Wisdom
of the Desert*. If you've
got nothing left, admit
and just be yourself,
be with him awhile.

Visitors come as plagues, floods, hurricanes, all unwanted. Civil forces try to fight them off. Remember the story of the woman who went to Lord Buddha and prayed that he return her dead son. He said he could do it if she could bring to him alms from the house where death had never visited. Optimistically, the woman set out begging in the villages from door to door. But wherever she went, they told her, "Our son has died," or "Our grandfather has died," "My husband died here," with no exception. Not once did she visit a house where death did not occur. The woman went back to Buddha and begged forgiveness for her foolish request and asked instructions for liberation from birth and death. No more visits to the material worlds means *nirvana* is possible in attachment to the Supreme Person.

"One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world but attains to My eternal abode, O Arjuna." (*Bhagavad-gita* 4:9)

Otherwise we perpetually visit in the material world, rotating in 8,400,000 species of life in three modes of nature, suffering birth, death, disease, and old age.

Is that so? Where did you learn it? Did you see it in a bunch of lilacs in a vase? In their scent? I am very proud of

you that so many of your poems, college buddy, appeared in an international anthology, edited by Czeslaw Milosz. I am not even envious, you got your reward and I've got mine.

Visit me when I'm sick
or in prison, you'll get
great reward for that
as if you'd visited Christ,
because he loves every one of these
little ones, so don't scorn
them or their visits.

If they want to see you
don't bolt the door or
say I'm sorry we don't
have enough chairs.
If you actually don't have
anything, offer water and a mat
and sit down beside them and cry.
Tell good stories, beam your face,
ask him or her if
they'd like you to dance,
read a good book aloud,
call over the fence to borrow
some apple cider, hug them,
give them your bed.







CHAPTER NINE

WE WILL VISIT THAT MAN WHO LIVES in a shack on the hill. We have time to do so because we have no visitors for twelve days. But he's a hermit. Just as we feel relieved to have no visitors on our schedule, he probably would not like to be bothered by us. We think, "Let us go and make our visit," but what profound questions do we have to bother a recluse with? You'll just make up questions, so you'll have some copy for your newspaper.

Why not ask yourself? Inquire within. Recall what your *gurudeva* has taught, and what Sri Krishna-deva has spoken in the scriptures through the mouth of Srila Vyasa and Sukadeva. That's good enough for you. Yes it is. I will visit with my own inner sources, whom I know will never be bothered by my inquiries. They will welcome me. They will welcome me like kind fathers and close friends.

Q: How much longer do I have to be reborn into this material world?

A: As long as your heart remains attracted to matter. As long as you do not love Me and My pure devotees with uninterrupted devotion.

Q: What is meant by Lord Chaitanya in five features?

A: The Supreme Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appears as the *pancha-tattva*; that is, He appears as five features. It is stated in the *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, "Spiritually there are no differences between these five *tattvas*, for on the transcendental platform everything is absolute. Yet there are also varieties in the spiritual worlds, and in order to taste these spiritual varieties, one should distinguish between them. Let me offer my obeisances unto Lord Sri Krishna, who has manifested

Himself in five as a devotee, expansion of a devotee, incarnation of a devotee, pure devotee, and devotional energy.” (CC Adi 7.5-6)

Q: Could you explain these divisions a little further?

A: “The three predominators (Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Nityananda Prabhu, and Advaita Prabhu) are worshipable by all living entities, and the fourth principal (Sri Gadadhar) is to be understood as Their worshipper. There are innumerable pure devotees of the Lord, headed by Srivas Thakur, who are unalloyed devotees” (CC Adi 7.15–16).

Q: Does the *pancha-tattva* teach the living entities in a special way?

A: Yes, they teach in a special way by the Lord’s *sankirtan* movement of chanting Hare Krishna. This is the best method. Each of them can deliver the world by chanting imbued with *prema-bhakti*.

Q: Why do they have to appear as five? Isn’t one good enough?

A: They appear as five because that is the Lord’s pleasure. It is His mood. He likes to appear as five, so that He can be the worshipper and the worshipped. He enjoys His mellows in that number. He likes to be Lord Chaitanya and to be with Lord Nityananda and to be with Advaita. They have their special pastimes, as recorded in their biographies. He also has a special relationship with Gadadhar, Gaura-Gadadhar, and He has a special relationship with Srivas, so nothing is unnecessary. All of the moods are absolute, and all the relationships are necessary. You cannot ask why He comes as five. He comes as five because that is His desire, and it’s for the perfect blend of mellows for all people.

Q: Do I have a relationship with the *pancha-tattva*?

A: Yes, you do, and you can realize it through your spiritual master. He gives you instructions on how to enter the

sankirtan movement, and if you do it wholeheartedly, you can see the *pancha-tattva*, and you can dance with them. There's nothing to prevent you, and through the *pancha-tattva*, you can enter Radha-Krishna pastimes. But it is not a plaything. It can only be done by the topmost pure devotees, who approach through their relationship with their spiritual master with utmost seriousness and dedication to his order.

Q: I must be very fortunate to have found a spiritual master in the line of Lord Chaitanya.

A: Yes, you are very fortunate. But now you must not lose that fortune. You must take advantage of the fortune to your utmost capacity. Lord Chaitanya is very lenient, but you must be very strict.

Q: What does Lord Chaitanya think of my attitude about visitors?

A: It could use some improving. A Vaishnava is *para-dukha-dukhi*, he is compassionate to all living entities. He is glad to help everyone advance in Krishna consciousness, so your not wanting to see anyone is not so good. But it is natural that you distinguish and don't like to waste your time with hoards of guests who steal your time from your good devotional projects that you can do only in solitude. Make a balance so that you have time to pursue your works and not have all your time stolen, yet be willing to give to others the precious gift of your association so that you can help them also.

Nobody coming around Monday,
you've got no date so what
do you do to be upstanding?
I know you can't write much
or read much in an exemplary
book. There are many tempting mayic things

you could do to pass the time.

Rise to an occasion? Write
an article? Answer mail?
Those would be decent choices
and some dips into play
“to help me relax and be
who I am.”

I am a visitor at the Brooklyn temple. They are going out on *sankirtan* in the expensive city projects. They sell knick-knacks on the broad hoods of the cars, and book distributors also go out with books into the housing projects. I am not a member of this temple but a visitor. I really don't know how things are done. Devotees treat me with good humor but don't hesitate to criticize me. The leader is a devotee who used to be a treasurer at the *gurukula* in Dallas and then for a long time was an in-charge American man working in India. He particularly makes fun of me for my blunders.

My ex-wife is there and is outstanding in her expertise in mocking me. She comes up and asks me permission to sell a particular object, but her asking is just satire because she would do it anyway. I am going along in good humor at the criticism of me, as is everyone else. It seems I have no self-respect or dignity. But I'm allowed to be there in my *sannyasa* dress and march along in the *sankirtan* parade with all the *gurukulis* and the *sankirtan* devotees, and all of the devotees run out singing and participating in some way. Even a foolish visitor is allowed. Occasionally I knock an expensive knick-knack off the hood of her car, which is a loss to the temple, and they chastise me for it. I'm so clumsy. But some seem charmed by my presence, since I'm such an old veteran, and at least I'm going out with them, taking part in the *yajna* as

a visitor to their temple. A gauche visitor.

And then the word is spread among the crowd that “David has distributed a book in the projects.” This is a great piece of humor, because David has never, ever distributed a book in his life, and everyone is amused and pleased at David, who is normally so inept. He’s distributing many books.

My lack of inspiration and playfulness. Sing along to the bouncing ball. He doesn’t have the umph to begin physical exercise. He doesn’t build up his body. Which comes first, the built-up body or the procrastination, the weak body or the procrastination, the decision to lie on the bed, the fear he will rip his tight pants on the indoor rower, the excuses? (He could change into another pair of pants.) So a general lack of doingness. The same is true for traveling to solace the devotees at Gita-nagari. He lacks compassion. He lacks physical stamina. Prefers to laze around this house and do nothing at all. Lets the afternoon go by lying in bed. He feels he has been wounded by visitors. It’s been too recent since the last visitors have been here, and he’s reeling from that. And it’s too soon before the next ones are coming, so he’s anticipating that and too crippled for a solitary flow of putting on his jumpsuit and starting a long stretch of daily painting. The same is true with writing. Crazy stuff every day. Maybe I should have never given up *Every Day, Just Write*. That was a more natural thing.

Rabbits running ahead of the car. Hari talking about mice inside the ashram. I don’t like to hear about that. We’re having trouble with the Tulasi plant in my room. She looks too droopy and depressed. Someone says she doesn’t get enough light, someone says she doesn’t get enough air. Someone says he will build a covered, screened house for her so she can stay outside more. It’s a bad sign if your Tulasi

doesn't flourish. We're all going to Mexico, but it will take some time to make the move. I told Ollie to sell the house in Vrindavan. When I go to Vrindavan, I can stay somewhere else. They're always thinking I will need to pass away there. Surely we could get another place. We're not using it now. He has a serious buyer. Kavi Swami writes to me that most of my free writing shouldn't be published. I tell him the young people think it's cool.

How do you go all around India
posing for pictures, your wife's teeth
are beautiful, your daughter's face is
turning oval and individual. And you
criticize me in many ways but say
you love me. You don't want to be
ostracized by my group of disciples.

I say you won't be but just
act respectfully, that is Vaishnava etiquette
photos sent of him and wife and daughter from
strange places in India,
posing against gigantic statues.

All the notes. We busted through.
Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam required
too much daily research, I went
to EJW. Stayed for seventy-two
volumes. Said "it's not
a diary." Then we stopped.

Busting through on visitors
opossums, skunks, give them
a wide berth, a deer looms

up, the power of the holy name
chanted internally can rearrange
yourself and purge out
all dirty desires.

If performed with attention
and single-minded love for
Govinda, no easy accomplishment.
Lie flat before Him, begging
He remove the swarm
of entangled thoughts.

Reeling from the last visitor
and anticipating the next.
It's like having a job,
going to work. But I'm supposed
to be retired, doing what I want,
right? Alone to write, paint,
or sit back in my boat and think.
Yes, my counselor said, but
do you remember weeks ago
saying you were bored?
So with intimate friends I'm happy
not with superficial guests it's a strain.
But a duty. Maybe we can set up
a season when you see them,
one month in the year
to see them all
and other time is to yourself.
You know that can't be arranged like that,
they come flying in, like UFOs,
put your foot down: this
is my off-season.

I tried to come out to the writing shack this morning at pitch-black 5:00 A.M. I almost stepped off an edge where the boardwalk ends. Felt my foot dangling in space. Made it back home for a flashlight. Twenty minutes wasted in that way, and I wasn't chanting Hare Krishna, just imagining myself falling into a pit and breaking an ankle or leg in the utter darkness.

Aim guruve namah. What does it mean? I worship my spiritual master. *Aim gurudevaya vidmahe, krishna nandaya dimahi.* He enthuses us because he is a *maha-bhagavat*. A small ball of dirt-wax from your ear is a secret, a scab from your nostril is another secret. You keep track of your coded secrets known only to you while you say the *gayatri*. I want the most important attention to be fixed on the *guru gayatri*. That's my stage of devotional service where attention is most important. The guru's mercy is everything to me now. I can't hitch directly onto *gaura* or *krishnaya* or the *gopis*, not those *bhavas*. In *Jaiva Dharma*, the spiritual master asks his advanced disciple, "What do you like to do in your meditation?" The uncle disciple replies, "Gurudeva, I like to think I am serving Lalita-devi. I like to make flowers and give them to her to give them to Radharani." The guru approves and tells him to go ahead and do that. Then he asks the nephew of the uncle. That nephew says, "Gurudeva, I like to think I am serving Subal and managing the cows for Krishna." The guru approves and tells him to meditate on that service. Astounding perspectives. And yet when they are alone, the uncle and nephew are still thinking about activities of practical living. The uncle doesn't know whether he should leave his family. It might be too steel-hearted to wander like a mendicant, he thinks to himself. It might be better to stay at home. The nephew is wondering too whether he should get married like his mother wants him to or whether he should live as a

mendicant. They decide to ask *gurudeva* what is best to do.

It is time to enter the house
and tell your man what you want
for breakfast. Stay awake:
the most important thing is to
address the Lord by His holy name.

It does no good to say
it mechanically. It must be
felt with ardor for whom
you are addressing. Then you
make greater strides
than by any other spiritual
method. So simple,
Krishna has empowered it.

It will be different when we are in Mexico. Plenty of
water for flowering gardens at the hacienda.

That electric guitar, "The Sermon," the Hammond
organ and Jimmy Smith playing it. I'm going into the house
now. I hope you enjoyed the moments together, I felt a pres-
ence with me as if I weren't alone. That's nice. But so sleepy.
I can't keep it up.

A ghostly presence of maybe my sister was in the room
enjoying "The Sermon" and liking the statues of Thérèse of
Lisieux, of Francis of Assisi. Did she think her little brother
was so degraded he smoked cigarettes and preached mind-
control rituals against the Pope's infallibility?

No, he's like he always was, three years younger than
you, praying for heaven and doing his strange ways, no wife,
a priest imperfect but trying.







CHAPTER TEN

BITTER SWAMI'S STOPPING THE FLOW OF E-MAILS with the ombudsman. B.S. said, "I'm stopping for now my campaign to seek permission from the Executive Committee to give second initiation to my first-initiated disciples. I am telling them to seek *diksha* from another ISKCON guru." The ombudsman said, "I only did this out of service and concern for you. I hope you are not too disappointed." Bittersweet Swami said, "Thank you for being a caring, friendly ombudsman."

He thinks the disciples will be disappointed, and he is too. He keeps thinking of more first initiates who haven't received second initiation. It's a sad story he has to tell them. Result of punishment; may they keep their faith in him.

