

ELECTRIONIC BOOK

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Also by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

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October 27, 1997, 12:09 a.m.

Devotional service is offered to Krishna for the benefit of the devotee, "for the Lord doesn't need service from anyone." Yes, but does the Lord *exist*?

Yes, He exists. Do *you* exist?

Of course I do. I'm here in my body, trying to pay attention, wearing two pairs of socks, hoping to have a good day.

So, Krishna is also here, although in a much different state than you are. You can contact him by hearing from Prahlada Maharaja.

I thought He existed long ago, like Prahlada Maharaja (maybe), and that He went somewhere.

You think so many things. You think the rowboats will forever be crossing the strait between Inis rath and Geaglum, and that the Hare Krishna temple over there will always be available. These events are recent and will not last forever. You are too proud, deluded into thinking your spot-life is all-in-all.

"By glorifying the Lord constantly, the living entity becomes purified in the core of his heart, and thus he can understand that he does not belong to the material world but is a spirit soul whose actual activity is to advance in Krishna consciousness so that he may become free from the material clutches." (*Bhag. 7.9.11*, purport)

When Krishna demands, "Surrender to Me," fools are amazed that He could ask so much. But the demand is not for Krishna's benefit but for ours.

I'm on Krishna's side on that one, but . . . my heart's

in the highlands, on a

tiny island of doubt and self-survival

(*annamaya, pranamaya*). What can I put into my belly? What

can I hear? Krishna, You see me like this,

so fearful. I'm not a fearless devotee

who can preach Your movement. At least let me be an honest one and find virtue in that. Perhaps, as Kierkegaard says, I can work on inward deepening. I write this for my own purification, whether I remember that or not.

Dear Lord, Your demand that we fully surrender to You is not "too much." rather, it's a confidential instruction. You know fools will need more time, so You provide us a gradual path. For those who can't hear *anything*, best that they simply serve a devotee.

* * *

Prahlada says, "Although I was born in a demoniac family, I may without doubt offer prayers to the Lord with full endeavor." (*Bhag. 7.9.11*) I used to claim to be a prayer-maker. Then I stopped. I aligned myself with a Christian prayer style and stopped that too. Now it seems I try to pray by writing. It's a full-time endeavor, and I give myself to it. Prayer is not only words recited or contemplated; it includes action. Prayer requires that we act (and think) with devotion, to praise Krishna. "With devotion one should feel

'God is great and I am very small. Therefore my duty is to offer my prayers to the Lord.'
On this basis can one understand and render service to the Lord." (*Bhag.* 7.9.12, purport)

* * *

The Loneliest Monk

& They assure you like a mom and dad, a lover, a crowd, a subway assures
that God is real, life is
real
you have to live anyway
so you might as well sing

* * *

as you move.
The coda of life the
demand is to serve God
and to pipe-toot
to the spiritual world O
God, God in rhythm and blues
You are the top and the bottom O
God, I'm talkin' to You.

* * *

Be God-mad not
sax-mad, or for
money or sex "get it right/ be purified.
Wrote to Manu I'm alone I'm sorry, I
made a mistake
be kind.
He is.

* * *

I'm broken and wobbly
forget to turn on the tape recorder to my own lecture, it's lost. No one else records it
although they're trying their best, their
level best. O Godbrother Maharaja, you were a great preacher. We put each other
down in life and
only at death do we eulogize
one another. "He was a good sort. He did such-and-such."
But can we afford
to love one another and still speak truth?
It's not only the reading and
recitation of scripture. Not all,

not at all.
Where is redemption?
rejuvenate.

* * *

Our bridges are falling, my fair lady.
O metaphor, please play the bass line as we walk the bridge
to the next world.
Pen, write fast to the
beat of my heart. I consecrate this day to Krishna.
O love eternal "you don't end.
And sorry, folks,
this attempt was flawed
to love you and to love God
and even myself. My end
is only
a new one. "

* * *

4:15 a.m.

The express route to Krishna consciousness is *bhakti*. X Swami is a big-shot Hindu and spoke fiercely to 1,200 *panditas* in Timbuktu. Who cares? I don't. Someone said when I get there, I should team up with that Swami and speak to the *panditas*. I wrote back, "Don't include me in any joint venture with that man. My health wouldn't permit it anyway." I mean, my mental health. He said he'd bring an ex-sailor to see me on my birthday. I'm already thinking ahead to December and to the flies that will be in the air at that time of year. Tropics. One woman there has an attachment for the Deities there even after seeing the well-cared for Deities of North America.

Sacred time. Enter the liturgy of
the computer. But
here you are with your old voice
saying this and
that. The back of your neck,
the pressure you create
can ruin a whole day.

Why not do something obviously holy? I have already chanted fifteen rounds.

Studebakers "no one knows about them nowadays, he said. But that's old stuff. I can't give you anything but love, baby. That's it.

Words I keep rejecting. Maybe I should accept them? Fat-cheeked baby, horn of plenty, *Tropic of Capricorn*. I thought that would be a great book, that it wouldn't disappoint me. Even if it was a great book for me at the time, such things are used up quickly enough in this world. They wear thin. There are few treats in this world.

Autumn News, a newsletter for "gay fraternalists." The Elk and Deer Clubs of America and Ireland. A magazine of Irish written haiku and haibun. "O Phoenix Park, / what a lark / the magpies ate the kittens." My God.

O Krishna, Narottama prayed, I am the worst. He said Krishna may ask why He should give Narottama mercy, since he is sinful. God's mercy is for the pious. Narottama said, "Sir, I am the most fallen, certainly. However, Your name is Savior of the fallen. Place my claim first."

A clever prayer. Of course, Krishna cannot be defeated by logic, and it was Narottama's love that saved him. Feeling oneself humble and unworthy, yet actually being interested to chant the Lord's names and feel separation from Him "even to lament the lack of such qualifications cleanses us.

Someone called Tilaka "a flea-bitten dog" and gave him a kick. In a lecture I said, "Don't kick the dog of the Vaisnava." But he didn't care. After the class he turned to me and asked, "Can I do anything for you?"

No, nothing.

"The garbage is heaped in the temple backyard," he pointed out. "The devotees should be cleaner."

O devotee, don't give free advice.

"I'll be quiet until I do some work."

Thank you.

Thinking again of disciples who don't write and who are distant. The guru-disciple relationship is voluntary, so why should I lament? If they don't care, why should I? It doesn't matter. Let them go. It is not my place to chase after them. I have done that in the past, and few respond. I'm sorry I'm telling you all this. It's not my real nature. Perhaps I am speaking like this because I've become slovenly. Fall back, my good looks shot, me and Bob Mitchum, who is already in the grave, although his films may still circulate on late-hour TV (I don't know because I don't live in the world).

O Krishna, I'm on the way out. Friends, please take dictation. I have so few inclinations left to read this or do that. And I certainly don't have time. I am beginning to seriously prefer the narrow way and to read the account of Krishna conscious persons trying to make it.

Will we save a temple or sell it? There is no other way to survive in this world, in ISKCON or out, except to take shelter in Krishna's name.

He said, "The world is full of *mudhas*. It's not going to get any better. Everything is happening by Krishna's sanction. If a devotee begs and people don't respond, it is by Krishna's plan. Krishna tells them in the heart, they weren't fortunate enough, so we shouldn't be disappointed if we can't collect anything from them. God's sanction is required. Pallbearers could not carry a coffin unless He allowed it, and the birds couldn't preen their feathers without His permission."

He said the meal is mouthed. You should offer it to Krishna. He said the real thing is to acknowledge that Krishna is supreme. He has allocated a particular space and quota to each of us. We get nothing more than that.

Prahlada considered himself unworthy and begged people to turn to Visnu. Later, he called them *mudhas*, but tried to save them anyway. A Vaisnava is always compassionate. He rules his notebook. He travels in a van and distributes books. He sells

paintings to cheat them into giving to Krishna. He walks down Grafton Street looking for an angry fix. The Beats are dying one by one like late autumn flies. Twenty slide shows with audio I'm arranging, so even if I'm not here, it can go on, my compassion. Or I could sit there like a dummy and say, "Okay, Paul Winchell, do the act."

Jerry Mahoney: "Hare Krishna! I went to the Hare Krishna temple and had a good time."

Paul: "Jerry, did you get any *prasadam*?"

In his squeaky voice and gray flannel suit and bow tie, Jerry Mahoney yaps open his mouth, showing his rows of wooden teeth, and says, "Oh yes, Paul, I had a real good time. I checked out the girls and sassed the men."

Paul: "Jerry, that's no way to act in a temple. You should be more reverent."

Jerry: "I'm reverent, but it's . . ."

Paul's lips drool and quiver. He is too old for this act, but the devotees smile and Srivasa says, "You're a good fellow." Paul gives a donation and then eats the forty preps that have been offered to the Deity.

Then the Swami who was in charge of almost everything on five continents arrives in the midst of an uproar. Our schedules are disrupted, his disciples take a recount. It looks like a fistfight might start. Steve comes and tells them all to chant "*On*" and "*Ah*" and "*Hare Krishna*," and so quells the crowd. When everything is calm, they make him chief of the Americas under another swami. That is the best way of two thieves. That is the anecdote we told ten million times in the wrong way and in the wrong place. Please give money "give money and we will bless you for helping the Hare Krishna movement. Thank you very much.

* * *

7:45 a.m.

Prahlada addresses Lord N²sinha: "I am not afraid of Your fierce form." We are glad that He killed the demon. Prahlada prays to the Lord as *k²pana-vatsalya*, He who is kind to conditioned souls. Visnu is kind not only to surrendered *bhaktas* but to fools too. Prahlada says he was afraid of associating with the demons and the *sansara-cakra*. "When will that moment come when You will call me to the shelter of Your lotus feet, which are the ultimate goal for liberation from conditional life?" (*Bhag.* 7.9.16)

* * *

I've been calling this season the end of autumn, but actually it's not. This is autumn's heart. All the leaves, brown and gold, lie curled on the ground. No more new chestnuts falling. Plenty of green leaves still on the trees around here. A perfect day to walk and swing my arms. It seems only by coming out to walk does it jell in me that Prabhupada specifically says we should take shelter of Lord N²sinhadeva when we're in danger. I imagine someone asking me whether we should do that. I would say, "You can chant Hare Krishna. You don't have to specifically take shelter of Lord Nrsinhadeva." But here Prabhupada recommends it specifically.

Gray sky curtain all the way to the ground. Green growing up grass "Irish green.

* * *

8:50 a.m.

"If one actually wants happy, blissful life, one must become Krishna conscious." As I write and read, devotees are ringing the brass bell at the quay, trying to catch the attention of someone on the island so they'll send a rowboat over. The bell used to be attached to the tree for convenient pulling, but the rope broke. Now the devotees have to hold the bell and bang it with a stick. Looks like a husband, wife, and two small children. Ten minutes go by and the island quay with its rowboats quietly parked shows no signs of life. Typical Inis rath. Not easy to penetrate. If I told those devotees waiting that Krishna consciousness is always blissful and happy, they might not agree right now, but even in this case, it's obviously not the fault of the devotional process if we fail to remember Krishna in such a circumstance. Neither is it the fault of the devotional process if we are inconvenienced by the mist and the cold or by the fact that we are forced to wait on the mainland for devotees who may never appear. Nature is full of obstacles, and the lonely temple on the island may be just as prone to them as anywhere else.

I can't help wondering how long those devotees will have to ring that bell, though. I suppose no one inside the temple building hears it, or they would come right down, wouldn't they?

"One might say that becoming advanced in spiritual life also involves *tapasya*, voluntary acceptance of some inconvenience. However, such inconvenience is not as dangerous as material attempts to mitigate all miseries." (*Bhag. 7.9.18*, purport)

Ah, they have sent someone to the rowboat.

* * *

I Approve

(I just read that material life is miserable and material attempts to mitigate it are a failure. We should follow the *acaryas*. Musicians and poets are meant to glorify the Lord. If we try to be happy without remembering Krishna, we will simply suffer from the pricking of a thorn.)

* * *

& Walk in a park "heard the clear, divine, profound
sound of that horn in the distance, the one
to which you can dance
if you choose, if the soul is right
and able to hear
and hold it
along with the abrupt drum
of life.

* * *

For the rest, This way, please, through the
dark theater where we have lost our way "
following men who misled
who said they knew
the art of the dance and how
to improvise.

* * *

At a moment
my head and your hand "
our pains united then
dissolved
I sit and look out at
a gray island sky, fog, rain
praying to help us remember
Krishna in the notes
and to find the right way.
May we find our own voices
although sometimes
our songs become more a complicated
still God-given, the point:
"Now you become the sacrifice. Give all to Me."

* * *

No chestnuts in
snow, not yet "still
fall, and ladies, children, old men
crinkled like fall leaves
in the rain our
soles spin past the things we want
pushed, sustained by
solo and dreams of freedom in NYC and degradation.
What could I expect when Celine was my guru,
and Genet "
blind
hopeless? "

* * *

4:45 p.m.

Long day, sidelined with vise in top of head. Is it clearing now? I'll test it "whether I
can read Pahlada Maharaja and not feel pain.

"Accepting the thoughts of exalted authorities through disciplic succession is certainly much easier than the method of mental speculation, by which one tries to invent some means to understand the Absolute Truth." (*Bhag.* 7.9.18, purport)

Crows on bare-limbed tree, like that early Basho haiku. There goes Prahlada dasa from his field to his house "long hair but *Sikha*, long sweater, gray pants, Wellies. He seems satisfied. He chants extra rounds, I've heard, and does agricultural work and cares for animals, some of them as pets. He lives in a different world.

I was daydreaming because I couldn't act. I imagined that Madhu died "his funeral, his relatives, having to speak. Would I stay in Ireland after that? They are kind to me here and seem to have adopted me.

Then: "What if *I* died?"

But I couldn't visualize the scenario. I looked at the chair and the tape album that says, "Srla Prabhupada." If I died, then "I" couldn't see or be, and what would exist? I may say, "Of course, life will go on without me," but I can't conceive of that. We are so self-centered. I simply wouldn't be here. I'd go onto another life, whatever that means. My meditation stopped there.

Yes, the pain is going down, but it's too late to go to the shed for the second day in a row, I'll miss it. Do they think I'm lonely here? But I ask them to leave me alone. When I have pain, I can't follow my normal activities. Still, I glimpse at them.

Merton says this about his writing:

And I realized the futility of my attachments, particularly the big one "my work as a writer. I do not feel inordinately guilty about this, but it is a nuisance and an obstacle. I feel hampered by it. Not fully free. But the love of God, I hope, will free me. And this important thing is simply turning to Him daily and often, and preferring His will and His mystery to anything that is tangibly "mine."

"The Journals of Thomas Merton, Volume IV, p. 150

I can't be guaranteed protection by caring parents or a good ship or airplane or medicine. "Ultimately the shelter is the Lord, and one who takes shelter in the Lord is protected." (*Bhag.* 7.9.19, purport)

Srla Prabhupada was convinced that "our humble attempt to propagate the Krishna consciousness movement all over the world is the only remedy that can bring about a peaceful and happy life. We can never be happy without the mercy of the Supreme Lord." What, then, shall I speak on November 4, a week from tomorrow, on Srla Prabhupada's disappearance day? I can't speak the most private things, but something I can share. How can I tell about the fervent heart of striving discipleship? His disappearance day is not an easy day. It's not important to talk of oneself anyway. Just glorify Prabhupada, but with the cutting edge of real honesty. And I am not obliged to speak only of his last days.

* * *

Everything exists due to God's potencies. Supersoul is in the heart. He "gives inspiration for action according to one's mentality." In other words, He allows us our free will to pursue personal goals, and He sanctions, although sometimes "unwillingly."

Krishna directs, "Give up all other activities and surrender unto Me." We reply in all kinds of ways to the Lord's demands, hoping to put off the weight of His words. We confuse ourselves. Actual *bhakti* is under the direct control of the Lord. I realize only a tiny bit of this. Actual *bhakti* cannot be lived as a farce.

* * *

Put Your Little Foot right Out
& The timing is fine I could dance
with you but that's silly
we seek the words
like a swan on lake
this is the Krishna conscious version of
Zukovsky:
Billy, he said, shoots to kill.

* * *

You don't know me without
you have read *Tom Sawyer*.

* * *

Sawdust trail, little foot,
John Wayne movies "we
Guarinos came back to Queens, 76th Street, singing
"Put Your Little Foot right Out."

* * *

The guy said it's a strange mixture, but
I accept it all, spit out the pits
don't eat the skins, look for what's soft,
loud, different, my
language ""obsessed with language" "

* * *

talking through a horn
and in "I" words
"self"
"atma."

* * *

Listen, I read what Prahlada said and I agree the worse is worst,

the bad is host
the way is KC
KC
KC KC KC
KC KC
Now you see I mean business too
and I'm just glad I'm out of pain.

* * *

I want to leave something for the world.
Obsessed with words
he creamed a pie "
I mean to say
Krishna consciousness in the book He said the remedy is worse
Supersoul will do what
you ask but why not
do what *He* wants?
Put your little foot right out.

* * *

We wanted You, Krishna, in the temporary. Srila Prabhupada assures us
it will all be gone.
He was "very angry"
he said "dog food" and "you murdered the whole thing in two days."
"I don't wish to discuss." O master in Hyderabad. I switched over to his
mellow *bhajana*, Hare Krishna *bhajana*. *Puspanjali*. "

* * *

Song At Night

1.
My merry songs at night
under the desk lamp.
Words are as important as
phrases, as how I feel,
who I am.

* * *

But silence has its own
prerogative.
Music makes words shorter
for dancing in our seats.
I think Prabhupada said that

about a *kirtana*.

October 28, 12:40 a.m.

Prahlada Maharaja states that the Supreme Lord is the source of the material energy and all its departments. Srila Prabhupada refers to the material facilities as "the sixteen kinds of perverted support." "The mind entraps itself in desires which we attempt to fulfill. The *maya* is completely entangling. Who can get free from this entanglement unless he takes shelter at Your lotus feet?" (*Bhag. 7.9.21*)

I dreamt I was going to be married to the daughter of a Hindu. I lacked money (because I'm a *sannyasi*?), so he forwarded me \$11,000. But as new donations came in, he expected me to repay him. I was up early in this dream with Krishna-bhakta dasa, but eventually our noise woke the others, "Who can get free from this entanglement unless he takes shelter at Your lotus feet?" When I awoke, I felt a small sensation in my right eye, so I stayed in bed for an extra half hour. Prahlada Maharaja, please speak to me as I read your verse aloud. Dear Srila Prabhupada, I'm hoping the same as I read the purport "that you will speak to me.

* * *

Do what is favorable to Krishna consciousness; avoid what is unfavorable.

Prahlada Maharaja declares that Lord Krishna is above material entanglement; the time element is His representation. "As for me, however, I am being crushed by the wheel of time and therefore I surrender fully onto You. Now kindly take me under the protection of Your lotus feet." (*Bhag. 7.9.22*)

Since Krishna controls everything and we cannot save ourselves by remedies individual or collective, the only recourse is to surrender to Krishna as He Himself demands in *Bhagavad-gita* 18.66. I read it but . . .

Why do I take it as objective science? It's not objective science but truth. Truth covers both the objective and the subjective. I say I accept it, and as objective science I do, but I can't live by it fully. I'm still somewhat under the influence of *maya*. Why else haven't I surrendered fully to Krishna? Is it that He hasn't granted me the intelligence to do so? I must not be worthy. But He has a plan for me. Surely it would help my cause if He could see my earnestness. If my friends read this they would agree with my analysis of my sincerity.

But it's a question of degree. I could do more. I don't seem to feel enough that I am suffering, that I am being crushed by the wheel of time. The initial relief I have obtained from my small practice of *bhakti* has made me complacent. Perhaps I am indulging in the small pleasures available within religion, and unable to understand the real pain of material life. My piety has cushioned it.

The realization will hit when I have to take birth again. I will have to go through so many trials, I may be set back from what I have now. Although I cannot lose whatever small advancement I have attained, I may be forced into a difficult situation. And I have already proven that I really can't handle suffering.

Why, then, don't I use my intelligence to pray for more intelligence? Prabhupada states that the criminal is put into prison and punished by the government, but the same government can release him. Material suffering has been allotted to us by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, "and if we want to be saved from the suffering, we must appeal to the same controller." I think of the verses in "*Gopinatha*." He has cried out for all humanity as a *sadhaka* who feels stuck in the material world. "O Gopinatha, please hear my cries. You are the most intelligent, so please figure a way to get me out of material life so I can take shelter of Your feet in devotional service."

* * *

4:50 a.m.

And so my friend, I take on all these influences. When I take on the influence of guru and Krishna, and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, that's the best for eternal life. That is my chosen *dharma* in this lifetime. Take shelter as best you can. I can't rid myself of the other influences, so I try to use them in service. Prabhupada wants us to practice devotion.

Hare Krishna Swami, Mahansa Swami, and others were with Prabhupada in Hyderabad in 1976. Surely they are sincere sons. Srila Prabhupada gave such difficult instructions sometimes, but always he lightened the weight of surrender in our hearts and provided us the transcendental teachings with which we could learn to bend. Some of us have never bent completely. I have failed in so many ways, but I have been sincere, too. I don't want to always beat myself down for my failings, but I want to see what Prabhupada has given me and what I *have* been able to take, what I am trying to offer.

This decimeter foiled. This guy striving to stay awake.

Eugene Hicks' Center for Community relations. Wow, is that the same Father Hicks I knew when I lived in Great Kills? Yes, it has to be. I could stop in and say, "Hi, I'm a lapsed Catholic. I've been a Hare Krishna for over thirty years. I had some exchanges with Father Hicks when I lived here. Would you like to hear about them? I thought since you honor him, you would like to hear some biographical anecdotes in case you are writing a book. I went to Confession and told him that I didn't believe in Confession. He told me to come and see him, and we talked."

No, they don't want to hear from me. They just want Catholics, donations, or those who want to return to the fold, contrite. They also want those who are prepared to move back to Great Kills and get purified. It would be too humiliating. It would be like trying to live out a bad dream. After a while I'd get disgusted and run away, try again to live on the Lower East Side, again start going to 26 Second Avenue where Prema-bhakti-marga and rasaraja would give me their time. I could be initiated by an ISKCON guru if I liked. I would have to go through all that stuff "suffering."

No thanks. No *sansara-cakra*. I prefer pasta. I'm already happy here on my own.

* * *

Preparing Breakfast

Dear Sir, here are my poems, *pissoir* and all.

I'm showing off my
teeth (like a monkey)
but have a deeper purpose.

* * *

Simple propaganda: God is great.
Hear a refrigerator in the next room,
a clock ticking
your precious time runs down
in Krishna conscious furtive
glances "is Death yet in this
house?"

* * *

Oh, finish this sestet
and go into the kitchen
to prepare yogurt,
wash blackberries,
raisins, apples, bananas with
rotting skins "
good within "to offer
to God. Then a light, elegant
breakfast for a poet
and preacher of words.

* * *

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry,"
she wrote, "for this and that."
All right already, I said.
Too many apologies.
I'll accept you as you are,
but not those rotted pears!

* * *

Dreamt I was back in the Navy, but cool-headed and calm. No one seemed able to disturb me. I walked around the ship and looked in on the different activities, then went to the office where I worked. No one spoke to me; I lived in a bubble. I felt Krishna conscious in the dream, and willing to allow myself to get through whatever I had to get through without depending on matter. I felt almost invisible, I was so calm.

* * *

7:58 a.m.

The material body and all the opulence it may acquire can be destroyed in a moment. Prahlada saw this happen to his own father. We should be concerned with the happiness of the eternal soul and not the body. "My dear Lord, I request you to place me in touch with Your pure devotee and let me serve him as a sincere servant." (*Bhag.* 7.9.24) Forget material opulence.

It's just turning into a brilliant morning. Dawn light is flooding the room. Just off the island's coast I see a boat with two men dressed in dark clothes. They are hunters, waiting for a duck to kill.

A crane flying from the mainland out onto the lake swerves back and lands in the water near the reeds on this side. The hunters' boat turns around and heads in this direction. Will they shoot the crane?

* * *

The forest path is just as idyllic today as it is in spring. Birds chirping, sunlight in the fractured brilliance. I can't actually remember spring except for the wildflowers, if I think about it. Now instead of wildflowers it's all dead leaf carpeting.

* * *

8:40 a.m.

Prahlada Maharaja says material plan-making is like running after a mirage. As we work, our minds are often like abandoned boats floating off in calm or stormy waters. Today I found myself thinking of persons whom I initiated, but who for various reasons have gone to different branches of the Gaudiya Math. N. dasa, a devotee whose original name I can't remember "was it Adhoksaja? He wrote me a letter about four years ago. He apologized, and I gave him "permission? At least I was cordial. But I don't exchange with them anymore. Oh, ket me row this boat back to Prahlada Maharaja's teachings.

He is amazed and thankful that the Lord placed His lotus hand upon his head. Our relationship with the Supreme Lord is in proportion to our response to His advice, "Surrender to Me." We select our own position. Do we *want* to go back to Godhead?

Now here is the verse I offer to support exclusive faith in Srila Prabhupada. It's 7.9.28. I was falling into a blind well full of snakes . . . "But your servant, Narada Muni, accepted me as his disciple and instructed me "my first duty is to serve him. How could I leave his service?"

Don't bypass the spiritual master even to serve the Supreme Lord. When you qualify yourself by *guru-seva*, you will "automatically [be] offered the platform of direct service to the Lord."

* * *

11:55 a.m.

Narada had assured Prahlada's mother that he would always be saved from the enemies' hands. So Krishna upheld that promise of Narada. "The Lord acts only to

satisfy the desire of His devotees." Prahlada approves the Lord's killing of HiranyakaSipu.

I approve of me being a better devotee. I
soup a nook
a corner for free-writing. I like the bright green grass
but won't eat it.
I look out for mail "always seeking
a favorable sign.
Not hoping for miseries, deaths, and so on.

Lord, I seem to pray, keep it going nicely. Not quite ready for the brave act of, "Die to live eternally," as the Christians say, or as Queen Kunti says, "Let sufferings come so I can think of You." Or as r

Radharani says, "If Krishna becomes happy by My misery, then that is my greatest happiness."

All right, we know you're not major league. Don't tremble in advance. Take the peaceful day while you have it and share it so others can find peace too. That's all we ask. This too is an authentic existence. And may I be able to endure life when (and if) it comes in a different way. If you can connect with Krishna in *bhakti-yoga*, then the upheavals won't matter. You will be anchored with Krishna, the unshakable.

* * *

Waiting for Lunch

I didn't forget "
brought in the table,
the plates for Lords and guru
filled with hot *dal*, broccoli,
carrots, bread with butter . . .
I will chomp but
first offer prayers to God.
Hundreds and hundreds of
times I have done it and
will do it until I
can't.

* * *

God, You please Your devotees
who wait for lunch,
but great ones live
not to eat but to feed
You their love. They
truly take Your
remnants.

* * *

2:32 p.m.

Finally made it out to the shed, feeling a little grumpy toward the devotees I passed and toward myself (my Shadow) on this sunny day. Shed wall covered with big flies outside and some inside. They stay close to the windowpane, so I won't bother about them. Better I do what I came for.

I am reading *Bhagavad-gita*, a verse describing pure devotees. Those who have no desire for self-interest, who only want to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead "for them, Lord Krishna is easy to attain.

Cranes land and fly at the water's edge. They are shaped like jets. I feel I am staring at them stupidly. The *Gita* text seems intellectual, theological. It doesn't address me in a primitive way. I keep putting it back into my attention and I value it, but not as I would like, wholeheartedly.

Gopi-manjari dasi wrote me that she couldn't come to polish my Deities. She couldn't find anyone to cover her service. She was told she shouldn't over-endeavor to come out to Inis rath. She said, "The time will come when I won't be able to see you." To what is she referring? I thought I'd live forever here, just as I thought Swamiji would always be with us in New York.

Sheaffer's speciality is their recessed Point pens. They stain my fingers. Good pens, though. I think I dreamt someone gave me a new "No-Nonsense."

Satatam and *nityasah*, "always," "regularly," or "every day," a pure devotee constantly remembers Krishna and meditates on Him. I can say at least I'm always trying for that, even if I am consistently poor and failing. I do chant and read. It's like slipping on wet rocks on a climb. My writing also culminates in Krishna conscious expression. This purport of 8.14 *Bhagavad-gita* doesn't describe something foreign to me, but it is not something I have attained: remembering Krsna always while He makes it easy to attain Him.

* * *

4:40 p.m.

Pain. Took Esgic. The sensation went down, but now I am restless, a bit lonely, feeling disturbed by the pain. I wouldn't mind receiving some mail, but even without it I'll get through. I know my master wants his *sannyasis* to preach. Caitanya-candrodaya wrote me a letter saying he thinks ISKCON pushes persons to become "professional *sannyasis*." As soon as they arrive at a temple, they have to lecture, are given no time for health or rest or study or their own inclinations. Same old thing "pushing for preaching. Just today I heard Srila Prabhupada tell a large gathering of his disciples at the 1976 Mayapur festival not to imitate Haridasa Thakura by staying in seclusion and chanting extra rounds in order to attain false acclaim. Better we remain active and work. Is this the *only* instruction for *all* time? Will contemplatives ever be allowed and seen as part of Prabhupada's army?

Prabhupada also said that we have to kill demons, but in this age we kill them by killing demoniac qualities. That's done by chanting Hare Krishna.