They decided not to have a big *Vyasa-puja* celebration for Bittersweet Swami on his birthday. The main reason is he lives in a very isolated location. It would be hard to provide accommodations for guests. They would have to travel a great distance, stay in a hotel, and he couldn't give them a personal meeting. *Vyasa-puja* celebrations without personal meetings are more acceptable when the venue is in a centrally located place, in a big hall, with accommodations for a hundred people. But Philo is made for getting away from people. The guests would be disappointed to make such an austere trek and only get eye contact and a couple of lectures from the spiritual master. They'd want to talk to him privately, but it wouldn't be possible, so they're calling it off. Maybe next year in San Miguel.

Thinking of you. Up so early in the morning. Swami

Chips walks like Frankenstein because of his injuries, and he hasn't valiantly worked his way out of it by intense physical therapy. Pitiful to look at, creature with flashlight, 4:30 A.M., making his way to the writing shack.

So what's happening, man? We are reading in different books. In "Prayers by the Demigods to Krishna in Devaki's Womb," Tenth Canto, Second Chapter, verse 33, the *devas* say, "Dear Lord, even if your pure devotee falls down, it is not like the falldown of an ordinary man." The *acharya's* commentary says a pure devotee's falldown enables him to come closer to the Lord, where he increases his *prema* and steps on the head of death. That's because of his intense love of the Lord, and thus the reaction to falldown of a *jnani* is different. Govinda dasa entered the room after we had already read that verse, but I asked him to read it back again, since he has to deal with so much of this. Later he thanked me for protecting him.

I know a man who
never fell down from a roof.
He was happy in his original teeth,
He took a vow of celibacy
and kept it all his life.
He won a silver medal for
combat in attendance
at all the meetings and festivals.

He was orthodox
wore his uniform at all times
and never went a day
without sixteen *japa* rounds
and three *gayatris*.
He attended *guru-puja*

in the temple, and he gave
or listened to the lecture.
Did outside lectures whenever asked.
His health was good.

One day he died unexpectedly
but homages poured
in and people considered him
passed on to auspicious company
in a spiritual abode or
joined Prabhupada,
unless there was something
troubling him that no one
even knew about
beneath his veneer.

Must have been here before. This morning the doctor visits by phone, asks me, "How are you feeling?" It's a ten-minute phone call at most. Soon he says, "So I will call you next Sunday?" It's hard to think of new things to tell him. Everything is steady. I am not exercising, not painting, I have some constipation, pass every other day, frequent urination.

Writing shack is a good place to be after you bloody missed the *gayatri*. The gigantic force of the mind is many-faceted, it's not an army tank going one way, but it spins and chops all over the place, doesn't even know where it's going unless you take time to notice, and then it has flown off on another crash course, dwelling on a tidbit of an old movie or your father dressed in his naval officer's uniform, or in the midst of your crisis in Wicklow.... Your eyelids lower sleepily as you topple on a mechanical *gayatri*, the Mad Hatter is a

dangerous character wearing bell bottom trousers and three playing cards tucked in the band of his top hat. Shall we have that? Alice does not take any insults from them, she can get saucy because she's always a human being with a suspicion that they are all illusory. Make those letters larger so I can see them, please, my vision is getting weaker.

Did you know that I am undergoing many *visits* to the dentists? He's not even called a dentist but another fancy name, and not just one specialist, but I also go to see a surgeon who's figuring out if I'm eligible to take implants into my gums and bones.

It's a long, expensive process. The visits are at least two weeks apart, it's maddening how they bill you and send you from one specialist to another and give you written instructions telling you exactly what the plan is, and you sign statements that are not obligatory but show that you understand what they are doing and how much it costs.

It takes us two hours to reach the office in Santa Rosa, and the same to return. Eggelston and Jarvis. We won't know until late in the game how many implants my mouth can hold, and thus how much it will cost and how much improvement it will bring to my eating process. The more you pay, the better it will be. The visits, including healing of surgery, wearing of false dentures, etc., may drag on for six months. Sometimes when I go I don't even see the dentist, just the technicians. They are always pleasant, but sometimes they are different ones, so I don't even get to know them. They are aware that for the average person, a visit to the dentist is not a pleasant thing, so they try to make it as bearable as possible by smiles, cheerful demeanors, and calling you by your first name.

"Bittersweet?"

“Yes?”

“You can come in.”

“Now?”

“Yes. Sit in a chair. Take out your dentures.” They are going to make a model of them today. Lots of people working here at the office. You have to pay high fees to cover all the charges.

It keeps the mind active to work
with the youngsters. Keeps you awake
and so he did.

The best monks at Mount Athos
yet they were not mature in
silent meditation.

He liked the challenge
they presented because truthfully
even though he was the elder,
He too had a youthful monkey-
mind. Together they worked on
silence, solitude
in the inner prayer.

He could spot their grosser wrestlings
with the mind and tell them “Whoa!”
Apply the reins gradually,
turn to *harinam* constantly
in a humble mood.

Stephen means “crown prince,” doesn’t it? High prince.
But his birth lines don’t show aristocracy. Lower middle class,
fighting up the ladder to middle class by hard work in the fire
department. Keep his head straight on compass. If he didn’t

go to church, at least his wife went for him.

He saw too many deaths in the war to believe in God. But his kids should go to church with their mother, that was the double standard. What a rotten hypocrisy. Is there God for some and not for him? Why did they have to go but not he? Go walk a mile through the village to the St. Clare's Church and make your visit to God and the Father and the Holy Spirit and hear the sermon, shoot your Sunday morning in that way.

Another visitor: Vedanta dasa. I've been avoiding him for many years. When Govardhan Swami visited here, I was telling him about my avoiding techniques, but then he met Vedanta dasa and told him. Just now Govardhan Swami phoned me and said that Vedanta dasa wants to see me. In other words, Govardhan Swami has trapped me. So I submitted and said I am open to a visit. After all, it's not such a terrible thing.

What Vedanta dasa does is travel around interviewing Prabhupada disciples for their memories of A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. He gets them on camera for about an hour. I should have done it earlier, before my face bloated out and before my chin became so saggy—and before my memory became so withered. But I'm sure I can still go around the block another time, especially with early-days memories. This is in addition to the lady, Surya, from the Oxford University project, who is going to do a longer interview for an oral history of ISKCON they are making.

I suppose I should be glad at the opportunity to talk about things related to Krishna that I have been through. One devotee told a reporter that he dropped out of studying history at the university because he decided he wanted to make religious history. This seemed like a snappy answer at

the time, and it's the choice that I have made too—to make religious history. So I might as well admit it and tell it.

But if Bittersweet Swami really doesn't want visitors, why didn't he have the guts to say “No” to these impending interviews? They were not at all on the schedule, and now they're suddenly on the radar for quick landings.

Answers: Because his recent visitor and friend Govardhan Swami arranged it all, and he didn't want to disappoint him by appearing to be too extreme a recluse. Govardhan Swami just wrapped it up in a package and delivered it as a *fait accompli*. There was no wriggling out of it, so it seemed. Govardhan Swami is just so friendly and cuddly cozy that he gets you in a trap before you even know it.

He made it sound so nice, describing Surya as a very humble woman who won't take any trouble, she'll be very respectful, all she wants is your oral history of ISKCON as you remember it. But then in the “fine print” he went on to say that she spent three days with some devotees, just squeezing them for as much as they wanted to say. Well, she's not going to squeeze my lemon for three days.

As for Vedanta dasa, I'll just give him an hour with the same old chestnuts I give, but I'll try to give them in a feeling way, dear memories of Prabhupada. I shouldn't gripe about it, it's an honor. See it that way. Don't take it as “oh shit, two more visits.” Think of it as an honor that people want to come and record your memories of religious history. They consider you very special, and they want to record you and video you for people of the future.

Be humble and give them the best. If they didn't come, you'd just sit around moping and sleeping, so this is a better use of your time. The only writing you do is in the morning.

Newspaper: So excited his record company
found the tapes of Trane and Monk
and could scoop everyone
with a very rare "lost" recording
from Carnegie Hall. Think of the
money and prestige and service
to the world of jazz. His label
had only one other Coltrane and
Monk record, and now this discovery
from the vaults of the national archives.
Oh boy! He was gloating and gleaming
at his good luck.

But you can't live forever on that
treasure find. You still have to
sink into the sea with only
your great discovery and all
the records and income
it will bring in.

That's the way the game of life is played
mortality dive. Speak excitedly on the radio
stuff a lot of money in your pockets
and in your obit it's printed
in the *Times*:
"John Fevers, record producer,
seventy-six years old."

The obits, that's where it's at.
horror movie ads: "The Venom:
never hurt anyone until he died."
New Orleans. "It will never be the
same." What if they had to evacuate

NYC? Impossible.

Shastric sayings: A guest is God. He should stay for as long as it takes to milk a cow.

Iron Will reached across the finish line of the five-hundred-mile Winnipeg–St. Paul dog sled race and broke the ribbon—first place! Just a few inches before the second-place contender. But he was first, clearly. And all the judges nodded soberly while Iron Will’s fans went wild and waved their American flags.

The boy was thoroughly exhausted, patched with blood, and so were his sled dogs. Iron Will, the American hero, played up in the first pages of the newspapers, even over the news that America was about to enter World War I. A Walt Disney movie. No visitors, so we did as we pleased. Sweet Swami agreed to be interviewed by two different parties, but now *they* are stalling, consulting their schedules, and they will get back to us when they are available.

Do you know what the *dasa mula* is? A *sadhu* from a Gaudiya *math* once challenged me. When I said I didn’t know, he said I was no Vaishnava, because all Gaudiya Vaishnavas knew *dasa mula*. I have a book now titled *Dasa Mula*. It’s something Srila Prabhupada didn’t teach per se. It’s a catechism of certain Vaishnava truths lined up and philosophically explained. It turns out that I do know these “ten truths,” but Srila Prabhupada didn’t teach them in the exact order.

The first is that the supreme truth is a Supreme Being. There’s a certain arbitrariness to them and why they are put in this order. I don’t know who originally did it. Truths can be found in other studies sprinkled throughout the *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. So I remember seeing

the *dasa mula* and remembering I was a little peeved at the Gaudiya math *sadhu* for saying I was not a member of the Gaudiya *sampradaya* by not knowing the *dasa mula* by rote. What about the six favorable and six unfavorable qualities of a devotee according to Rupa Goswami? The twenty-six qualities of a Vaishnava, the sixty-four qualities of Sri Krishna, Bhaktivinode Thakur's items of *sharanagati*? On and on.

They have left messages, and now they appear to be playing hard to get. But I am sure they will turn up soon. Meanwhile, the definite three-week guest is looming on the horizon, September 15. I'm shy to take him on, don't know exactly how to do it. He's a disciple, but highly placed. Don't know how to engage him, instruct him, bring him close, make his time worthwhile. His name is Chaitanya.

Ride on your days and say on
the phone to your buddy that your
feeling all right. Your unexercised
body gets pushed around in a wheel-
chair an hour so you can stay awake
on a "*japa* ride."

Tell your friend you miss him
but if he needs to stay in Mexico
to do work, let him. I felt
sorry I said that. Bring him
back. We all need to regather
regularly. I mean the family.

Bring him back
and then he gets recharged
to go out again.
I miss him for

reading poems, cutting my nails,
seeing in the morning,
hugging,
talking in an intimate way.

When no one comes, I don't do anything? Not true. Answer letters, cast longing glances at the writing pad, and just a passing glance at the painting area, enough to tell you don't have the strength. A *japa* ride on the wheelchair. Last days I did indoor rowing, leg press, read with manuscript to get a taste for the current writing. Extra naps, possibly an extra writing session. But when visitors actually come, as they do on the 19th and a dentist on the 21st, visitor on the 29th... then you can't do that schedule. You have to build one around meeting them. Personal meeting. Try to keep it good and deep. Personal. Yet you reject every step of it rather than embracing and compassion. And know that it will come back to you.

As you use your talent in Krishna consciousness, you'll be given time later to express generosity and realization. If you can actually give time in a field, working to learning the art of giving.

You'd better be careful. I stepped out of the shower at 4:00 A.M. naked, and was accosted by a guest. He said, "Why aren't you dressed?" I said, "Why are you barging in here at this hour? You are a trespasser!" I'm just waking from a dream. What was in your dream?

A man wants to rationally perceive
Krishna consciousness beyond mere faith. "As
you see a car or tree or
the sky, I want to know it like that,

by rational perception.”
It doesn’t sound like something
we can do very soon.
It’ll have to wait.

Even mere faith is hard enough.
Coming to the pure heart of a *bhakta*.

I just believe it because the *Gita* says so.
The species count is eight million four hundred thousand—
those numbers have been counted,
you just take them on faith
you can’t count them on your own.

Krishna will occasionally visit in a shadow form a neophyte devotee who chants His names with offenses. The relationship of the name and the devotee is much stronger when the devotee has surrendered to the holy names and is chanting seriously without motivation or interruption. The latter type of chanting is sometimes called shadow of *prema*, and the former is called a punch in the face from *maya*.

Why? Because you are gradually decreasing your taste and number, and you don’t associate with good chanters. Having many visitors doesn’t help in the all-important *yajna* of *harinam* but may bring one anxiety that he can’t give proper attention and space for calm, reflective *harinam*. “Oh when are they coming? When do we have to pick them up at the airport?” And then the actual meetings, the time gobbled up, the talk.

Why do you say “shy”? He’s so gentle and shy himself. But he’s deep, and he’s so much a man of integrity. He wants

to know how I could have made such a mistake and how he can trust me now. I don't think he wants a whole confession, but he wants an explanation, and I'm prepared to give it. But it's hard.

At the same time...you have to preserve the honor of your feeling your present recovery...and yet admit to the degradation. Nanda would say, "No, don't say it was degradation." I'll ask him how he would present it. Yeah, and ask him how I can get through three weeks of this. What opportunities will Krishna give us to be together? We can't just give him menial jobs. Why does a guest come here? It's really awkward. They want to see me, they want to associate with me. But I don't know how to give them association. "Here, push this tack into the wall while I hold a calendar up. Please undo my shoelaces from my shoes. Please read from the *shastra* to me while I eat my lunch."

We will get through it, but Chaitanya is going to be one of the hardest guests. I could just ignore him and let the others give him some kind of work, but that would be disappointing for him. How can I play or work with him in a way that would employ him as a servant or a secretary? I can't. He's not that confidential or intimate.

At least one talk with him, maybe more. Ask him about his plans and ambitions. It's rare to have these conversations, even if they're gropings. I groped when the swamis were here, but the difference is I know them better and I could always engage in persiflage with them when we ran out of things to say. But he's more serious, and I'm less intimate and less familiar with him. More seems to be at stake in bonding with him, and I don't want to lose that chance.

Be calm over petty things
incessant prayer of the heart

samadaya mano hrđi

bring the intelligence down to
the mind and bring them
into the heart
and stand before God. Do you
know what that means?
Not truly but it sounds
very good, and I think of it
occasionally.

Don't be afraid of guests
think of the almighty
trust the Supersoul
chant the holy names
be yourself.

Work for Prabhupada.
Some of it is not so enjoyable,
tapasya. You can do that
too, and come out graced
stronger, and if you have to,
meet whom he orders
and leave out the rest.





CHAPTER ELEVEN

BITTERSWEET IS MAKING SUCH A BIG ANXIETY CASE out of Chaitanya's visit. He's making the three-week visit seem like one and a half years. He's just got to calm down about it. Chaitanya's coming to rebound. He's not an enemy. Sure, he wants some time, and Bittersweet's got to give it to him. But there's a limit to what he can give, and he has to tell Chaitanya that.

Do you want visitors or not? This seems to be a very important issue for you, and you haven't solved it yet.

Swami Bittersweet's birthday party is a few months ahead, but he's already plunged into the paradox: whether to invite a very minimum number of persons, or a few more than that. In any case, there are not many accommodations here, and he could not give people special attention that would warrant their traveling such a great distance and staying in hotels. So chop it down to as many as you can count on your fingers, if possible. Don't let others know, and if they ask, turn them away. And what will you do with those who come? No more playing music and improvising speech on top of it. No more showing paintings and talking about it. Besides, I haven't painted any new pictures.

Talking to music is too controversial. Don't wear Levis and a cowboy shirt. It doesn't look as becoming as the tangerine-dyed *sannyasi* clothes. You've been hearing all that *Jaiva Dharma*. Could you make something out of that? No, I don't think so. Nanda likes the idea of your speaking and commenting from your books, a night with the author. That's good when you have the right material and you're turned

on for high comments. Then at birthday parties, you often ask the disciples to speak something. Maybe ask them how they came through the crisis of faith and landed on my side. Bring it all out.

Tell them how you feel. I am very repentant, but I was angry at how the GBC treated me and how it became a scandal on the Internet, with people saying the scandal was all the result of Bittersweet's writing in spontaneous prose and his outsider art. There was really no connection to that. Whatever it was, it was due to some lack. Maybe it was *maya* after so many years of enforced perfection in celibacy. It was the influence of medicine. It was deliberate seduction of the other party. Fifty percent—fifty percent. The swami's pride at his Krishna consciousness, his offenses to other devotees and to the holy names. Do you really want to do this? It might be better not to say anything about this.

Or you might ask them how they handled it when they first heard the news. Did they lose faith? Did they then regain it by *shastra* and by their realizing how much their spiritual master did for them and how he was a man who loved them? Did they regain it by someone preaching to them?

In the morning, do something more affirmative. Show them you're healthy. Tell them the news of Mexico and books you're writing.

The sled dog's leg and side were cut open
by a savage bite from another dog. The
boy took out his gun to put his dog out of
misery but instead he applied a poultice
on the open wound while the white dog,
the leader
of his pack, whimpered.

From then on the dog could not lead, but he was carried beside the boy on the sled while he slowly recovered. This was Iron Will, the seventeen-year-old American, racing the five hundred miles from Winnipeg to St. Paul to save his family's farm with the \$10,000 prize.

We cried tears at his determination, his whistle to which the dogs responded, the evil man who tried to cheat him the Indian sage who taught him, "When you are in fear think of the Creator."

It was just a movie leaving us shocked and remembering it days later, how the boy fell down just before the finish line but remembered the Indian chant, "Trust your dogs and remember the Creator."

Everything you see is Me. You are that too. I am not this body; I am Brahman, spirit soul. The heroes were reciting the *maha-vakyas* before going to war. They were combing out their long hair the night before the battle of sure death. Prostitutes came to them, and men dispensing get-high drugs. .

The African Queen maneuvered under the sight of the German fort. The soldiers opened fire on them. One shot disconnected the steam pipe line, but Bogey reconnected it with duct tape. Hepburn stayed out of sight and steered the

rudder; Most of the soldiers were black conscripts, but one man was a sharpshooter German, who came closer to the shore and lined up the boat in the crosshairs of his telescope. He looked into the sights at the last, perfect moment, just as the African Queen was moving under a branch, but the sun rose at that moment, and the officer's vision in the gun was ruined. The Queen had passed through safely, beyond reach of the fort.

Today Bittersweet is wearing comfortable clothes, sweat-pants and sneakers and a violet L. L. Bean sweater, which is an atrocious color. But the clothes are definitely relaxed. I *feel* relaxed in it. However, the uniformed vocational man is expected to dress in the uniform of his dress code. In cities like Norfolk, military police roam the streets looking to catch military men who are out of dress code. They arrest them and put them in screened cars and take them back to the base for punishment. Can a monk stay in his own monastery, recollected in prayer and dressing as he feels? If a visitor comes and that visitor then leaves and tells others, "I saw him out of uniform, and he wasn't wearing *tilak*. He did not look like the Vaishnava as described in books like *Jaiva Dharma*"? That is one of the reasons I don't like visitors. You can't be yourself. You have to put on an act: "Oh welcome, my dear friend. It's so nice to see you. It's so nice preparing for you and sharing time with you. So good to see you."

Bad John couldn't get it right.
He was a cool guy but drank wine
and played it wrong. His music was
good. He played "Bad John" in
the *baddest* way with Grant Green
and Lou Donaldson and John Patton
on the organ.

These men all attended the *ratha-yatra*
in Cleveland and received soul plates
of mercy *prasadam*. "This is good!"
they declared. Does that make them
devotees? Yes, anyone who looks at
or smells or touches, eats the
holy *prasadam* of Jagannath or if anyone
hears the holy names and likes it
what to speak of anyone
who joins in on the *sankirtan*
chorus—they gain liberation

from all sins of a lifetime.

Visitors in boots up to their waists brandishing swords
were calling out, "Where is Bittersweet's chicken coop? Where
is he hiding?" They hold them off at the big house and phone
me. "Bittersweet, your visitor is here, just as you asked."

"But that was months ago. Now he's actually here. Can
you tell him I don't want to actually see him? I have to go to
the dentist the day after tomorrow."

"But what about now and tomorrow? What do you
want him to do? Why don't you see him and speak to him?
He has come a long way."

"I have come a long way also, I have nothing really to
give. I just want him to stay on my side, but I don't want to
say, 'Please stay with me.'"

"I'm afraid you're going to have to say that. You're going
to have to be self-effulgent and win him over. We're send-
ing him down right now, so don't run away. And put on the
clothes you think are best. You've got five minutes."

"Please make it ten minutes."

“Bittersweet, don’t be such a chicken.”

Sweet Swami makes a last-minute decision. He’ll be in a stronger position if he wears *dhori-kurta* and saffron upper piece. Superman, not Clark Kent.

DREAM:

I was in the hands of an Indian man whom I had insulted. He had me by the arm in the street. He was telling me how he was going to take his revenge on me. I was going to have to carry out a task, and there was no getting out of it. I had to do something, which was explained in a big paper that he handed me, and I had to bring it back to him by tonight, not tomorrow, but tonight. Then he demonstrated to me different ways in which he was expert, intelligent, cruel, so that I would be convinced there was no way out of serving him. Different people passed us on the street and saw my plight but could not help me. Finally, as a parting gesture, he demonstrated to me the various ways in which he was expert in military arts, so that he would devastate me if I tried not to bend to his will. He was famous for these arts, and no one would oppose him. As he spoke, all I was thinking of was getting out of his hands. I was not so much afraid of him or thinking of alternative ways of acting but just simply getting free of his clutches. Now in the morning, awake, I’m thinking of myself, not Krishna’s devotee.

Vasudeva was trying to stop Kamsa from killing Devaki after Kamsa heard a voice in the sky. Vasudeva tried different arguments, but Kamsa had his sword raised and was convinced that he should kill Devaki because he heard a voice in the sky saying that the eighth child of Devaki and Vasudeva would kill him. Therefore, Vasudeva simply wanted to get Devaki free from him and see how fate would act in the future. I too was depending on fate to act in the future,

because there was nothing I could do to defeat this Indian man right now. I was also determined not to give him the completed paper tonight. I would rebel in that because I didn't think I could do it anyway, so I agreed to do the paper, and he let me go. After letting me go, a few people came up to me and expressed their sympathies and attempted to help. But I realized they were not very expert.

I told them, "What could you do against that man? He is far more powerful than you." They admitted that that was true, and they walked away. The dream ends this way, with me in temporary freedom but living in the same vicinity as this monster who will come for me the next day and ask if I had filled out his paper, and if not, he would exact out his punishment. I am somehow depending on Krishna in a dumb way, thinking that He will save me, but I don't know what He will do. I have a dumb loyalty to Him to save me. When I wake, I must gather my poor wits and think of how to become eligible for a save by my Lord. Is this in anyway connected with tomorrow's visitor? The visitor is inevitable, but maybe I can make it not so much of a menace in my mind.

This country was originally built on gregarious meetings with the native Indians. The white intruders went out with loudmouths to the chiefs, who highly respected the gun-toting, sword-bearing gods. Traded their land for ridiculously low prices, Manhattan for beads and trinkets amounting to \$24. The greatest cheaters in the world. Better to have kept to themselves. Broken promises. Wars. Drive the red man off his land.

Pray in their hypocrite churches while forcing the superior white way on the Indian tribes.

Similarly, when Bittersweet Swami was sent to preach in countries inimical to Krishna consciousness, he received

cold receptions and in some places he was barely tolerated. In some cases, he was not allowed to stay at all. Other places were good. America was wide open, the American Indian immigrants came, and the young Americans. Russia was very good after the death of the Soviet Union. Roots were slow to establish themselves.

But you have to try to make commerce. Not keeping alone. That's what they told him. But whenever Bittersweet Swami was thrust into a crowd for meetings, for purchasing Manhattan, or for other things, discussing columns of money to be paid to others, or socializing, he felt most alone at the senior prom. Better to forget all that. Come stay with Lord Krishna: My dear Lord Krishna, please forgive me, a sinner. You mean you are going to ignore what the other person is saying and just say your prayer? No, but whenever the favorable chance comes, I will go inward and pray, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, and pay attention to it.

So why do you complain if you can hear
the grand organ of Bach and win a scholarship
for playing it after many years of discipline?

You are worried it's not Vaishnava enough
to please a spiritual master? Certainly Bach
was spiritual
but it was Christian. Should
I have learned Indian classical music?

I chose this because my mother started me on
it at five years old. She said, "Pick a
musical instrument." I thought of the violin,
but organ music seemed more serious

and was available in the church.
And ten years later, I am a
serious recognized student, and although
it's not a Vaishnava thing, yet I love
it. It's my thing, my accomplishment
and it will be my career in life, playing
in orchestras

and friends with symphony
musicians who rehearse together
under the baton of a maestro.

I will still have time and interest (I hope)
to chant on beads and read
Krishna conscious books.

But my mother figured
when I was young I'd have to be
self-sufficient when I
grew up—the Hare Krishna movement doesn't
make you ready to face
the world, but I am ready.

Chaitanya arrives today, 4:00 P.M. Will he have to eat his meals in the terrible *brahmachari* ashram with Deepak and Hari? They have grains and canned food and fruits all out open on the shelves, and the place is mouse-ridden, and they have four "Have-a-Heart" mouse traps, and the cat, Haribol, keeps coming in to have his meals, and then he leaves. The place has a bad odor to it. I go there to eat my supper just to be with the boys and to hear the reading, but I don't want to subject Chaitanya to all this, to have to take all his meals there. What else can we do? Give him his meals

alone in his room? That would be odd. I wouldn't want him eating breakfast and lunch with me, and I plea that I don't have a big enough table. Sometimes he could eat with the family of Govinda, but not always. He comes from such a clean and *pukka* place (like the first-class brick top road) that I hate thinking of him slumming here with the room jammed with supplies, open rice bags on the floor, the food bag for the cat, the food bowl for the cat, the cat himself entering and exiting, no real cleanliness, and all of it so different from the place where Chaitanya comes from.

Everything is me, and I'm embarrassed for the guest because I'm responsible for everything. It's good enough for me here. I can take it in stride, but I feel it will be jarring to him. That is some of the worst things you get with a guest. You think your house and children and personnel and food won't be up to their standard, and they will go away and tell other people about it. "I saw Bittersweet taking supper in his filthy house, and I suspect he only wore his saffron robes because I was there. And I saw movies in his room, video, jazz and classical CDs, and he didn't play *bhajans* while we were there, and the place was a great mess compared to our place. Most of the people didn't wear *tilak*. They didn't have any central temple or morning program." He wouldn't be able to empathize with the kind of place it is, the meaningfulness.

Dedicated to a genius
he must have been thinking of the one
source from which all little brilliant ones come
shine awhile and go out.

Some of them lead pious lives, some
are tragic wastes but are mere sparks
from the everlasting flame.

Science versus spirit. Blow up the rockets
they originally did not exist.

I wish to say triumphant for
God and spirit soul that they
are not ghosts and all is
not mechanistic belief
in speculative
change science lords.

Veda is not ghosts
but has to be accepted a priori
and then applied.