Hare Krishna.

One extra round. I try for a second, but it dries to a silent murmur at the end. From one book to another.

* * *

6:05 p.m.

Ex tempore, I could speak on his disappearance day. Look at them and feel within yourself. I might say, "Those who have never met Srila Prabhupada may think we who have are fortunate, or they may wonder if perhaps being with Prabhupada wasn't as extraordinary as we say it was. Well, such people can see his videos and judge for themselves." How about, "Although, we don't really see *sadhus*, we hear from them"? No, I won't say that.

Then what? I'll have to say *something*. Someone advises me to prepare as much as possible before I speak. It is good not to be caught unprepared so that you have to stutter through a lame, disorganized presentation. That leaves an audience cold.

But what does it mean to prepare? It doesn't necessarily mean memorizing a speech. Kierkegaard says that such memorization and presentation is a waste of both the speaker's time and the audience's time because the audience won't even remember the points. Too true. So, dear folks, we must prepare by remembering the topic "in this case, Srila Prabhupada" and to feel our love for him. Then we can find within our hearts the proper glorification and preaching on which to speak. I wrote an essay for the GBC stating that Prabhupada was not the guru for only one generation, but was there for everyone. We simply have to approach him. Still, it's a fact we cannot know the pure devotee, just as we think the moon is moving when it mingles with blowing clouds.

Anyway, I have a week to ruminate on it. My speaking on that day is right now a back-burner problem. O Grand Tetons, O grand hoaxes, the little man is better tonight and will close the evening with activity of a suitable sort. He is not down in Cork with the devotees putting on the festival. He won't even be drinking a glass of juice "too sober.

Krishna conscious poet degrades the age with his splayed out . . . Prahlada was saying Krishna is everything, and to know Him we must practice devotional service under the guidance of the pure devotee. I got that straight "Krishna is the original Personality of Godhead. The same philosophy "I don't have to invent a new one. How did Srila Prabhupada always feel fresh and enthusiastic to repeat it? He loved Krishna and wanted to convince people of His glories. At the Hyderabad farm he said, "I want five hundred people here tomorrow night. I have not come here to sit quietly in a room." That was Prabhupada, always pushing to spread Krishna consciousness. It was even in his last year that he said that. "I have not come to sit quietly in a room."

I'm sitting quietly in this room. I took a pill to calm the pain; if I hadn't have, I wouldn't be sitting here quietly either, at least not quietly chanting and reading. The headaches often make me sit and simply observe the pain. I keep thinking of that approach, "You can feel the pain, but don't feel the hurt." regardless of what I see, I can't seem to work when I'm in pain, and I certainly can't leave the room and go on stage before five hundred people to give a Krishna conscious lecture. I have no potency,

really, anyway. Of course, any Krishna conscious presentation is good, but there are so many ISKCON swamis who can do it. Better I stay here.

"We appreciate that you want your own space," she wrote, "and I don't want to disturb you, but what do you think of my problem?"

I will say her struggle is commendable. Don't let them squelch it out of you. How can I tell her not to take her feelings seriously?

Sreyas and *preyas*. The man on the moon. The pipe-smoking half moon tattooed on my father's arm, and a sinking ship, "A sailor's grave." Did he think he would die at sea? The moon smoked a pipe with a devil-may-care attitude. Such a frivolous thing to put on your skin forever. Devotees write "On" or "Hare Krishna" or draw Hanuman or Lord N²sinha over their hearts. I don't need such markings. I am already marked with the sign of the spiritual master. The depth of that mark can't be represented by material graphics.

* * *

Prahlada prays with inspiration because Krishna blessed him to do just that. His activities will always be remembered by devotees who read the *Bhagavatam*. This is the last big chapter on him, and I want to take it one verse at a time. Here Prahlada is saying he wants to help the *mudhas* "that famous verse is coming up. He says Krishna is the cause and effect; He is everything and is the original person.

* * *

The effect free-writing has is "you don't care? I do. I care that it contains praise of Krishna. I often think of the parrot who praises Krishna over radha. Then the female parrot praises radha over Krishna. I found their speeches amazing when I read them in *Govinda-lilam²ta* and elsewhere.

I want to do that. I want to care. In the meantime, I can't wait for perfection. Socrates said he wouldn't accept a professional orator's speech in his defense, even though his life was at stake and the orator was able to make convincing arguments. He had more integrity than that. He chose to speak for himself, and not to try to avoid death. He was a man of principle.

October 29, 12 Midnight

In South Africa, Srila Prabhupada had to meet a Mayavadi swami and others at a program. Srila Prabhupada said, "We are not these bodies, but everyone thinks of himself in terms of the body. Even the dog thinks, 'I am dog.'" The Mayavadi began his disagreement there and said, "With all respect, do we know actually whether a dog thinks that he is a dog?" Srila Prabhupada didn't answer at first, so the man repeated the question. Srila Prabhupada replied, "Yes, or why does he bark?" I like that answer.

Now that I have told you that, we're ready for another day. Madhu is supposed to return sometime today. They are probably just winding down from their evening festival, maybe talking to a few last guests or clearing out the hall.

Prahlada Maharaja declares that the Supreme Lord is everything, but that He maintains his original personality. He is the seed of existence, which is manifested in varieties, all of which originate from the One.

In a purport to this section, Srila Prabhupada states that a devotee remains undisturbed by duality. A devotee is always situated in Krishna consciousness, whether in so-called distress or happiness. I see in myself how strongly I favor peace over the distress of physical pain, confrontations with people, and other obstacles. I want things to run smoothly, under control. I want to be able to flow in a creative life and to do the things I like to do. The pure devotee, however, sees all situations as within Krishna; they are gifts or blessings from God (*tat te 'nukampam*) It is difficult to advise devotees to think like this when they turn to me in trouble.

If we really want to think like this, we have to keep clear-headed humility, knowing that we do not possess the requirements necessary to attain pure devotion. In humility we can express regret, and at least in little ways, try not to drop below our present level. In humility, we can also praise those who have attained a higher level than ourselves. Certainly, we shouldn't envy them.

* * *

Looking ahead today and wishing to help myself, I hereby say that when the headache begins, I won't view it with duality. Yes, it seems that pain disrupts the flow of my life, but actually it is *part* of the flow of my life. We have to stop seeing with duality, and facing reality is part of what it means. In my case, pain arrives almost daily, stays for some time, then departs. I try hard to live in process in my writing. Can I do that with the pain too?

And now, seize the hour? Okay. Prahlada Maharaja speaks of the Lord as Karana Visnu, He who enters *yoga-nidra* after annihilation. *Yogis* can practice *yoga-nidra* on a small scale. "The mind should always be actively fixed at the lotus feet of the Lord."

* * *

4:10 a.m.

Worshipping radha-Krishna and Prabhupada is sanctifying. It is nice. Words to describe it fail me. The experience is not something tremendous, exactly; it concentrates my mind and words on worshipping the Lord and His devotee. It's inconceivable that I am able to touch their forms.

Now, folks, I want to tell you that when Srila Prabhupada spoke on Bg. 2.12, he surprised me. You'd expect him to get right into a discussion on "Myself and yourself," the Lord and the *jivas*, and how they both always exist. rather, he took the words *jnanadibhir* and spoke about *ksatriyas*. He told how *ksatriyas* fight and never turn back, unlike today's defense minister who has never seen a battlefield. He told how Jarasandha and Bhima fought. It was quite a digression, but then he returned to the point and spoke about the eternal individualities of the soul.

O folks, the teacher gave each student a small bit of buttermilk. He asked them to drink it. Then he said, "Just imagine having nothing else to eat or drink for two days."

He was pleased that the kids got some insight before they began to speak of Raghunatha dasa Gosvami.

He's going to be the priest on Saturday at a wedding. He's nervous "never did it before. I said, "Prepare yourself, but don't be afraid if you make some mistakes." We'll have to see about me, whether I can go over and eat with them. If I have a headache, what's the use?

The use is I don't steal hubcaps or car emblems. I am staid and sit on a stage if they ask me to, and say, "Oh me, oh my, the truth of the scriptures is indeed a narrow one, and we follow it. We don't need the support of reasons anymore other than the reasons given in this science itself. Krishna also uses reasons. What we basically repeat is faith in the *sastras*, although we use reason to make it clear to *jnanis*."

Where is the man who went to ISKCON New Orleans to be temple president? He used to write to me when he was in the Navy. He remembered me from when he was young and I had visited the Houston temple. Where is the girl, now grown older, who used to type for me? She ran away and then came back to take shelter of another ISKCON guru. She never writes me either. Why do I ask these questions? Why allow these people to hang around your neck like fog?

Because they have meaning.

She made fun of a devotee she saw in the street. We are funny, I suppose, and not always properly motivated. It takes a keen insight to appreciate devotees "to know them. The temples are weak "no money or memberships. Someone said, "You simply lack vision." Let us see, then, what is in the cards.

Krishna upped the ante and allowed some people to go to the moon with rockets. Next it will be Mars. Why don't they see if there is life on this planet first?

Is there a person who understands the self within the body? I don't mean who repeats it from dogma and goes on saying that he carries his cross with Christ, but one who knows that there is another life and lives for it here and now?

He's writing with his eyes closed like a rabbit about to fall over due to breathing in too much oxygen. I better lay down a second and rest. Prahlada's journey through prayer is for sane persons with aural reception at work, not for a fellow who falls down and recalls falling from a building.

* * *

8:53 a.m.

The Supreme Lord is the original seed of everything. By His will the universe develops, first springing as a lotus from His navel. The universe later grows when agitated by His glance. When it has grown, the origin is no longer visible (thus scientists speculate on the origin but are unable to know it since they rule out a Supreme Person as the original cause and they don't accept Vedic *sastra*).

This is my study. When the Vedic version is faithfully presented, we may experience a flicker of doubt. Whether or not we experience doubt, we are aware that we are accepting this information on authority, which means on faith. Kierkegaard explains that the very nature of faith is "beyond probability" (sometimes described as "absurd" or

"offensive to reason"). This is why an empiricist cannot accept it. But *brahma-Sabda* redefines the word "science."

What is true of the Supreme Lord's relationship to the universe is also true of His relationship to the individual living entity. The Lord causes our bodies, created of material energy, to appear. When we enter a material body, we can no longer see our original cause, Krishna. "An intelligent man, however, can see the Supreme Lord existing everywhere." Brahma came to this realization through *tapasya*.

* * *

I don't know when M. will return, but it could be at any moment. I'll say, "So the traveling troubadour has returned," then hear how the festivals went, and ask whether he brought me anything (I'm like a child "like to get presents). Then we will return to our usual routine, with him bumping and phoning in the next room and me being able to talk to someone "a mixed blessing.

* * *

It's a beautiful morning, but I've opted to stay indoors to avoid a headache. I have a good view of the local action and binoculars to enhance it. The collie runs around and around. He has beaten down the grass in his path. He ducks under the barbed wire fence in exactly the same place and races after cars that go down to the quay past the boathouse. The boathouse, now the domicile of Prahlada and his family, puffs up bluish smoke from the chimney. I can also see rowboats coming to and from the island. People generally can't see me "or maybe they can, a figure seated at a desk facing a window "but they don't interrupt me as I sit here, read, write, and think.

Looking up from the desk I see the local material world. Looking down into the book I read words about the eternal form of the Lord, *sat-cit-ananda-vigraha*. It's worth studying. Mostly it doesn't hit me, but occasionally I detect a faint glimpse of it "God is a person from whom everything comes. He is eternally blissful, all-powerful, and all-knowing, and we are His sparks (parts and parcels). Then it fades again: I grow tired of holding it in my mind (it seems), so I look up at the easier vision of the peaceful (and sometimes stormy) lake strait.

* * *

Poem Words

Don't bluff, words don't mean
that much to me, don't bear
such esoteric sound
or shape or meaning "as
if to penetrate existence in a
good poet's sensitive heart.

* * *

Mostly we arrange words to carry
the *parampara*. A poem is
a quick way to convey a moment in a serving day,
like explaining a picture "
smoke rising from a chimney,
what it's like to be here
at a desk, a man,
wearing a sweatshirt,
amused, deficient, quiet . . .

* * *

Words "complacent,
yearning "too strong?
Apple is easier, a straighter
meaning as if I was
looking at someone, a reader,
talking to him about Krishna
and my attempts, or
even leaving myself out of it
speaking only the holy names
the holy words of the Absolute
in his ear.

* * *

10:30 a.m.

When I began to read Vardy's book on Kierkegaard, I said that my situation was not as fixed as it used to be (when Srila Prabhupada was here) in terms of having the confidence that I believe I'm working earnestly for Krishna. Perhaps now, however, I have more of an inward life. I was reading some of the things I wrote about that in some EJW entries I wrote last June. I was glad I had a chance to write them down and to go through them.

* * *

12:07 p.m.

Prahlada Maharaja states that the Lord came to kill demons. Srila Prabhupada says demons sometimes attack devotees who are distributing Krishna consciousness, but the devotees "must rest assured that demoniac attacks will not be able to harm them, for the Lord is always ready to give them protection." (*Bhag.* 7.9.37, purport)

Prahlada Maharaja refers to *channah-kalau*, the Lord appearing in Kali-yuga in a covered form. This indicates the appearance of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. The Lord protected Brahma from demons in one incarnation; He appeared as Lord N²sinhadeva to protect Prahlada Maharaja in another; and as Lord Caitanya, He appeared to protect us, the fallen souls.

* * *

Strange sights in the usually peaceful lake strait: two speedboats with giant outboard motors roared up to the Inis rath quay. Each carried about six men. All had an aggressive stance. I took out my binoculars and sighted what seemed to be military men. They wore identical uniforms "fatigues and boots. Probably the British Army. One boatload of men disembarked at the quay and walked toward the temple. The others waited. The men were gone only a short time before they returned. I hope they got *prasadam*. A little later, a barge went by, and for the first time I saw cattle being carried on this lake. There were about a half dozen black cows penned in on one side of a long barge.

When I read Prabhupada's statement that the Lord will protect the devotees from demons, I wondered if it meant that in every worldly situation the devotees will always triumph. That doesn't seem likely, although that's what he seems to be saying. Then I turned to *Judge For Yourself!*. Kierkegaard writes that real surrender to God "beyond probability" has to be done without the guarantee of worldly success, but with the understanding that we might succumb. That would also seem to be the Vedic version, as in the cases of Jatayu and Abhimanyu, who were on the Lord's side against the ungodly.

Similarly, I can't expect undisturbed peace as I sit looking out a window at the lake island. Even here the Army can land, and even from here the cows can be taken away.

* * *

2:40 p.m.

Goats bleat and make humanlike sounds as I pass. Do they think I'm Prahlada, their protector and maintainer? Radhanatha's workshop door is open. Does that mean M. is back too? To the shed.

reading Bg. 8.15. The great souls attain Krishna and never return to the world of *duhkha* and *asat*. Srila Prabhupada writes, "The *mahatmas* receive transcendental messages from the realized devotees and thus gradually they develop devotional service . . ." Can I also receive those messages from Srila Prabhupada even after his disappearance? Yes.

We want the highest perfection, but we have to work hard to achieve *any* perfection. Why not reach for the *siddhin paramam*? And what kind of work does that entail? Anything of which we are capable. It must be performed to please Krishna, not our sense gratification. It cannot be measured by miles of travel (or days spent at home).

Spiritual planets "going there. Krishna will take us. We cannot arrange such travel ourselves, yet we do have to put in a request. We go by our desire. That is Krishna's kindness. *But so much will have to change in us before we're qualified.*

In the meantime, we carry on in this world, which feels real enough due to our limited experience. That's unfortunate, because in the next body, we won't even remember our present concept of reality. We will know what it was only by hearing about it. That's another way we have to work: to really understand the eternal, spiritual reality. A verse such as *cintamani-prakara-sadmasu*, or even books such as *Govinda-lilam²ta* and *Krishna-bhavanam²ta* provide us with the information we need, but because we cannot see past our material mind and senses, we think these books are describing a

fantasy world. Therefore, the sages don't even recommend too much that we read them. We have to become purified of the material identity first before we can understand them. Until then, they are beyond us.

* * *

4:50 p.m.

Just by chanting the holy name, the mind will become clear of sin. I've been chanting for years. Even if I say (for the sake of argument) that I'm in pretty good shape, how do I know that the chanting has caused my good fortune? I only know that I feel the need to chant.

* * *

Prahlada prays as if he were a common man. He says, "I am so polluted. How will I be able to think of You?" Srila Prabhupada says the sinful person can be cleansed by chanting. It's as simple as that.

* * *

The senses each demand attention, like a man with many wives. They have to be controlled. Denied? Sometimes. The principle is to satisfy them in a Krishna conscious way through service activities, including eating, touching, hearing, seeing, and so on. Again, chanting is recommended.

Prahlada wants to save himself and others who are suffering from repeated birth and death. "A Vaisnava is always afraid of such an abominable life, and to free himself from such horrible conditions, he engages himself in the devotional service of the Lord." (*Bhag. 7.9.41* purport)

Krishna is compassionate. Therefore He appears for the benefit of the *jivas*. Still they don't accept His mercy. He then comes as Lord Caitanya to preach. One should follow Lord Caitanya's teachings and become a guru by spreading *Bhagavad-gIta*.

* * *

Dreamt about a group of school kids I knew. One girl was quite plain, so I didn't notice her at first. I began to speak to her and found that we had a good rapport. Then while riding the bus home from school, I saw my old friend John Young, who said, "I'll be in tomorrow and I will see JagadiSa." John Young was always a wild one.

* * *

6:24 p.m.

No sign of Madhu yet. I'll go to bed on time tonight. Reading Merton's 1961 journal and remembering the widespread fear in those days of nuclear war. Now they say the Cold War is over, but the bombs have not gone away. Although the threat seems to have

reduced from Russia, the world is filled with small wars. As I write, the light trembles "the bulb must be about to burn out.

ISani brought me more blackberries. I can't offer and eat them fast enough, it seems. O Krishna, please accept me. I am looking for freedom from pretention and have prayed for that.

October 30, 12 a.m.

M. came back around 8 last night, but I was already resting. I want to be quiet this morning so I don't wake him up. I'm not so eager to rise at this early hour today, but my body is accustomed to it, so it's hard to refuse. This time is valuable, and it provides me with an opportunity to look freshly at scripture. I want to gather the deepest teachings. Please let them enter my heart, or whatever we want to call the innermost *atma*.

Prahlada Maharaja prays that he expects the Supreme Lord "will show Your causeless mercy to persons like us who engage in your service." (*Bhag. 7.9.42*) In his purport, Srila Prabhupada presents strong references to prove that it is best to become the servant of the Lord's servant and not to try to become a direct servant. referring to Bhaktivinoda Thakura's song, Srila Prabhupada states, "One must become the dog of a Vaisnava, a pure devotee, for a pure devotee can deliver Krishna without difficulty."

"Prahlada Maharaja wants to save the whole world by spreading Krishna consciousness." Now comes the prayer quoted often by Srila Prabhupada, beginning, *naivodvije para duratyaya* (*Bhag. 7.9.43*). Prahlada Maharaja describes the material world as difficult to cross, but states that he is not afraid of it. rather, he is happy to chant (Srila Prabhupada translates *gayana* as "chanting or distributing") the glories of the Lord. He is also concerned when he sees the *vimudhas* entangled in their misery-bound activities. In the next verse he becomes more specific in his prayer: "I don't wish to be liberated alone . . . Therefore I wish to bring them back to shelter at Your lotus feet." In this desire he says he is unlike the *munis* who do not care for the cities and towns, and who prefer to meditate alone in solitary places, uninterested in delivering others.

I remember using these verses in my opening chapter of *Living With The Scriptures*. I confessed my own tendency to live alone and said Prahlada's prayers checked me from abandoning my preaching duties. That essay may be worth looking at again. It was written in an ideal mood (at least as we have tended to define it), and is more ideal than my present feelings. At that time I was writing a "confession" of a tendency I felt was perhaps not so correct; I have a different position now. At that time, I still didn't know how deep my desire for solitude was or how difficult it was going to be to dismiss it. None of this had been tested. I thought I could dismantle my tendency merely by mentioning it as inferior. Now I honestly seek a way to be both solitary and concerned for the welfare of others. My solitary practices actually make me more fit to preach "and I preach through my writing, which is fed by solitude "and I stress the importance of example over precept in our present-day splintered ISKCON.

Still, the question is before us all (not just me). Srila Prabhupada states that a devotee can go to hell and still be happy, and actually a devotee is interested in living in the

busiest parts of the world, since that's where the most conditioned souls live. We must ask ourselves *very practically, realistically* how we can respond.

* * *

3:25 a.m.

I proposed to myself that I read the last sections of *Srila Prabhupada-lilam²ta* to prepare me for Prabhupada's disappearance day on November 4th. I just opened the book and realized I didn't want to do it. There were too many heavy feelings from those days. I stayed with it anyway and read Rupanuga Prabhu's prayer to the higher authorities to please allow Srila Prabhupada to remain with us a little longer. That drew me in and convinced me to allow those emotions to again be stirred in me.

* * *

4:10 a.m.

Madhu is still sleeping. I guess I'll make my own breakfast. What shall it be, sir? And shall I lament over disciples who never belonged to me but who I now think have left me? Shall I be sorry that I don't see Krishna or realize that He is nondifferent from His holy names? Shall I lament that I sometimes fall asleep over sacred scripture? Shall I serve lamentation for breakfast? What shall it be?

No, my breakfast is an open book, and if I eat blackberries, there won't be anything to worry about. Oh, we are a dignified little fellow with narrow shoulders. We don't even have to choose our wardrobe each day. It's always the same.

* * *

Network pain, network CBS interviewed five persons from a cult all of whom said theirs was actually the great Hindu tradition. They are developing a Communications Department (Public relations) in order to inform the world who we are and to remove any misconceptions the general public may have. What is the correct conception? That we are hard-working, that we are striving to become better, that we are human and fallible, but that we are basically interested in peace in the world. We follow our spiritual master. We do practical stuff like feed the poor and provide free medical treatment for the injured.

Then a swami began to speak about how to implement *varnasrama-dharma*. When a member of the audience fell asleep, the swami said, "This is a *Sudra*. See how he gives in to the mode of ignorance?" That person had been a *brahmana* up until that moment. Instantly demoted. He then had to pull a *thela* full of heavy-set GBC men and their families to and from the meeting hall. He cursed his lot. "I used to be a bigshot," he told his fellow *wallas*, but they only laughed and cursed and spit.

The *Sudra* revolution in five reels. Come, sit down and watch it with me. I only request that you not fall asleep. We are willing to honor you as a genuine person from the East. You are like an American natural religionist, like a Shaker or Quaker. The Lutherans won the basketball game, by the way. They also raked their leaves in the front yard of the seminary in Mt. Airy. The Hare Krishnas hid behind their high hedges.

Anyone was welcome to their temple, and sometimes that included thieves. They stole incense from the basement and anything else they could get their hands on. The persons living in the temples were exposed to this austerity.

Fire drill, fire drill, air raid drill, general quarters "this is a practice session. They all filed down the stairs, pouring down, hundreds of them, and went outside to the schoolyard "felt good about being outdoors on the pretense of a fire drill.

The air raid drill was more ominous. We had to duck under our desks while imagining a red ball in the sky and death about to take us.

Nowadays, we duck under our desks when we tune into the worldwide web and hear the debates. Some say debate is the natural state of ISKCON these days. There is always someone to argue for or against any point. Some say everything is all right "we shouldn't worry "and that we know our wrongs, have been humbled by them, and are trying to do better.

But who knows what "better" is? For many it means chanting Hare Krishna, but how? And in the meantime, does it mean . . .

* * *

Dreamt of Prabhupada last night. He asked me to write on a topic which someone had suggested to him. The topic was something a *karmi* might say: "My life is too hectic for me to take to Krishna consciousness." Prabhupada asked for a report before he left the place where we were all staying. Then he gave me a second assignment. When he left, he wasn't feeling well and his intimate servants were concerned. He looked pale.

* * *

Morning Walk

My walk started out in a soft, tinkling rain, but that soon cleared. Picked up four new chestnuts. The chestnut leaves are the most brilliant golden and the largest of any of the leaves. The path is carpeted unmistakably with autumn foliage.

Now Tilaka is running in my direction. I know him well enough "he's not overly affectionate or clingy. He just happens to be running in my direction. He won't mind if I pet him. Then we are free to return to our little independence and walk where we choose. Mind wanders while the Hare Krishna mantra motor purrs.

* * *

10:05 a.m.

All right, so I read a little. In Hrishikesh, Srila Prabhupada said the symptoms "from the material point of view" were not good. The devotees moved immediately to Delhi. Almost five hours by car. reading this is like reading about my own oncoming death.

* * *

2:40 p.m.

"If death takes place," said Srila Prabhupada, "let it take place here." That was his return to V²ndavana. I can find fault with ISKCON, even with V²ndavana. It's almost impossible to stay out of controversies. But V²ndavana is the home for those Vaisnavas who are dying. I may not be so lucky as to have enough warning to get there. I pray to be fully engaged no matter where I am. "One who dies in service to the Lord lives forever."

I am reading, hoping to retain some of it for my talk next Tuesday. Prabhupada wanted to be completely relieved of management, but still he worried whether the Bombay temple would be opened, whether the Deities would be properly installed. He recited *bhavauSadhac chrotra-mano*: the best medicine is to hear about Krishna. He asked for small *kirtana* groups to always sing softly at his bedside.

He looked thin at that time, like a *Bhagavatam* ascetic. He told us there was no hope he could live. He asked his disciples not to regret his departure, and not to spoil his institution "Mayapur, Bombay, the whole world. He emphasized preaching.

* * *

5 p.m.

You heard your "music," you wrote
in shed "no weak head "wore gloves.

You said

"Hare Hare," "Lord Caitanya."

"Process, not product," and remember
the history, to improvise
your day.

The truth is nigh.

* * *

Henry, trespasser from the moon,

"What would you do if you went too far?" the art book asked.

I'd stop. I'd

say, "All right, Krishna,"

I'd straighten out.

But I wouldn't die. I

wouldn't indulge.

I'd check myself because I'm a student of the Swami
and I control my senses.

I wouldn't let art distract me

I'd remember what happened to Bharata Maharaja.

So what's to fear? Keep going.

Simplistic.

Guru hammers on it.

He's right I'm for him. I choose his way
the path to Krishna.

October 31, 12:12 a.m.

Srila Prabhupada asked the devotees to live long, keep good health, act without sense gratification, and pour all their ambition into Krishna's mission. "Then next life you go back to home "permanent life." He made it sound easy: just do what you're doing in ISKCON wholeheartedly and go back to Godhead. "Back to Godhead" sounded so real whenever he spoke of it.

"It was like old times" "we went to Prabhupada to report, and he was either pleased or displeased. Often he would correct us, then ask us to do more "and more ""assuring them that Krishna would help them." O Prabhupada, I know I defend my service and myself in my mind and heart to you, but I want to do what is pleasing to you. I want my contribution to be dynamic in this changing ISKCON.

* * *

Book distribution reports. Chanting Hare Krishna by his bedside. As for a lecture on his disappearance day, just pray, "He lives forever." Don't you have a heart and mind to consult?

One reason I may be afraid to talk personally is that it's too difficult to speak so openly from the heart to a large audience. I have to choose a more palatable message to suit everyone. How can I recount in public the anguish of those last days? Or recount the competition we survived, not even knowing how we would each be tested, not by each other but by Krishna? There was no real joy, no attempt in those days to accept ourselves as we really were, no real humility. We were too busy striving to keep up with each other, although some of us couldn't "how to recount the price we have had to pay for that? So many are now gone.

And what about death itself, how we cling to life in this body? Speak about Vidarbhi and how the disciple shouldn't live unless he can dedicate himself fully to his spiritual master's service? I admit I am not up to that standard, that I am still looking for the humility to feel that deeply, that I want to love his mission and myself at the same time. O Srila Prabhupada.

Prabhupada said we would be all right even if Krishna called him to leave.

read even if your reading is not profound. Keep close to Krishna consciousness in one form or another. Then write, let it come out, a testimony. Become purified. The creative process is also a form of Krishna consciousness.

Adi-keSava "

saw a plugged nickel, cookin' at . . .

hold in check and select right words. Don't gorge.

But sometimes I do, he said,

and the GBC members were aghast. Each one in those 1977 days had material desires and so many problems,

we

went wrong.
If I had it to do over again . . .
Maybe I do.
But Srila Prabhupada will be with me. In
this I have faith.
Chant Hare Krishna softly.

* * *

5:35 a.m.

M. is making breakfast. Curtain closed because it's dark out there. I had two clear days in a row. Stand by? I'll try to write no matter what.

Try to think. Yes, I had a chance to read a little more SPL. I'm not waiting for further enlightenment "will speak with what I have. Now tending to the internal observance, although I'm not in V²ndavana or attending meetings and seminars.

What happened? I can write of other things, but it's better to be controlled now. I once bought a "Basque shirt" (translate, T-shirt) with broad black and white horizontal stripes. (They sold them also in maroon and white.) Steve Kowit liked it, and one dark night, as I wandered out onto the street in my black pants, Basque shirt, and dirty white sneakers "but all these things are dead and gone. The main thing is I survived to meet Prabhupada. Even so, am I entirely satisfied with who I am now?

Art book: "What would you do if you went too far?"

I'd come back. But it might take a long time, be a costly mistake.