Stay with me, clouds. Carry lunch back to school, except
in disaster when school is closed. You were young. Stay with
me, clouds, get the woods, dedicated to a genius, Krishna.

So nervous I could die. Mind wandered to terrible
events of the past and things that never happened—while
waiting for the guest. Finally he arrived. I thought how I *will*
die one day. In Mexico? Who will be there to help me in the
last hours? “Pray for us now and at the hour of our death.”
Tragic background. Wake up! Get up and go to the smelly
little ashram and take the little meal we are offering to our
guest. Just be humble. This is all we have. Please share it with
us and hear the reading.

Kettle drums and flowers dropped from the sky by
demigods at the time of Krishna’s birth. Nanda met Vasudeva
in Mathura at the time for paying taxes. They spoke in a
friendly way, and Vasudeva was glad to hear that Krishna

was safe. But he told Nanda, "If you have finished paying taxes, you'd better get home to Gokula because there may be some bad omens occurring there." Nanda hooked up his oxen, and along with the other cowherd men they returned at once to Gokula. The first demon that Krishna killed was Putana. She appeared as a most beautiful woman, and was allowed entrance into the house and maternity ward of Mother Yashoda and the other women.

The men were attracted to her also. She picked up baby Krishna. In actuality she was a demon who was circling Gokula and killing baby children on the order of Kamsa. She had smeared her nipple with a deadly poison. She looked into Krishna's crib, where He looked like a fire covered with ashes. His eyes were closed. She picked Him up, and Krishna angrily grabbed her nipple and sucked out her life air, as well as the poison. She screamed, "Leave me! Leave me, child!," but Krishna exposed her demonic form, which spread out all over the landscape of Gokula, smashing trees and gardens, including the garden just outside Kamsa's house.

We were reading this pastime at dinner last night in the company of our new guest, Chaitanya. He seems calm and grateful and humble, but I'm stressed and always wondering what to do next regarding him. I am consulting Govinda and trying to think what's best. Should I eat lunch with Chaitanya? Should he eat lunch alone? Should I eat supper with him? When should I have a long talk with him? Should I ask about his fidelity? Should I skip that topic? Should I just leave him alone and stay by myself? No, you can't do that. You can't ignore a guest. But what to do for the three weeks?

If it's any consolation to you, Bittersweet, Chaitanya has brought his laptop computer with him. He is in charge of sixteen departments at his temple, so he'll probably be occupied keeping in touch. Govinda said to Sweet, "A devotee

is never without anything to do. He can always chant or read. So why are you so worried?" I am worried because I just feel responsible. Responsible that we make the most out of bonding with him and that he goes away feeling that he got what he wanted here. Like it says on one of the products in the bathroom, "Satisfaction guarantee." But I wish it would happen without my having to work so much for it, by others doing it. But he's a VIP.

Get your mind off that one single track of worry.
There are so many things you can do.
I'd like you to
pick blackberries or say the prayers
the hands at work the mind on God.

Don't dwell so much on "What's my guest doing at this moment?" He's a big man and there are others who can take care of him.

Relax and work on your opus,
try to do physical exercise and bring
your weight down, "Pray constantly,"
stop the *manah-ratena* merry-go-round
of the mind's fantasies. Go real.

These are not orders because I know
I can't push you. They are constant
suggestions for your good. Turn
to Krishna, His holy names, and brief
prayer name will clear the screen
of dirt and phantasmagoria.
Be a real *sannyasi*.







CHAPTER TWELVE

A MINOR NERVOUS BREAKDOWN from trying to treat Chaitanya as a peer. But when I offer him a chair, he sits on the floor. I go to his house, the guesthouse, to talk to him rather than call him to my house. Dinner is served at his house. We talk of Bittersweet's fall. Chaitanya says one wants to see the guru as a hero. But if after forty years of good service he has one small mistake, we shouldn't throw him out.

Bittersweet agrees with this line of thinking and says he did not run away with money or blaspheme the spiritual master afterwards. He picked himself up. He's still a spiritual master.

"Yes," Chaitanya says, "if you had done this years ago, they would have thrown you out."

I quote the favorable *shastra*, *api-cet suduracaco*, "The faults of a pure devotee are like spots on the moon, the fall-down of a devotee is not like that of an ordinary person," etc. So Chaitanya seems to accept him. Not much more to say. They speak of other things related. How some of his disciples criticize his avant-garde writing and art.

Chaitanya: "Do you mean they have a too narrow vision of Krishna consciousness?" Yes. Chaitanya: "Srila Prabhupada said be who you are and add Krishna to it." They both give examples. They fall into a wild tangent— Pandit Swami and Chaitanya's accepting the theory that the U.S. took part in the blowing up of the World Trade Center by setting off explosions within the building exactly when the planes crashed into the towers! Climbed out of that one with great difficulty and spoke again on the point that one can make different offerings, like Bittersweet's, to the spiritual master.

But then I get a headache later in the day. Couldn't contact any of my caretakers to discuss it. Took a pill on my own decision. I could see my reactions to Chaitanya's presence, my behavior about it is causing me trouble. Part of it is the pressure I feel I'm performing for my disciple because I want to make a good impression for him that he will tell others when he gets back to Europe.

Govinda finally came when I was in my room lying on my back waiting for the pill to kick in. He sat beside me with soothing advice. He told me the story of the time he went out on book distribution in some isolated hill country of Italy. He said it was so isolated that the houses were far apart. He went to one house, and it was the residence of a retired priest. The man was so old that he had a nurse visiting daily to see to his needs. That priest did not wear a uniform but just shirt and pants.

Govinda was hinting that I too am in a retired position and don't have to be expected to wear the *sannyasa* clothes every day. It's a fact that I do feel more relaxed without having to act out a role that I can't really keep up. I *am* still a *sannyasi*, and it's by my natural presence, my honesty, my decency that will make a good impression on Chaitanya and not by an artificial show.

Govinda also suggested to me that I not try to treat him as a peer. He said that if I treat him as a servant, Chaitanya and I can gain more intimacy, because that will be more natural and more desirable for Chaitanya. That sounded right too. Besides, this present behavior is bringing too much wear and tear on me, and I don't think I can last three weeks. It was a wrong decision on my part to think that because he is a VIP in ISKCON, I should treat him like a Godbrother and not allow him to be in the natural position of a disciple. I'm going to change it, at least by starting off wearing civilian

clothes tomorrow.

The books of A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada were sold in the university libraries all over the world. Bhakti-tirtha Swami was responsible for much of it. We would go in and see their purchasing librarian in the morning. He would tell us which professors would have to give their recommendation for books in order for it to be accepted.

The devotees would go out and see the professors in their offices. They presented themselves as agents of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, carried book satchels and samples of the works and catalogues. They had memorized a stock of answers to questions they might be asked. They fared well by their charisma and in accordance with the interest of the professors and with the little flame of interest they could fan in the professors. They also had to overcome the suspicion and the professors' doubting mentality.

By the end of the day, Bhakti-tirtha Swami would bring the requests back to the acquisitions librarian. It usually occurred just before closing time. The librarian would look over the professors' signatures authorizing a standing order for Prabhupada's books.

A full sell was a clincher, two standing orders a triumph. Or maybe not. Maybe they just ordered a few books for their department. Usually there was a standing order, at least one. The men exited and shared the good news, went to the van and drove off the campus to the campground, taking off their uncomfortable wigs, smiling and joking, sharing remarks of the day. Get the uncooked supper ready, set out the clothing for tomorrow. Share a reading of *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, and then to sleep.

Those were active, youthful days, covering the entire United States quickly and then to Europe. Some of the uni-

versities canceled their orders, but many books stuck, and some were read. Some books changed peoples' lives. One young man started reading Prabhupada's books by checking out volumes of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* from the library of the university where he was going to school. He began with the First Canto. By the time he had gotten through Canto 4, he had moved into the preaching center near the university.

Our visitor is reading *Srila Prabhupada Lilamrita* for the first time. "It is a nice book," I told him. "It's like you were with Prabhupada." And I think about it for a moment.

Those were also youthful days, running around with the other interviewers, motivating them, organizing the tape recordings, getting them typed, and then my own exclusive chore, waxing the prose of the biography, the prose of devotion. Bringing it to life, nothing dry.

And now here it is so different. People doubt what you are writing. But it is my life for Krishna and Prabhupada. He said we could do this. Just add Krishna to your life. But criticism. "It is not mainstream." "What is mainstream?" I ask. This is new stream, fresh stream, live stream, this is happening.

So I told him I want to go deeper in my relationship, and the way to do it is not by treating him as a VIP peer but as a disciple, and the more I can give him service and be at home in being who I am and being his guru will bring out the best in the natural intimacy in our friendship. It didn't take long to get that point across. Chaitanya said he felt uncomfortable with his GBC character and is willing and able to act as my disciple, taking orders, being subservient, taking me as I am. I didn't feel obliged to go over to the guesthouse to eat lunch with him, but I ate alone. Later I asked him to come here, and he pushed me in the wheelchair while I chanted *japa*.

DREAM

It was my retirement party. Many people who loved me were there. They liked giving me presents, but mostly their love. Eileen Gimess was there from Staten Island Community College. She said she was giving me \$600, but more important, a big notebook in which I could write my free memoirs. I did not have to write any more books. I said someone was dusting my long hair gray.

I had trouble finding little pieces of my dentures, which were very tiny and complex and ornate. There were other things on the floor. It was too bad I couldn't assemble my dentures into a pleasant-looking arrangement. There were some people who were arguing with me from some other *sampradaya*, but I figured they weren't too important since I had my loved ones there.

I said I now wanted to see my intimate blood family. I wanted to see my mother and father, and then I said, "Oh, no, my mother is dead." I wanted to see my mother and father and then my sister's brood. That is, sister, brother-in-law, and all their children. One of the people told me that my sister said she would be there because she was so attached to me, but she wouldn't be there when I gave my Hare Krishna speeches. I was very laid-back and was prepared to do everything I had to do. That was to give some lecture, I suppose, and to be in retirement spirit.

Shrunkened, frail people entering the medical clinics. By comparison, Bittersweet is a young old man. But he's got the signs. He's in their camp. He's a senior citizen. Hard to walk, some indications of cataract, arthritis, takes many pills, side effects, frequent pissings, anxiety. Retired from regular duties.

Petite woman still dressing stylishly but about eighty or ninety years old escorted onto the elevator. Behind her, a shrunken man. He seems to have actually lost several inches in his height and much in his massive weight, but he still wears a dainty moustache. Some jolly, compassionate young caretakers... some big-time money-takers... some pretty young secretaries, detached from the old age scene: "Here, Mr. Schneger, fill out this form, just the colored parts on both pages... so do you have the \$220 for the imaging?"

"Yes. Do I pay for it now or when I come out?"

"Right now."

The CAT scan technician, Latino moustache, snappy looks, abrupt approach. With his back to me he says, "My name is Jass." He tells me I'm late for the appointment. I tell him why—the address printed on their card is wrong, not the address of the actual building they are located in.

He says, "Oh well, it must be an old card. Anyway, you are here." New model of false teeth. He places you in a scrunched up position under the CAT scan. He has a nurse, clamps your mouth tight and tells you not to move.

There's a red light band overhead and a sound. The whole procedure doesn't take long. Then we're out of there, meeting more very old people in the corridors and elevators, giving them the right of way. We eat a sandwich in the van and start home, the whole trip is six hours. There will be many more trips to the other specialists, the surgeon, the dental implanter, and none of them can tell you the total price. They say, "You'll have to ask the other doctor how much he's charging "

As I write this, a fly offers stiff resistance to my writing hand. He jumps on my face, then cheek and eyes and hand, making his buzzing, goes down to my fingers... I try to brush

him away, but he's back. He forces me to stop writing, it's too hard to put up with. It's like ducking under bullets to get in a few words. He's on my hand and then jumps onto my mouth, and I spit him out with disgust onto the back of my hand, then to my chin, my nostril, this visitor. If you had a fly swatter, would you kill him? I'm going to the next room to chant.

Answers to Bhakti-shastra Test

Keep your eyes open
ten-grain cereal.
We like the life of inward prayer
and quiet. I spoke up for me
and Hari. That's our nature,
what we like to do in Krishna consciousness.

Does that translate into Krishna
japa repeated sixteen rounds *hari-nama*
and as much hearing of Krishna
katha in Krishna science as possible?
Yes, that's about it.

And other spiritual duties, Hari said
his spiritual life is
cooking and cleaning for his Guru Maharaja.

Bittersweet said taking care of
disciples by writing letters, exemplary
behavior, and he is a spiritual
author. He is hampered with
physical illness but does what
he can in *japa* and reading.

The question was, do you think these duties are transcendental or by the choice of nature? The answer, it is both: we have a psychophysical *ruci* for these within *varnashram dharma* but because they come from Lord Krishna and the spiritual master they are performed beyond the material modes of nature.

Lieutenant Dan told Forrest that the lieutenant had a destiny to die with his men in the Vietnam jungle attack, and so Forrest should not have saved him. He cursed Forest because now the lieutenant was a paraplegic, legless. But eventually he made peace with life, and even thanked Forrest for saving his life. Lieutenant Dan said, "There seems to be two ways of looking at life. One is that all is destined, and the other way is that life events just float around by chance like a feather." Dan said he believed that life was a combination of both.

When Forrest was a boy, his mother made money by opening their house as a boarding home, and there were always plenty of people coming and going, so it was never lonely. Once the young Elvis Presley came by with his guitar and stayed. Forrest danced for him in his leg brace and intrigued Elvis when he danced for him.

Years later Elvis kind of imitated Forrest's dance while singing *You Ain't Nothing But a Hounddog* and the other songs. Forrest touched many peoples' lives and changed them. But he couldn't hold onto his soul partner, Jenny. She was just too different, too fast for him.

When bullies were chasing him on their bicycles, Jenny

urged him on, "Run, Forrest, run." One time his leg braces suddenly broke. It seemed like a disaster. But he broke out of them like a chicken out of the egg and started running faster and faster. His legs held strong and he kept running so that nobody could catch him.

Still, Jenny was too fast for him, and she was too troubled from her upbringing in her daddy's house, where she was abused. By contrast, although Forrest was slow, he had a loving mother who always told him to remember, "Forrest, you are just as good as anyone else."

We are getting in a groove where I don't see Chaitanya much here. He comes over around 11:00 A.M., and he gives me a *japa* ride on the wheelchair. Govinda said, "He doesn't seem to be a person who wants profound talks. He's introverted and is satisfied to be here, taking a break from his heavy zonal duties, reading, answering letters on his computer, and satisfied each day doing any service we have for him and in exchange with me. We were kind of looking for some deeper conversation, but it's not coming naturally, so we're letting it go.

In *Good Will Hunting*, how did the counselor get through to him? He kept saying, "You are not guilty." At first the tough, troubled genius pushed him off, defended himself, didn't want the counselor to get close. But he kept advancing on him.

"You are not guilty. Will, you are not guilty," until Will finally broke down sobbing and held the counselor. That was it, that was the breakthrough. But Bittersweet doesn't understand what happened then. You will ask Nanda today.

Then after the breakthrough, the kid was going to straighten out. He found a job, but then at the last moment he decided he'd be more challenged and compelled, more

fundamental, if he were to reconcile with his girlfriend, the woman he loved. So he ran after her in his car to California. I hoped he would find her there and that she would accept him. It would be shit if she didn't.

We've settled on not expecting much out of Chaitanya. If he wants to use this as a vacation, then okay, that will be the impression that he will take back with him. He's reading *Srila Prabhupada Lilamrita* up to the fourth volume and working on managerial correspondence on his computer. I ask him to push me in the wheelchair almost daily for stay-awake *japa* sessions, but rarely do we speak.

Designers put pictures of the authors on the covers of the books, but usually after the author's dead. But Larry Rivers designed a picture of Kenneth Koch's book *New Addresses*, and he had Koch's face tucked in amidst many typed addresses. You can do a stunt like that, and it's less likely to appear egotistical. There are many ways to put the pictures into other features and amidst other objects, and yet have it there.

Where I am sitting, I keep staring at the video cover of Sid Caesar pretending that he's kissing the ring on Imogene Coca's hand. It drives me crazy, because it appears too sexy. We're going to have to turn it around.

The counselor said, "You are just a raw kid from Boston. You never went to war and held your buddy's head in your lap as he died. You never loved a woman, so that she was completely vulnerable in your life and you were completely vulnerable to her. You might be able to tell me all about Leonardo da Vinci from books, but you don't know what it's like to stand in the Sistine Chapel and look up at all the figures... you don't know, etc. etc." He exposed Will as a cocky, inexperienced, arrogant know-nothing.

Write a line for your advancement.
I thought God doesn't have to be "Krishna"
it's the Truth, the Supreme Being, it was
a confusing moment produced watching
a movie, a positive emotion subjective
to my own belief that Krishna is Indian.

Of course Krishna is God, not a Christian God,
but I don't know what
to say. He's not confined. Best theology
and best cowherd boy is Govinda but

something else happened, I better not
say what it was. It made me feel
that religions come from different
cultures.

Again *we will visit* a doctor, this time the local Boonville man. With so much hair on his face we call him the wolf-man. So far, after four visits, he has not been able to improve Bittersweet's frequent urination, has just insisted we don't have urine infection and just switched us to different pills.

A woman scantily clad stood at the edge of a high-rise building, her arms upraised. She moved her toes to the edge of the building, contemplating leaping to her death. But then she backed off and collapsed into the room, decided to save her life for another time.

That was just at the stroke of midnight New Year's Eve. In another part of the country, a man who loved her was thinking of her. They were both looking up at the moon, the gravitational full moon, but the man at the distant place did not know that she was contemplating suicide. He was

just thinking of her with simple love and “wondering what she was doing.” He had no idea that she was drugging and contemplating suicide. He was in milder circumstances, bonding with a Vietnam war buddy.

They had just thrown two whores out of their apartment because one of the whores called one buddy “crippled,” and the other whore had called the other buddy “stupid.” The buddies couldn’t tolerate those words and had kicked the whores out. “Don’t you ever call him stupid!”

They began talking about God. The paraplegic baited his simpleton friend for believing in God, but they remained friendly.

I have no time to straighten this out this morning, because I got up late and I have to get ready to go to the doctor. He doesn’t seem to get down to brass tacks, just asks a few questions and then recommends another medicine.

Govinda suggested that if he just recommends another medicine, I should ask for another doctor or just concede that there’s nothing else that can be done. Divert your mind to other things. Did I read something in the newspaper about a girl keeping a diary? She wrote that she was going uphill on a San Francisco trolley car, and she wanted to get off the stop but the doors didn’t open, and so she had to wait. Although she had to go to the bathroom, she had to wait. She wrote something down to divert her attention. Do not pass, do not pass.

The man who died at the dinner table had no more need for notepads. His wife, Joan Didion, wrote a very moving essay that appeared in the *New York Times* magazine section about how she didn’t know what grief is. She said she used to depend on the reality of geology. It was always there, the big shifts in the earth. She appreciated them, especially earthquakes.

She related this to William Faulkner's statement when he took the Nobel Prize. Did she? Man would always endure. Or was that related to something somebody said about Mississippi and the earthquake? Man would always endure, even if he got shakes.







CHAPTER THIRTEEN

JOAN DIDION BELIEVED IN GEOLOGY as a kind of God, but she never thought he would fall from the dinner table with a massive coronary attack (which is what her husband did one night), throwing her into grief, which is a place we don't know about.

It can happen in an instant. Suddenly a plane crash. We are not expecting anything like that on our easy visit to the wolf man this morning at the nearby Boonville clinic. Neither are we expecting any cure for frequent urination.

I want to visit some of the treasure chests of Prabhupada memories. I said goodbye to him by rubbing talcum powder on his feet. It was the last week before he passed away. Other leading devotees were in another room discussing something more important.

I lingered alone with Prabhupada and pressed his feet and consciously said silently to myself, "Goodbye, Srila Prabhupada, goodbye." They were speaking as if there was still a possibility he could live, but I was convinced that he was going to die, and so I was saying goodbye. It was common knowledge that he liked to be rubbed with talcum powder, and so I was doing it. He was not externally reciprocating, but within, he liked it, and I was doing it, gently rubbing his beautiful feet and leaving them white, imprinted with my loving goodbyes.

Someone asked me how I felt when he passed away. I said I was numb, like some kind of a shot to my backbone. No pain, no nothing. I heard a devotee named Swarupa walk past and say to me, "You don't know how much you

appreciate a good thing until it's gone." Panditji also said, "Just think, Prabhupada was with us only eleven years." I heard all those things, clichés in the atmospheres. I added my own clichés. I knew there would be trouble ahead. I knew I could do my duties and preach. I still had good health. I was ready to go back to the west and be a leader for Prabhupada, giving lectures and writing a book about him. There were things to do in his service. But there was no more authoritative, single person to go to to settle the disputes among the leaders. And that was very dangerous. The one person who in one sentence could chastise one of his leaders and hold him back and tell him, "No, you can't do that," was no longer present. Who could stop a man from acting in a powerful renegade way.

A young man wrote a prayer to Krishna that I could become a pure devotee because his dad is his *shiksha* guru, and his dad is my follower. The son is a follower of someone else. Let us all receive Krishna's blessings and prayers and work for the Lord.

Invitation to the land. Without notice, a twenty-minute storm fell during our reading in which Krishna was stealing butter from the neighbors. Rain on the roof offers competition to Deepak's croaking voice, so he has to increase the volume. Greensleeves. Rains. Smiles. Finally I get my talk with Nanda. I told him I was still puzzled by the movie titled *Good Will Hunting* and whether he won the girl at the end.

Nanda said, "There are two universes. In Schrodinger's universe, he wins the girl, but in the Newtonian universe, he doesn't win the girl." I said, "If the girl doesn't forgive his cruelty and take him back, his life will be screwed up. He'll have to find a job and try to find a life again. He shouldn't

feel guilty for losing her. Pick up the pieces he lost, but go forward again.”

Visits to every malady shop in town, every bone fixer, soul-soother, pet courier. It's just better to stay home, but then you never meet any pretty girls, you never get out of your safety zone. No one will say to you, “You couldn't win a pillow fight at Vassar,” and you couldn't reply, “I wouldn't be fighting.” Don't visit a place where you would get hungry and order a meatball sandwich and a beer late at night. Don't get bamboozled into the navy and spend a weekend on the isle of Capri walking around by yourself barefoot, stopping at one-man-size chapels with burning candles and praying to you know not what except for aesthetics.

You threw the book *Lolita* from the boat because it disgusted you. *Lo-li-ta*.

They suggested I might let Chaitanya do more intimate service, massaging my feet and arms with lotion and reading the books in the morning at breakfast time. A disciple phoned me from Ireland and said that the turnaround time of a letter to me is six months. He asked if he could phone me regularly, just for friendly talks. But this person is someone I don't trust. I wouldn't like to talk to him every month. They should read my books. The essence is really there, but they don't get the point.

As a sample of what we would talk about on the phone, he said, “I got a new job.” Visit by the phone. After a few of them you'd be exhausted. I know a swami who holds conference calls with his followers. That would be better. But my disciple in Ireland wouldn't want that. He wants a private call, like in the Catholic church, you can only hold Confession one at a time. And that's so discrete it's not even face to face.

Every girl, every boy hanging on a thread
They may lose it's lovely

The one with Krishna will not forget. That's
why the Abbotess
said, "A brokenhearted
woman makes a good Carmelite."
We say music is brokenhearted
for joy—joy for the broken
hearted.

Squeeze my hand. Read
my future. I better hurry
up writing before? Let
us go and make our visit.

The visitor wore a tall hood
and we were afraid of him but
when he came out of the night
he was not something unearthly,
just an inspector. What did
he want? A report on
what we've done. Here
you can see for yourself
then go away.
We don't want visitors.

Light blue. Each stanza
is a different mood. What connects
them is the vitals, heartbeat, pulse, body heat—
last night when
he spoke of Prabhupada's death,
he felt a pain in his own chest

and it didn't go away. Be
careful speaking, you'll get
heart attack talking about
the guru you love.

You'll find you do love him so much
your ache
will move
your death.

Your prayer should not be brief, like the visitor who stays as long as it takes to milk a cow. You should stand vigilantly before God with His name in your heart perpetually. Awake! You do not know when the thief may come in the night and steal away your life. Stay awake praying with the master. He moans and groans and finally rejoices. *Stayi bhava, maha bhava*—who can even know these things but another *maha-bhava*? From the ground you watch the comets in the sky flashing by, and you hear of their names: Radharani, Krishna, Advaita, Sridam. Great stars in the firmament of love of God, possessing *prema*, unable to think of anything but Krishna for a moment...

Mother Yashoda thinks that her Krishna has not shown her the universal form but that it is something else, but she never forgets Krishna. She fears something may be wrong with her child. She embraces Him and loves Him and takes Him to her breast. Maharaja Nanda is concerned. He pats his son on the head. They never get outside their parental *rasa*.... And you?

Do you ever get out of your entanglement in the modes of nature? Have you ever prayed to please Krishna, the *bhakta-vatsala*? Have you ever discovered that His greatest quality is to be inclined to you?

“This food tastes like shit, and my shoes are too tight,” said the resident of Patala, the hellish planet. “You’re going to hear a lot more discomfort than that,” said the chief of the planet, “and it’s nobody’s fault but yours.”

“How long do I have to stay here?”

“Trillions of years.”

“Is there a way to shorten it?”

“Yes, if you get the extraordinary mercy of a *mahabhagavat* and the mercy of the Lord and the mercy of His pardon, as given out in Kali Yuga to the chanters of the pure names, as seen even in this age. Sometimes pure devotees go to the hellish planets, and if they’re well received in the delivery of the holy names, it can be done. This was done during the advent of Lord Chaitanya by Haridas Thakur and Vasudeva Datta and by Narada Muni in his travels through the cosmos.

A resident of the hellish planet can do it himself, standing before God with the Lord’s name in his heart and repeating the name with great feeling. But hell is not a suitable place to do it in because of the foul association and the bad atmosphere. *If* a powerful devotee appears in the hellish planet and you get his visit, then it can happen. We are not meant for hell.

“But you have to do your part. You have to approach the great devotee if he comes and if he visits. You have to fall at his feet and take his instructions. Do whatever he says. Avoid all sins. Become his puppet. The main highway in Kali Yuga will still be the road to hell, but you can start a new career that will save you from it again and again. It means catching on to the hand of the *acharya* as he comes through on his perennial visit, his *parivrajakacharya* mercy, seeking out of lost souls.”

Speak with joy, it isn't so bad, is it?
A *timingala* can swallow a whale but
Krishna will protect from those giants just
as He protected Arjuna from
the *timingalas* at Kurukshetra.

Be brave, soldier, in any case, even
though your soul is eternal and you
may be afraid or attached to your
family members, you have to do
your duty.

Krishna speaks, do you claim you
don't hear Him clearly, don't know
what to do? Is that neophyte's
defective hearing or a copout?
He speaks through guru.
That should be good enough, Vaishnavas,
the Supersoul, the meditative conscience,
The best you can do.

You're having a good party time
with trombones, trumpets
your way, drinking, looking
for loose girls.
That's trivializing the event
meant to be an
elevating concert.
We'll throw you into jail
for degrading it into a booze
and prostitute hunting.
It's meaning should be absolute work

of spirit soul. I don't say ours
is not joyful, it's just a different thing
from your whoredom.

The next visitor will be different. He's a man who lives most of the time in Vrindavan. When he's there, he does some deity worship, and he reads and plays the harmonium. He's odd, solitary, chants. He finances yearly trips back to America by "*sankirtan*," traveling with a few devotee buddies on a cross-country route, following rock bands and selling neck beads to the rock audiences. After some of that, it's back to Vrindavan. Lately he's been learning the lyrics of *rasika* songs of Radha and Krishna and singing them on the harmonium, which he's learned to play. His name is Raya dasa.