"Still, you have to allow yourself," they say (the painters). Paint the topic that obsesses you over and over until "it" decides it's said enough.

* * *

Masks for sale? No Halloween (a noise "I jump) or black cats, witches orange-black not here in Ireland, not a bit of it. Blessed

we are by His Divine Grace. Lost no way untraced "
he brought His message for us.

That's it. That's the rebound. I write and I want to do so much.

Grain in wood on desk "sound of M. stirring cereal in a pot

sound of air in my nostrils, breath, chest rising
diaphragm and memory.

* * *

O Mary, I hope you get better.

O Joey, I hope you get pure.

O Nancy, whoever you are "a tribute to all disciples and
bless us with *aSirvade*.

It's as simple as tying shoelaces "speaking scripture and praying creative.

* * *

9:15 a.m.

"All my child <!--This is a comment.[correct? "check SPL]-->," said Srila Prabhupada, "only Ramesvara is a little intelligent." Make a trust to protect the properties.

But what about the enemies within? Who will protect us from the trustees themselves?

And if they fail, who will protect us from loss of faith in ISKCON authority? Who will protect disciples from falling down? And even if we follow the rules strictly, who will protect the devotees now and in the future from hard-heartedness and institutionalism? We couldn't even see what was coming. "All child," and maybe none of us were so intelligent after all.

Devotees ask, "Why didn't Krishna protect our leaders?" Or, "Krishna, why didn't You tell Prabhupada to choose someone trustworthy? Why didn't he develop a different system?" But then, the leaders who would fall and mislead others already had power.

But then . . . but
then . . .

Doctor Ghosh diagnosed Prabhupada's "disease" as "anxiety for the devotees and the Krishna consciousness movement."

"I may live or die, in either case I am with Krishna. I ask Krishna to give me enthusiasm to continue up to death. A soldier should die fighting on the battlefield."

Srila Prabhupada said he felt he was "a worthless person" taking so much service from his disciples.

TKG: "Our only desire is to serve you."

"I know," Prabhupada replied, "and it is the very reason I am living. All over the world things are going on by your sincere service."

As I write these lines, remembering the events even from this distance, I feel the mood. The lake is calm, and the sky cloudy. I am on the edge of pain, so although it is a beautiful chance to take a walk, I will skip it. Too weak.

* * *

11:30 a.m.

Took an Esgic and the pain seems to be going down. Immediately after taking it, while I was lying in bed, I became filled with emotion. I thought of the passions in my life, my attachments. A few of them I won't mention here because EJW is not, after all, the most private expression in the world. Some of them were things like my love for another guru (although that's past now); my love for Srila Prabhupada, which is such a total absorption despite any resistance I sometimes express; writing; my living in Ireland in solitude; love for the devotees who are dear to me. It was interesting to see how I first located a center of recognition that "This is a passion," then with that established, my attachments floated through my mind. Things that were official or in the category of "supposed to be" didn't even enter the circle. I haven't attained love for Krishna in this kind of emotional way, but I want it and I know it is possible to achieve.

* * *

Washing my stainless steel plate and the breakfast pots "I like washing dishes. It's a form of prayer. Since I am not able to pray with attention or at length on my beads or in the *Bhagavatam*, I should try to extend my prayer into activities that are more accessible to me. (Prabhupada wrote me that I could vary my Krishna conscious activities. He said Krishna would give me the intelligence to know when to wash the dishes, when to read, and when to chant.)

* * *

12:05 p.m.

Srila Prabhupada talked for two hours with Svarupa Damodara. TKG asked, "Would you like that *kirtana* party now?" Srila Prabhupada replied that his talking was *kirtana*. SPL gives standard instructions regarding the guru's *vapuh* (temporary) and *vani* (eternal, in separation). His disciple, the fortunate ones who were serving him, his body and his moods "I could have been one of them, but I was excluded. Still, I was close and already feeling his separation, often thinking of him and desiring his return to health, praying to Krishna for it. I served him even though he emphasized that the important thing was not to depend on his "staying alive" in the body.

"I may stay or go, but in my books I will live forever." The last days of the drama "no more *vapuh* "but he assured us of his continued association. Did we really love him? Did we want to be with him? Serve his movement?

"Whatever I wanted to say, I have said in my books. If I live, I will say something little more. If you want to know me, read my books." (SPL, <!--This is a comment.[research volume]--> p. 338)

Preaching. News of GhanaSyama distributing books in Communist East Europe.
"How much potency this boy has."

* * *

They are going to bring a cow into the temple tomorrow for *go-puja*. I suggested we could worship the cow outside, but they insist. She can wear shoes inside, they say. I thought they chose one of the black Kerry cows, which are all old and fat and ugly "and what if they bring in Draupadi and she starts to bellow? But they plan to invite Prahlada's smaller, brown cow. She's pretty. I may not be there. I have a headache right now. It's more important for me to attend on Tuesday than on Sunday.

* * *

2:45 p.m.

"Bring students to the *gurukula*," Srila Prabhupada said, and they did. Many were unhappy or mistreated. Some grew up angry. You don't hear that when you're reading about 1977 when it was written so soon after the events. Prabhupada's disciples tried to follow his orders "that's a truth too "but when peoples' hearts are impure, even if they are good managers and bring students, can organize construction, or whatever, everything will collapse in due course. Did Srila Prabhupada emphasize enough purity of heart? Yes, he did.

But *enough*?

"I am thinking of so many things. But my life is ending. So keep these ideas." By mid-July (1977) the rains began to fall in V²ndavana. Srila Prabhupada continued his routine and waited to see what Krishna desired.

Srila Prabhupada received news that three hundred dacoits had attacked his Mayapur temple. It disturbed him. It disturbs me to read of it now, so I am going to skip over it just as I skipped over the discussion about the Vedic Planetarium.

Srila Prabhupada became choked with emotion as he thought of his Mayapur men. Lord Caitanya wanted His movement to be pushed all over the world. "We are limited."

The bad publicity that had first come from the dacoits' attack turned a few days later to something more favorable.

Srila Prabhupada continued his *Bhagavatam* purports, speaking into the hand microphone. We prayed that he would live to continue his purports through the Tenth Canto and onward. He was working on Krishna's babyhood pastimes, and praised Mother Yashoda. Regarding Mother Yashoda's inability to understand the Universal Form in baby Krishna's mouth, he wrote that we should simply offer obeisances to the Lord when we cannot understand why something is happening.

He heard of HarikeSa Swami's printing books in thirteen languages. "You are the most important grandson of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati. Go on doing like this." Wonderful praise and even more wonderful, the blessing to go on doing more.

* * *

5:40 p.m.

He said several times he was touched by his disciples' love for him and the service we were rendering around the world. He was grateful. "*Brhat-mrdaíga* . . . I am beating from this room and the sound goes ten thousand miles away. Our enemies are surprised: how this man is still going on?" (SPL, Vol. 6, p. 355). I don't dare compare what I am doing to what he was doing, but I follow the principle and pray to make it offerable. He allows me. I don't want to "cannot "do it outside his movement. My writing is valid only because it is connected with him.

When Srila Prabhupada's health worsened in July, he said devotees could pray for him, "If You want him to stay, please cure him, and if not, please take him away." He saw his staying or leaving as up to Krishna.

TKG pushed for Prabhupada to travel and gain his will to live. Srila Prabhupada picked up the enthusiasm and he said, "At least my disciples will know that I came at the risk of my life."

November 1, 12 a.m.

What does the racing clock mean? What is its purpose? in V²ndavana, they would bring Srila Prabhupada in his rocking chair, carefully carried by two men, to sit before each of the three sets of Deities in the temple. Srila Prabhupada sat erect, wearing dark glasses, his palms together in a gesture of prayer. He was shockingly thin; he was hardly eating. Then they would carry him over to the courtyard and set the rocker down under

the *tamala* tree. Two at a time, the *gurukula* boys would come forward to dance before Srila Prabhupada.

In the meantime, he was gaining his resolve to go west. "If I can work a little more," he said, "our Society will be very strong. I want to see that what I have done is made still stronger."

But he was physically weaker; he was no longer translating the *Bhagavatam*. SPL mentions that in August, I came to see him with a few others. He said to me, "I like your magazine." In the evening he let three of us massage him. I massaged his leg. Prabhupada laid back with his eyes closed peacefully. "You are all Vaisnavas," he said. "Be merciful to me." I sometimes massaged him at night under the mosquito net.

From the letters that his secretary read to him, Prabhupada appreciated that his devotees were praying for him around the world.

The Consulate in Delhi insisted that Prabhupada go personally to renew his Green Card. "Please take me," he said to Tamal Krishna Maharaja. "Don't be afraid. I am not afraid. Either to die in the temple here or there "it is all Vaikuntha."

Every devotee should keep these things in mind "the examples he set. We cannot imitate him, but we are all meant to become real *sadhus*. We are taking certain risks to serve him, but at a certain point, each of us will have to stop what we are doing and die, hearing the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and the Hare Krishna mantra. The only good health we will have at that time will be our heartfelt Krishna consciousness.

He said he prayed to Krishna to give his disciples strength. He recalled 26 Second Avenue: "I was working very hard. Lecturing at 7 in the morning and 7 in the evening. Cooking and distributing *prasadam* to anyone who was coming. *Do you remember, Satsvarupa? You would bring some mango and fruit. Daily you would come.* Those days are past. Now I am feeling happiness remembering those days." [emphasis added] He also remembered StryadhiSa eating many *capatis*.

They left V²ndavana for England, Srila Prabhupada and a few devotees, at the end of August. I didn't go on that trip, but I was among those who sat with him at the Delhi airport before he left. He looked to see who was present and nodded slightly to each in recognition. I remember thinking that it was all right that he didn't speak. He had spoken so much already to inspire us to take to Krishna consciousness. Now we were satisfied just to be with him and to share our love with him. Then he was taken in his wheelchair to the airplane.

* * *

5:30 a.m.

So many years later, I'm looking for my own voice with which to offer that same love. EJW hopes to hold it. I look for it by sometimes absorbing what's out there. How different my life is from a person living in an American city nowadays. I don't know anything about television, computers, the workday grind, crime, contemporary music, politics, sex, or even how to live "completely out of it. I live in an insular, Hare Krishna world.

Even among devotees I am pretty much out of it, though. Lately getting in touch again with different things. read some books on creativity, dreams, etc., but not too deeply. I

know it's a distraction. I am meant to stay in a Krishna conscious world. To look even a little into what's going on in that other world assures me I am better off where I am. At the same time, I am not fully satisfied with socializing or politics, dogma, and the official presentation existing in ISKCON either.

Prabhupada built a high wall around his disciples "he said that. It's like the brick walls, twenty feet high, topped with pieces of jagged glass or even barbed wire. A V²ndavana wall. As soon as the land was purchased in V²ndavana, Prabhupada told the devotees to build such a wall around it to assert their ownership. Prabhupada did that with us.

* * *

6 a.m.

Madhu did my Prabhupada *puja* today. I won't be able to go over to the temple for Govardhana *parikrama* because I have too much pain. Sit it out.

November 2, 12:30 a.m.

Hard day for me yesterday coping with the localized pain. Couldn't make it go away and couldn't read or write. Couldn't sleep either, except here and there. Did it bring me insights? It stuns me and tends to exhaust me. It's a wonder (Krishna's mercy) that I bounce back each time the pain is over, happy to resume my duties. It doesn't leave me depressed.

The pain does have one benefit though. That is, I'm more prepared to defend my way of life if any ISKCON committee or authority tries to convince me to become more active according to their own definition. I just can't do it, regardless of my critics, internal or external.

Now I want to return to the flow of my daily life, reading, writing, and chanting. I am interested in EJW. I have a new art book here called *Life, Paint, and Passion*, which stresses process over product in a radical way. It's encouraging for my creative life. I don't have to apply what they say a hundred percent, but it has its valid points. The main assertion is that an artist must work and trust the creative force. In my case, I trust that what comes out can be offered to Krishna and His devotees. I also trust that whatever art I can make in writing comes best when I remain process-oriented. I don't have to tax my brain to create fictional characters or structured essays. I don't have to worry about anything other than, "Is Krishna on this page?"

* * *

In a dream I was preaching to two doubtful women, but my headache was so bad I told Madhu I had to lie down. I was sorry I couldn't participate more, but there were other devotees present who could take over.

* * *

10:20 a.m.

Back in my room after giving a class on *Caitanya-caritam²ta*. It went well, by Krishna's grace. I am grateful to have been able to do it.

Walked down with devotees to the quay afterward. Bhakta Leo described how he prays to Krishna to send him nice people on *sankirtana*, and he also prays that he will get *laksmi* from them. Then he realized that these were not superior prayers; he should pray for his own purification.

"Yes, that is the better prayer," I said. I used my headaches as an example. When the pain comes, it tends to kill my ability to engage in my usual devotional activities. It's only human and natural that I prefer days when I don't have to suffer like this, but that doesn't mean I pray at the beginning of each day, "O Krishna, please give me a pain-free day so I can remain active in Your service." rather, I pray for the strength to endure whatever Krishna sends me.

I added that although it's also natural that I prefer days that are free from pain, there are probably important lessons to be gained on the days when I have pain. Similarly, on book distribution, when nice people don't come and Leo cannot collect *laksmi*, there's something important there too for him to learn.

In the class we discussed Lord Caitanya's prayer, "*Krishna! Krishna! pahi mam, Krishna! Krishna! raksa mam.*" He prays to Krishna please maintain Him, please protect Him. When all the protectors upon whom we usually depend have disappeared, we are left only with Krishna. That is truth.

* * *

2:50 p.m.

It took twenty-four hours for the plane to get from Delhi to Heathrow. reading of Srila Prabhupada's visit there in September of 1977, I wonder who I am to be reading these reports twenty years later. It is November 2 now, close to his disappearance day. I'm physically chipper, having recovered from yesterday's headache. Who *am* I to be reading these reports? How can I possibly speak of them to the devotees on Tuesday? "Shock," "heart-rending" "how the disciples felt who saw Srila Prabhupada arrive, so thin, so . . . wearing sunglasses, transcendental to his body. Why repeat it? What effect can I expect? The devotees crowded into his room. This was no casual visit. They had dedicated their lives to him and he to them.

"So, is everyone all right?" he asked, smiling.

"*Jaya Srila Prabhupada!*" was the warm reply.

Srila Prabhupada's mood was pure thankfulness without his usual critical instructions.

I write this in the shed. The lake is calm. It is a gray, almost misty day. I myself am calm, fit enough to be here. This is rare.

He simply wanted to be with them. He didn't speak, but sankirtana, tears flowing from his eyes. Srila Prabhupada and Radha-Gokulananda.

At that time I was returning to L.A. via the Far East, and I stopped with devotees in Hong Kong. We ate ice cream at a hotel restaurant, then travelled on to L.A. to tell the hundreds of devotees waiting about my visit to V²ndavana. Then waiting for news.

He revealed ecstatic symptoms "tears, and a long, deep, "Hmmm."

* * *

11:05 p.m.

I had a dream, which I'll report the gist of. In it, I tried to creatively solve my irrational fear of getting lost. The dream presented me with practical tips: (1) work with maps; (2) when you feel "an attack" of being lost, don't lose confidence in yourself. It's not your fault. Speak up for yourself and work as a handicapped person. Even though you have a handicap, you can still function.

But in the dream, the persona, armed with these new aids and inspired by his love for a newfound girlfriend (?), became proud, told lies, and got in worse trouble.

The dream brought me here to write. Am I using my life to search for myself as an artist? Is this deviant? It's deviant from pure Krishna consciousness, I suppose, but is it deviant to allow myself to be myself as I try to offer it to Krishna?

Is this discussion too private for this book? Maybe.

November 3, 12:13 a.m.

On Janmastami he rode downtown to see Radha-LondoniSvara. He removed his sunglasses and his eyes were flooded with tears. Do I realize what I am reading? I wasn't there. I can't go through it all emotionally "it will bring me too much pain. My nerves are too short, my tolerance low. Do you remember how you couldn't stand the pressure of living with his secretary and the inconveniences of the sleeping, nothing to do all day, waiting for a rare few moments to be with His Divine Grace? Yes, I remember. It's easier to read about it than it was to live through it.

TKG was expert in the way he described to Prabhupada his London preaching pastimes when they rode in the car through the city. I wasn't able to do things like that. Then his health became worse and he couldn't go to the temple. He requested that he be taken back to India. He said he wanted to see the Bombay opening. "I have worked so hard for it. If opening and then die, it will be a very peaceful death."

I compare myself. No, not that "I seek clues in how to live in the way my master lived. What's *my* hard work? What's *my* peaceful death? What more do *I* want to achieve?

Srila Prabhupada's not going to America upset the devotees' hopes of him getting better and living a long time. I wrote an accurate rendition "the intense feelings described in balanced words, not afraid to tell the emotions of love and the facts of life of death. It was "expensive" writing to tell of his last days. "I was praying to Radha-Gokulananda to please engage me in the service of Sri Sri Radha-rasabihari."

* * *

2:45 a.m., after thirteen rounds

In a letter I opened this morning, a disciple wrote of his midlife crisis. He has several children and a wife to care for, but he doesn't like the ways he has been forced to raise money. Neither does he feel spiritually strong. In an attempt to find himself, he has begun to listen to motivational counseling tapes. They encourage the listener to state affirmations at night and in the morning, including the statement, "I am getting better in every way." One affirmation he says states that he is taking responsibility for his life. Another says he is forgiving, but releasing the programs other people have for him. After going through this on his own, he has come to the conclusion that what he had really wanted to do (a childhood dream) was to become a musician. Although he has no previous musical training, he has begun to take music lessons and to pay for lessons for his family members.

I mention it here not to pass judgment, but to mention how again and again devotees must face what they have repressed after years of "doing the needful." As Narada Muni says, we want freedom, but where is that freedom really to be found? That is the question each of us must face.

It is interesting how this happens to devotees, especially since we tend to be free-thinkers "we must be to have come to the Krishna consciousness movement in the first place. We already broke out of the mold into which society forced us and joined an alternative society; now we have to break out of the mold we or our ISKCON society have imposed upon us and find our truer selves. But not by stepping outside a Krishna conscious context. If we feel caged as devotees, we may find ways to "release" ourselves, but we can't lose our attachment to searching out the Absolute Truth in the name of breaking free.

* * *

8:22 a.m.

Srila Prabhupada was glad to return to Bombay. Imagine what that feels like. Whenever I go to Bombay now, I try to feel it.

Prabhupada began to keep his *japa* beads around his neck at all times. I'm not going to give an overview of the last chapters in my lecture, but will speak on two of the main points from the Vidarbhi section: (1) when the husband dies, the faithful wife should dedicate herself to his mission or die with him; and (2) when the *acarya* passes away, chaos enters, but a sincere disciple works to correct it. Then I might speak on what his disappearance means to me. I'll tell of the last events perhaps, at least some of them. We tend to resist death and dying, but Prabhupada taught us the lesson.

"He asked that the framed picture of Radha-rasabihari be fixed to his bedpost so that he could see Them always." He would sit up in bed and hear a devotee read aloud from *Srimad-Bhagavatam* while he looked at Radha-rasabihari. He said, "This is the most important thing. Read as much as possible." He also heard the devotees recount the struggles he went through to preach in Bombay.

Srila Prabhupada had been planning to stay for the Bombay temple opening, but now he thought of going early to V²ndavana. He didn't want to go to a hospital. "Going to a hospital means going into the mercy of the material scientists." He said the GBC members should come to be with him in V²ndavana.

No, I don't think I can tell all the ins and outs of his last days. It could become tedious if I speak without expressing my real emotions. I won't fake it.

* * *

Found two more fair-sized chestnuts still in their casing under the chestnut tree. I've got enough jars in my room, so I'll keep these in the shed. Of all the leaves, chestnut leaves are the most sensational "long and golden. Some trees have a brighter red to them, but when they fall to the ground, the individual leaves are not as grand. In Ireland, as autumn moves into November, you don't get a sense of the approaching chill. It's obviously not summer, but it stops short of arctic or alpine.

"Hmmm "Let us see which palace I am going to."

To Giriraja: "Organization and intelligence."

Satyabhama-devi dasi: "I will miss you so much, Srila Prabhupada, if you go. I beg that I remain always your menial servant and devotee."

He brought out the best in us. We meditate on his teachings. Live in the temple, struggle to maintain it, engage others to maintain. Somewhere something went wrong. Financial burdens, forcing devotees to collect money . . .

I see a small boat loaded with devotees crossing from Inis rath.

* * *

"Srila Prabhupada was becoming more and more in favor of departing from the world." How long can an attitude like that last? Will *I* ever think like that? Will someone give me a push if I'm not ready? Remember Krishna and desire to take up your service again next life. Srila Prabhupada is making us taste that.

He asked what the cooks were serving the devotees. TKG gave a glowing report. Srila Prabhupada was like a perfect father providing food and shelter. TKG added, "And you have trained us in spiritual knowledge."

Prabhupada uttered one of his deep sounds, "Hmmm. Chant. All together."

White vans and cars that were here for the weekend are leaving.

I just read of Narayana Maharaja's farewell visit to Srila Prabhupada. Srila Prabhupada apologized for any offenses he may have committed while preaching. Narayana Maharaja assured him that he had committed none. The ring of Srila Prabhupada's disciples closed in tight around his bed. He told them not to fight after his departure.

* * *

2:53 p.m.

Then I tell the drama, if you are willing to enter it, of how Srila Prabhupada said he didn't want to recover, but he asked his disciples to discuss "and decide what you want me to do."

This is Manu's house. It's cold, dark, and windy outside. I haven't felt quite up to walking out to the shed, but I'll continue the schedule I'd be following if I was there. Painting too?

When he said he wanted to die peacefully, I accepted it docilely. I thought it was what he wanted; it seemed inevitable anyway, Krishna's will. There was no point, it seemed, to get him to change his will by group endeavor. Maybe my response was too fatalistic, the emotion of a weak-willed disciple. Or maybe it was an accurate assessment.

Srila Prabhupada said, "Krishna has given me full freedom" whether to live or die. But he wanted to die peacefully. The devotees went into the other room to discuss it, and they decided to appeal to Srila Prabhupada to please go on living for their sakes and to complete the *Bhagavatam*.

They pleaded, and he said, "All right." It seemed to be a turning point. He asked for something to drink. Everyone was relieved: Prabhupada had decided to live. He was teaching them to live through love.

* * *

The last chapter of SPL begins, "Despite his promise to live, Srila Prabhupada said his life was still in Krishna's hands "everything was."

* * *

3:23 p.m.

I came to the shed. My head is not perfectly clear, but it's worth a try. It's special out here. It's sometimes uncomfortably cool, or with the heat on, too hot, but it's apart, more alone than at the house. Enter the ambiance. Crowded desk.

No, my head isn't clear. I watch it like a weather report.

Srila Prabhupada agreed to stay, but it was still up to Krishna. They showed their love, and he expressed his willingness to stay even though it would be a struggle, but Srila Prabhupada was surrendered to Krishna. Krishna seemed to move inexorably toward a fairly soon departure. In a sense, this deflated the joy and relief the disciples felt when Srila Prabhupada agreed to stay "and when it appeared it was within his power to live on. It doesn't defeat anything in Srila Prabhupada's sterling example of surrender. The interlude where he forced out of them the plea, "Please stay! We need you!" was not in vain.

Furthermore, all things must be judged by a longer view of time "who *did* remain faithful to Srila Prabhupada's *vani* over the years? Was it a moment of intense emotion only? Was the cry, "Please stay!" sincere? Were we simply weak, like bowling pins ready to be knocked over by *maya* as soon as he left us alone? Time tests and it's not over till it's over.

* * *

I wrote that last chapter in 1981, analyzing, with distance from the events and with confidence too. I wasn't perfect as I wrote, but it came out all right. It's only a biography. It can't bring us fully to Srila Prabhupada, but it can definitely help.

" . . . sooner or later he would have to return to the lesson of how a person should face the end of life." It seems I favored this theme philosophically. This was the ultimate. Love triumphs over death, but not in this world. At least you can't live forever in this world. But I don't know anything about these "life and death and matters of love. Please excuse me for attempting to discuss them.

I make the point that Srila Prabhupada lived in a humanlike way, although liberated. He did not pull a *yogi's* trick to stay with us which we wouldn't have been able to follow when our time came. He taught us perfectly.

* * *

5:08 p.m.

Tomorrow morning we will sing *ye anilo prema-dhana*, and we will fast until noon. I fasted on his actual disappearance day too, had a headache, sat, or stood at the foot of his bed. I clung to life even as he left his, but he didn't die. He was sure of his eternal existence. He always spoke of it and was unafraid. That last day he didn't speak at all. He had gone inside himself. What was that like? I don't know. I have died so many times, but I don't remember the feeling.

I doubt I will be able to speak convincingly of death in my lecture. Why not follow the example Srila Prabhupada set when he spoke of his own spiritual master's disappearance? He spoke in the same way about his appearance. He discussed his contribution to the world. My duty is to follow him.

I'll close my eyes and press for words "improvise. I see myself doing it. It will take heart because I won't want to fake it. I simply have to begin. I'm sure I will find it. O master, on that day I cried in grief.

So I will speak of what Srila Prabhupada gave us and express gratitude. I remember Tamal Krishna Maharaja encouraging Srila Prabhupada up until the end. He did all he could, then placed his body in the grave. Now he says he's still serving the spiritual master's body as ISKCON. Allegorical.

That unvarnished wood floor, wood burning stove, long temple room, windows facing the charming lawn and trees and lake "O Radha-Govinda, Srila Prabhupada sits always gazing at You from his *murti* form. Prabhupada and Krishna.

November 4, 12:46 a.m.

reading how Srila Prabhupada allowed himself to be cared for by his devotees. Whoever came to Vrndavana could enter his room and chant for him by the hour, massage him, and sit and watch or hear him dictate *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. But, my mind wants to ask, who actually benefited from that mercy? Who even remembers the details of it? What lasts? Only *vani*. He put so much effort into binding us to him, and even

though the *vapuh* was temporary, it had lasting value. Each moment of association accumulated and made an impression on our hearts. Even if we don't remember every detail, we retain their influence. For example, we are all deeply influenced by our parents even if we don't remember the details of their caring for us "how our mothers treated us immediately after our birth.

When the spiritual master offers or asks us for personal reciprocation, our love for him is tested. ISvara Puri passed all the tests and became the beloved disciple of Madhavendra Puri.

I don't know if I am able any longer to relive the emotions as I lived them at the time. At least I'm not able to do it today. I've probably repressed a lot of it because it was so difficult at the time. I do know my relationship with him was strengthened by my having gone through those days with him, even though I was not one of his intimate servants. "So take care of the bones as long as possible, but the real life is here, always remember that." He meant the real life, the soul.

Toward the end Prabhupada again refused to eat or drink. He said recovery was material and he didn't want it. "Krishna's will was indicating Prabhupada's departure."

Srila Prabhupada spoke of his having committed offenses. Devotees assured him that he hadn't. He said, "I am a little temperamental. I used to use words like 'rascal' and so on. I never compromised. They used to call it, 'A club in one hand and a *Bhagavatam* in the other.' That is how I preach."

* * *

3:10 a.m.

Head pressure. I'll have to take more rest. The mix is underway. I thought while I *japa*-ed "*Japa* Ed, education in *japa*, the freeway to arrange your thoughts through the heavenly muse. Golden pen from rr.

Thanks. You spent/ I too.

We're tired of headaches, but what can I do? They come when they want. I can't rearrange my life.

Even though today is the pain of his "death," witnessing it twenty years ago stunned me "all of us in V²ndavana. Even then, however, there were so many attitudes, so many brothers, and it was so hard for me to be myself and to grieve. Anyway, although it's the anniversary of that day, I'm going to act normally, write normally, and paint normally, and I'm going to continue to be happy in Krishna consciousness. I will not pretend, but will live in his *vani*.

* * *

Go back to memories/ no one with me now from those times/

I survived the wreck of the Pequod/ floated on a wooden coffin,

the ship smashed to pieces by the whale

the pen that doesn't write "very temperamental.

Last episode "the bullock cart ride. I told it in the temple. Someone asked, "Are you saying Lokanatha Maharaja was wrong?"

No, that wasn't my point. Srila Prabhupada drew us to him in love. I can't remember why I brought it up. Fog in my head and on the water. The dark night continues.

* * *

4:10 a.m.

And they say Srila Prabhupada is not teaching enough, is not *rasika* enough, that we need to go to another now. No, I will always defend against that.

Oh, I remember why I told about the bullock cart incident in Medalago. I told the devotees how the prevailing opinion was that Prabhupada should not go and how Prabhupada surrendered to them. His disciples were becoming crazy with anxiety. I don't remember how I presented it. Do I remember the actual time in 1977? I remember the bitter feelings "some Godbrothers making veiled hints toward others' intentions because it was obvious that Prabhupada would die if he went on *parikrama* in his condition. I was caught in the crossfire.

"Dying on *parikrama* is glorious," Srila Prabhupada said. He would go to Govardhana Hill. Hearing this episode in more recent years, a member of the Gaudiya Math concluded that Srila Prabhupada was expressing his *rasa* and asking to be with radha and Krishna in that capacity.

Srila Prabhupada agreed to go, but TKG, forceful, tear-filled, anxious, came to him at night, "Why must we go tomorrow?"

Srila Prabhupada capitulated. He said it was his duty "to capture spirit souls and deliver them to Krishna."