I'm wearing my *sannyasa* uniform because it's the first day of our new visitor. But he won't be getting here until 4:00 P.M. I'll be visiting with my counselor on the phone from 3:00 to 4:00. Birds visited the autumn tree branches. The leaves are rusty on the pine and birch. Still, bright sunny days, but the mornings are late with darkness and mistiness. The sun doesn't visit until after 9:00 A.M. Sometimes in the evening, there are long streaks of clouds, and pink and violet streaks. It is a beautiful country.

Be yourself, be who you are. *Krsnadasa anudasa*. How do you know that? The great *acharyas* have experienced it, and they have told us. Another says, "This has come from the Supersoul. They have received knowledge from the Supersoul." We were talking about the advanced physical symptoms of love of God, swooning, hiccoughs, belching, cold tears, hot tears, etc.

Letters are visitors. They stay with me while I wrestle with them, love them, answer them dryly, then let them go

after their visit. I am not a professional confessor and expert. They come to me behind the dark panel of the confessional, and I listen. Some take longer than others. Some are more complicated, more honest. "I know what the absolute goal is, but I'm not sure I believe it." He says you go by reading the scriptures. If you make a terrible mistake, you will be ruined. It is better to have faith than to not believe. I visited with Theophan the Recluse. I love how he keeps saying, "Stand before God with the mind in your heart." I'm sure it is good to live with these holy words and their parallel in the Vedic Sanskrit, *samadaya namohridi*. Bring the concentrated mind into the heart and think of Krishna. Theophan sometimes says the words are not even important, it's the feelings for the Lord. My dear Lord Krishna, please have mercy on me, a sinner.

You can't force open the lock on Prabhupada moments, they have to open by themselves. I forced open one and by mistake it was a picture of my father. He was steering the hook and ladder around the corner of the village street where the red and green light is. He doesn't have to stop for the red light, his strong arms. Similarly, I'm proud of Prabhupada strongly answering the questions after a public lecture. I prefer him relaxed after his talk, going to his temporary home, sitting behind the low table and chuckling with a few leaders about how foolish they were. This one said this, that one said that in their questions. It's late at night, but he wants something to eat. The great warrior, our leader we're proud of.

Jumpy and happy we want people like that.
Why be morose? If there are actually artists
who can feel happy and convey it, why not?
Isn't that from God? Singing his hymns with

the lyrics direct “Krishna, have mercy on me”
or just the feeling, *he speaks*.

Jumpy and happy we want men like that,
blowing their horns like angelic choir
blues on the corner, know what it's like
to go through earth time but carry heads
high because they worship the savior
and don't try to keep anything for themselves,
don't lament over sufferers' just deserts
and remember him always
please have mercy on him,
become absorbed in holy Lord
with no regrets
bliss attachment
he and I are one
servant and lord
we sing that song.

Raya dasa carries about fifteen small assorted *Shalagram shilas* with him along with a large Govardhan *shila* and a Radha *shila*. The airline security man stopped him and asked, “Do you like rocks?”

“Yes, I like spiritual rocks.” Ray then went into a spiel that he was a yoga teacher and that he used rocks for special power. They contained energies, and he used them in exercises. The man let him through. I guess he couldn't picture this innocent-looking man dressed in saffron standing up in the airplane hurling little rocks around in an innovative hijack. Or we can say Yogamaya covered the man so that Raya dasa's Govardhan could travel undisturbed.

He tells me there is a new law in New York that reli-

gious books can be sold on Union Square in Manhattan, so he has been going out regularly with a Godbrother, Kirtan dasa. He phoned Aindra prabhu in India and told him that he was staying in the West through Karttika to sell books and neckbeads. Aindra chastised him severely and told him not to do it next year. Raya dasa is showing his full independence to live in Vrindavan or to stay in the West.

I am accommodating two extra visitors by having them read to me at dinnertime. Also with Raya dasa I'll be open to private talk. Ask him about his life career and how he expects to shape it as an East-West *brahmachari* who has no real authority over him. He works hard and gets into the mood at whichever place he's staying in.

Ask him what he thinks of my "event." If he asks, "Is it true?," tell him with a sharp regret I feel I have a permanent scar on my reputation in ISKCON—show him the long black scar on my right forearm. But say I believe in the *shastric* verses about a devotee's faults being like spots on the moon. He's not an ordinary person, and so his faults bring him closer to the Lord. Those who find fault with him for his mistakes are in trouble, *apichet suduracharo*. Seek out Raya's actual viewpoint, don't just tell him your own.

After about a week or so, all these visitors will be going, and then there'll be a longer stretch of peace and quiet. At least that's how it looks. Oh no, that man is coming to interview me for a video, and maybe someone else. There's no telling.

Today is my first day of appearing dressed in civies before Raya. It may give him a surprise. He's a diehard for wearing *brahmachari* costumes except when he goes out to distribute books.

There's a married couple, elderly Indians going around speaking ill of me. Maybe I should write them. They wrote me that I keep cats, play jazz at lectures, turn a *Vyasa-puja* celebration into an ordinary birthday party, wear a goatee, read quotes from Christian books and literary books, had a fall down with a woman, take medicine for headaches.

They later apologized for this letter to me, but they kept on spreading the poison to people they met, like a God-brother in Honolulu. It hurt to hear that they do that stuff. How to bring it to a stop? Should I ask them to stop? When you face them with this, they say they aren't doing it.

Raya dasa is maturing, becoming more confident in what he wants and how to do it. His main love is being part of the twenty-four-hour *sankirtan* party under Aindra prabhu's supervision. And living in Vrindavan, worshipping his *shilas* and living in that atmosphere, where he has learned to play the harmonium and sing *bhajans*. But he is quite capable of moving to the Western Hemisphere, where he goes to rock concerts to sell a wide variety of neckbeads—pink ones, silver and Tulasi ones, bracelets and anklets. He tells us about the American summer rock scenes.

The fans show up long before the bands play. Their vans are scenes for drinking, and their cars and pickup trucks are arranged to play games, like throwing balls, all the while playing with their women and listening to rock music. Raya says he has to come by at just the right time, when they are not too sober and not too drunk, but just in the middle.

Once he came by and a guy waved him off, "You're too early." Raya does an extended comic act, singing and telling everyone that they should spend three or four dollars for the beads. We were entranced hearing his skits and songs, telling that his sales are not for charity but going into his own pocket. So he's equally at home in the rock concert parking

lots or in his much more beloved Vrindavan. He can make the switch because he knows he has to raise money, and he does it without resentment and with hard work.







CHAPTER FOURTEEN

TALK TO THE DOCTOR TODAY. What shall it be? Ask him for lowering of medicine in the near future or turn with determination to two *japa* rides on the wheelchair to bring you up to fourteen rounds? You don't want to risk the pain-free comfort that you're enjoying now, but you want to lose your sleepiness that prevents you from doing any normal quota (unless you do it in the wheelchair). What shall it be?

Brent told Raya dasa that there are mountain lions and bears here. I told Raya that I never saw any. Raya said he saw birds. Of course there are deer, wild turkeys, and rabbits. What animals would we see in San Miguel? Boat-tailed birds. Business. Newness. New adventure. It will be so at first. To outside devotees, it will sound like we are in South Korea, and they won't want to visit. But eventually they'll get the idea that it's a different thing, and that it's even easier to visit than Philo.

It's confirmed, Krishna is our God, we've been first- and second-initiated and *sannyasa*, keeping all honors, yet he's not allowed to initiate. That's a bummer. Maybe someone will want to work for me even if not initiated. That will be a tough one.

Haribol. The Confederate Army won many battles but lost the war. Confirmed. I've got my Lord, Tribhanga, Govinda, the most intimate and powerful form of God.

He's kept His secrets in the Sanskrit Vedas
and one may wander many eons before
tying up with the *sat* guru.

"I'm so happy," says the light-colored man in the commercial for McDonald's when he learns they have a new creamy cheese chicken sandwich. "It's a paradigm shift, it's like meeting your twin on the street." The light-colored McDonald's employee smiles back to him and hands him the stacked creamy-bun sandwich. We're so happy, boy and girl in McDonald's land.

Then back to the baseball game, the Mets. Just watched a bit, but tomorrow we're lined up for as much as possible of the Boston Red Sox versus the New York Yankees in a do-or-die contest for the pennant. Hearing high technical *rasas* and *stayi-bava* and so on near the end of *Jaiva Dharma*. One more week for our two guests. Things holding up well. Wear your *sannyasi* clothes tomorrow. But I ain't missing that ballgame.

There are six men eating *prasadam* in the evening and listening to the reading in the ashram. That cuts down the bad odor, and the raunchiness is less noticeable. The smallness of meals is less noticeable, and there's a pleasant overall illusion created by the reading and commentary of *Jaiva Dharma* to the clipped Scottish tones of Deepak dasa, so my anxiety is much to myself now. The stickiness at the edge of my table and the terrible stain on my apron are still there, but I hope the others don't have the equivalent. And because I cannot chew seventy percent of the food, I hope the others can find the taste bearable and are able to eat more of it. For their sakes. They come here, and this is what we honestly have to offer them.

Someone said that Prabhupada wanted much preaching just in Manhattan. There are now three places just in the Lower East Side where there's preaching or restaurants. There's also a restaurant in Brooklyn, and a temple (which doesn't count as Manhattan), and another temple in the Indian district of Queens, and certainly there's plenty of room for preaching in the streets of Manhattan. Prabhupada began in New York City and stayed there long initially, and he said he was well received here. He appreciated the rough and sophisticated *jivas*, and he repeatedly visited them in the four different ISKCON temples the devotees moved to during his lifetime, including the place on Henry Street, Brooklyn, and winding up in a grand skyscraper at 55th Street and Eighth Ave., which he liked very much but proved too expensive. More visitors came to that temple than any other place. Life members in India stayed over in small hotel rooms.

When Prabhupada came back to visit Manhattan in his last year, he went through the streets and pointed out the places he went to in his first year in the city, when he was "loitering alone." He showed the building where he first had a room in Mishra's studio, and the grocery store where he purchased small items. Sometimes he gave a downtown tour, the loft at 92 Bowery Place, a bookstore where he placed some *Bhagavatams*. This was his city before we knew him, a place where he sold books on commission, where his typewriter was stolen, where he recorded his lectures on the Uher reel-to-reel tape recorder, before any of his initiated disciples came to ISKCON, when he was freelancing and writing *Bhagavatam* and *Bhagavad-gita* and storing lectures on the tape recorder and waiting for all of us to catch up. He was a person ahead of his time. In those early months, he thought that he would just make a visit to Manhattan and then return to India, but then he changed his mind and decided to stay in the west. He

fixed his passport so that he could stay in America, and made his headquarters in Los Angeles. He asked his leaders to visit him there, and he would teach them Krishna consciousness to practice in their home temples. But then he went back to India to build monumental cathedrals. Soon he was traveling to Europe and all over the world, and a concept developed that he was *jagad-guru*, you couldn't expect to catch him anywhere in any particular place but he was all over the world, opening temples and keeping his devotees alive.

Joy spring autumn is here leaves
all crumpled like a wheat flakes
cereal, cold mornings.
We're not afraid. Making a
comeback for more energy.

That will be more life-full
I'm talking about reducing
the medicine, on a dare.
If it doesn't work we'll go
up again.

Krishna fly-by epic bird
land on branch say
hey to the pines and the
sky bright blue
with white puffy clouds

Take your fall examine
and go out with the
Karttika moon you
get more get more
blessings this season than any other.

Bittersweet Swami hid out on his guests and watched TV, a postseason playoff game between the Red Sox and the Yankees. It turned out to be a terrible bummer, a waste of time, with the Boston Red Sox winning 10 to 1. Today I'll make up for it and ask Raya if he'll play some harmonium tunes for me.

We sat around longer after supper last night as I tried to make up for my TV watching. Chaitanya said, "San Joe say," and I corrected him. I said, "The city is pronounced, 'San Ho-say.'" He and Deepak told about their day swimming at the beach and driving around the dangerous cliffs. I spoke of a devotee who is in jail with a life sentence. We spoke about another devotee who was recently released from jail. It was low standard but friendly talk, not shastric or about Krishna. We spoke of when they would be leaving and tried to turn it into a carpool rather than have each man leave on a different day, which would be a strain on our drivers.

They were agreeable to it. Oscar Peterson was playing *Whisper Not* on Sirius radio. I looked at the *japa* clicker and it read almost 895 for the day. That *japa* while riding in the wheelchair is a good thing. I should try for two rides a day after the guests leave.

Nityananda from Calcutta phoned today. He asked the same questions to keep in touch and make me feel accountable. "Are you writing letters? Do you have guests? When these guests leave, will you have more guests? Are you writing and painting? Are your headaches still coming? Are you traveling? Lecturing? How is your ankle? Are you going to have a *Vyasa-puja*?" While he spoke, I felt the urge to urinate, but I couldn't tell him that and interrupt the conversation, so I quickly walked toward the toilet, carrying the wireless phone with me.. All the while I did this I continued the normal visi-

tation phone call. I told him it would be better if he phoned Mukhi dasi and set up the details for his proposed February visit to learn press skills. Jaya, goodbye, *haribol*. I changed my soaked clothes for the third time of the day.

Free For All

Bop era hard music does not yield
making music Krishna is the top God
top commercial ad football game
glamour woman TV show

anything piano recital bass
player I can't give you anything
but love
sticks and a piano storming
drums of Art Blakey
in *Night in Tunisia* I'm
writing my own being in
ISKCON fitting in as I
like it—doing authorized
service working hard as anyone

just not within a framework
of a temple where a T.P.
tells me according to his
whims how to live.
Independent. Solid
word.

Can you get this to
fit into the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan?
Prabhupada's flock.