The biographer doesn't linger on this discussion. You might think he would give more details of how they surrounded his bed, singing and crying the Hare Krishna mantra. Maybe the biographer thought that the people who were there would have their own versions to tell and would not agree with his. Maybe he thought it was already enough.

Enough.

I waited for intuition to tell me what to say next. I ended it without intricate details, such as how Pishima sat on the floor and gave Prabhupada Ganges water, or how we were ringed in around him. I summed it up philosophically, assuring the reader that Srila Prabhupada left in an optimum situation.

* * *

November 14, 1977 at 7:30 p.m.

We used to (still do) gather in his room to offer *arati*. When I was there they often let me lead the singing or offer the *arati*. I blew the conch, holding the note as long as I could. The bed would be covered with flowers. I am usually honored because I am one of the oldest. I *act* with devotion in public, and maybe I feel it because the occasion is so right, but it's only a brief performance and must be proven by a lifetime of surrender.

Tonight I'll probably be in bed by 7 p.m. I'll dispense with the formalities. I tend to assume my life is dedicated to him. It is.

* * *

"You are the inspiration."

"Yes, that I shall do until the last breathing."

"Is there anything you want?"

"*Kuch iccha nahim*: I have no desire."

V²ndavana was his last junction. As Bhisma said, "Despite His being equally kind to everyone, He has graciously come before me while I am ending my life, for I am His unflinching servitor." He passed away in the most sacred place, V²ndavana, surrounded by Vaisnavas chanting the holy name.

Told one of his *sannyasis*, "Don't think this isn't going to happen to you."

To attain eternal life. "Prabhupada underwent death in a way that was perfect and glorious and at the same time in a way that we can all follow." reminds me of what Christians say of Christ "he *did* die, but entered eternal life.

I remember using the Dictaphone for these last pages in a Guesthouse room in V²ndavana. I was working on this section during the early mornings. It was coming out right, inspired, it seemed.

Then came realization of service in separation "union in separation "and the nectar of his direct association becoming available for everyone. Krishna consciousness was still available. We still had the gifts he had given us. We needed to carry his legacy "books, devotees, the method of applying Krishna consciousness to every situation in the modern context. Whoever takes it up is his follower.

* * *

7:55 a.m.

Calm lake. Gray day. I won't be here forever. And the others? They too will have to die. Swans . . . I even heard a tree crash down suddenly while I was walking in the rain.

Cars. Words. I find release. Don't mistake it: the soul is a person. Duties. Even while I write this, a letter arrives. I'll tend to it later. "It's not important." What's important? *Srila Prabhupada-lilam²ta* says that whoever follows the four rules and chants sixteen rounds and recognizes Prabhupada as the *acarya* can be his follower.

* * *

9:40 a.m.

In my lecture and while walking back to the quay afterward, I spoke about how Prabhupada taught us how to die. On this, his disappearance day, we tend to remember death. We are not like ascetics who meditate on the hour of their own deaths or who drink from skulls to remember the difference between matter and spirit. To us, the thoughts of mortality should be transferred into the positive energy to get our work done. Although I spoke about it, I thought I was speaking partly out of *fear* of my own death. I admitted in my talk that death is the thing we most repress. It is the most amazing thing that human beings deny their own mortality. I doubt I'm much of an exception to this universal denial.

* * *

10:25 a.m.

Resume reading the *Bhagavatam*. read with heart and write with heart. The details are not as important.

* * *

Noon, after listening to Prabhupada talking with professors in Toronto (1976):
He's speaking to professors in his room.
I'm hoping they don't embarrass him. Of course they can't. He never backs down. But I want him to look good in *their* eyes, them to see a Vedic sage "even if they can't follow him.

* * *

"Swamiji, but isn't it true . . . "
They're always disagreeing.

* * *

Sad for those academics who cannot submit even to such a Vedic sage. At least they knew he was a scholar of the same texts they know "Hopkins used to appreciate his *bhakti*, and respect him, and inquire.

* * *

2:45 p.m.

Krishna, it's dark in here. So foggy this afternoon. Turning to *Bhagavad-gita*. The collie followed me out here, but I met no humans. Passed two goats though, each tethered in Prahlada's field. I enjoyed my lunch, then thought how a real sufferer would fast throughout the day to commemorate Srila Prabhupada's disappearance. I'm a take-it-easy fellow.

Twice today I saw swans flying very low across the water, long necks stretched out. It's now less than a month before we leave for Dublin and New York.

If anyone was qualified to go back to Krishna's abode, it was Srila Prabhupada. Or if Krishna wanted him to go elsewhere to preach, he did whatever he could to please his Lord. My faith in Krishna consciousness has been placed in him because he follows Krishna.

It's almost too dark to read in here. Beyond these worlds is the unmanifest *sanatana* nature. It's never annihilated. The *Bhagavad-gita* gives only a hint of Goloka V²ndavana.

* * *

4:05 p.m.

Life, Paint, and Passion says to let go. Just let the arm, body, and especially the heart, paint. Let the creative force come through you. Live in process and accept what comes out, what feels good, and don't worry about the actual product. For me, I have to add Krishna consciousness to this formula. I don't want to waste time. What if someone looked at my work and it did not impel their Krishna consciousness? What if it didn't impel *my* Krishna consciousness?

Okay, mate, got it. The *Sannyasa* Ministry might not understand, but it's what I have to do.

* * *

5:55 p.m.

Caitanya-candrodaya sat with us as we watched an episode of "Abhay." Then he came into my room and lit Karttika candles while we sang "Damodarastakam." He's appreciative. I like to be with him. Now moving toward sleep. I pray that I am living for my swami like a chaste widow who lives on after her husband passes away. I also hope I can encourage my swami's other children and grandchildren, since I am an older son.

The *Bhagavatam* says there are ten prescribed methods to attain liberation, but *bhakti* includes all of them. One of those methods is *mauna*: "There are many who observe silence some day in a week. Vaisnavas, however, do not observe such silence. Silence means not speaking foolishly." (*Bhag.* 7.9.46, purport)

November 5, 12:10 a.m.

After my lecture yesterday morning, one devotee "the last question I took "asked why Srila Prabhupada gave so few instructions before he left on "the disciplic succession." He said it was left unclear.

I didn't agree. I thought he made it perfectly clear. He presented so much in his books, he gave us the Gaudiya Vaisnava *siddhanta*, and he assured us that the disciple becomes the next guru when he matures.

The devotee then asked the same question again, and added, "Why do so many disagree?"

I said something about how devotees' gurus have fallen, but that doesn't mean we should concoct a new system. I don't think I convinced that devotee. Anyway, I'll see him as I come and go to the shed "he lives and works nearby "and we'll exchange the same superficial words we always do. Hare Krishna.

When I see another devotee and his daughter outside, they bow from the waist like the Japanese would do and I return it. In a way, I'm glad they don't get down in the mud because that would force me to get down too. What I want is not the obeisance but sincere relationship. It starts with me "by self-examination and constant effort, I have to make myself worthy in my own eyes. It's "never enough," the taskmaster says.

Let's look at *Srimad-Bhagavatam*:

"The supreme cause can be understood only by devotional service. As stated in *Bhagavad-gita*, *bhaktya mam abhijanati*. Krishna reveals Himself to an active servant." He wants our love. I can't give my love by my own endeavor "I can't even find it. Kierkegaard said that since he couldn't respond to the fullest demand of preaching in the streets, he would try to serve by rigorous self-examination, which would result in his becoming humble before God. Then he preached through his writing, and advocated the highest standards of surrender, even though he admitted he couldn't follow them himself. *Bhakti* cannot be faked.

God has an all-pervasive conception (aside from His personal form). It's permeated by His personal presence for those who know Him and His inconceivable energies. "I exist everywhere." (Bg 9.4) They can see Him or know Him or attract Him only by their devotional service. "The Supreme Lord stays only where His devotees chant His glories."

* * *

3:10 a.m., Hot off the Beads

Hot off the beads he's a 6:23 man. Got 'em going: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna "there's rhythm in his *japa*.

"How come you guys chant your prayers so fast?"

You can't know. "How come you mumble them? Why do you insist on counting them?" You can't

know.

We do it.

We do it.

The man in the moon I haven't seen in a while. I'm not dejected, SaSi. There's a rabbit out there in outer space. What we see from here by the naked eye or telescope is not as much as the *sastras* decree.

* * *

Mee Mee "write a letter to a friend interested in and knowledgeable about art. read a letter or a page by a great, dedicated writer or scholar. Chant Hare Krishna "let go all the fine books and writings.

O pudding rice pudding

In cold, cold autumn is into November. Ah, chestnuts, sleepy lids, you call this "hot off the beads"? You look like a man who needs a shave and who has been deafened by the sound of pens scratching against a train. Well, keep up that noise,

Bowling pins crash! A *pujari* blows the conch and wakens the tenants on Commonwealth Ave. No *m²daigas* through the walls, please. Park your cars in back. Nestle against the radiator and sleep.

recall *bhakti*. I play his lecture as I sit Oriental style in the bathroom. Yesterday I fasted, so . . .

skin and water, blood inside the brain and running throughout the delicate sausagelike system "the factory work of a body.

A little longer, please. "Give me another year," the blue's singer pleaded, picking at his steel strings.

In Jagannatha Puri where the waves break on the sand "I won't be there. I'm here in a room, at a desk, in Ireland, wearing white gloves to chant, although they are worn, and arranging to have my clothes washed.

I did sixteen rounds, O cigar from Cuba. I read a little Saffire in the *New York Times*. Is Russell Baker still alive? Whitney Balliet?

Give it all up! I can't when I chant, but at least I keep count on the rosary of my beads and incline my mind toward You.

Sixteen tons "whaddya get? Tennessee Ernie, Johnny Cash, Tin Pan Alley. Blow the conch. rub his chest, he's still alive. Sixteen rounds of pure sound on red berries, the *murti* of beads.

That beadbag needs a bath, along with your mind. Now franchise this. Sell it, tell it. I did sixteen rounds and what do I get? I'm another day older and deeper in chanting
inattentive but
somewhere
on the map
chanting with beginner's will
hoping to attract that best of Krishna's servants
O Prabhupada, I am inspired to achieve
devotion.

* * *

"When I state myself, as the representative of the Verse, it does not mean "me "but a supposed person." So wrote Emily Dickinson.

"The exemplary or model 'I' in autobiography," one theorist has written, "*ipso facto* belongs to writing. It is an explicit 'dummy' ego by which the autobiographer is kept aware of or acknowledges the discrepancy between his 'life' and life." (*Dickinson: The Modern Idiom*, David Porter, p. 126)

You see, the "I" is not me. I'm writing in a dummy capacity. I'm actually spirit soul, full of irony, standing behind this.

But the spirit soul is not ironic. It's earnest and pure and eternal and knowledgeable, and always focused on Lord Krishna. Thus the ironic is also something short of soul, probably more to do with intelligence. I don't have to label and categorize all these subtleties, but I want to note the possibility of writing "I" and not feeling bound to the non-use of imagination. I can say, "I went and sat under the oak tree," even if I didn't. I can say I'm a pure devotee even if I'm not. I can say I'm afraid or I ate an apple even when I'm not or I didn't. The real "I" that's important is the one that aspires for Krishna consciousness. That "I" wants to break through into a new kind of Krishna consciousness that resembles the old at the heart level.

Someone told me she has a phobia about bees because when she was a child, she fell onto a wasp's nest and was stung hundreds of times. She went to therapy to remove her fear. I have some kind of phobia against mice, but it doesn't control me. I don't have to run out of the room if I hear one rustling in the walls. I think besides being afraid of

them, mice remind me deep down of my mother's panic. I empathized with it deeply as a child, and even empathize with the rodent's panic. I feel it inside me.

When a mouse came out, I jumped up and stamped my foot, then slammed my hand on the desk and shouted to scare it away. "What if it had been a lion?" Narayana Maharaja said when Bhurijana Prabhu jumped at a mouse who appeared under the bed. (They were constantly under there getting at the sweets people donated.) When I see a mouse hole, I stuff it with paper. That sometimes stops them for awhile, but only for awhile.

Prahlada says that in cause and effect, we can see the hand of the Supreme Person. We praise Him. The pure devotees see Him in His all-pervading form as well as in His personal form as Govinda.

Last night we saw an "Abhay" installment. They had a long segment where dancers depicted the story of Lord Jagannatha. An older woman (looked to be at least fifty) played Radharani and a younger man played Krishna. I suppose the older woman was a great artist for the dance, so they thought she could do the job. There were also young girls who played *gopis*. But it leaves a strange impression in the mind, thinking that "Radha" was so old. "Krishna" was bluish and pretty good, but he had hair on his chest and smiled in a way that was too imitative. It's all Indian culture and not lascivious, but still . . . it was no *rasa* dance.

I watched and ate a whole pumpkin. I toasted the ballroom dancers with champagne. I'm a supposed person, not the real me. Over the motion of the backlash, I carry a whip in my hand and wear spurs and boots and chaps over my denims. I mount the big horse easily. I ride off in a clatter after the outlaws. I chase after them. My horse races alongside the stagecoach, which now has no driver. I jump onto the horses and slow them down. I then fistfight with the chief and the outlaws. I win the girl, but prefer the horse. I ride off into the sunset.

Nostrils flaring. I read all the books the way Agastya Muni drank the ocean. There is nothing left to do. You don't have to read the *Vedas* if you are active in devotional service.

You plow the acres with oxen and are patient about your lack of advancement. You go from *sadhana-bhakti* to *raganuga* by the slow, gradual process of devotional service. It's best not to fake it. That's the truth.

* * *

8:25 a.m.

Prahlada Maharaja ended his prayers and Lord N²sinhadeva was pacified. He asked Prahlada to accept any benediction he desired.

I'm satisfied that I washed the breakfast dishes with hot water and liquid soap. I looked out and saw the dark, rainy vista moving toward the lake. My desk lamp flooded the *Bhagavatam* page before me. No great shakes, you could say, but I'm in the right place performing the right action. Devotional service should be performed without desire for material remuneration.

Prahlada Maharaja replied, "Please don't tempt me with these illusions." Prahlada was a *nitya-siddha maha-bhagavata*. The Lord sent him into this world to exhibit the

symptoms of a pure devotee. Prahlada Maharaja said, "If a person wants a material benefit in exchange for devotional service, he's no better than a *vanik*, a merchant."

* * *

It's been raining for days now. The potholes on the road leading to the property are filled with water. The leaves in the woods path are slick and wet. I definitely need my Wellies in this weather. I walked out of the house with my beadbag outside my coat, then realized I should tuck it inside a pocket. As I stopped to do this, I heard a squeak or creak behind me, something like a rusty sound of metal. I turned and saw Tilaka announcing he was behind me. He looked too wet to pet, but I said "Hare Krishna" to him and continued walking.

What do I think about when I walk? This morning I thought about the three letters I just received, one from a disciple in France, one from England, and one from someone at Inis rath. I mulled over how to answer them. In one of the letters a devotee asked when I plan to go back to India. He says he feels he needs to go every year for a month to rejuvenate. He wanted to know if he could time his going with mine. I don't have any plans yet. I'm still waiting for the desire to build up within me. Until that good pressure builds, it would be artificial to go to the *dhama*. At least at present when I think of it, some of the unpleasant realities of my staying in V²ndavana are prominent in my mind, such as the inevitable socializing, the controversies, the pressure to attend the morning program "and all of this comes in with a convincing sense within my room in the Guesthouse and equals more headaches. I could take an alternative approach and live outside the Krishna-Balaram Mandir at Baladeva's house, but I don't have the spirit for that right now either. I know a visit to India would purify me, because it always makes me more "Vedic."

* * *

2:53 p.m.

I don't always have to read first and then write, but as Srila Prabhupada wrote me, "Your first duty . . . is to read my books. Otherwise how will you preach? Whenever you get time, read my books."

That takes time because I like to first read something prayerfully, then write what comes to mind. reading first means I don't just write "all the time," moving further and further into outer and inner mind orbits. Of course, even on my own I have enough training to turn toward Krishna, but reading is important.

It's cold and dark outside, and I'm not inclined to walk to the shed. Maybe I should anyway. It's my cold place, like Cold Mountain. I feel more alone there, although the cold is harder on this delicate body.

ItMs are flowing and I'm concerned that they don't starve EJW. The phone ringing next door. Why don't I go to the shed? It's austere, but so what? If I don't go now, I may never get another chance.

* * *

4:45 p.m.

Set up a new painting corner in this room and taped Bristol board to the wall. My head is too weak right now, however, to get into it, and I guess I'll pass on the next "Abhay" episode too. This one is when young Bimala Prasad tells his father he feels dissatisfied.

What's new: things stacked around this room.

What are people doing? Uddhava has two caravans for traveling around Ireland to preach. His wife works in the garden and writes a "book" of her realizations, addressed as a series of letters to her spiritual master. Everyone wants to give people Krishna consciousness, but we have to first give it to ourselves.

* * *

Well, I didn't go to the shed. As long as I can live and write in an Ecology legal pad, I'll be okay. As long as I can eat once a day, lie in a comfortable bed, and have friends nearby to take care of me, I'll be okay, right? As long as I don't have to go out and work like a *karmi*. As long as my health doesn't get worse. But all those things "these cushions" can be removed.

He's in a prison-hospital I was told. Someone's jeep went over a cliff. He's okay. We are protected by Krishna.

Think you are a great writer? The process school doesn't bother with that question. They advise a writer to simply swim in the ink strokes and get as close as possible to what he or she loves.

November 6, 12:08 a.m.

O defeated and humiliated man (just see last night's dreams "you didn't make it at Harvard and were robbed on the street), can you write something vital? Turn to Visnu, Krishna, and demonstrate that as the goal of life. "O my Lord, I am Your unmotivated servant, and You are my eternal master. There is no need of our being anything other than master and servant. You are naturally my master, and I am naturally Your servant. We have no other relationship." (*Bhag.* 7.10.6)

Here is the application of the saying, "You can't serve two masters." Serve Krishna, surrender to Him, and give up all other religious obligations. The real master commands, and the real servant obeys the order. I hope to always be His servant, and not to ask Him (or His servants) to serve me. I may exploit my position of being recognized as an older disciple of Srila Prabhupada ""I served him, so you should serve me" "but I should not do so and must continue to serve Him always.

I have been reading the book *Life, Paint, and Passion*, in which the authors also speak about the impossibility of serving two masters. Of course, they are referring to the masters of process and product. They say that process is important and that we should not be concerned about what results from our process. In service to Srila Prabhupada,

however, process is not enough. We must show him our results. He often quoted the phrase, *phalena paricyate*, everything will be judged by the results.

The result, however, does not have to be assessed in terms of quantity. Srila Prabhupada even said that a pure devotee's perfection is that he is fully engaged in Krishna's service. He loves Krishna fully. Our "product" is to make a full, wholehearted, honest attempt to do the same. The process is *bhakti*, and there's no such thing as failure or worldly success. There is only engagement freely offered, totally offered with life, wealth, intelligence, and words (*prana-artha-dhiya-vaca*).

In my dream, I couldn't make it at Harvard because of all the demands it placed upon me. Awake, I offer my poems. It's a risk, I know, because if they were measured in quantity they would never be enough. When measured by that other scale, however, of one who is striving for wholeheartedness and honesty in making a Krishna conscious attempt, perhaps they will be acceptable.

Serving Prabhupada's mercy is an open secret. I may not have emphasized that enough on his disappearance day in my lecture. What's stated in the epilogue to *Srila Prabhupada-lilam²ta* "that everyone can serve him directly and become his follower "is truth. As Lord Siva told Parvati, "The highest goal of life is to satisfy Lord Visnu, who can be satisfied only when His servant is satisfied." (*Bhag.* 7.10. 6, purport). If we try to make Lord Visnu our order-supplier, He will refuse to become our master. The perfection of serving Krishna is to go back to Godhead and to serve Him eternally there. "O my Lord, best of the givers of benedictions, if You at all want to bestow a desirable benediction upon me, then I pray from your Lordship that within the core of my heart there be no material desires." (*Bhag.* 7.10.7) Because as long as we have lusty desires, we must take birth again to fulfill them.

When we have material desires, we cannot properly use our senses, intelligence, mind, and so on, for the Supreme Lord's satisfaction. This is what Srila Prabhupada writes. Implicit in this is the goal of serving Krishna in His *parakiya rasa-lila* in Goloka. Srila Prabhupada usually leaves this implicit in his purports.

* * *

4:07 a.m.

Typing this at a little eating table sitting on the floor. room rearranged for these last three weeks to accommodate a new painting corner. Can I plunge into the writing the way Bimala Prasad entered the Ganges and went completely under? His guru requested that he first bathe in the Ganges. Then he would give him the holy name in a confidential whisper. Then the scene depicted a disciple sitting upright, chanting his *japa*. I heard it clearly: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare.

What does it mean for me to plunge in? It means that there are books being written, a flow. I catch hold of parts and weave. I weave my life too. My life becomes clearer by the writing, and the writing becomes clearer as my life's focus becomes better. Disparate elements? Notes taken while reading the *Bhagavatam* "that's all right. And whatever else I do, I note it down, write take-offs, free-write. Everything patched and woven together.

He brought me a hot lemon drink with no sweetener. It's good for cleaning the system, they say. Impressions from the night before. Now chant Hare Krishna.

I did, sir.

How was it?

Good.

* * *

To plunge myself into my service means I have to give up any fear or doubt. I am simply a writer who must write for Krishna. Of course, that implies that both I and my writing must be authentic.

Hearing Srila Prabhupada speak to professors in Toronto in the summer of 1976 and remember myself there, sitting by him. He told them what was wrong with the world, and said that people were acting no better than cats and dogs because they make no reference to the actual purpose of human life. Professor O'Connell asked, "Swamiji, do you find that the young people are different now than they were in 1965? They have changed, you know." Srila Prabhupada didn't address that question. He said that the young men are still coming, and added, "What is the difficulty?" Why do we say it is difficult to respond to Krishna's request that we surrender to Him? Krishna says *susukham kartam avyayam*: it is easy and happy to perform." Jayadvaita Brahmachari read the quotes at Prabhupada's request. I was perhaps a little embarrassed that the professors might later talk among themselves, "Did you notice how the Swami didn't understand or answer our questions?" But Prabhupada was in trance. He wanted to speak of the transcendental Lord and His loving service. He spoke of the deeper wrongs in all materialistic societies. He urged the professors to practice what they were studying. He was not concerned with the fact that in 1965, young people were different than they were in 1976. You might even say he didn't notice the difference. When he traveled to countries around the world, he saw all the people as good candidates for spiritual life. He could judge a nation's people by meeting a few of them, just as we can guess whether a pot of rice is cooked by testing one or two grains.

* * *

"Dear So and so, I got your letter." Another batch of letters should be here in less than a week. I have a few here, which I answered in my spare time. I see you, I speak, I say something that may help from my life experience and reading. I hope you will take it with respect and find its value. I'm not saying something you couldn't have found for yourself.

* * *

A lemon drink cannot sustain me. Prahlada finished his prayers. He asked to be delivered from all material desires and only to serve Krishna life after life. That is an excellent way to take a benediction. Soon he will also ask for his father's salvation.

I woke up and saw the dream in my mind's eye. right away I recorded it because otherwise I knew it was subtle enough to disappear forever.

Get satisfaction from it?

Plodding along. Dreams are like a ball of yarn that sometimes falls to the floor. The kitten runs after it and bats it with its paws, but you recover it and continue knitting your socks. Are they for me?

* * *

8:15 a.m.

A reinitiated disciple wrote that he considers Srila Prabhupada his main guru and that he doubts whether Srila Prabhupada wanted his disciples to initiate. He doesn't think he needed to be reinitiated and now feels he was forced into it. In 1983, he reminded me, he expressed his doubts to me in confidence, but later heard them announced by the temple president to all the devotees. He also asked my permission to seek guidance from one of my Godbrothers. I read his letter earlier, but it's still on my mind. Since I'm a diarist, I'm putting it into this book. Although I have already answered his letter, I don't feel complete relief.

Something worth saying is how much I assume and depend on being accepted as a bona fide spiritual master and how I depend on ISKCON law to enforce that conception. Those who think ISKCON law is false or rotten don't find a friend in me. But I'm not an enemy either. I can only tell my truth and go my way.

Whatever material opulence a devotee has he uses "to expand the glories and service of the Lord." Become purified of pious or impious reactions (both of which abound in this dangerous material existence) by always thinking of the Supreme Lord. Srila Prabhupada refers to expert management of one's life in this world. Don't be aggrieved in any awkward position, and don't feel extraordinarily happy with material riches. Stay in Krishna consciousness and you're liberated.

* * *

12:07 p.m.

Fergus and his brothers were rushing to the hospital to be with their father before he passed away. Only Fergus made it on time and was able to chant the Hare Krishna mantra into his father's ear. The other brothers felt bad that they didn't get there on time. I assured them they are doing the best they can for him by becoming devotees.

Aside from that, I am sitting on the floor in front of the altar. Radha and Krishna, Him in red and Her in bright green, are as splendid as sapphire and gold. They are the small Deities who will deliver me. I put Them to rest at night. It is not so powerful in me "nothing is. I am tepid. I told the brothers not to feel bad, and I'll tell the same to myself.

I rushed here just now because I wanted to say something nice. They say the thing is to give yourself fully to the writing and not to worry about how it comes out. How do you give yourself fully to it? You say "O Krishna." You utter the Hare Krishna mantra. You find ways to chant throughout the day either directly or indirectly.

I wiped off the Lord's stainless steel plates until they were shiny and clean. At the same time, I heard Srila Prabhupada speaking to devotees in Washington, D.C. on July 2, 1976. The tape is called "We Want to Take Care of You Forever, Prabhupada." He's eating fruits and smacking his lips, then distributing it to others there. I thought about

how much we forget the details of our time with Prabhupada. The devotees who were there probably thought it was the greatest nectar and they'd never forget it, but they probably did forget how they actually felt. They may even have forgotten to obey him. We are so easily carried away by *maya*. In some cases, the impression of faithfulness stays, and even if it goes away, it returns. Krishna has claimed us.

People have been giving me *cadars* and hats for my Prabhupada *murti*. One devotee told me he had a dream that his Prabhupada *murti* "came alive." Because of dreams like this, he accepts that Prabhupada is his main guru and he doesn't need any other guru from among the ranks of Prabhupada's disciples. All right. I am writing this before offering the delicious lunch.

Fergus' father died. The three of them and some sisters left in the world. The sons are all grown. One of them has three sons of his own. Gray hair too. Each of us will follow his father. The one who wrote about this says he's thinking that the world is a bitter place and he wants to have nothing to do with it, wants to go back to Godhead. He also wants to help others do the same (he's a part-time book distributor).

* * *

2:33 p.m.

Flies big and little in the shed "it's sunny and warm today. I'm clear-headed too. Thank You for these blessings. Whatever comes is a blessing, but it is easier to receive sunshine and no pain than the other.

I'm thinking of bringing back my "Improvisation" poems into EJW. The book feels lonely without them.

Krishna's abode is the supreme destination from which there is no return. Do I believe it? If you don't, that doesn't make it less a reality. "You may believe or disbelieve. That is a different thing."

The Supreme One is always in the supreme abode, Goloka V²ndavana, but still He is all-pervading "so that everything is going on nicely."

Get it? Yes, it's a great catechism. God has an eternal spiritual form. His original form of Krishna stays in Goloka with His innumerable expansions of spiritual bliss (*gopis*, *gopas*, cows, land, etc.). He expands into Lord Visnu forms in Vaikuntha, and as *jivas* and material elements and the Supersoul abiding in all throughout the material universes.

Very good. And there are flies in the shed. I pushed open the window and a few escaped that way. Sun already beginning to set in the west.

* * *

Ocean of Love and Mercy

(I begin with a prayer that my writing will live in Krishna's shelter. That's no occult hope, just a statement that I intend to follow the process. And yes, it's a recognition that this is an unusual form. It needs to be approved by guru and Krishna. May all be blessed and the demons be subdued. May all passions be dovetailed. Now bring your own instrument and join the *kirtana*.)

* * *

& Now to enter the ocean of love and mercy. No limping now,
even if you are physically crippled. Find your heart
your way in the music
of Krishna consciousness offered.

* * *

Mercy means on a sunny day I rode across the lake
without caring whether someone didn't
honor me. That was a freedom, a mercy.

* * *

It means I've made mistakes "we *all* have "and
many of them. But God has an all-pervading energy
and a spiritual abode and we can live there
if we love Him enough.

* * *

But what about those loud, harsh sounds? I tell you, it's all *Him*. I can't always figure
it out myself. There is the Lord, you see, and free will, and the tiny *jivas* stand against
the powerful *maya*-illusion (*mama maya*). They get into trouble and that's their grief "so
prominent in Kali-yuga. They call it "bad karma."

* * *

So harsh "the body takes a beating
and the beat goes on
each finding his way
to ascension.
There's a rhythm among those
who are looking for a life
dedicated to God
in love.

* * *

I'm improvising, forming my lectures based on what I read and hear. A Godbrother I
know unwinds his lectures like that. We could say he is always unprepared, but his
whole life is preparation; his surrender is his preparation.

So listen and I say I
read my Post-its and penciled
marginalia.

Okay! As long as I look up to the audience from time to time
to give what I already have
and stay with Sastric *siddhanta* "the right mood even of "what could have happened,"
as he does in "Abhay."

* * *

I could have been in a rowboat in the blue watery princely blue cool.
I could have been a cloud
a picture by a master
a foot-loose paranoiac British young man who drifted into Krishna consciousness.
The way has many roads, but a ticket to Delhi won't get you to Bombay
and prayer to the demigods won't take us to Krishna.

* * *

There was a conga drum at Tompkins Square in 1965 "we were there with our Swami.
Did we ask their group to cool it? No, we just took our place and did our thing on the
Oriental rug. People joined us, some with frankincense pouring out of a pot, others with
saxophones, wooden recorders, toots

while the Swami banged the one-headed drum. It was Afrique-India-NYC-Polish-
Irish

trans

transparent dancing

the jive was in our heads but

in Swami's heart was the Hare Krishna movement

direct from Lord Caitanya.

November 7, 12:10 a.m.

"Abhay" film: Gour Mohan De stands by the window of his house gripping the bars
and praying aloud to Krishna that he wants his son to grow up and be a great devotee.
Gour Mohan's face shows intense desire, even anguish, that this should come about. His
wife stands beside him amazed at his intensity, and she appears almost foolish when she
insists that the boy grow up to become a lawyer.

In the shed yesterday after going from reading to writing to ItM to painting, I
lingered. I also felt the beginning of pain, but it was only a beginning. Still, it was
enough to stop me from trying a second poem. The weather was comfortable, so I simply
lingered awhile without doing anything. I'm usually not capable of being idle.

Lord Brahma thanked the Lord for killing HiranyakaSipu, but Visnu took this
opportunity to warn Lord Brahma not to give out such dangerous benedictions to
demons. Prahlada Maharaja was then coronated as king of the *daityas*.

If we think intensely of Krishna at the time of death, we will return back to Godhead
and receive a body like His (*svarupya-mukti*). Srila Prabhupada writes a
purport (*Bhag. 7.10.40*) mentioning what we know as *raganuga-bhakti*: a devotee
"should externally execute his routine devotional service in a regular way, but should

always inwardly think of the particular mellow in which he is attracted to the service of the Lord. This constant thought of the Lord makes the devotee eligible to return home, back to Godhead." It's there in the purport, but Prabhupada doesn't dwell on it or turn it into a major discussion. When I asked Srila Prabhupada about it, he told me not to try for it now, that that kind of meditation would come automatically. Srila Prabhupada speaks of qualifying ourselves by thinking of Krishna all the time while we are practicing devotees, and he assures us that we can attain such concentrated thought by preaching or worshiping, *Sravanan kirtanam*, etc.

In the "Abhay" film, we watched them perform an *abhiSeka* to small brass *murtis* of Radha-Govinda. They were similar to the ones I have. The inner meaning escaped us, I'm sure.

Prabhupada recommends hearing *avatara-katha*. "One must hear about the *avatars*," not only about Krishna in V²ndavana. Many instructions are given and we have to follow according to our *adhikara* and what Srila Prabhupada taught us throughout his teachings. Yes, and as the Lord dictates in our hearts.

The preachers of the Krishna consciousness movement must kill all the demons. "Prahlada is our guru, and Krishna is our worshipable God . . . We must accept Krishna and His incarnations and no one else." (*Bhag.* 7.10.43 purport).

* * *

Medley

& Prerequisite is a Krishna conscious camp for kids. One devotee went on stage at L.A. Ratha-yatra and played the congas. Almost *any* entertainment can pass. People will see devotees do normal, even far-out things "like enjoyers. But

did you know the tune? It's called "Soon."

Never heard of it, dearie. I don't even know

the tinkle of ice cubes in a glass or how much a drink costs when the waiter presses you to buy.

I no longer know

one tune from another.

Oh, "Love Walked In." remember how sweet?

I know it only

in a Krishna conscious way.

* * *

In that context, this world "to handle it, pious or impious "when love walked in through the temple door, my guru entered and changed my life. Suddenly.

From him I heard the Hare Krishna mantra, although I didn't know the words.

* * *

But dearie, did you know how serious and exclusive he was? And nowadays you must ask the question, "Did you know (in your heart) whether he'd fall down?" Was he American? You know they have a bad record.

* * *

Do you remember the tune, "Our Love Is Here To Stay"? It answers that question. Love is not just for a day. "The rockies may crumble,/ Gibraltar may tumble,/ They're only made of clay . . . "

The province of the eternal soul and Krishna "it's a shame (the worst) when the eternal guru falls or even wobbles when you see him under the power of a woman's eyes. I know, and what to speak of disciples who err.
*The rockies may crumble,
Gibraltar may tumble,
they're only made of clay.*
but our love is here
because the soul is steady "
kutastha.

* * *

Morning Walk, 9 a.m.

Frost everywhere on the grass. Heavy mist, but the sun is up and I can stare right at it as if it were the moon. At this rate, the sun will burn through, but it's still cold with low visibility. Looking down at the bent over, stiff, whitened, grass I remember the phrase, "Humbler than a blade of grass."

I'm starting to prepare for Sunday's *Caitanya-caritam²ta* class. We'll be reading the section where Lord Caitanya begins His tour of South India. He chanted ecstatically and empowered whomever He met with *bhakti-Sakti*. That person would then return to his own village and empower the others. I'm looking for a reference in Prabhupada's letters where he told a girl in the Bahamas that she had the power to tell others about chanting Hare Krishna and it would work, even though she was a neophyte. This is actually the principle upon which the Hare Krishna movement was spread and on which it continues to spread. I want to debunk the myth that empowerment is rare. Anyone can be empowered if we accept Prabhupada's instructions.

Of course, there are degrees of empowerment, and Prabhupada was the most empowered. *Krishna-Sakti vina nahe tara pravartana*. Also, one's present degree of empowerment (like the capacity for carrying electrical voltage) can be increased. When we see someone who does an excellent job in presenting Krishna consciousness in any way "by painting, singing, or developing a project "we naturally say that the person is empowered. Empowerment is evident by the symptoms.

* * *

11:45 a.m.

I hope by writing to learn something new. The art book, *Life, Paint, and Passion*, is influencing me in writing too. She says if a person is absorbed in painting, that's good enough. We don't have to ask for more. The result is not important. The act is everything. "You are not a 'painter' [or writer] 'just paint.'" By that rule I should simply get into it, let the hand move.

But it's no small thing to become fully absorbed. You have to give yourself to it. With the ItMs, often I feel the play and then the sense of satisfaction inherent in it, and that seems good. I'm also aware that the poems are experiencing an evolution. I can be patient and see where they lead. I don't have to be so passionate as to try for many, many poems. Look for them to become a steady part of the repertoire.

I just finished reading *Sacrifice for the Bhagavatam*. I was really trying to keep my life simple then, and always going back to the reading and doing little else. Maybe it was a bit artificial how much I restrained myself, but it was good too. That basic act of reading is something I don't want to abandon. It will always form the foundation of my writing. When I write freely, I expose the fact that after all, I am a devotee. So what do I have to say? I need to say what I have remembered of Prabhupada's teachings, and I also need to have fresh input through hearing and reading so that my writing remains alive and precise, not just vague points recollected without emotion. Often, the emotion is the struggle. I want to expose myself more and more to that emotional quality, my gut response to what Prabhupada says.

* * *

I got another letter from that reinitiated disciple. This time he said he didn't mean to say that he doesn't accept the ISKCON gurus. His specific problem is that he doesn't accept *me*, and he wants my permission to approach another guru. In my response, I repeated his words back to him so that he could hear himself clearly and perhaps understand the implications. Whatever he chooses to do, he should be clear on what it is and what the consequences are. In the end I said, "Go to another guru, but don't reject the initiations I gave you." He wants these talks to remain confidential, I think, because he was hurt when in the past he told me something confidential and his lack of faith was broadcast.

I am writing of it here because it moves me. I need to go through it and to feel the implications of it myself. It will take me to the next place. I don't like to avoid such energy. Artists often say we should pause and listen to both the intuition and the body. What color touches you at this moment? What words are struggling to find their way out? What kind of movement do you want to make on the page? Go ahead and do it without analyzing them. I have to take the images from my life. That's all I have.

(akip)

More blackberries this morning. When I drew, I also wrote the word "Peace," and then fit the *maha-mantra* into a word balloon emanating from the person who was riding the capital "P."

It's noon and the day is bright. The frost has melted by now. ISani has gone away for a few days, so others will cook. We have only three weeks before we travel.

* * *

This evening we plan to burn our candles, one each, and then watch the last episode we have of "Abhay." The creation of that TV series is another good thing done in Krishna's service.

This morning I looked up that letter Srila Prabhupada wrote to the girl in the Bahamas (Andrea Temple). In the course of going through the index I noticed how many letters he wrote to various disciples. I have almost as many letters as anyone. Brahmananda has more, and TKG has many. But it made me proud to see the list. Perhaps that pride wasn't good, but it asserted the fact that I am a bona fide disciple of Srila Prabhupada. See how many letters he wrote me? O Prabhupada, you were as soft as a rose and as hard as a thunderbolt. I want your mercy.

* * *

2:52 p.m.

Flashes, like the lightning that doesn't produce rain, have come and gone since early this morning behind my eye. I hesitated to come out to the shed, but here I am.

No one wants to be hurt by someone else (except the masochist). Letters and writings only partly reveal oneself. We seek physical and mental satisfaction and peace. The *karmi* especially works for the body's pleasure, the *jnani* for the mind's. Srila Prabhupada spells it out: there is no happiness *at all* in this world (*srama eva hi kevalam*). There is only the true satisfaction of *bhakti*. Only *bhakti* is not destroyed by death.

Devotional service, in one stroke, surpasses all the rituals of the different orders of life. "Simply by performing devotional service he attains all these and at the end he reaches the Supreme eternal abode." (Bg. 8.28) The Sanskrit to this verse mentions "*yogi*", which Srila Prabhupada translates as "devotee" and "devotional service". *Bhagavad-gita* 6.47 established that the devotee is indeed the highest *yogi*. He alone can go to Krishna's personal abode of eternity, bliss, and knowledge.

* * *

He shoots to kill, goes for the jugular "expressions of appreciation to a writer. He soothes my spirit. He is merely a noble cologne. I am tougher than he is; I'm a real man. He's just a frustrated, lonely fellow who writes on the material mental plane.

Give me loyal followers. Give me intelligent enemies. Give me "oh, I'm getting what I deserve, my karma.

Write open "I'm just in a peeved mood, it will pass. I'm in the shed and happy to be here. The collie is sleeping on the cement driveway, but jumps up to see if he's interested enough to eat the guru's leftovers that have been dumped into his bowl. I reached the shed without meeting anyone human, and didn't notice the goats. I did notice the length of the path through the grass and was glad to take a small walk. The key ("Draper" stamped on it) sticks into the lock and I hear a friendly click. Just relax now, and don't be afraid of the lightning in your head. If I can only understand the middle six chapters of

the *Bhagavad-gita* through the teachings of a pure devotee, my life will be perfect. "In the advanced stage, one falls completely in love with Krishna."

* * *

Better Get It In Your Soul

& They pray, "Well, don't be a sociologist
or an anthro-
pologist.

Do your own stuff and
get a little in your soul.
Pray for salvation? That's when a man
asks the Lord to deliver
him: "I want out!" he shouts.
But will you cease your sin?
Listen, you guys, you had better
come crashing down
fast.

What you lookin' for,
the Sermon On The Mount?

Get it in yo' soul.
(The dean said No blues
in my church les' you
play it to the hymns.)

* * *

Kirtana "Prabhupada didn't stop them
enthusing

even if it wasn't quite right
their running around
free for a moment
of false ego, jump-springing for joy.

Haribols to heaven "heard
blaring trumpets in Delhi
and such drums I heard in Mayapur
and I heard him
slow down before
Radha-Krishna and say

* * *

at last
at least *hari-nama*.
We are born and die
and we wail in between "

baby to man to old
man till we lie down
finally, with God's name
on our lips
and Ganges water.

* * *

<!--This is a comment.***-->

Don't Forget God

& Using my first Pilot pen in 1977 "L.A. *Back to Godhead* office,
I thought, "There never was such a good pen as this."

* * *

Silly, whatever you want
you can get on our budget "a
briefcase with a lock, and
what's your diet?
Fruit, milkshakes (no women, 'cause you're a *sannyasi* and lie alone on the floor).

* * *

All so false. We didn't know.

* * *

And so this song "I want to
tell it in newer
tones.

* * *

We live in this world and
forget God.
That's the worst.
Krishna is the source of
the gentleman and the scholar
the inquirer
the barroom brawler.
Bhagavad-gita verse says He's beginning,
middle and end. You know.
He's the solo virtuoso
and shows constantly
a little of what He can do.

* * *

A fly going berserk in this winter room
like a drummer flailing
and me working hard
not to be misled
to God, the most beautiful
boy.

* * *

Master, I want intellectuals to get Krishna consciousness confirmed. You say,
"Get back here and sit on this little patch rug and hear." You say, "Where is
Satsvarupa?"

Typing your letters
lying in bed
remembering you in a million ways.
"All right, all right."
<!--This is a comment.

-->

November 8, 12:07 a.m.

I have been here for over a month. I could stay here always through the ups and
downs, be so settled in I would hardly be noticed while I write at my books (those also
hardly noticed), and read the *Bhagavatam* and Cc. again and again. I could grow older
here.

"By studying *Srimad-Bhagavatam* under the direction of the bona fide spiritual
master, one can perfectly understand the science of Krishna, the nature of the material
and spiritual worlds, and the aim of life." (*Bhag.* 7.10.44, purport)

When I read the *Sruti-phala* after the narration of Prahlada ""Anyone who with great
attention hears . . . surely reaches the spiritual world, where there is no
anxiety" (*Bhag.* 7.10.47) "I wondered if it could possibly apply to me and my level of
"hearing." In the purport to the next verse, Srila Prabhupada writes, "After hearing the
activities of Prahlada Maharaja "a devotee might be disappointed thinking that he can't
come to that standard. This is the nature of a pure devotee; he always thinks himself to
be the lowest, to be incompetent and unqualified." <!--This is a comment.[use exact
quote]--> But there is still hope. We need to try to improve ourselves, even when it
seems impossible.

recently I came to understand the meaning of *nayam atma pravacanena labhyo*. We
say it means that we cannot attain Krishna's mercy by our own efforts; the Lord bestows
mercy on whomever He chooses. But whom does He choose? He's not random or
whimsical, although He is independent. He chooses to give the most mercy to His
devotees. *Nayam atam pravacanena* is similar to *Slokas* like *bhaktya mam abhijanati*
"only by devotional service can we know the Supreme. It's a verse exalting *bhakti*.

Hands across the black-faced clock, moving down past 12:25 and I haven't said much. Where is the structure, your narration of the pure devotee, or even a story of a fellow in conflict to hold the reader's attention?

Nothing made up. A scholar writing on autobiography called it the "veto of the imagination." Those who write literally what happens refuse to make anything up. They tell what they ate for lunch and whether they digested it well. What we are looking for is whether they actually tell the truth that hurts or enlightens. Stretching this curtain down so it will reach the bottom of another page. Sisyphus' stone? Next page and I'm at the top again. Until He calls it over. O readers, judge me kindly.

* * *

Nothing made up, neither your bed nor your *Sikha*. Quarrels remain unpatched. Progress to Goloka untraversed. I didn't make up my messy rounds or botched *gayatris* or for my lack of boldness in preaching. Stood at my wall calendar last night and asked M. when the next Hare Krishna festivals will be. I checked with my pencil one on the fourteenth and one on the twenty-eighth of November and felt satisfied that he'll go. Felt a quiet joy that I'll stay at home.

Each day this week I marked in pink or red to signify headaches. Not one completely clear day. Yet I wrote every day. I pray for the consistency, attempts to hear and chant at least something every day.

* * *

4:40 a.m.

The young musician was rebuffed and went home and cried.

Please explain yourself.

I don't have to.

Then don't expect *us* to figure out what you're trying to say. If you write for yourself, then you can be your only reader.

O Krishna. They serve chocolate bunnies in springtime, but now it's fall and so many other associations are coming to mind as we move toward November's midpoint.

I'm at the end of the Pahlada chapters. What's next? We are looking for immediate nourishment.

* * *

Thinking about improvisation and the energy it brings. I like to improvise on typewriter or with pen even in the quiet, and to hear what's coming down the pike. Mother, are you dead? I used to smell the cold cream on your face when I kissed you good night. Your skin was already sagging "an old bag. Now I'm an old bag too.

Old people aren't beautiful with their sagging skin and missing or defective parts. We must learn to love the soul within as it shines through the eyes or in words or other expressions "through wisdom and good works. Love the elders of the community.

Well, what wants to be said?

Betty Grimes, Bernie Atkinson, names to shine the fame of old times. Am I really so much on my own? So many things I couldn't share, and I'm sure that's true for you too. We are each alone. Sometimes we envy those who maintain close friendships, but we wouldn't really want too much intimacy ourselves. Or sometimes we do, something real, based on shared interests and respect. Ultimately, though, when I get tired, no one can rest for me, no one can take my karma, no one can satisfy my hunger. Friendships mean giving to others, not so much taking.

For a devotee, it means giving without asking anything in return (no karma-bound activity), and it means giving each other evocations of Krishna consciousness in ways others will find pleasurable and inspiring. That takes practice and detachment. Little of what we do or say will survive in the long run. We must do "in the doing is the surrender. O Krishna,

O Smiter Mcrivers, do you really come
from Alabambee with a typewriter
on your knee?
Walking through frozen grass
I find that this is limited space
but I can move elsewhere
as Krishna desires.

* * *

Swami Alexander was his name
Who's his guru? Ask
at the desk if he's bona fide or
whether he's a Mayavadi
absorbed in the Brahman's colored lights.

* * *

They claim they are God. Nowadays, we have to show passports to get into ISKCON temples. Only then do they know for sure that we are who we say we are.

If I get through I'll see you on the other side. In the weeks ahead I'll be hitting the lecturer's trail again. In Spain I am magisterial and confident. I open my mouth and *sastra* falls out mixed with personal experience.

I heard Srila Prabhupada speak at the opening of Fiji's Kaliya-Krishna temple. He said all the service in the temple was absolute, as it is in the spiritual world. He encouraged the congregation to participate in the ongoing temple programs, including hearing and chanting. Without *Krishna-katha*, our lives are wasted. Without *Krishna-katha*, we will fall down into the lower species. He was harsh and demanding perhaps, yet sweet and giving.

The Deities are looking over my shoulder. Hare Krishna. I am near Them. Expecting pain today. Please spare me another winter.

* * *

Who is happiest? 12:20 p.m.

Feeling of freedom, but I haven't forgot the source of such freedom (I took an Esgic at 9 this morning, which released me from the pain, but that's not the source of my freedom, because I'll have to pay for it later.) O Krishna, I don't want to forget You. And I don't want to forget that worldly happiness is an illusion. *Dukhalyam aSaSvatam*, Krishna says about all life in this material universe. Only in Krishna consciousness is there happiness.

In July 1976, Srila Prabhupada was in Manhattan. He said, "This is a skyscraper, and around us there are so many skyscrapers. Take all these skyscrapers and ask them, 'Do you have happiness as we have here?' It is practical." He asserted that our happiness was the best happiness in the city. Now that temple has been sold back to the *karmis*, and ISKCON has moved to theft-happy Schermerhorn Street in Brooklyn. Adi KeSava is no longer there, and I have been deposed and exposed, and even PuruSartha Prabhu told me in car coming back from a Maine home program that he was actually a drummer. (Where is he now?) We all fled. But Krishna conscious happiness is still available, and Srila Prabhupada's words are not false. Finding it just takes a little hard work. We have to hear and mine the gems "take them for ourselves. If we didn't know how to find the happiness on 55th Street, New York, that doesn't mean we can't learn to find it now.

* * *

2:36 p.m.

Arrived in shed, knocking over the water bottle on the way in. Had to sponge it up. It's cold, but not so bad in here. Gopi-manjari dasi has come from Belfast to spend a few days here. She cooked an excellent lunch. I was going to meet with her, but didn't have a clear head. Wrote her a note instead.

Weeks dwindling "you already know, but I say it here because it's on my mind. Ninth chapter "thou doest not cavil, so I'll tell you the confidential knowledge about the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Know it and you will be relieved of the miseries of material existence.

But everything depends on whether you have faith in the lotus feet of the spiritual master. He gives us power of attorney.

You say you'll preach, but you must be empowered. You say you want to hear or speak confidential topics, but you'll have to be accepted and called forward by Krishna. People who are not interested, not qualified, are taught less confidential knowledge.

Govindadvipa looks like a Govardhana Hill on a plate. Gentle rise in the middle where the trees are tallest and slopes to the edges. Buildings covered behind the forest, modestly, and Radha-Govinda at the heart. Radha-Govinda,

Radha-Govinda "
my Deities.

Knowledge of the eternal activities of the spirit soul in the spiritual kingdom are the king of knowledge and the most confidential. Devotees become free from karma because devotional service is pure.

* * *

Driving In The Shed

(Hear here. Quiet a while. The moment is static. That is, right now I don't have an acute pain and I'm not falling apart. It's a good time to pray to the spirits of Love and Peace in Krishna consciousness. Can I pray and be transformed? Am I empowered enough to do it? Let me see.)

* * *

& Jump for joy/ we mean
no harm
on our train
to Philly "this big band
of Hare Krishnas
all happy to go.

* * *

The artists "looking for an old tradition,
but happy to return
they want "
we want "
a German devotee looks at me and asks, "How are you?"
"Me?" I need a coat. "It's cold."
The other guy is a noon dude
a dolt like Sats
who eats too much. He rolls by
and speaks so fast they can't keep up
the same old riffs.
Or is it that I need to listen better?
I haven't listened enough and
I'll never know
what we all went through.

* * *

Brainwashed?/ conga
drums in the park
I was there with the Swami and we could
incorporate a whole world of happiness. Why not?
If one skyscraper, why not all?

* * *

Now we look for comic relief.
But he drove us as long as possible
and in some ways, now we drive him.

* * *

But this is Govindadvipa and not a train
to Philly, not New York. I still carry
a black bag, but can't blow up the world
like the U.S. Pres. My bag contains
jokes and mixtures
and a copy of *Caitanya-caritam²ta*
no cherries or old fruit
no bricks or memories
but jokes "one looks like spilt ink, a
rubber nose hose, an electric handshake
and preps for my lecture.

* * *

A trombone upon which I ride "best
in the land, super-
lative. Applaud, you fools.

* * *

We went to Philly, really, and you
ought to appreciate the drive.
We were one
suki . . . susske-ookan,
round the river to Mt. Airy "
Hayagriva, Harry
Krishna "and I was there.
For how much longer
can I hold this note?
Can I hold it out against the police the
posse of *maya* of
Krishna "
all in it together.
Imagine a band jam
of love an ocean of love of Krishna and mercy
expressed with Krishna in the center
winning for Him "that'd be nice.

* * *

Now you sit down realizing I'm only talking hype something I heard
Norman Granz Phil Harmonic
Phil in the woods
Phill 'er up my

money bag on book distribution?
Oh, don't be ashamed. I know you want the best "Krishna on the
balcony, front row, onstage in lights
on Mayapur building
and *they do* it "those dancers and singers
and planners and big *sannyasis*
in their lectures
and you know what?
Me in my foxhole too. See?
"Glory to Govinda" amid
the chords and runs
while the sun peeps out
and then descends west
while we're meant to be happy and
here's the chance!

* * *

Sorry I'm red-faced
you gambled all four
the Swami said
he speaks
angry and glad and sometimes badly recorded
but no matter
he's boss
pure devotee
God-approved
and I love Him
I do. "

* * *

A Tour Of The Temple

(Now something slower, gentler. Let me take you in here, folks, and give you a tour
of the temple. No, this is not a house of horrors. This is a temple. This is where the
monks pray. Step this way . . .)

* * *

& The monks bed down here "
it used to be a ballroom,
body by Fisher, by those
mirrors F. Scott Fitzgerald
danced

with Ford (Ambarisa?) and
the reuthers I think "but not
his
mobs and monkeys
who fought to spend millions.
Step this way.

* * *

Here's where the monks play.
The women live separate "still
operates as a convent so
I can't show you everything, but
the nails in the walls
are to hang *dhotis* "
I haven't been here in years!

* * *

While you're tasting cream puffs
from our kitchen, let me tell you
that Krishna is Giridhari and why not?
God can do anything.

* * *

Yes, someone always objects,
but most go home satisfied and me, tired and sorrowful
and especially tired
go to my master and say
I tried
but could have done better,
here's the collection,
here's my heart.

* * *

I slide off to my bunk and hear trumpets and altos
while I rock off to sleep "from the old ballroom sounds?
When he called me at 10 and said, "Write *another* book
about what is wrong in the world "how we forget Krishna,"
I wondered how? Why?
Don't kick skunks, he said.

* * *

Twenty-seven years later here I am
dissolute
shameless
green-gloved
punching holes
still a *sannyasi*
watching "Abhay" "
I can enter almost any temple and be given
a slot and I will probably die
with a clear conscience
in the game room in
a green pool of sweat and spit.
I am not this body
and old romance
I spit out in one last glut
through these poems I blow up
blow off
steam
color
O Celia, O Astrud, O mothers, O children
please forgive me
my excesses
before I die. "

* * *

4:30 p.m.

Walking back from the shed, the sky was a light robin egg's blue. The half moon has already risen, mottled in white. Trees rising against the sky with hundreds of bare fingers, and the grass wet and cold even through my boots. It's a beautiful November dusk. My breath is already vaporizing, and for once, my head is clear. Far ahead on the grass path I see the black cat and a small blackbird flying down from a tree. Wonderful sights if we can see them with the eyes of love of God: Krishna is in the center, the most accomplished artist. And Prabhupada says preaching doesn't grow on trees.

* * *

6:12 p.m.

" . . . A pure devotee of the Lord is always with Krishna through thick and thin; his way of life is Krishna." (*Bhag.* 7.10.49, purport). Ah, yes. Have you ever thought how serious it is to have free will? Krishna would prefer that we get out of this material world once and for all and go back to Godhead, but we really have the choice. To want to go back to Godhead, we have to really taste the love. Beg for it.

In the meantime, we try to determine how to follow the straight and narrow path when it appears to be such a zigzag course. We could say, "Just follow the GBC," but where did that lead us in the 1980s? Zig and zag. Or, "Yes, but now just follow what your

Godbrothers say. read Srila Prabhupada's books only, no others. Preach only in the most recognized ways." Maybe we hide behind our positions, leaders and regular devotees alike. But the real self, who is he? Is he alive and offering himself to Krishna? We belong to Krishna.

We watched another "Abhay" video episode. It was a sentimental one, where Abhay's young sister gets married and her mother cries. Her father almost cries too. As a matter of fact, her grandmothers cry, the little girls cry, and all have tears running down their cheeks. It didn't have much to do with Abhay this time. The next episode shows the British plotting to divide the Hindus and the Muslims. A man is killed, beaten with sticks and stabbed. He dies at the house of Bhaktivinoda Thakura, who is spattered with blood as he and his family members chant Hare Krishna into the man's ear.

Then we lit our candles before the Deities. I'm waiting for the right-sized radharani to arrive here. *Sri-Krishna-caitanya prabhu-nityananda Sri-advaita gadadhara Srivasadi-gaura-bhakta-v²nda*.

* * *

The Absolute Truth remains inconceivable. Krishna is always with the pure devotees.

Narada tells Prahlada's history to Yudhisthira Maharaja. Now he ends the chapter with a story to illustrate that Lord Siva derives power from Lord Krishna, the *paran brahman*.

read it in the peaceful setting in Manu's house. Your life too could be part of a TV setting. You could be an actor sitting at a desk, writing with a pen, black ink on yellow paper. The camera zooms in. You're picking your nose. The clock says 6:25 p.m. Will you maintain peace? What do the Sanskrit letters say?

November 9, 12:05 a.m.

I think if I get a head twinge this morning, I won't take a pill because I took one yesterday and another a couple of days before that. If pain comes, I may have to cancel my Sunday lecture. I gambled with the medication because I felt it was important to stay active yesterday. Now I will have to face the consequences. Tell M. to prepare for it "to prepare to cancel if it comes to that.

As Lord Krishna equipped Lord Siva so he could fight the *asuras* after he had lost a battle, so Srila Prabhupada assures us that "Krishna is always in the background to protect [the devotee] if need be, to equip him to fight with his enemy. For devotees there is no scarcity of knowledge or material requisites for spreading the Krishna consciousness movement." (*Bhag. 7.10.66*, purport).

I'm glad I'm eager to preach in the lecture hall today. Glad also that I was willing to pay yesterday so I could be active in my reading and writing. I know that what happened yesterday was not motivated only by service; I was partly motivated by the desire to be free of pain. I don't like to be sidelined. All right, but I should not be afraid of that. I need to learn to surrender to pain when it arrives and to see it in a Krishna conscious way. There's something valuable in being forced to stop all my activities and to accept Krishna's control over my life, to survive in it, to stay with that reality for awhile and to

be subdued by it. I am not the controller, and allopathic medication cannot make me the controller.

Lord Siva is known as Tripurari because he burnt to ashes the demons' three magic flying dwellings. Narada ends the chapter by praising Hari, Lord Krishna. "Everyone can be purified by His activities simply by hearing about them from the right source." (*Bhag.* 7.10.70).