In the *Jaiva Dharma*, we read last night that it is offensive to earn a living by professionally speaking the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and charging money for it, especially if you are reading from the *rasika* chapters. Chaitanya dasa said he saw nothing wrong with a pure-hearted devotee making his living by speaking from *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. In *Jaiva Dharma*, the man who was doing it sought repentance and said that he would take a lower job. Chaitanya dasa interpreted this to mean the man admitted he was not pure enough in heart to read the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. His point was that so many devotees have to take low jobs, so what is the harm if they speak on *Srimad-Bhagavatam* for a living, taking Prabhupada *parampara* and avoiding *rasika* topics? He seemed to be arguing wrongly and against the spirit of the offense stated in the *Jaiva Dharma*. But when we spoke about it more in terms of modern days, we gave some credit to Chaitanya's point of view. If a devotee could cleverly set up a series of talks for himself in schools and churches and Buddhist centers and yoga centers, and accumulate credentials from his talks—letters of praise and the like—and if he preached the actual message of the *Bhagavatam* and charged a fee that he put in his pocket, would it be so terribly wrong compared to hiring himself out as a FedEx driver to make his own money? Must the institution of ISKCON collect all the fees for lectures on Krishna consciousness, or is there not enough audiences to go around for freelancers to comb the vast masses of foreign souls?

Our spirited little debate last night did not conclude. The jury was still out. No governing body committee to decide on its legality.

Raya dasa is singing a one-half-hour *bhajan* for me tomorrow on the harmonium. I'm allowing him to do it so he'll get nectar as a visitor, but I am getting nectar too. He

sings only Hare Krishna tunes, no *bhajans* with lyrics. He brings his *shilas* and places them on my altar while he sings Hare Krishna.

Govinda is so kind to me. He is designated as a number-one caretaker. The other one is Nara, who spends most of his time in Mexico. Govinda buys me clothes when I'm low on items like underwear or socks, he gives me a nightly massage with a machine that vibrates your feet, and then he applies a lotion to my hands and feet. He discovered a fungus under my toenails and applies a liquid there every morning and night. He's the only one I would allow to do such intimate bodily things. He cuts my toenails and fingernails, shaves my face and gives me haircuts, and with him I speak intimate things that I don't speak with others, such as my stress with visitors and waiting for them to go. He truly cares for my health and hopes that I'll get better. He's the one who makes phone calls for my dental work and takes me to the dentist, which is two hours away. He never seems to be moody or unwilling to do the work but is always cheerful and loving. Anybody would be grateful to have a disciple like him.

We will go to breakfast with some prayers
done, our writing is our main prayer
mussy hair, bad night but up early
to milk the cows on time.

Phoned a woman with a broken hip
who was being retained in hospital
for possible breast cancer. Dangers
at every step. She sounded strong,
hanging tough because she's forced
to be more dependent on Krishna.

Yes, she agreed. I know something about it
and wished her
sympathy. I was going to tell
her to “be brave” but that didn’t seem
right. Be dependent on Krishna
and your devotee friends seemed better.
Keeping her in one hospital
and moving her to another
can’t go home.

We said we both *sounded* good,
strong voices, but both had
teary eyes too. Body is a cart
ready to break down in a slip on
your yard lawn and cost you many dollars
and many delays maybe never recover
just turn to the Lord.

Tomorrow the two visitors leave. It is good to hear Raya dasa’s *kirtan*. Better than watching hours of the Yankee playoff games with the California Angels, although that was rewarding too because the Yankees won 4–2. But there was nothing spiritual in it, and it hurt your eyes. Better today to opt for some more *kirtan*, even if it is a little bit boring, and cancel the second playoff game. And maybe you can talk with Chaitanya, since it is his last day, even though he is so reticent.

You also got an e-mail from a disciple in Ireland asking you to phone her in Los Angeles on October 12. In October 29 the video man comes for an hour or so for my memories of Srila Prabhupada. Pump them out. I’d rather hold my books to the camera and summarize each one. Tell him I have written more about Prabhupada than anyone. But

what he wants is fresh recall, as if I'd never written a word. Shyamasundar's video memories were probably the best so far. He was pouring out memories—he had to stop several times for tears and being unable to speak out of affection for Prabhupada. Sometimes he'd burst into laughter at the charm of Prabhupada and the blunders of the early days. He was terrific. I could not imitate that. Just register some accurate data, especially from 1966–1968, tell how I needed special attention from Swamiji just before I would surrender and take initiation.

Steppenwolf. He had to grab you. When you were in his room, having returned some typing, the phone rang. Swamiji picked it up, and it was someone making arrangements for the marriage of Mukunda and Janaki. He put the phone down and then told me about the marriage and invited me to come. He asked specifically, "Could you come?" "Yes," I said, "I could." This is what I needed, to be personally invited. Then I left, and he said, "If you love me, I will love you." There was a similar incident when I had to stay late at work and missed the grand congregation at lunch in his room. I phoned and said, "This is Steve. Do you remember me? I can't come to lunch today, but will you save something for me?" "Yes," he said. I went there and he was alone. I bowed down to him. I'll tell the interviewer how this boy had to be hauled in gently with special attention, call him in from where he was sitting on the curb and tell him about the Sunday feasts, which he had been too timid to attend, thinking that they were just for insiders. When I missed the first initiation, I was at once regretful, and definitely wanted to get initiated as soon as possible. I asked him if I could be initiated. "Yes, you can, and the next one is Radhastami."

I look forward to no visitors

when I can lounge in or out of uniform,
and rest in the afternoon, don't
have to schedule dates

time to myself. Don't have to worry
how they are doing
and stretch myself in conversations
chewing the rag, worried they are not
having a good time.

It'll be a break to be
your own man.

Oh I dreamt I could become
a great writer in a different
style. That could only happen
with more time.

Whew. Last night was their last night. In the *bhakti-shastra* class, Govinda asked us to draw pictures of a moment in which we were experiencing the higher taste in Krishna consciousness. I drew a picture of Bittersweet Swami facing the viewer and smiling. He was running along the surf on a sunny beach, just by the surf on the morning after he first attended the temple. He was celebrating his release from bad habits. Chaitanya drew a well-constructed image of himself from the back, with a little *shikha*, cleaning a big stack of pots and pans and at a large kitchen sink and singing Hare Krishna mantra, an apparently demeaning task, but he was experiencing bliss.

Keli drew a picture from childhood experience when he first attended a party with adult devotees, and they had *kirtan* and delicious scones. On the way back home, he said

a cute kid thing, "These are my people." He really liked it. Magdalene drew a picture from her Catholic convent days. She drew a big blue cross of Jesus and a little cross which had a brown interior and a blue outer border. She said the first time she joined the convent, the nun told her to go alone inside a room and chant the rosary for an hour. Magdalene didn't like it at first, and she didn't want to surrender to God. This was represented in the drawing by the brown interior. But gradually she became humble, and she felt like butterflies and angels, and her crucifix grew borders of the blue colors of Jesus. Raya dasa drew a picture of the three domes of the Krishna-Balarama Mandir in Vrindavan and the sound of the Hare Krishna twenty-four-hour *kirtan* pouring out. Nanda drew a picture of himself restringing his broken beads. He said it was hard work but blissful to be fixing his favorite *japa-mala*.

How does a transcendentalist speak? What is his language, and how does he sit? Govinda said we should not take this in a simplistic way. He is equipoised, his language is controlled, his senses are like the tortoise's limbs; he withdraws them unless he wishes to use them. The Krishna consciousness movement is a team, and the founder-*acharya* wants us to continue it. That will be a test to show how much we love him. Where does Mexico fit in? I hope he will accept it as a loving offering where his loving devotees are worshiping him.

That young man in Mexico and the Virgin of Guadalupe will appear to him and ask him, "Make me a beautiful cathedral above Mexico City." He brought her message to the bishop, but he was only eighteen years old, and the bishop did not believe him. Again he prayed to the Virgin, and this time she bestowed upon him a huge bouquet of out-of-season blooming roses, very aromatic. He rushed to the bishop with them, who this time became convinced. Eventually a temple

was built, and the boy was canonized a saint. Mexican candlesticks and other pious paraphernalia of the Virgin are sold on both coasts of the United States at Latin *bodegas* in Latino neighborhoods. We will no doubt see her in Mexico, where I hope I will be able to write something substantial, the big story that I've been waiting for. That's what you dreamt.

Speaking confessionally, prodded by Nanda's saying that he was an honest hypocrite, I admitted I watched the baseball game, admitted to personal sins not befitting a *nitya-siddha* pure devotee. Nanda said he wanted to speak "where the rubber meets the road." The metaphor had to be explained to the girls—it means where the tire of the car hits the road. In other words, not just theoretical talk or reciting the scripture but actual reality.

He's going sentimental off
control pilot no improvisation
say it's not true.

We wanted action. They had
sticks they could hit together but
they disturbed the performers.

I don't know if you will be true
all autumn and winter, then in
spring you're supposed to move on a tour
taking you eventually
to Mexico, San Miguel.

Krishna Krishna is in every
flower and gravel and every
soul of a living being.
The problem of the human being

is to realize He's there and
to love Him.

And so they came and went. And so they come and go. All summer long and year after year. I prefer it when they don't come, but I gain when some come. I wouldn't want to be left all alone always. It would be too odd. It would not look right. I would become imbalanced.

"What's with Bittersweet? He lives by himself and no one ever sees him. Is he some kind of nut?" Some kind of recluse hermit. You can't keep away from them. They want to see you, and you want to see them. They ask for invitations, and you can't refuse them.

Would you really be a better devotee if no one ever came to see you? I don't think so. Because you're forced to put out. That's a form of compassion. You help others.

"I want to come again soon."

"I want to visit again next year."

"I missed coming this year, but I'll come next year."

"When can I come?"

They're coming out from the cities, down from the mountains. You can't escape them. You can only have patches of a few weeks to yourself, and then more visitors, sometimes two and three at once, and you get nervous, anxiety in anticipation, but then they come and it falls into a groove of their routine. Some, however, are so demanding they meet with you every day. Some are more reserved. But every one of them takes your time.

I'd like to go somewhere alone with just editorial workers and typists who can give me immediate return on the work I was doing. And I'd write an epic book. I know what I have in mind, but it would have to be done in a solitary place without interruption. It's not possible now, but maybe

in a few years in the right place, like maybe Mexico, where we will probably set up. For now it's *Visitors* and anything you can write in between.

Freedom suite write in bigger handwriting
or you won't be able to read it. Prepare
yourself to be a writer. Read books
by recognized prose writers or poets. So late
in your age? Shouldn't you be concentrating
on the art of prayer and quotes of
acharyas from the *shastras*—impelling
you about your shortage of time
and need to reach higher stages
of *harinam*?

Of course, but you have to work to
contribute literary masterpieces
blended, braided ropes of *yukta-
vairagya* to capture the attention
of inattentive dull minds and
brighten them.

Both. A bright angel standing
on a grotto rock, singing praises.
The humble chanter
repeating the mantra with utmost
feeling for Krishna and the
dove free from the dovecote
by Krishna's grace, writing
ashes and sparks, "My words among
mankind."

Freedom suite, you don't even

know you are singing. It's God within
you. He's doing it.

He's the freedom suite and you are His
unalloyed servant, music
comes out of that. Like
Sri Chaitanya's *sankirtan* with
His associates—it was all
Him cracking the universe
but they were echoing and shouting
and swooning too.

The End





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ABOUT SRILA PRABHUPADA

HIS DIVINE GRACE A. C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPADA lived in this world from 1896 to 1977. Born in Calcutta, India, he first met his spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami, in 1922. At their first meeting he was asked to spread the Vedic knowledge all over the world, and during his many years as a married businessman, he often contemplated this order of his spiritual master. At the age of 63, he accepted the renounced order of life (*sannyasa*) to help fulfill this mission. From his humble surroundings at the Radha-Damodar temple in Vrindavan, he began work on his life's masterpiece: a multivolume English translation of the eighteen-thousand-verse *Srimad-Bhagavatam* complete with elaborate commentary.

In 1965, with 40 rupees in his pocket, he came by freighter from India to New York City. After almost a year of great difficulty and heroic perseverance, he established the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. In the twelve short years before he passed away, he had guided the Society and watched it grow to a worldwide society of more than one hundred ashrams, schools, temples, institutes, cultural centers, and farm communities.

In Srila Prabhupada's own view, his most significant contribution is his books. Highly respected by scholars for their authority, depth, and clarity, they are used as textbooks in numerous college courses. His writings have been translated into over fifty languages. Despite his advanced age, Srila Prabhupada circled the globe fourteen times on lecture tours that took him to six continents. Yet this vigorous schedule did not slow his prolific literary output. His writings constitute a veritable library of Vedic philosophy, religion, literature, and culture.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SATSVARUPA DASA GOSWAMI is a disciple of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), better known in the west as the Hare Krishna movement. As one of Srila Prabhupada's senior disciples, Satsvarupa would later serve as initiating guru to disciples around the world.

Satsvarupa, born in New York City, is a Vaishnava writer, poet, and artist. He is also the author of Srila Prabhupada's authorized biography, *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. While traveling, lecturing on Krishna consciousness, and instructing disciples in many countries, he has published over 150 books, including poems, memoirs, essays, novels, and studies based on the Vaishnava scriptures. In recent years, his devotional life has included the creation of hundreds of paintings, drawings, and sculptures that capture and express the artist's vision of Krishna consciousness.

In 2002, Satsvarupa, a celibate monk and exemplary disciple since 1972, suffered a serious physical and emotional collapse from chronic migraine headaches—a condition that required immediate medical intervention and treatment. Expressions of support and concern poured in from devotees everywhere. In consultation with the official governing body of the Krishna consciousness society, Satsvarupa agreed to cease initiating disciples.

During this stressful time in his life, Satsvarupa began comprehensive healthcare treatment with a team of care-providers in northern California. The treatment, along with the prayer and support from many in his worldwide community, has significantly improved Satsvarupa's health. While

in California, Satsvarupa also began a website, <http://www.SDGonline.org>, to facilitate communication with his disciples and friends.