To the world it always seems that our choice in selecting Lord Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead is sectarian. Those who know Krishna as everything are rare. If we study *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, however, it is easy to understand Krishna. "The Krishna consciousness movement is just trying to make Krishna known all over the world as the Supreme Personality of Godhead." How wonderful of Srila Prabhupada to do this. We work for him. He knew the odds against us. He warned us that not everyone could accept the truth, but he knew that if a few qualified devotees worked to spread Krishna consciousness, many people would be influenced. He was wise about how influence is spread through the world, wise also about management and organization. He was also, of course, spiritually wise, purely idealistic, and strong enough to see his vision through. He said he was "temperamental." His Godbrother, Puri Maharaja, and Narayana Maharaja said at the end of Prabhupada's life, "You committed no offenses in your preaching. You were not proud; whatever you did was for the good of all humanity."

* * *

We will see in the "Abhay" film how the evil-minded British governor in India inflamed enmity between the Hindus and Muslims. Strife, riot, violence "poor people misled. This is the world in which we live. Even young Abhay had to run for his life. They don't hesitate to tell this "Srila Prabhupada's view of the situation. It's the Sastric view too, that there will be constant fighting in Kali-yuga. The impressions of enmity are difficult to eradicate.

* * *

Yudhisthira Maharaja now inquires about *sanatana-dharma* and *varnaSrama-dharma*. religion may change due to birth or otherwise from Hindu to Muslim to Christian, etc., but the eternal occupation of the living being is service to someone. *VarnaSrama-dharma* organizes society so that everyone's service may be directed toward Bhagavan, the Personality of Godhead.

* * *

You've Come Home
& You've come home.
No light thing.
When a friend or lover
enters the house if there is actual love
things go right,

but going back to Godhead
is not a light song
yet it's the lightest.

* * *

Going home is my song, and I walk to it.
Even in the car going to work
Madhava dasa is "going home,"
home to his service, his consciousness.

* * *

But the pain saddens you? Do you worry,
"Will it hurt?" But the letters, the
calendar, the impersonal, faceless
reality tells me I'm going to end
another life. Not faceless, really,
nor am I wandering. Krishna, please
guide me like a dog who knows the way,
a homing pigeon,
You my unerring compass guide

* * *

on this zigzag path through the Milky Way.

* * *

going home requires a dance and a sigh and a memory
of foolish, hard times, perhaps
a famine in Ireland, a Holocaust
other ignorance "all a burning
building, but the brisk tune
is You, Krishna,
the Hare Krishna mantra
even written on a wall
in the men's room
spoken in a prostitute's words
on a billboard.

* * *

The clarion call to
go home.

* * *

Krishna goes home when Mother Yashoda
calls. Then He hurries to make contact
with His lover. O Krishna,
Krishna take me to
Your abode
in faith
Your home "
no place short of this. "

* * *

5:38 a.m.

The cabin at Saranagati is no more. Now a new one is being built, but the builder may decide to live in it himself. I don't have to go there. The rats ate through the floor to gain entrance, then ate the curtains. Thieves broke in repeatedly and stole the rocking chairs. I have no desire to go there. Just imagine . . .

Then what will I do? Where will I go? I don't have to go *anywhere*. I can stay here, or, if the government forbids me, return to my own country. Surely there's a place I can stay there that's quiet "*somewhere*. Surely . . . without a telephone. The main thing is my desire. If I don't stay in such a place, then I could live as I used to, a *sannyasi* in temples here and there, as long as I could still write every day.

Writing is how I place the iron rod in the fire. We all want to do that. People say they want to preach, but it's not easy. We have to be empowered. I want to find that section on the tape. I could play it this morning for the devotees. I'll ask M. to tell me something about the waves of preaching going on in Ireland with Uddhava and his crew. I want to hear about that other kind of preaching, but to assert my own method too. We are all concerned with this topic because preaching was Prabhupada's order. It is how we will catch Krishna's attention quickly. Prahlada Maharaja was compassionate. He wanted to save people from ignorance. We need the conviction that unless people take to Krishna consciousness, they will suffer birth and death. We need to believe in their need.

But what if they already have a religion?

Then leave them alone.

But almost everyone in Ireland has some kind of religion or religious affiliation.

But they don't take it seriously.

Isn't it true that some people will be agitated if we push Krishna consciousness and people start becoming devotees?

Yes. A preacher has to be prepared for such a reaction.

Why is it you, sir, preach mostly with a pen?

Because I like the scratching sound it generates. It's like scratching at an itch.

really? The sound of a pen across the page? Doesn't that sound like rats gnawing, scuttling, or prisoners trying to dig through a wall with only a file or something? Or perhaps it sounds like refugees crossing a plain in deep snow wearing snowshoes. Does it have rhythm? Could we compare it to . . . Bird?

No, you can't compare it to anything. I can only say that it leads me toward faith in Krishna consciousness, and that it is intended to lead others there too.

* * *

I was sitting at my desk trying to read *Caitanya-caritam²ta*. Suddenly I felt sleepy, then had a dream. I was in a classroom. I tried to speak to Robert Baker behind me. I said, "I think the meeting we have planned for after school has not been sufficiently advertised." When I spoke, Mrs. Mulligan, the teacher, said, "You are not prepared for your lesson." I tried to show Mrs. Mulligan that I was attentive, but I was too tired and could not stay awake.

After this dream, I decided it was worth taking a nap to prevent the onset of a headache. The room was cold, so I put on my knit cap. This reminded me of a line of verse, "While Ma in her nightgown and I in my cap/ had just settled down for a long winter's nap." My mind began to run over the other lines of that poem. Recalling the lines, I fell asleep.

* * *

9:50 a.m.

Class went all right. Topics from Cc. were (1) what it means to be empowered with *bhakti-Sakti* to preach; and (2) what it means to preach in a favorable place.

Yudhisthira Maharaja praises Narada Muni. We are in Narada's disciplic succession. Preaching takes conviction and purity. Preaching also requires enthusiasm and increases our enthusiasm. As we can become empowered by a pure devotee to preach, so we can be disempowered if we are offensive.

* * *

12:24 p.m.

Almost time for lunch. I'm still running clear, so it looks like I'll make it to the shed this afternoon. Fog still over the land. I can't even see the lake. Faxes come and go. Huh? The charlatan got elected. The Pope is all right. The Maxivan was hoisted.

The twenty wristwatches melted and the chestnuts got so moldy that I said, "Yuck!" The Webster's dictionary sits on the windowsill.

And in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, if I am willing, I can meet Sri Krishna, His incarnations, and His pure devotees. I really ought to.

Narada is teaching *sanatana* and the four orders of life. I'll pay attention and repeat it. With the time I had, I spoke of empowerment. There is more to it, but I didn't have time to say it all.

God gives. A little robin was just fluttering against the glass door as if trying to gain entrance. It was tiny. So now, sobriquets, time for lunch.

* * *

3 p.m.

Can I write and not care about the result? Can I write and not be afraid that I've said it all before? Can I stay away from critics? Can I find joy in it? Can I purify myself through it and attain Krishna consciousness? This is a preface to saying that I feel pressure in the front of my head. I'd also like to tell you that I'm looking for the passion of creativity as taught in *Life, Paint, and Passion*, but with the assurance that it's Krishna conscious.

Progressive steps to *ruci* and *bhava*. He described it excitedly, as if he knew it from personal experience, but it was just the intensity of an orator-scholar. We memorize, paraphrase, then give droplets of what we have learned.

Line of gold glint through the clouds in the west. Still a gray day, though. The water is clear and two speed surfboats are playing. M. is probably playing his melodeon now that I'm out. I don't press him with too many duties these days, except the usual copying and mailing of tapes.

The *Bhagavatam* speaker said that in the higher stages, we will think only of Krishna, just as a fish out of water thinks only of water. We won't care for material desires because we have tasted Krishna and we want Him back, and the taste of serving Him.

All theoretical. Now when we chant, we're distracted either by passion (many ideas) or ignorance (sleep). All these notions I stole from the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* speaker, who got them from Vishvanath Cakravarti Thakura or someone like that.

I steal what I tell you too "from the *Bhagavatam* or elsewhere. Or perhaps I'm not stealing it; I'm repeating in *parampara*. What is my own is the pressure in my head and the distress it brings me "me, the so-called *purusa* who seeks peace and "immortality" in this body.

* * *

Advice To The restless

& (We are gathered here today . . . G. says he sees death everywhere since he witnessed his mother's death. restless, emotional, he says no one he talks to about it can understand how horrific is death. He wants to cut his "emotional baggage" so he doesn't have to see friends die "or himself. But it's a cold day today, and I am trying to relax the strings in my head. Strum them peacefully, like a flamenco guitar, and sing.)

* * *

In the parlor the bop soprano sax
is in style, and so many young people
and elders showing off on
drums.

I just want peace.
He leaves and enters the suburban woods
his house up in flames.

* * *

This cold day I minister bequeath
the service for the eternal
the eternal blue book, the
Sanskrit and polemic and phil-
os-ophy stretch it out in
well-repeated phrases.

* * *

You dear audience here's the gray day we
want you to be happy as a saint who chants the holy names.
But what about you, boss?
Did you have a dream?

* * *

I have a letter but I'm tired of writing back because later
I'll have to pay when I can't respond in kind "I keep
the stakes too high.
That's called ecumenics?
No, Marcus Aurelius
um just now I'm
stoic (in a hurry).

* * *

Density blue "the wisdom
of the artist desiring peace. We
put so much practice and learning into it, it would make you sick,
you'd lose your spontaneity just hearing
how hard we worked.

* * *

And all I wanted was to be rightly situated
in my Krishna consciousness
familiar memory
practice and routine.

* * *

It's feeling I have to get across.
That's what this is all about "
the human element "

as we find our taste
and climb up the stairs
of *bhakti*.

* * *

My master taught us what to do. We stood at traffic lights and gave out books,
incense, flowers
if they gave enough money. I personally
stayed in the temple and spoke on the phone when one
became distraught: "Just keep trying, Prabhu,"
I said,
"or do you want to come back
to the temple?"
"I'll try. I've only got five dollars so far."

* * *

The music of the spheres and the density
made us space out
with our desires
whiling away the hours
ours to regain or pass
until we found out how to pray
to God.
Never mind if you realize God.
Just say it: O Krishna
Hare Krishna.
No more avant-garde required. All at once rejoice and say good-bye,
chase the evil spirits. Chant Hare Krishna.
Now the organized religion flees
and rejoins us near the
Tuscarora Creek.
From Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna "
we chant even in paradise. "

* * *

4:10 p.m.

Turned heat on, so the windows are fogged. Now it's too hot in here, and I have to
open the windows. Soon it will be too cold. Hot and cold, off and on.

Iron lung. Dark too. TLC. Can you write "
you and your musical genius/ can you keep up with it? No.

They say so many things about him, but he's dead and has been for a long time. He
has probably already taken another body according to his desires. The body doesn't lie
and the mind carries the imprint. I'll go back inside now.

And my sister Mad, and Martha, will be there. Martha is beautiful in her way. They were both older than me by three years.

It's starting to rain "the soft patter. The pen scratching is louder, though, so I have to stop writing to hear it. These two sounds often ease my pain, like arpeggios of Krishna consciousness stirring in my blood.

I can't locate the spirit soul "I'm no *yogi* "but I believe what I've read. You can laugh a wry comment, but I'll just sit it out for a while.

* * *

Segment

& Segment.

When I was young I could have some birds but
heard this Bird.

The grass dark outside
and a fellow
in a green beret.

* * *

Does he remind me of my own creative spirit?

Father,

O *sadhu*,

can you dance
on rocks on coals
on Govardhana?

* * *

Star Eyes

& We could even dance
in seats squirming
and find the way I didn't
know was so well-recorded

* * *

we're dying and the soul wants and
knows devotion to Krishna
I have only myself
in this woodshed and God
and all the world to talk to.

* * *

O Krishna, You are the only one
blood flows through Your
names and manipulators
disturb us with bad
dreams of Hindu-Muslim riots

* * *

better I live a free spirit "Bird or old, his "Star Eyes"
means I make mistakes but am
who I am, always a person who
can sing.
The crying of cows
the distant dissonance I
think of Star Eyes
and want to go home
to where
the *gopis*
might call Him that. "
<!--This is a comment.

-->

November 10, 12:10 a.m.

I prayed to God to help me improve my faith in guru and my receptivity to his writings and the writings of Vyasa, *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Bhagavad-gita*. May the *sastras* become an enlivening challenge to me again. I have allowed doubts to live in me. I say I can't help it, so to admit them is a form of honesty, but one has to rise and kill doubts with the sword of knowledge. Armed with yoga, stand and fight.

Yudhisthira takes the opportunity to inquire from Narada Muni. He has great faith in him as the foremost spiritual master. He wants to hear about the religion which can lead us to the ultimate goal of life, devotional service. Narada replies that he will explain what he has heard from Lord Narayana. He begins, ". . . The Supreme Being, the Personality of Godhead, is the essence of all Vedic knowledge." (*Bhag.* 7.11.7)

To know God, we must follow *Sruti* and *sm²ti*, but is this just for Indians? We saw more "Abhay" video last night. M. commented that it's aimed at Indian audiences. Westerners wouldn't be satisfied to see dramas based so much on traditional Hindu values. Their ways of marriage and social and religious dealings are simply not followed by non-Indians in this world. People may even think further, "Their worship of God is sectarian." Of course, the Vedic scriptures are intended for all souls, and those who study them will discover their universal truth. Thanks to Srila Prabhupada's adaptations, the essence of the Vedic culture and spirituality can be followed in Kali-yuga anywhere in the world, with adjustments to suit time, place, and persons. The essence is to chant the Hare Krishna mantra, which is not a sectarian practice.

I call this "my way." Is that a concession to the ways of others? Yes, there are other paths, and from those who are following a *bhakti* path, we can learn something. Still, we

have chosen our current form of *bhakti*, which is based on the beautiful form of Krishna. The *bhakti* principle itself, however, is universal.

I didn't paint yesterday, just inked in a few cartoons.

* * *

In three weeks we'll break camp. Maybe the lecture trail will be good for me. Pray to Krishna.

* * *

There is a good list of thirty qualities to be followed by all human beings in the purport to *Bhag.* 7.11.8 - 12. I see my weak points as I read through them. I can also accept all of them as desirable, even if I can't attain them immediately. Ones that seem to reveal my shortcomings: "rendering service to saintly persons, gradually taking leave of unnecessary engagements . . . always remembering the activities and instructions given by the Supreme Personality of Godhead . . ." Externally I could say I'm doing all right, but today I'm see how my reading and Krishna conscious life is superficial. I'm critical today, and see my life as lived in goodness (an accommodation to my headache syndrome and old age), but perhaps too satisfied with peace. It's a begging off too much from the strife of preaching work.

Anyway, what can I do but live with myself and continue to turn to Krishna. He knows. When I travel, I'll be expected to give Krishna consciousness to others. I won't assume a high profile or claim that I'm a pure devotee who is always absorbed in chanting and hearing. I will simply present the *sastra* and something about what it means to live a life of Krishna consciousness. The people to whom I will preach in Trinidad and Guyana have certain standards and needs, and the people in the Northeast U.S. have theirs too. Krishna, please help us all. I pray to serve.

* * *

Concorde

& Music, a gentle rumbling, and sir,
have you been to France?
Do you know *concorde*?
That's how we say agreement, peace
permission to speed along or
swing with life.
There's lack of it.

* * *

I surrender to the ease
and the joy of the music
in my head.
I can't, not entirely,

live a cartoon movie,
like sense grat
tickety tick
to tickle myself or amuse.

* * *

But deep concord
peace with Krishna
and do whatever He says
our Taskmaster. If we don't agree
we'll be crushed by the wheel of time.

* * *

But *concorde* with God's ways
means more than saying
the required words.
We want honest and free love of
God to open in us
to taste the colors of emotions
amid the unorthodox
the trail strewn with
bodies and new flowers
followers
maxi-taxis
in Trinidad,
and self-expression
given in no time.
Concorde "the Lord's
acceptance. "

* * *

3:23 p.m.

Would I like this book to be more intense?
I just want to go back to Godhead.

Don't be dedicated to writing per se. Mert said he wanted to give it up. In Bangkok he concluded his seminar lecture with these words: "And now I'm going disappear." A few hours later he died a violent death.

Yeah, well? I thought I might die out of station too, perhaps in a hospital. That wouldn't be good for my reputation. We gurus are all supposed to die in V²ndavana (or Mayapur). Otherwise, it's a stain against our purity. I mean, would Krishna allow us to die somewhere else? Not if we were pure.

Someone could say, "He died out of station because he was preaching."

Then they'd look at my books, my looks.

Not writing per se. Cold this November morning. Consider today's words and projects. I already wrote a letter to the young man who was upset with Death. Writers like Zukofsky are dedicated to language, but what is the quality of their lives?

* * *

Avant-garde

& I've got a little time to wake up "
reveille, grab my socks, then
"What's this?!"
Never heard such raucous sounds.
It's swallowed it's human
they're waiting for the usual *kirtana*
but it doesn't come

* * *

instead this wild beast.
My intuition says to paint a *sadhu*
and words like ""Here
lies the dead man,
here be the Krishna conscious duet, here
be the scared poet, he expressed
himself write and true.
He rose the soul like a phoenix
and it went to Heaven leaving
behind all mundaners
including those artists who
don't perform devotional service to Krishna."

* * *

The sounds are delirious the
words perfidious "they
scatter and fall. The man was in
the ballroom
considering a ballad,
but not one of you could dance to or
contemplate in the old
4/4 way "no beat at all.

* * *

He wanted it roomier, jazzier, but
he crossed out his words
didn't worry about Robert Moss

who said you could go to the worlds
with primitive shamans, birds, spirits "
invents the path to the spiritual with no regard for *sastra*.

* * *

These fellows are my friends.
Do they look like monsters?
Sorry I painted them "they came like that
from their own convictions and
schooling.
And I'm sorry the dance is called off.
All we have are these two crazy fellows
sounding like beserk poets
making fun
making serious
individual sounds to
the stratosphere
to mix with Krishna music "
you'd expect something better,
a tabla and dancer.
Is someone entering my room?
Intuition "something is speaking here
a beat,
and it seems like forever
it's going so weird, the dead
spirits, the seaweed on the beach,
dark nights of sea froth breaking against a cottage wall
while turf burns on the stove
where this ode was written.

* * *

I came here to tell you that Narada will teach how each person should live, and don't
worry, there's a place for you and your freedom.

* * *

5:45 a.m.

Dear Sir,

Please send me a pinch of smut Horley's Macab. I enclose five dollars and blood and
sweat amulet and talisman. Black magic preferred unless white is more potent. And no
karma, please. I am a Hare Krishna member, so no prejudice. I wear neck beads. My five
dollars is legal tender, so treat it accordingly.

Enclosed, find a picture of our cows. Note their teats have been treated with microbe
disinfectant.

Don't show this, please, to your company shrink or bartender.

Any maniac like me?

I'm actually okay, got 114 IQ and B+ average. Was discharged. Uh . . . that's all I'd like to tell you for now. Send my Tom Mix inner magic ring as soon as possible. I want to take it into the dark and watch it shine and reveal the inner light world. Hot ralston. I will hear you tonight.

Oh, I chant Hare Krishna. Enclosed are shreds and a wire from our amp. Good night Daddy-O, we used to say and drink our milk in Krishna consciousness.

Yours,

Annie (short for Andolph)

So many errant thoughts
there be

when you take *sannyasa*
you should be free.

Always read the *Gita* is our
code.

May you be protected and
to Krishna's abode

enter soon,

Swamiji.

* * *

8:35 a.m.

Come back to *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. That's why the fluorescent desk lamp works and why I have no pain right now. And for reading this book, I have been left alone.

Narada describes the duties of the four *varnas* and *aSramas*. The three compulsory duties of the *brahmanas* are Deity worship Deity, Vedic study, and giving charity. Although the *brahmanarecipient* of charity must be pure, Srila Prabhupada states that at present, we live in an emergency condition, and this supports why people who are lowborn can be recruited and trained as *brahmanas*. The Krishna consciousness movement was created out of the emergency "because spiritual culture has been stopped all over the world."

Serve your master. If you perform your duties and try to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead, you will gradually become free of outer duties and attain *niskama*, freedom from material desires.

Yasya yal laksanam proktam: a person should be accepted according to his actual symptoms, not by his birth.

"At last, when because of old age he can no longer perform the activities, he should gradually stop everything and in this way give up his body." (*Bhag.* 7.12, pre- chapter summary).

* * *

10:13 a.m.

The method they teach in "The Painting Experience" is to allow the hand to move and to watch for signals coming from the body. You might start with a blob or scribble, and a figure-image may emerge. Don't hurry; let the creative force work through you.

Someone just wrote me, "You already know I like your literary presentation, but now I'm enjoying your conventional writing in *Touchstone*."

Okay, as long as you like my literary style.

But I don't do *any* conventional writing these days. I just blow the horn of improvisation, that's all. *Touchstone* was carefully crafted, and went through draft after draft until it was concise. No more of that, it seems. That was the last one in the bag.

But sir, you could save your energies for more of that, couldn't you?

No.

* * *

I saw the collie sitting upright, looking out at the lake and sky. Every few moments he'd turn toward the boathouse. That's where he runs off yapping if a car comes. This time he was sitting unusually still, his coat looking clean and dry for a change "shades of white and tan. He didn't know or care that I was watching him.

God looks down on us "from above," but also from within. He knows us within and without. It occurred to me that when we are skeptical about these simple points, we lose our desire to even know God. Perhaps we are living only on past desire, so the impression remains in the mind. But the active desire "that is killed by lack of faith. That's why the *sastras* recommend we associate constantly with pure devotees. We may need to borrow from their conviction.

I drew a man with a checkered shirt and a four-wheeled vehicle under him. Another man seemed to be flying down from the sky over him, then a disembodied hand and arm wearing a wristwatch. And a tree. All in many colors. I entered into it, then sent it off. I said my farewell.

"From now on," the Chief said, "we will have ceremonies where chiefs like us are honored and the people can benefit just by seeing us walk among them. But watch out for Cassius: he has a lean and crazy look over there in his cottage. He pretends to be apart from the world. Whenever he sees a photo of us chiefs at a conference, he boils and makes little curses into his gruel."

What would you have us do then, Chief? Want us to knock him off?

"No, don't talk like that. Think of a better plan."

* * *

The natives are envious. The periwinkles don't work. The astral path is studded with stars. Jets blast through. This is a science fiction movie. The nuns and priests are good, some of them, and a few may have become corrupt. Our flag has been shortened by it. We will fast until noon. The parameters are bounded.

Now you *brahmanas* come here and do your thing.

"Yes sir, we will worship the Deity, and then we will teach you about the *Vedas*."

Okay, *brahmanas*, very good. Now let us hear more of the glories of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. It's the only way to drive away skepticism.

* * *

M. says he'll be busy in the coming days. I will be too. If my head holds out, I may paint twice a day, once in this room with my new working area and once in the shed even when it's cold. You know what else I do. It's possible to be busy in several ways.

I'm busy staying away from computers and the worldwide message boards. A message was sent out worldwide, "Who will come and take control of the devotees in ISKCON Ireland?" Some put down their names.

My response? Well, let me situate myself at a distance. Frankly and purely, that is my motive. Find a place where if they come, I will tell them that I get headaches and "beware of dog. Electric fence: do not touch. No trespassers."

Or I will say, "Hi" (I mean, "*Haribol*"), smile, and throw them off with noncommittals. Block the entrance. Until Death comes, of course, and for him I'll have to open. Might as well welcome him in as Krishna's representative.

And not the committees?

I'm getting tired of using words with several syllables.

Hypocrites galore and snore the dreams, slipping out of his hands another one gone because he didn't want to disturb his sleep, and anyway, what's the use of another strange story?

* * *

12:05 p.m.

He said lunch would be at noon today because we've been fasting.

* * *

Dreamt a large peacock was eating a smaller one. I saw the smaller peacock go further and further down the other peacock's throat. Eventually, only its tail was visible. I was horrified. The smaller peacock made a last ditch attempt to fight back, but it was too late. It was devoured.

* * *

2:20 p.m.

It's raining. Be grateful. Does the shed, when you enter, look less than joyful? Do you lack innate jolliness? There's no happiness in this world but the joy to be found in Krishna and Krishna consciousness.

"*Susukham*. Why? . . ."

One can hear the lectures. Simply by sitting, one can learn. Then one can eat the remnants of the food offered to God ""very nice palatable dishes." I ate with much relish

(catsup too?) at lunch, while hearing B. explain *prema-bhakti*. We are far below that level, still only aspiring to be devotees. He explained, with much animation, how wonderful it all is.

Did you know that the false ego is the most difficult thing to shed? I have no concept of who I am "a pure spirit soul "what that means *exactly*. B. says the self is fast asleep.

Stop and hear the rain beating on the shed roof and remember that you will have to die. Then allow first thoughts. *They* won't kill you.

No, no, he said. I don't have to put up with those Henry Millerisms. I'm getting rid of all the burdens I no longer need and climbing the hill of *niv²tti-marga*.

Oh.

B. sums up all the good things about *bhakti* from 9.2 and says, "Therefore one should adopt it."

In the meantime, I'm calculating how my mail package should arrive today. It might even be there when I get back to the house, but more likely it will come tomorrow or the next day. I have my letter opener ready. I'll pick out whatever seems most urgent, such as a Godbrother's approval of my essay. Nothing much else apart from the world of my disciples. Maybe the news compiled by Kr for August along with his apology for being so far behind. A few ISKCON newsletters. rain on the roof.

"Those who are not faithful in this devotional service cannot attain Me, O conqueror of enemies. Therefore they return to the path of birth and death in this material world." (Bg 9.3) Have faith that by serving Krishna, all other interests and needs will be satisfied. The third-class devotee falls down; the second-class doesn't. The first-class makes progress and achieves the result. People who officially engage in devotional service but who lack faith return after some time to their former material lives.

* * *

The Hero returns From Battle
& They marched off to a kind of
war (Don Quixote
humor in that)
in a jazz syncopated
rhythm
little fellows going off
to battle demons,
happy sorts too.

* * *

As for me I went elsewhere. remember
how St. Francis returned from the Crusades
alone
to become a great conqueror
of the self for
the love of God?
I'm back and looking

for my own authentic story
but find a dream "peacock eat peacock "
Krishna Krishna.

* * *

Susukham "back to listen to a lecture
desiring no more roller coaster rides
with enticing girls
big shot manip "no,
I prefer
homemade ice cream
and my beat, poems hard and
clear
triumphs of an internal
sort for ISKCON
leaders "getting down" to
leave each other alone, to proclaim
we all have rights to serve
to be for Krishna.

* * *

So this hero went to war
and came back alone.
It was quiet and not too cold and he walked
deep into the woods and God protected him.
He chanted more on EkadaSi
gave thanks for his dinner
wrote poems on
occasion and returned unharmed
despite the gash the
inner wound
his head pain
his upcoming
death. "

* * *

A Few Bird Tunes

1

Offering a Latin Mango

(A few bird tunes while rain patters on the roof. I don't like to admit how low down I
am. How would I exonerate myself? Would it even be necessary?)

* * *

& The big band introduced him to
Latin hellish
stuff but he can play
anywhere even with machito.
I wasn't there when he stood up
and took his licks
all the same and
after him
everyone did it too.

* * *

Mango is a season my master said
and he'd rather preach in russia's snow
without the brass band
but with the music of God
beating in his heart.
This offering is hidden,
dark shed in rain
another kind of love. "

<!--This is a comment.***-->

* * *

2
repetition
& Things come again and again "
you know how it is "
but we find ways to
be new while toeing the line.
We love relief
as much as repeats "
the sun dawns again
and again
and all we want
is more of it and not to die.

* * *

But the repetition of birth and death,
that we don't want "to repeat the pain
and fear and the attempt to repeat
pleasure "the waste of it all "
I still feel the remorse even now.

* * *

Let us repeat our service to master
and the repeated attempts
to free ourselves of desires
our karma
our pain, and please let us
come to devotional service, love that
repeats
once and forever
and the love in this
song. "

* * *

Night Notes, 6:15 p.m.

Gopi-manjari dasi shined up Radha-Govinda quite nicely. Made *cadars* for Them too. She joined in as Madhu and I sang "Damodarastakam." Earlier tonight I recorded myself reading excerpts from the EJW I wrote last summer when alone in Wicklow reading the *Bhagavatam*, walking in the morning, etc.). As I selected the excerpts, I found myself looking for the more conventional passages "no far-out free-writing. Because of the intended audience.

O wry pipsqueak, you have your squeaking secrets, although you are an open book. You and your unconscious, your leak-connection to what you feel when you don't think about it. How is that different (it obviously is) from the joy a devotee in *prema-bhakti* feels, as described by Vishvanath Cakravarti Thakura? The main difference is that the pure devotee sees Krishna and is madly Krishna-centered. I have no whiff of that. I write from down here. I dig out what I find in art and nature and self (impure), and assert their connection with Krishna. Krishna is even in this explanation, although again, that's different than the question of my own experience of *prema-bhakti*.

Back to climbing the ladder, the beanstalk of my poems.

November 11, 12:08 a.m.

reading of the *brahmacari* under strict vows and the guru's control at the *gurukula*. I seem to have outgrown that, but will I experience it again in another life? If only perfect devotees return to Goloka, how can I assume, "I may not be perfect "am not perfect "but Krishna will allow me to go to His abode because of my great desire"? No, I have lost that hope. There's no point in making feeble calculations that somehow or other I may make it if I just do this thing or give up that thing. I say I've lost that hope, but I know I am not squarely facing the consequences of my not giving that one thing up. Where is my surrender?

To preach and to take a position of responsibility in ISKCON appear to be a good way to surrender, but that appearance of surrender won't necessankirtana movement, to be daring and active. He told us to "tax the brain." There is no ease.

We should also study *sastra* to discover elements that can help us purify our material motivations so that the heart of our surrender becomes clean. The description of the *brahmacari* tells us that a boy or man (even an old man) should not mix freely with women, nor with men attached to women, nor should he read of man-woman affairs or think of them. This applies also to a guru with his female disciples. "One should associate with women only for important business and not otherwise."

I feel benefit in reading this section. Every section of the *Bhagavatam* is edifying, and I take them and hold them one after another.

I am still readying myself to give everything up. I may have to do it suddenly "I will, at death. Although I make plans for the things I'd like to do in my remaining years, material concerns as well as spiritual plans and duties, I know, are temporary. Fate, Providence, the Supreme controller, will say, "I have given you a particular life duration and now it's over." I can't ask for more than that. I *can* ask Him to help me recollect myself and to be spontaneously drawn to Krishna in surrender. I can beg to be freed of lingering material desire. It's my ten-year plan.

* * *

Moving Fast

& On a walk "so many bright
sights
I see this

* * *

old guy may go at any time
the wet leaves tell that story.

* * *

Then indoors my song "
a solo act where
background "
autogenic heart, arm,
brain "all given "
the leaves, the sky, a
virtuoso performance
of what I'd like to do
to be.

* * *

Background becomes foreground
and a pure devotee lives each
moment in Krishna's presence.

* * *

Background noise "even pain
spent in trance he can't be distracted

* * *

and that's driving me
to wail and play
while no one knows who
I am
but Krishna.

* * *

I do what I can "the guru
gave me a mantra
and I'll chant until death "
Hare Krishna "fast and slow
back and fore and middle

* * *

grounds, and
when I run out of milk
ink
or like a race car driver
of gas
I'll drop and
smile and find a new song
and do another take. "

* * *

4:10 a.m.

Well, folks, here we are in Shea Stadium at 4 in the morning. The lights are on. The lights are on, then the lights are off. The hot lemon drink is by my side, and me and Phil are ready to broadcast another ball game play by play. It's another fine rainy day here in Geaglum, and it looks like the forces of evil will not be appearing because it is so quiet and pretty here. Who would know that this is North Ireland, the land of so much trouble? The devotees have turned this piece of property into a halcyonic haven. It's a sort of Prospect Park. Know what I mean? They have their troubles, you can be sure: they have little money and little managerial expertise, and they have only a few shabby rowboats to take guests back and forth from mainland to island. Well, it doesn't matter. Things are going on. But no one comes here if they are looking for comfort.

Prabhupada lectured that we are not the body and that we want to go to Krishna in the spiritual world. A devotee wrote to me that she has read his books twice, and now when she goes to read she thinks, "I have read all this before." She has lost interest.

But these are not ordinary books. We must be aware that we need to hear what Prabhupada is speaking, or else we will forget who we are and we will lose vital contact with Krishna. I told her that and I tell it to myself. Yep, pardner, that's the way it is at the Lazy-Q ranch.

There are 8,400,000 species of life. Heard it before? Well, you have lived in most of those species at one time or another. If a human being thinks that there's only one life, however, then he's ignorant. The human is meant to understand his eternal nature and to uncover the real self so that he can return to the spiritual world. He has to strive for that knowledge while living in the material world. That's the difficulty. These instructions roll off our tongues and appear in our handwriting. She asked how to prevent herself from becoming bored while she reads. It's a challenge and welcome to the club of those who struggle with this. One brother said he studies deeply, reading the *acaryas'* commentaries and seeing how they all fit together. Another said he tries to read in a prayerful state, a little at a time. There are various methods.

Every ball game is new, and you can't predict the outcome until it's over. When it begins, the score is always zero. The first batter and each subsequent batter has the power to change the direction of the game. We bring you today's game courtesy of Gillette razor Blade Co. and Foamy Shaving Cream Co. Also, Sheaffer Beer (who also make Sheaffer pens). All of this will be illusion, although we have a different angle on it. We are broadcasting the game with reference to Krishna, and that changes the flavor entirely.

A sip of lemon drink, fatigue in the spine, leaning forward over the machine that makes letters on a page. Exasperation "nothing to report. I could look at a new book on how to stimulate creative ideas, but I already know that all I have to do is just allow a trickle to come and then keep going with it. We read this morning that *brahmacaris* should live at the guru's place and collect alms for him morning and night. They should offer him their obeisances and learn sense control and *brahma-jnana*, devotional service, from him. That's the duty of a *brahmacari*. When the *brahmacari* matures, he may get married, but even then he must obey his guru and engage in sex with his wife only on his spiritual master's order. That's called *garbhadhana-sanskara*.

Well, it looks like the game is rained out, so I'll bid you good-bye for now.

* * *

Post-painting session impressions, 5:30 a.m.

It took some effort this morning to get up and try to paint. I started by reading a chapter of *Life, Paint, and Passion* that talked about finishing a painting and how one has to keep going even after he or she considers the work done. That is a challenge.

Then I taped the paper vertically on the wall rather than horizontally, as I usually do. I began to paint a portrait. It took up the entire 18"x24" page. I won't give you all the details, but at one point I wrote "Prabhupada" on the top. I was trying to follow the mood

of letting the painting paint itself instead of trying to control it so it would become something pretty or artistic. I was looking for a devotional experience. I wrote, "Prabhupada rules and allows me (I underlined 'me' four times) to be." I felt in me a resentment toward Prabhupada coming out, and I started to make a big-faced Prabhupada. Or at least I was thinking of him as I did it. It was, of course, not a traditional portrait; it had blue, orange, and green painted into the face. It is a strong image. Before I wrote "Prabhupada" on it, when it was still a white page and when I was still under the influence of the teacher in *Life, Paint, and Passion*, I wrote these words in black pen: "The page is important, or Krishna is important? The 'process' is important, or 'passion' and pleasing God? Can you answer?"

Toward the end I wrote the words under his mouth, "He didn't let me do it," and then asked, "Who?"

The painting teacher said that when you want to let a painting go, ask yourself first what you didn't allow to go into the painting and see if you want to paint it. I didn't allow in a woman, or a man filled with passion. I put the woman in the ear of the main portrait, and a passionate man on the lower left.

I felt that the painting was actually a breakthrough for me, and the images were strong.

Then I started another. This one came out even more primitive and raw, but it wasn't as clear who it was or what it was saying. The figure had at least three eyes. I wrote words in the upper right-hand corner, but after a while I painted over them. They didn't seem important.

On the right and upper left-hand corners of the painting I wrote the words "GBC" in red. I allowed red marks to radiate from one of his eyes as I thought of headaches. I also thought that my pain is really not so bad, but this strange man "confused and contorted" soon developed a compartmentalized head, and that spoke to me too.

The third and last painting also started out as a portrait. Then the lines wandered around and I thought, "Why not a woman? Draw the woman of your dreams, the woman no *sannyasi* can have." I tried to make her face beautiful without really caring about ordinary standards of beauty. I made her face thinner than the man's. I allowed the paints to mix themselves more and to come out with offbeat colors instead of the usual plain ones. Her hair was long and straight wore *tilaka*, had green eyes, a red mouth, a black "mole" on the chin. Now she (or he "the painting suddenly freed itself from gender") looks out at me in black, blue, and brown strokes "another strong image. I got the impression that sometimes my previous painting was child's play, but today it was serious, an expression of suffering and a confrontation of feelings beneath the ones I usually express. I'd like to keep going for that.

* * *

8:12 a.m.

Narada teaches that we shouldn't massage our own bodies or draw pictures of women

...

How the Lord is all-pervasive in a personal form, so small He can enter the atom, and how the living entities are everywhere "is inconceivable.

Long strands of cloud, the blue sky behind them. The clouds are edged in the white-yellow of morning sunlight. Two men walking down to the quay. I know one of them is Arjuna. My head is still clear, so I'm going to take a walk "as soon as I read another verse or two. I hope to take the knowledge with me as I walk: *maya tatam idam sarvam*, God is everywhere and yet not everywhere. "The Lord can defy Himself." (*Bhag.* 7.12.15, purport)

Collie busy running back and forth as if something is happening. He gets excited by his imagination or perhaps he perceives wild game amid the trees and runs to and challenge it. He sees and hears what I don't see or hear.

The *vanaprastha* duties described in the *Bhagavatam* are extremely austere. In ISKCON we don't practice that strictly. I take EkadaSi breakfasts two days in a row. Today they gave me carrot *halava*, tapioca, a banana, and some milk. So much!

The body comes from the material elements. Merge the body back into those elements at death. At least know where the body has come from and that the self is elsewhere: *ahan brahmasmi*.

* * *

Just before I went out for my walk, I asked Madhu to get me the manuscripts of the newly arrived ItMs so I can edit them. He said he would, then added, "The telephone is a dangerous thing." He then told me how he had just spoken for half an hour to one devotee and for half an hour with another. One of the devotees wants to hold an *istagosthi* for the devotees in Ireland to discuss "whether we should emphasize chanting and hearing or the implementation of *varnaSrama-dharma*." With that in my head, I went out the door.

Put those aside and look at the coppery foliage on the trees along the path. See how the sky reflects in the puddles? Let me hear my own chanting. I want to emphasize that "to myself. If he's got the poems ready when I get back, I'll edit them. I'm an artist; that's my place in society.

I had an exchange of letters with Caitanya-candrodaya on this subject. He pointed out that although there is a lot of discussion in ISKCON about *varnaSrama-dharma*, he doesn't see how the society could actually implement a system where some of the devotees would *not* be *brahmanas* but be designated as *vaiSyas*, *Sudras*, etc. It doesn't seem likely. Who wants to be a *Sudra*? It seems that Prabhupada and Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura wanted to train all lower-class people as *brahmanas*. But no doubt there is much, much, much more to be said on this topic, so they will have their *istagosthi*.

* * *

In just a couple of days it'll be the first anniversary of my starting *Every Day, Just Write*. I would like to acknowledge it with a celebration. Madhu will be gone that day, and there's no one else here who even knows about the existence of EJW. Maybe I'll write a letter to someone who is working with it, then toast myself with a glass of juice. I'm old, but going strong.

* * *

3 p.m.

I feel a little guilty that I used up half of my weekly two-pill quota today, Tuesday, but I wanted relief so I could continue editing ItMs. I gave one of them the title, "Free Karttika," and thought of using it as the title for this volume. We may not be free "freedom means liberation from all desires and thus from birth and death; it means being situated only in our attraction to Krishna and Krishna's service. It doesn't matter to me how these words get defined. This is my free Karttika. I am bound by my limits, my distraction while chanting. I'm not free in *that* sense "can't control my mind. I'm certainly not free of headaches. I'm not free to soar out of the material world, body and mind, to the spiritual world. Can't read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* freely; my little taste and feeble attention span stop me. I'm not even free of my gremlin, who criticizes relentlessly. But I'm free in many other ways "free to be here, to think of V²ndavana, to chant at all, to find the music of my heart and to offer it freely to Krishna and Prabhupada. I'm free to write and paint, free not to see anyone "a free Karttika.

* * *

I like the actor who plays Gour Mohan De in "Abhay." I like his thin moustache, his handsome Indian looks, his never-dying piety, his cheerfulness, his love for Abhay and his wife "an ideal guy. I like him even though I'm always aware that he's an actor playing a part. I suspend my disbelief to taste the fantasy that I am actually seeing Prabhupada's life enacted.

The Supreme Lord is everywhere, yet He has His own form. That's His *yoga-aiSvaram*. Learn from *Bhagavad-gita* how God is. He's holding up the universes by His energy, but not like Atlas holding up the globe. Krishna plays in V²ndavana, and by His will, all the universes are created, maintained, and annihilated. He's always undisturbed, as are His pure devotees. They're free.

* * *

Peace and Love: A Prelude

& A prelude is a time to warm up or
each pray before
joining brothers and working
in concert.

* * *

A prelude is a brief space and I hope
my demanding (but friendly) readers don't
bolt out, impatient.
Let them use it as they like,
going off in their own minds
to Krishna

bypassing any automatic knee-jerk reflexes,
and finding the truth.

* * *

I listen to that voice, my master's, like a dog listens to music,
you know how he tilts his head to one side at the side of the
Victrola? The pup is bemused that
it could happen "the voice could come
and hypnotize
can be there even when
his master is not.
The human factor "
slow romance, other
illusions
but peace abides in me and
I no longer know when it's Christmas Eve
although at midnight Mass there were moments
too when I could hold my breath,
be with Him for awhile,
taste reality.

* * *

Inis rath brings a more sustained peace. It too comes from my Lord,
my friend
Krishna
in response, I suppose, to my own desire.
Still, gradually I am finding freedom
from the material modes. Let me listen and write a little longer,
served once in Boston and elsewhere, on the GBC,
don't want to go back to the Navy "no
front-line action for me.
Just give me my space.

* * *

O Krishna, You are the source
of pain or no-pain, but
Your liquid melodies "how You
hold the long note of time
You are really a friend
of Peace and Love in this
universe.
Bhakti-yoga is rising
like a full moon bright

toward the end of Karttika "

* * *

Here's That rainy Day

& Here's that rainy day.

I remember 72nd St., Central Park near
furnished room of piano teacher
and his concubine student, an
Italian girl.

I had a room with my own piano
and often imitated Bill Evans' chords
I'd heard somewhere,
dreamy, on marijuana. Just two
or three notes over and over
like calling up spirits
of the dead or anyone who would
come.

* * *

He, cotton-white hair,
and holding a candle
(lights out)
said, "What are you doing?"

* * *

Here is that rainy day
and I play alone,
I don't mock the guy
when he claims he's a poet "that one
he'll figure out for himself
and so will I "what is a poet
the strength and the softness
the ability to hear
the rhythm

* * *

of a rainy day gone
in the mind blue
sky, and eager to see a
moon filling up
the end.

* * *

"Ordinary!" one says.
"Genius!" another.

* * *

Here is that rainy day
when one person practices
before God
with piano or pen "
whatever he has "and knows
that God gave him
what he is.
O Krishna, please find some *bhakti* in me
because this
is all I know. "

* * *

4:45 p.m.

Outside the shed. Locked the door. Stood just a moment. How calm the lake is. I can hear something like distant trucks, but they are distant. And there is the moon shaped like an egg, although it's growing. I can see two eyes, or they are more like the places where eyes would be. The mouth open in an "O", as if to express distress or sadness or loneliness. Is the moon inviting me to feel lonely for God? There is no other thing I would yearn for from the moon "not for a woman, not for power or recognition.

Dear Krishna, You are present in the moon and I can see You there, although I am full of petty desires. I reach toward You, but can a dwarf touch the moon?

Further out there's the plate that forms Inis rath. It's a secret treasure, that place. Who can understand what is going on there among those few, unsung devotees? Freedom in Karttika. Freedom to walk as I like, to be as I like.

November 12, 12:04 a.m.

I want to protect my creative life. It could easily be disrupted. In a book, a scholar argues that it is a moral necessity for an artist's process to be protected from destructive criticism. I should not be open with my peers on things that are unpublished or on writing methods. That means I have to protect myself from *maya* on my own, through self-examination, and by opening myself to the scrutiny and orders that Srila Prabhupada gives in his writings and lectures. It creates a tension in my relationship with Prabhupada, but that's required "some fear of displeasing him, a "bite" to his rule and my obedience. However, I don't want to harm the tender love I desire to exchange with him. Too much military commander and underling soldier in the exchange won't be healthy.

The psychological factors psychologists speak of seem to be real for us conditioned souls; they say the repressed aspects of ourselves will come out in other ways.

Therefore, it is healthy to give some harmless expression to them. We do, however, restrain ourselves from sex and other things that are detrimental to potent spiritual development.

In my case, there's also a question of profile. There may be things that are good for me as a person but which don't look good in a guru or even an elder. I have to protect my reputation in order to protect my disciples' faith. Still, I try not to fake it; I let them know who I actually am.

These considerations on waking, and more.

* * *

Narada Muni teaches how a *vanaprastha* should renounce his life by returning each part of his conditioned self, body, and mind to the sources from which they were drawn. I like the idea of being able to actually renounce these attachments in such a clearly defined way. We have "borrowed" from the material elements, and we can just as easily return them. Among the items to return: subject matters of intelligence along with intelligence, and false ego. "When the material body is returned to its various elements, only spiritual being remains." (*Bhag.* 7.12.31)

My dream of being held captive by both thieves and the police reminds me that the protected life I lead cannot be guaranteed. I should not be overly attached to it. Like everything else, it may have to be "returned." This doesn't mean I should live in fear. We work for Krishna with the awareness that our services and capabilities may be revoked by He who provided them. We will never lose the essence of our surrender to Krishna, however. Thus we must distinguish the eternal nature of service from the things Krishna allows us to do according to our own free wills. Be attached to eternal service, but not to the particulars of how that service is expressed or the facilities with which we express them in this body. I'm a writer, but that may only last for this lifetime. Even within this lifetime, facilities come and go. Try to see Krishna's intention through providence.

* * *

Narada's description of the *sannyasi* is extreme; many of the points are not applicable to our present lives and were therefore not assigned by Prabhupada. Once again we have to follow our spiritual master in how to apply the Vaisnava principles found in the *sastra*. Narada says the *sannyasi* should walk naked and live on the alms he gathers while going door to door.

"One who is advanced in understanding the self should understand that consciousness and unconsciousness are but illusions, for they fundamentally do not exist. Only the Supreme Absolute Truth exists." (*Bhag.* 7.13.5 purport)

"Some stress death and point to the illusionary existence of everything material, whereas others stress life, trying to preserve it perpetually and enjoy it to the best of their ability. Both of them are fools and rascals." We should observe the eternal time factor and the cause of our being entangled in it. "This time factor is the impersonal representation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who gives the living entities conditioned by material nature a chance to emerge from this nature by surrendering to Him." (*Bhag.* 7.13.6, purport)

* * *

What Kind Of Hero

& A little man-artist is risking.
"Don't defeat yourself, hero," he
said, "but beat your head against this wall
and be a
hapless
stance
in baggy pants
(baggy *dhoti*)
tilaka smeared across your forehead."

* * *

O serious monk
sannyasi
whom everyone loves
(not possible)
be brave to fight Russian
orthodoxy and pain.
Be a hero so pure you
don't like avant-garde
see consciousness and unconsciousness
as illusion
and walk naked "no
peers to judge you or throw stones
or ²*tvik* chiefs to kick you in the lip "
and never beg for mercy/ from fools.

* * *

Listen, ordeals must be faced
only be a hero and
chant Hare Krishna.

* * *

It's funny
how serious
we take these holy names
as no other way and
wash the feet of our masters
and then turn and
return
what we once took

at death. "

* * *

8:57 a.m.

Temples should be off limits for lazy, crazy, rejected fellows. *Sannyasis* should preach and not allure disciples. It's not necessary to carry a *danda* or *kamandalu*.

* * *

Morning Walk

It was completely foggy until just before I decided to go out for a walk around 9 a.m. I wanted to keep the *maha-mantra* before me while I walked. Instead, I feel I came out "carrying" the letters I've been answering in my mind. The mental mailbag. Halfway through the walk I suddenly noticed that the sun had risen and the fog had dissipated. Small birds were hopping about, and the neighbor's black and white cows were pressing against the gate, expecting something according to their inner clocks. The foliage was a brilliant orange. I felt my breath come freer.

Madhu sometimes works with me ,to help put my affairs in order, but it occurred to me today that there are certain things that I can't expect him or anyone else to smooth out or help me with. For example, general feelings of rest or unrest, the lack of perfect happiness and resolve. It's not a matter of someone making a phone call on my behalf or seeing that "it gets done." It's not even something that goes away or improves while talking with a close friend. Still, I live on. I often touch on such issues in other people's lives through the mail, such as how to find taste for the holy name, how to understand the destination of our lives, where to find true happiness, and how much of a sacrifice we can actually make. So much of this, however, remains unspoken, and that's probably true for most people. It's worse than ISKCON's thorny controversies, because it's a little closer to home.

I'll write less here today so I can finish the mail and then put aside that persona who answers letters. Waiting to get back wholeheartedly to my quieter voice "or maybe it's louder, but it's the more real me.

* * *

2:47 p.m.

Mail answered. Now rest the blood flow in your head. Year ending. I feel a quiet happiness which I cannot explain. Is it just from life or from something special? Is it communication with God?

Did you see the Bangalore temple photos published in BTG? A letter arrived from a man who doesn't think he'll survive. A young woman writes, obviously too young to face the absolutes the older man can see. O Krishna.

And I had the nerve to tell them both, "Please look at *Bhagavad-gita* to find Your dear friend, Krishna, ready to pick you up. You speak of life's hurdles. Well, make the effort to jump them. You need only lift your body a few inches from the ground and

Krishna will lift you over the hurdle." Thus I try to use words and images to ease another's pain.

But I didn't say anything false: everything is under the complete control of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

My old body was born in 1939, same year as that green Mercury coupe my Uncle had, same year Germany invaded Poland. My baby body is gone, but the skull expanded, the blood, running through the helmet of wired veins and arteries, was destined to be the source of so much pain. Will I grow old like other men and live to see rushes by the lakeside turn golden one more time? When winter comes, old men light their pipes and I pick up my beads. We both puff in and out, but I breathe in Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare . . . As the air is in space, so all is in Him.

When Brahma dies, 4,300,000,000 times "a hundred years of that "before his life sputters out like a birthday candle, he wants to do something substantial for Krishna. Well, my brother remained committed to ISKCON, so why not me?

"The whole cosmic order is under Me." Sitting in the shed, trying to read this vastness of Krishna's reality, His personal control.

* * *

Dark Doings

& The soldiers are marching "

Is that what it sounds like?

Did you ever hear soldiers march?

Yes, doctor, I saw them on Memorial Day come marching down Gifford's Lane.

Were there drum solos?

No, only at high school dances or

Gene Krupa,

something like that.

Do you remember the first time you saw green grass? Felt velvet? Felt desire for a woman?

* * *

I didn't want to linger with *that* doctor, so I came to the chapel to chant Hare Krishna. If they have power, he said, they'd close down other religions just as the Orthodox and Politicos did in Russia. That gave him a slight depression for a day, but he picked up his motor and away he went.

* * *

Doctor?

Yes?

Where is Krishna now?

In your hair. He's not a myth.

Meth.

Beth, where is Doctor now?

Tell her the time you went crazy writing words "the voice of the woman in the piano composed by a classical composer.

No, that was banshee madness, and stumps of trees felt pain of dry karma "I'll have to face it, there's no way free.
So you scream?
Implode Rilke?

* * *

Already released from that hell.
Now in purgatory.

* * *

Here we are in the half-shelter of ISKCON, trying to avoid the too many words and to see only how Krishna's vast will controls everything and to worship Him in faith "
there's no alternative.

* * *

Here we chant, then go down gracefully. Our dark doings.

* * *

Krishna, Krishna chant and chant. "

* * *

Getting near 5:00 p.m.

Standing outside the shack, another day. I pushed myself further than usual today, so vise tightening in head. No pill to save me. I'll go to bed early. Clouds over Inis rath "such a small island. Only three or four devotees to take care of everything.

Here comes the moon "just the white tip of a bald head. See how it too seems to ache? O moon, speak to us of Krishna. You're just a tiny, insignificant orb, part of the material world. Up and up you come. Moon over Trinidad, moon over North Ireland, moon in my aching head "You balance on the two tallest pines on Inis rath. Krishna, Krishna, Krishna.

November 13, 3:07 a.m.

Missed my midnight calling. Just chanted sixteen rounds. When I got out of bed at 1 a.m., still with a headache and indigestion, I thought of the title "Free Karttika" and it felt sour. To what freedom am I possibly referring? Is it something hollow, like a claim of New Age spirituality? Ah . . . freedom to wear sweatpants, you say. No that's illusion. I knew it when I said it and I know it now.

Still, I'll stick with "Free Karttika" as a title. Or perhaps I should call it "Free-style Karttika." Yes, for better or worse, I want to be free of the professional *sannyasa* obligations that ISKCON *sannyasis* usually perform at this time of year. It is important to me in a human way.

But I'm not free of pain, material desire, or distraction, nor free of the failure to taste (*nama-ruci*). I do have a kind of freedom, however, that comes from Krishna, and it is dear to me. It's a freedom in which no one stops me from indulging. It's the freedom to chant and to try for Krishna's mercy.

* * *

One day while touring the kingdom, the adult Prahlada Maharaja came upon a fat person lying in the road like a python. Prahlada recognized him to be a saint. He asked why he had become so inactive. The saint replied, smiling, and also recognized Prahlada for the devotee he was.

Nice relations. Okay. More later. "A saintly person doesn't wish to speak to anyone and everyone, and he is therefore grave and silent." (*Bhag.* 7.13.23 purport)

* * *

Softly, For God
& Softly, the way is mine to paint
"There's only the present
moment, nothing else"?
No.
The *sastras* say
move gently
with purpose "
God put us here to do
something
not just to invade His moments.
We hear His music only because
He has given the genius ability
the practice
although He can take it away,
and He did "it's over for so many.

* * *

Softly, for Krishna, I praise Him

although I no longer see Him
but can feel His presence when I
paint
hold my *japa* beads
take a walk
remember hot ralston.

* * *

"Don't remember, don't
think, don't stop
don't
finish
so soon,"
says the all permissive painting teacher.
I say, "Softly, for God." That's all.
I am happy to play the trill.
Please Lord,
slap it on "
orange and blue "
my intuition playing
with You. "

* * *

Post-painting Impressions

It's four-and-a-half hours since I painted on three 24" x18" sheets. I don't have the kind of raw impression I tend to have when the paint is still drying on my hand, but let's take a look.

The first painting depicts two people watering plants. They may be in the backyard of Hare Krishna dasi's garden. This painting has a light feeling to it. I suspect that if the teacher of "The Painting Experience" were to get into me on this one, she would say that I was painting surface feelings. But I think there's a place for a light touch. If you feel pleasant and want to make light pastels, and to depict something soft, you have a right to do that. In the right-hand corner I wrote:

* * *

Krishna-caitanya-devam.

He writes as long as
he's able before pain
or Time stops him.
Hurry, says Krishna "
seriously with love.

* * *

This painting was on the floor and I was glancing at it while I spoke with Madhu about various business. I liked the way it looked back at me.

The next painting wound up with a title in the lower right-hand corner: "Hare Krishna Person." It started as a careful abstract painting with a lot of different colored shapes. I was careful not to let them run into one another. Orange blob and stick, yellow orbs, blue lines "then my passions arose. I let it dry, then went back to it. I follow this intuitive "physical" feeling when deciding what color to use next, and I like how this one developed. Maybe it's the whimsy of it that catches my eye, and how it was saved from becoming an impersonal image and turned into a figure. I took the black ink and made a simple, almost masklike head to cover most of the page "big eyes, nose, lips in a primitive, stylized way. Big green *tilaka* on the head. Now it's rougher and has layers, which makes it different than the cool composition with which it began. I need say nothing more about it, I suppose.

The third painting I had actually started first, but had put aside and gone back to it last. Three faces. The one in the middle has a downturned mouth and is wearing something like a crown. His face reminds me of the yin-yang sign. Maybe he's mocking, maybe angry. He's an arrogant fellow too, the way he holds that stick. When I started the stick, it felt like a crucifix. Because I had done the yin-yang, I wanted to add a crucifix from the other religion. I would have added in an *Om* symbol if I had known how to draw it in Sanskrit. In the upper right are the words:

* * *

"Boys chant with
Swami in '66, remember?
Hearing it now."

* * *

10:20 a.m.

Investigation going on whether someone poisoned Srila Prabhupada. They sent out a message over the Internet, "Urgent, for Satsvarupa Maharaja." The investigator wants to know who gave me tapes of Srila Prabhupada's last days and who edited them?

Poisoned? What next?

There will always be one thing after another like that, it seems, and that will be true life after life. Who would have agreed to join this movement and take such responsibilities if he or she knew the mistakes we would commit, how much we would open ourselves to defamation, how much we would struggle with our own pride, how often we would be attacked? Srila Prabhupada wanted us to surrender, but his institution is insular, full of infighting . . . I keep apart from it (despite the electronic outreach). But I'm here.

* * *

read and edited more ItMs. I stick my head into that world of expression and art. It's a way to make a reality other than the one you have to face. I'll try to read more

in *Dickinson: The Modern Idiom*. The author has a theory that Dickinson wrote to create an alternative reality to the one in which she lived. Scholar Porter calls this "The radicals Of Writing." I seem to seek that too. Crawl into "or crawl out of "this world into that one, a major transference, like Alice going through the looking glass, or C. S. Lewis children gaining entrance to Narnia.

reality is Krishna in the spiritual world. We can escape the material world only by chanting Hare Krishna. No need to enjoy dreamlands with our senses. Discover "alternative realities" for a noble purpose. Write "dare to write "but seek shelter. Those principles are the real radicals of writing.