While the task of being a guru, which he received faithfully from Srila Prabhupada, has been demanding, Satsvarupa has remained committed to cultivating on-going relationships with his disciples and to supporting their spiritual lives. He has also re-committed himself to his vows as a *sannyasi* (a lifelong celibate renunciate), as well as to the *sannyasa* way of life. His writings continue to demonstrate a gritty self-honesty and dedication to his spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada.



For more information about Srila Prabhupada and his work, please visit www.harekrishna.com, or contact

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For more information on Satsvarupa dasa Goswami, please visit www.SDGonline.org.



THE HISTORY OF GN PRESS

ESTABLISHED IN 1980, GN PRESS is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to sharing the transcendental teachings of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, as presented by his disciple His Holiness Satsvarupa dasa Goswami. The Press grew out of a team of researchers, interviewers, editors, production workers, and support staff who helped Satsvarupa dasa Goswami with his work on the *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. Since completing Srila Prabhupada's biography, Satsvarupa dasa Goswami has responded fervently to Srila Prabhupada's order that he write books and has produced more than one-hundred books and publications of essays, prose, and poetry, each presenting Srila Prabhupada's teachings in language appealing to the modern reader.

GN Press provides books that appeal to a wide range of people interested in Krishna conscious literature, philosophy, and culture, as well as memoirs about Srila Prabhupada and commentaries on his writings. GN Press has over 150 titles that include biographies of saints, spiritual self-help guides, devotional prose and poetry, and genre-bending avant-garde literature meant to intrigue those of a more literary bent. These books encourage an individual's cultivation of authentic and honest relationships with other seekers, with a spiritual master, and with God.

Our mission is to present the teachings of Krishna consciousness and to help readers all over the world come closer to pure love of God through a personal devoted relationship with God. The writings published by GN Press address the day-to-day struggles and successes that those who apply Srila Prabhupada's teachings may face through many stages of their practice. GN Press is sustained by a global membership of readers, as well as by donations for printing and volunteer service to the press.



GLOSSARY

A

Acharya—a spiritual master who teaches by his personal behavior.

Adhikari—qualification.

Aparadha—offense.

Arati—a ceremony of worshiping the Lord by the offering of various auspicious articles, such as incense, flowers, water, fans, ghee lamp, etc.

Arjuna—one of the five Pandavas. Krishna spoke the *Bhagavad-gita* to him on the Battlefield of Kurukshetra.

Ashram—a spiritual order: *brahmachari* (celibate student), *grihastha* (householder), *vanaprastha* (retired), *sannyasi* (renunciate); living quarters for those engaged in spiritual practices.

B

Balaram—Krishna's elder brother and His first plenary expansion.

BBT—the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.

Bhagavad-gita—lit., “song of God.” The discourse between Lord Krishna and His devotee Arjuna, expounding devotional service as both the principal means and the ultimate end of spiritual perfection.

Bhagavatam—see *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

Bhajan—devotional activities; a devotional song.

Bhajan-kutir—a hermitage-like residence for the practice of devotional activities.

Bhakta—a devotee of Krishna.

Bhakta-vatsala—a description of Krishna's quality of loving kindness shown toward His devotees.

Bhakti—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Bhaktivedanta—a title conferred upon Srila Prabhupada by the Gaudiya Math, meaning “one who has understood that

the conclusion of Vedic scripture is *bhakti* (devotional service).”

Bhava—the stage of transcendental ecstasy experienced after transcendental affection.

Brahmachari—a celibate student living under the care of a bona fide spiritual master.

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

C

Chaitanya (Mahaprabhu)—lit., “living force.” Krishna in the form of a devotee, Who appeared to teach love of God through the *sankirtan* movement.

Chaitanya-charitamrita, Sri—the biography and philosophy of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, written by Srila Krishnadasa Kaviraja Goswami.

Charanamrita—holy water that has bathed the Deity.

D

Darshan—vision; audience.

Dasa—lit., “servant” (masculine). An appellation that, along with a name of Krishna or one of His devotees, is given to a devotee at the time of initiation.

Dasi—feminine variation of *dasa*.

Deva—demigod.

Dhama—abode; the Lord’s place of residence.

Dharma—the duties prescribed by one’s nature and social position; ultimately, *dharma* means devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Dhoti—a garment wrapped on the lower body of men, commonly worn in India.

Diksha-guru—the spiritual master who initiates the disciple into the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra.

G

Gaudiya Vaishnava—a follower of Lord Chaitanya.

Gaudiya Vaishnavism—the practice of Krishna consciousness as taught by Lord Chaitanya, who appeared in Gaudadesh

- (West Bengal), and who is accepted as being nondifferent from Lord Krishna.
- Gaura**—a name of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, meaning “golden.”
- Gauranga**—lit., “golden-limbed.” A name of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.
- Gaura-Nitai**—Lord Chaitanya (Gaura) and Lord Nityananda (Nitai).
- Gayatri**—a prayer chanted silently by brahmins at sunrise, noon, and sunset.
- GBC**—Governing Body Commission, ISKCON’s board of directors.
- Gita-nagari**—a spiritual farm community established by Srila Prabhupada in central Pennsylvania.
- Goloka**—Krishnaloka, the eternal abode of Lord Krishna.
- Gopi**—a cowherd girl; one of Krishna’s most confidential servants.
- Gopi-manjaris**—Srimati Radharani’s most confidential maidservants.
- Goswami**—one who controls his mind and senses; title of one in the renounced order of life. May refer specifically to the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan, who are direct followers of Lord Chaitanya in disciplic succession and who systematically presented His teachings.
- Govardhan Hill**—a hill in Vrindavan, the site of many of Krishna’s pastimes.
- Govardhan-shila**—a stone found on Govardhan Hill, and worshiped as nondifferent from the Lord.
- Grihastha**—a married person living according to the Vedic social system.
- Guru Maharaja**—title of respect given to one’s own spiritual master.
- Gurudeva**—one of many titles that may be used in addressing one’s own spiritual master.
- Gurukula**—a school headed by the spiritual master.
- Gurukuli**—a colloquial word referring to an alumnus of an ISKCON *gurukula* or school.

Guru-puja—worship of the spiritual master.

H

Hare—the vocative form of Hara, another name of Radharani; refers specifically to the internal spiritual energy of the Lord.

Hari—a name of Krishna.

Haribol—"Chant the holy name."

Hari-nama—lit., "the name of the Lord."

Harinam—public chanting of the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*.

I

ISKCON—acronym for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

J

Jagannath—lit., "the Lord of the universe"; may refer specifically to the Deity of Lord Jagannath in His temple at Puri, India.

Janmashtami—the festival of Krishna's birth.

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

Jaya—an acclamation meaning, "Victory!" or, "All glories!"

Jiva—the individual, eternal soul or living entity; part of the Supreme Lord.

Jnani—one who approaches the Supreme by cultivation of knowledge.

K

Karatalas—hand cymbals used during *kirtan*.

Kartik—the Vedic month corresponding to October–November, in which Lord Damodar is worshiped.

Katha—talks.

Kirtan—chanting of the Lord's holy names.

Krishna-Balaram—the presiding Deities of the ISKCON temple in Vrindavan, India.

Krishna-katha—topics spoken by or about Krishna.

Krishna—the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Kurta—a tuniclike men's shirt commonly worn in India.

Kurukshetra—a holy place where the war between the Pandavas and the Kurus took place and where Lord Krishna spoke the *Bhagavad-gita* to Arjuna.

Kutir—a hermitagelike residence for the practice of devotional activities.

L

Laulyam—greed; usually refers to intense desire to see Krishna.

Lila—pastimes.

M

Maha—a Sanskrit prefix meaning “great” or “large.”

Maha-bhagavat—a devotee in the highest stage of devotional life.

Mahaprabhu—supreme master of all masters; refers to Lord Chaitanya.

Maharaja—great king. Also used as a title of respect for a *sannyasi*.

Maha-vakya—a principal Vedic mantra or verse.

Mala—string of beads used for chanting.

Mandira—temple.

Mangala-arati—the first Deity worship of the day, performed an hour and a half before sunrise.

Manjari—an intimate *gopi* maidservant of Radha and Krishna.

Mantra—sound vibration that can deliver the mind from illusion.

Mataji—mother.

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

Maya—the external, illusory energy of the Lord, comprising this material world; forgetfulness of one's relationship with Krishna.

Mayavada—a philosophy that states that the Absolute Truth is formless and without personality.

Mridanga—a two-headed clay drum, traditionally used in *kirtan*.

N

Nama—the holy name.

Nityananda—the incarnation of Lord Balaram who is a principal associate of Lord Chaitanya.

Nitya-siddha—an eternally liberated soul.

P

Pancha-tattva—Krishna as manifested in five different features in the pastimes of Lord Chaitanya: The Lord—Sri Krishna Chaitanya; His plenary portion—Sri Nityananda Prabhu; His incarnation—Sri Advaita Acharya; His energy—Sri Gadadhara Prabhu; and His devotee—Srivasa Prabhu.

Parampara—the disciplic succession of bona fide spiritual masters.

Parikrama—a walking pilgrimage.

Parivrajakacharya—the third stage of the *sannyasa* order; one who constantly travels throughout the world, preaching the glories of the Lord.

Prabhu—lit., “master.” Added to a devotee’s name by another devotee to show respect.

Prabhupada, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami—founder-*acharya* of ISKCON and foremost preacher of Krishna consciousness in the Western world.

Prajalpa—foolish, idle, or mundane speech. Talks unrelated to Krishna consciousness.

Prasadam—lit., “mercy.” Food that has been spiritualized by offering it to Krishna and that helps purify the living entity; also referred to as *prasad*.

Prema—love of Krishna.

Pujari—a priest, specifically one engaged in temple Deity worship.

Puja—worship.

Pukka—a Bengali term used to define someone or something as “first class.”

R

- Radha(rani)**—the eternal consort and spiritual potency of Lord Krishna.
- Radhashtami**—the festival celebrating Radharani's birth.
- Radhika**—Shrimati Radharani.
- Rama**—as part of the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*, refers to the highest eternal pleasure of Lord Krishna; may also refer to Lord Balaram or Lord Ramachandra.
- Rasa**—the spiritual essence of a personal relationship with the Supreme Lord.
- Rasika**—person or thing absorbed in *rasa*.
- Ratha-yatra**—an annual chariot festival celebrating Krishna's return to Vrindavan in which the Deity of Lord Jagannath is pulled in procession on a *ratha* (chariot).
- Ruci**—lit., "taste." A stage in the practice of Krishna consciousness in which one develops a natural attraction or "taste" for the activities of devotional service.

S

- Sadhana**—regulated spiritual activities meant to increase one's attachment to Krishna.
- Sadhu**—saintly person.
- Sadhu-sanga**—the association of saintly persons.
- Sahajiya**—a class of pseudo-devotees who take the conjugal pastimes of Krishna and the *gopis* cheaply and who do not follow the proper regulations of *vaidhi-bhakti*.
- Sampradaya**—a chain of disciplic succession through which spiritual knowledge is transmitted.
- Sanatan Goswami**—one of the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan.
- Sankirtan**—the congregational chanting of the holy name, fame, and pastimes of the Lord; preaching.
- Sannyasa**—renounced life; the fourth order of Vedic spiritual life.
- Sannyasi**—one in the renounced order of life.
- Shaivite**—a worshiper of Lord Shiva as the Supreme Lord.
- Shastra**—revealed scripture.
- Shikha**—lit., "flame." A tuft of hair grown at the crown of the

head of male Vaishnavas.

Shiksha-guru—an instructing spiritual master.

Shiksha—instruction.

Shila—lit. “stone.” Refers to the *shalagrama-shila*, who is an incarnation of the Lord in stone form and is therefore worshipped like the Deity.

Shukadeva Goswami—the sage who originally spoke the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* to King Parikshit just prior to the king’s death.

Six Goswamis—six great disciples of Lord Chaitanya who wrote many books on devotional service and who established the major temples in Vrindavan.

Srila Prabhupada-lilamrita—the biography of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, written by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami.

Srila—a term of respect given to a spiritual master.

Srimad-Bhagavatam—the *Bhagavat Purana*, written by Srila Vyasadeva, which specifically points to the path of devotional love of God.

Srimati—a term of respect given to women or female Deities.

Sthayi-bhava—continuous love of Godhead in devotional service while fixed in one’s particular service mood.

Sundara-arati—evening worship of the Deity in the temple.

Supersoul—an expansion of the Supreme Lord as an all-pervading personal presence in the universe and in the heart of every living entity.

Swamiji—lit., “great master.” A common term of respect addressed to *sannyasis*.

Swami—one who controls his senses; a title of one in the renounced order of life.

T

Tapasya—austerity.

Tattva—truth.

Tilak—auspicious clay markings that sanctify a devotee’s body as a temple of the Lord.

Tulasi—a great devotee in the form of a plant; her leaves are

always offered to the lotus feet of the Lord.

V

Vairagya—renunciation.

Vaishnava—one who is a devotee of Vishnu or Krishna.

Varnashram—the Vedic social system of four social and four spiritual orders.

Varna—the four occupational divisions of society: intellectual (brahmin), administrator (*kshatriya*), merchant (*vaishya*), and laborer (*shudra*).

Vrindavan—Krishna's personal abode, where He fully manifests His personal qualities.

Vyasadeva—the original compiler of the *Vedas*, and the author of the *Vedanta-sutra*, *Mahabharat*, and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

Vyasa-puja—worship of the spiritual master, who represents Srila Vyasadeva, on his appearance day.

Y

Yajna—sacrifice.

Yamuna—a sacred river in India, which Lord Krishna made famous by performing pastimes there.

Yogamaya—the internal spiritual potency of the Lord.

Yogi—one who practices sense control with the aim of spiritual realization.

Yukta-vairagya—real renunciation by using everything in the service of God.