* * *

M. has left for the weekend. I'm alone. ISani will put my lunch on the trunk in the hall, and I will try to use my time well. I haven't been reading so much *Bhagavatam*, but at least I'll continue to come back to it in order to maintain my Krishna conscious integrity. I didn't poison Srila Prabhupada or take part in any conspiracy to do so.

* * *

Noon

Seeing the bad results of sex life, the saintly persons stop participating in it. Vedic culture regulates sex and the other animal propensities. Vaisnavas teach that the best way to cease materialistic activities is to engage fully in spiritual activities.

* * *

My spiritual master seems far away today. Now they say someone poisoned him. It depresses me. We all say we want to love him. Am I actually loving and serving him? Have I "poisoned" my devotion to my spiritual master? I'm realizing more how I fall short. I tend to look back with envy at my former innocence in how I once served Sriila Prabhupada. I didn't know what it would be like over the long haul.

Over the long haul, it's harder to accept everything he taught with great enthusiasm. It's hard to surrender to ISKCON. It's hard to admit all my mistakes, and to face how the institution is so defective, how it has splintered. Most difficult of all is to see myself for what I am. I say I'm contributing to his cause, I write a personal homage every year, and some say what I write is fresh and honest. I feel my inability to feel that freshness as I follow his teachings. Still, I have to admit that whatever has kept me going in this movement and in Prabhupada's service has been my desire to please him. O Krishna, please help me.

* * *

The living entity doesn't know that happiness lies within himself in his relationship with Krishna. He is like a deer who cannot see the water in a grass-covered well, so seeks water elsewhere. We look outside of ourselves, but our happiness is within. I like to hear that.

* * *

After Srila Prabhupada passed away, I wrote and lived on in his movement. I was given a high seat, took it, then brought down again. Now I am sidelined with illness. Turned into a hermit of sorts. But I have not given up my duties as guru. A partial confession. Seeking the way to make poems and prose . . .

Prayers came and went, haiku too,

Confess something juicy for the grapevine. Give us some dirt. Uncover some scandal or lie in which you were involved. Investigator: "Where were you on the night of?"

"I can't remember."

"That's not good enough. You have to remember."

Don't detain me, don't take away my right. Let me live and enjoy breakfast and lunch and free-time. Let my plane fly safely.

"And may you die in Ireland."

Change to, "And may you die in V²ndavana, hearing the holy names and thinking of Krishna, praying to Srila Prabhupada to take you to him. When you die, die in faith.

* * *

Let the "Prabhupada was poisoned" disturbance turn me to improve the shortcomings in my relationship with him. Of course, his disciples didn't poison Srila Prabhupada, but since the accusing finger is wandering around looking for culprits and conspiracies, I will admit I have poisoned my innocent devotion and surrender. I wish to improve it. Srila Prabhupada is unpoisoned, transcendental, waiting for me to improve myself and my relationship with him.

* * *

2:32 p.m.

The Supreme Lord is the director of all the activities in the material world. This is no myth. Then what happened?

I'm not obliged to record each detail except those that will help me or others.

There are things we must face. Where does the creative process meet or conflict with the process of devotional service? We can use greed, anger, lust, or fear in Krishna's service. The world is false, but how is Brahman truth? He's truth in the ways we can serve Him, and that includes using the material nature as part of the offering.

Hey, if you didn't poison Srila Prabhupada, why are you feeling bad that they're looking for someone who did?

Because there is such distrust, such a feeling that it could even possibly be true. I feel bad that ISKCON agitates itself with such discussions, and that it could include me in on it and force me to reply.

Speaking at a *sannyasi* initiation, Srila Prabhupada said that if by preaching a *sannyasi* could bring even one person to Krishna consciousness, it would be a great credit for him.

Not only that, but God is a person: keep that in mind.

The price for love of Krishna is *laulyam*, the intense eagerness to possess it. It takes lifetimes to achieve it. I can already see that.

The *mudhas* cannot conceive that any kind of person "with a form like that of a human being can simultaneously control the infinite and the finite." I cannot conceive of it either, but since the *sastras* assert it, I accept the truth of it. Be patient and hear from Vedic authorities. "Lord Sri Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, along with Balarama, played liked a human being and so masked, He performs many superhuman acts." (*Bhag.* 1.1.20) He's a human, yet all-pervading.

Krishna,
my Lord.

* * *

At The Threshold
& At the threshold, hey!
The God is in the center
eye your right eye too is Him
don't pause

* * *

the flies in the shed want to
get out but don't know only
Death awaits.

* * *

O Master I didn't
poison you, did I? Did
my lack of devotion and surrender
make you discouraged?
I always thought you could carry
us all

* * *

like a Hanuman screaming
"Jaya rama!" you leaped
across the ocean of our
misunderstanding while we
wailed
but you

* * *

you

got us.
Now we say we want freedom
but at what price?
We won't lose you.

* * *

"Oh, I intensely love
the avant-garde," he said.
I intensely "nothing."
I am mild and middle
can't get the right notes
want out want in
Master, I was bewildered
but did not poison the atmosphere
of your hopes
with my soiled
nightshirt
my devious schemes
my fear of those who
would corral me in your
name.

* * *

Then on came the all-
knowing lawyer playing a
trombone. When we joined together it was sweet
not all of us are bitter or
in competition "friends
on the verge of real friendship.
Was there a soul like that or
was that too a deception?

* * *

The vandals burned down \$100,000 worth of stuff at New Talavan.
They made cahoots with the religious and politicians
burned down freedom of religion ""We'd do
the same if we had the chance."
The world is not a fit place "
but who is a gentleman?

* * *

Together, a handsome riff on

the threshold on the
outskirts of *Gloria*,
the island outback,

* * *

Master Krishna
I sigh in my wanting of You.
Let the exam come. This well-
practiced servant will pass.
Death is faith.
read where it takes you

* * *

this boy coming home
from the threshold.
In faith, yes. "

* * *

Aspiring Devotee Lullaby

(My little eye. I have past ghosts and goblins and pains, but more ahead. This is a
respite. I seek asylum in Your peaceful center under the shade of Your mighty tree for
Krishna consciousness artists of easy-going elder age.)

* * *

& Forget me
you've got your eye on
Mexico, some town some place
in your mind

* * *

when you lay your head on the pillow
you dream and ask
Krishna

* * *

to be able to say His holy name
like a lullaby.
Lullaby "repeat a sweet word
to the Lord above
and in your heart.

* * *

The dream ushers me along
down into the dark
aisle with his Made-in-India flashlight

* * *

to sit before the screen where
the master is speaking
but the theater is full of
spooks and dead or lost
ISKCONites.

* * *

a possible riot waits
outside "the nondevotee slugs.

* * *

I do see ladies too
and spirits and Deities wrapped
up. We are en route
to Godhead but must pass through the threat
before we can get there.

* * *

I dream I did it
but wake to find myself
on my own,
living soft with a piano
of sound
a real melody
just one of any number
God can brush away with
a flick of His hand. "

* * *

Post-painting Impressions

I left a painting today on the desk in the shed to dry. It's a big, brown head looking straight at us. It looks like a ram with curling horns and a downcast animal mouth. Sad and angry. In the right-hand corner I wrote:

* * *

"*Ki jaya* Internet blues
people insultin'
better keep your own missives
tender at least with humor
don't destroy faith

* * *

stay out, mind your business
mine your gems
in Krishna consciousness."

* * *

Another painting shows a figure that looks like me on the far left. He's walking off in a graceful but absent-minded way, perhaps holding a book in front of him and reading. right behind him, almost in pursuit, is a large, rectangle-headed, open-mouthed, fire-breathing person. That person has red *tilaka* and wears an earring. Aside from his head, the rest of his body consists of what looks like two wheels, an oblong one in front and a square one in back. The upper right-hand corner says this:

* * *

Purport:
Vande guroh
thank you, Bro "
I already got a
spiritual master.
Surrender to
Sansara
Song.

* * *

5 p.m.

A beautiful moment: the moon is hanging over the island. Although earlier it lay behind a cloud bank, it has now appeared not low on the horizon, but a few hundred yards above the trees. It's a full moon tonight. There is still a gauze in front of it "it's not beaming and clear "but I can see the outline clearly. It gives off a lanternlike reflection on the lake, just as if an electric lamp were shining upon it. I turned out the lights in my room so I can sit in the moonlight.

It's amazing how quickly it rises. Now it's clear of the clouds and I can see the cavernous eyes and O-shaped mouth.

* * *

O bright golden moon
signaling the end of Karttika,
you are free and generous tonight.
Thank you for appearing against this dark blue background "
so startling, revealing yourself
so clearly.
Are you thinking of Krishna?

November 14

Sharp right-eye pain all night. Sometimes I slept, but headaches dominated my dreams.

In one dream I was waiting to meet friends who never arrived. I was waiting at a busy subway station. I was surviving the pain.

Later in the night I dreamed our Hare Krishna center was receiving a group who cared for homeless children. These people were among the few in the town who were sympathetic toward the devotees. I had a painful headache in my right eye, and I couldn't attend the function. They were disappointed with me, but I couldn't help it. Someone else took charge of the program.

Then I wandered out of my room and heard Madhu singing. He said, "You really ought to hear the songs I recorded tonight. It is the best recording I have ever made." I expressed some appreciation for what he was doing and we both began to cry. Then I said, "Please, you'll have to forgive me for this pain." It was like saying, "You don't know what this is like."

* * *

In my notebook, "In Favor Of Staying With *Every Day, Just Write*," I made the following entry:

"A year ago today I began *Welcome Home To the One Big Book of My Life*. It's still going strong. I have to be willing to face repetition. I'm writing in process, but it's not that I don't care about the outcome. I trust that the process will produce good results. Good results mean that the writing will simultaneously help me in my own life and will produce writing I can share with others.

"repeat themes: my chanting is inattentive yet there is good in it; I am faithful to Srila Prabhupada yet I fall short; my solitary way may be challenged by ISKCON yet I can defend it.

"Also, write about writing, my small daily life filled with headaches, fears, dreams, pleasures, and especially aspirations. Write poems; paint. Write while reading scripture "these are items of repertoire which are repeated and cycled. New adventures too, or projects.

"As I repeatedly write about these things, may I go a cut deeper and spiral inward. By practice I will learn to say it better and make it eligible for sharing. regardless of what

remains in the published book, all should get said, even that which is counter-productive for a reader, such as the words of my gremlin or self-doubt. If Krishna desires, may I continue EJW."

* * *

5 a.m.

I was won over by reading *Life, Paint, and Passion: reclaiming The Magic Of Spontaneous Expression*, but I have finally come to the point with which I cannot agree. The authors write, "We are at a loss when the mind cannot understand the reasons for our actions. To continue under these circumstances requires a basic trust in yourself that transcends the content of the ascribed meaning of your actions. You are challenged to discover that the moment in itself is enough "and not merely enough, but absolutely complete "in fact, the moment is all there is." (p. 99)

In particular this phrase: ". . . the moment . . . is . . . absolutely complete "in fact, the moment is all there is" "that bothers me. This seems to be the hidden agenda of the book, and it points to a lack of God consciousness. Natalie Goldberg's books on writing teach a similar faith in process, but at least she was up front from the beginning about her atheistic Zen. Thus I was able to weed out the gold from the dross of what she had to say. The authors of this book seem to reach a similar conclusion about void and the present moment without having spelled it out from the beginning.

A lot of what the authors say, however, can be taken and used in a Krishna conscious context. Their radical assertion that the product of a painting session is not the point is useful. What is important, rather, is the process that led you to paint and which took you into the act of creation. If we can improve our consciousness by releasing demons and living more mindfully in the moment, while allowing ourselves to be regularly in touch with the creative spirit, that's a gain.

Still, a devotee would be attached to the product too. Not attached, but mindful. To get in touch with process is to get in touch with the act of offering; but part of the offering is what is produced. That's only natural. That's also the mood of preaching: we want to do something that is not only good for ourselves but which can draw others to Krishna's feet. If I could reach a stage where I was actually painting in devotion to Krishna, then that might warrant my claim that the product didn't matter "what went on while I was painting was a private communication between Krishna and myself.

The authors of *Life, Paint, and Passion* have presented a healthy challenge in the way they discuss "painting [only] for the gods." I like their challenge, although I may not follow it to their radical conclusion. I'm certainly not going to live by their concept that the present moment in which we paint and create is all that exists. We are living a life, and whatever we do "whether we paint or work or think "acts to shape our next body and mind. There is a present, but there is also a future and a past. If painting in the present helps us to release ourselves of material desire and to become Krishna conscious, then great. But just to become absorbed in a moment's passion as the all in all, allowing ourselves to become an instrument of an impersonal creative force "then that's suicidal to developing a loving relationship with the Supreme Eternal. We want to go back to Godhead, not just enter deeply into the present moment of a temporary life.

Having stated these reservations about the book, there are still powerful encouragements in the book, such as, "Let go of the attachment to the painting and begin listening to yourself . . . Paint with your true feeling, not with what you wish you were feeling." <!--This is a comment.[research reference]-->

"You move step by step, from the easiest to the easiest. It is never tedious or tiring because there is no need to force anything. Depth resides more in surrendering to spontaneity than in hard working struggle." (p. 42)

"Boredom, frustration, and tiredness are not indications to stop; they are signs that you are not doing what you really want to do." (p. 114)

"First thoughts spring from that mysterious dimension beyond logic . . . Second thoughts are calculating; they want to civilize the primitiveness of our spontaneous urges . . . Good rules to follow; if it has reason, be skeptical . . . If it comes uninvited "if it does not fit or make sense "dare it!" (pp. 84 - 5)

* * *

8:08 a.m.

Even if you achieve success in material activities, you are still subjected to *sansara*. rich men may suffer insomnia because of the questionable ways in which they have accumulated their money. Srila Prabhupada quotes rupa Gosvami's verses on *yuktan vairagya*, which state that we shouldn't give up money that can be used to spread Krishna consciousness, and neither should we misspend money for our sense gratification. Many good encouragements and warnings. We must read with submission to catch them, and if we can't carry out everything he asks, then we should be humble about our lack of intelligence.

The saintly person lying on the path as a python tells Prahlada Maharaja that *Soka-moha-bhaya-krodha-raga*, poverty and unnecessary labor are all originally caused by the desire for unnecessary prestige and labor [check?] (*Bhag.* 7.13.34).

The not-quite-opaque pages of my *Bhagavatam* annoy me sometimes. The *Caitanya-caritam²ta* edition is better. Maybe I should switch to it. For such a minor reason? Seeking an excuse? I can hear the *Bhagavatam* in the lectures Bhurijana Prabhu is giving; he is doing an overview right now. remember the days when I wrote to Prabhupada stating that I was reading more than three hours a day? Is that not possible now?

Is it all right that I don't read more than an hour? It's understandable, I suppose, provided I'm active with other services "and provided I read for that one hour. We rarely saw Srila Prabhupada reading his spiritual master's books, but he worked an hour or two daily on his own translations and commentaries, and that brought him deep into Vedic study and preaching. Srila Prabhupada's writing was also direct service to his spiritual master. Furthermore, he lectured almost every day. If I'm not lecturing daily or translating and directly commenting on *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, then I need to find a way to keep in touch with the voice of scripture.

* * *

The saintly person tells how he has learned lessons from the bee and the python. He's confident that he is doing right. No one can shake him by calling him a *babaji* "that is, a non-preacher. He is fixed on his path in his extreme condition. He lives according to ultimate values. He accepts whatever came in terms of food or sleeping accommodations; he makes no effort to acquire anything, and feels no anxiety. He doesn't praise or blaspheme people. "I only desire their welfare, hoping they will agree to become one with the Supersoul, the Supreme Personality of Godhead." (*Bhag.* 7.13.42)

* * *

A Sad romantic Song

(recovering from all-night headache. Back on track, reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and now this. As I write, it's misty dark, about 9 a.m., and two rowboats are coming from the island. The morning program must have just ended. I read of the man who lies on the path like a python. I hear of the ISKCON investigation into the suspicion that Srila Prabhupada was poisoned. I feel troubled by such news, but according to the saint who lies like a python, it's the nature of life in this world. Trying to get out.)

* * *

& We shouldn't live for sense grat "
none of us devotees should sit in
theaters to hear love songs,
relax in illusion as the
lights go up and the heroine dances
in a long gown with the hero in his
tux.

* * *

It's just too sentimental, and it won't last.
We sit and await the denouement,
for the villain to appear, the plot to thicken.
"The butler did it!" Killed him
with a brass candle holder.

* * *

No, we should live with truth
while they dance by candle-
light in a mirrored ballroom.
reality is they will have to sell
it to ISKCON in later
decades and then ISKCON will probably
also have to sell it
or it will crumble

slowly seeping into
the Detroit river.

* * *

You cynic! You exhume
fumes "a little Kaliya "
so says my inner friend
who thrives in the stygian darkness
of another day filled with pain
and a melancholy yearning
to go beyond the world
of fools in love "to
hear another music
see another dance.

* * *

"People are becoming like
werewolves," wrote Mert in his
diary, and he read *Theology of Death*
by rahner and liked the intuition
that death means surrender
in faith "as an act "
that God will take us.

* * *

So, my friend, I say a
soupy and long-noted
sax sad or angry suggestive
life
is no good for me. It's
too dead, and its nerves
are too jagged. "

* * *

10:17 a.m.

Prabhupada told us to live as if it's our last day. Then certainly we
would *hear* the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and and chant with love, wouldn't we?

But that consciousness cannot be gained artificially. We live "unless we have some
notice to the contrary "as if we have years and years. If I received a short notice, I
suppose I'd tend more toward renunciation. I'd stop trying to develop my art, stop
worrying about publishing, and I would try to get my affairs in order. I would spend
most of my time preparing my mind for thinking of the spiritual world.

Some might think it's best to just keep preaching as usual. Srila Prabhupada said he wanted to die on the battlefield, and some plan to do the same.

The "Srila Prabhupada was poisoned" theory is poisonous. It tends to ruin the atmosphere. I predict it will never be solved, but will be another sour note added to the many notes already sounded by his followers since his disappearance. So much infighting and lack of compassion, I can't hack it. It makes me think that if things pile up like this, I'll . . . what? I will develop more conviction to serve Srila Prabhupada in a way that makes sense to me. reformers are righteous about leaders who mislead, but the reformers are often just as strident, proud, and offensive. And if they get power, they often become the next set of misleaders. I'm too cynical by now.

But I was talking about preparing for death. A reminder of our own death can shake us up to see things differently. We can measure our various activities and mental interests and put them into a final perspective. The stakes are high. Are we going to risk our chances of going back to Godhead for something temporary and unworthy?

But we can't seem to fake it either. We can't force ourselves, for example, to read only the *Bhagavatam*. Or even if we can, to read it all day. We can't convince ourselves that our little sidelines are not good for us.

* * *

11:50 a.m.

Last day of Volume 18. A mom rowing her kids across the lake. I keep my nose down, glancing at my white page and trying to fill it up. Look at the last words of the pythonlike man.

Self-realization is to realize that the individual soul (me) is subordinate to the Supreme spirit.

* * *

Looking now at *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 7.15, in which some verses praise dedication to the spiritual master. If your spiritual master is favorably inclined toward you, you receive Krishna's mercy. Don't think, "He's gone. While he was here, I managed to stay in his good graces. But things are different now." The essence of obedience to Srila Prabhupada is not judged by my ISKCON reputation, in my opinion. It can be known only by my actual dedication. I *must* have faith in him. Srila Prabhupada had a hundred percent faith in *his* Guru Maharaja. I am not as great a disciple as he was, but I won't give up. Therefore, I put myself through self-examination. I admit to my lack of total devotion. I accept that truth about myself, admit it, confess it, then try to go forward without pretense.

That is the particular risk of my writing. It is who I am, but I dovetail it, as we need to dovetail who we are in our guru's service. If we plan to live for an entire lifetime as devotees, we need to face our personal needs and personalities. I need solitude, for example, even though it is not the usual way Srila Prabhupada asked his disciples to live. I can only say to him, "Under the present circumstances, with ISKCON the way it is and me the way I am, I feel impelled to serve you in this particular way. Please accept my offerings. Accept me as your disciple."

It's difficult, even harrowing sometimes. We find out quickly that living an honest spiritual life does not mean blissfully walking around yelling, "*Jaya Prabhupada!*" with total confidence. We have to fight doubts, and keep fighting doubts, and keep reading his books and listening to his lectures, repeating him when we preach. In the end, we have to arrive at a way of expressing his teachings that is meaningful to us.

Krishna has captured me. Wherever I go I return to His conclusions. My master is my master. I'm acceptable among his followers, but not really to anyone else. Let me speak to *them*.

* * *

Thank You, Lord, for renewing my faith in my spiritual master,
showing me there's variety
and freshness in my coming to him,
there is hope,
I want to protect my creeper
from agnosticism
and yes, I can do it by reading
his books and hearing his lectures.
Still, it will be hard,
the demand is exacting
but there is hope and love
and confidence too.

* * *

2:38 p.m.

Innocent souls or obedient devotees acknowledge that they haven't met Krishna face to face. Still, they are convinced that He is the Personality of Godhead. They accept His supremacy on the authority of *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, presented by Srila Prabhupada. I want to be such a devotee. At least I live in this camp and my name is spiritual. My clothes denote that I am a devotee of Krishna in the renounced order. People treat me as a *sadhu*, a Krishnaite. I don't want to be that sort of person mentioned in the purport to *Bhagavad-gita* 9.12: "There are many devotees who assume themselves to be in Krishna consciousness and devotional service but at heart do not accept the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, as the Absolute Truth. For them the fruit of devotional service "going back to Godhead "will never be tasted."

I want to serve the *mahatmas* with the hope of coming, like them, under the protection of the divine nature. "They are fully engaged in devotional service because they know Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, original and inexhaustible." (Bg. 9.13)

Big flies and little flies against the window of the shed. I let (or chased) a big one out by opening the window. Am I doing him a good turn, or am I sending him out to freeze? I chased him out because his buzzing was so annoying. At least he'll find something to eat outside.

The *mahatmas* are so completely fixed on *only* Krishna. Seems more than I can do "unless I think of Krishna in His all-pervasive feature, "I am the sound in ether, the

ability in man . . . " I seek His *darSana* in this world. I chant His names (that's Krishna directly), and hear of Him (*Krishna-katha*) from *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Unfortunately, I do things that spoil my chances at becoming fixed in *samadhi* at *ruci* and *asakti*.

I can't claim I'm at the highest level. Some say it should be required of me since I have disciples. Maybe I'm not much better than my disciples, if I'm even better at all. What *about* that? Someone argues, "You may see yourself as fallen, but I see you as exalted. You are intense in *japa* and attached to Srila Prabhupada."

It's a puzzle. "Get off the throne," one section shouts. I choose to stay with the ISKCON system. Am I wrong? Should I pretend or act according to a stereotype of guru? I don't do that. I do refrain from nonsense because that's important, but I am honest about what goes on in my mind. I don't wholeheartedly love and serve Krishna as a topmost devotee would.

Anyway, the issue doesn't concern me as much as the truth of what it means to me personally. I mean, apart from the debates. In his purport to 9.13, Prabhupada ends by saying that it's not difficult, there's not much austerity, and that it's fun to perform devotional service. Accepting that will lead toward becoming a *mahatma*.

* * *

Please Lift Me Up
& There were flowers near Napoli-
Vesuvio, who played in their way.
Then I knew my way was okay
too.
In Krishna "
Krishna's heart. It's all in
Bhagavad-gita.

* * *

Napoli was chaotic, but
we followed the trolley tracks
around and around
and I found a way
to sing. O Krishna, when I falter,
will You please lift me up?

* * *

remembering Napoli and the days of my
distraught youth. I thought I
could serenade like a cat in an alley
and I would be forgiven because
I was so young
I planned to live amoral, immoral

with Anna and Eliot
but then pulled out.

* * *

Srila Prabhupada writes of *acyuta-bala* "
you lift yourself out by Balarama's strength.
You eat muffins and yogurt,
sleep, remain alone, suffer
bad thoughts or good, feel sorry
you're not single-minded enough "
just not "
and you face it by Balarama's strength.

* * *

I'm a beginner who claims
advancement
because I've been here so
long. I sing
kirtana "don't
want to be cursed to return to
next life as a *Sudra*
even a Gandharva, like Narada,
because I sang the wrong songs.

* * *

Feeling Low, I remember The Full Moon, Last Night Of Karttika
& We go to Seine
we go into our house
we go
back lighthearted
light-foot Lamé Deer

* * *

we/me and Supersoul in
one heart
fleshy and spirit
we go don't say
low-level down.

* * *

No, I see golden sunshine
and maybe the last moonshine of Karttika.

* * *

Why forget Saturday night
so bright
alone in your room?
O moon, Krishna loyal
Prabhupada
let the music
take us dancing.

* * *

But all I see is my own self in mirror
the book cracked open
under the light.

* * *

I don't want news lies,
no music radio
or politic shouts
I want only the air and
a few hours a few words
O Krishna I'm
a spinning top
lost and You alone
can find me.
Please pick me up

* * *

O Krishna, my hand aches to tell
that You are subordinate
to Radha, to Yashoda and Nanda
to Your pure devotees. Please
let me learn the art on this page
let me serve You
for the joy of it.
I came here to commune with the self
and the Self of all selves.

* * *

Old temples finished for me.
Seine "Mississippi "burned down
they'll attack some place where I reside too
but this Saturday night I want the moon
and my *japa* and
to not get worse.
I admit the words float from God but
I don't know.

* * *

Before it's too dark lift a flame offered
a last Karttika light,
Damodara light "
let it burn/ no headache "
to Radha-Govinda
shy shiny boy and girl
and my masters. "

* * *

5:03 p.m.

Caitanya-caritamṛta, Madhya 7, Lord Caitanya's tour of South India. He chanted, "*Krishna Krishna he!*" as He walked. Whomever He met He empowered to chant Hare Krishna. Then He came to Kurmaksetra.

As I read I keep looking up to see if the moon will appear. The sky seems clear enough for it. Was it up at this time last night? It's not quite pitch black. All I can see is a little rectangle of light from a window in the boathouse, and my own face reflected in the window of this room. Back to the book, the bright light on the page. Kurmaksetra. As Lord Caitanya chanted and others joined Him, "It was as if the nectar of the holy name of Krishna overflowed the entire country."

The *brahmana* named Kurma invited Lord Caitanya to his home. After washing Lord Caitanya's feet (and drinking that water) and offering Him food, the *brahmana* prayed that Lord Caitanya please take him along with Him. He was ready, he said, to leave family life. "I can no longer tolerate the waves of misery caused by materialistic life." (*Madhya 7.1.26*). The *brahmana* was well off materially, but he saw it as unhappiness.

* * *

5:45 p.m.

I closed the curtains and was reading, so I missed the time when I could have seen the moon. Looking out now. It's a full moon, of course, but I see just a bit of it because it's under a thin black cloud. It'll soon disappear, but emerge again, then again more clouds. Typical of this area. The surrounding sky is a dark gray, illuminated by the moonlight.

Then there are lighter grays splashing the sky with a milky spill. O Krishna, You are the greatest artist.

V2ndavana is the real place to observe such sights, especially at the end of Karttika. Today in the bazaars they were no doubt selling sweets, and people were breaking from their austerities and special vows. Cold weather ahead. And for me, without any fanfare, I observed my first anniversary of *Every Day, Just Write*. It does seem still just right.

Appendix 1

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Memorable Quotes From readings

While Writing EJW 15

October 28

How to deal with doubts, from *For Self-Examination*, pp. 69 - 70, by Soren Kierkegaard:

Kierkegaard says that doubts arise when people try to demonstrate the truth of Christianity with reasons. ". . . these reasons foster doubt and doubt became the stronger. The demonstration of Christianity really lies in *imitation*." By "imitation" he means sincere following of the way of Christ. He then raises the question, "Who has doubted the Ascension of Christ?" He says the true followers don't doubt because they are so much striving to lead the life of sacrifice and thus they *need* the Ascension.

* * *

"And now you, my listener, what do you do? Do you doubt the Ascension? If so, then do as I do, say to yourself: No sense in making a fuss over that kind of doubt; I know very well its source and nature "namely, that I have coddled myself with respect to *imitation*, that my life is not exerted in this direction, that I have too easy a life, spare myself my dangers bound up with witnessing for truth and against truth. Just do that! But above all do not become self-important by doubting; there is, I assure you, no basis for either, since all such doubt is actually a self-indictment. No, make a confession to yourself and to God, and one of two things will happen "either you will be motivated to venture further out in the direction of *imitation* "and then certitude about the Ascension will promptly come "or you will humble yourself, confess that you have coddled yourself, that you have become a milk-sop preacher, and then you at least will not allow yourself to doubt but will humbly say, 'If God wants to be so gracious as to treat me like a child who is almost entirely exempted from the sufferings of *imitation*, then I at least will not be a naughty child who on top of that doubts the Ascension.'

"How could it ever occur to you to report with a doubt when the answer inevitably will be: First of all go out and become an imitator of Christ in the stricter sense "only someone like that has the right to speak up "and none of these has doubted."

* * *

"When I am not fully free, everything weighs on me.

"Dom Leclercq's advice to accept and like all this is very far from the truth. That may be his vocation, but it is not mine. This explains my uneasiness with him "his eagerness to be interested and busy with a million things and people, his careful construction of a better monastic mentality, his erudition . . . He is simple and kindly and a great man, but that is all utterly alien to me. I have a feeling that, when there comes a slight lull in his million pursuits, he is bored and restless. And I am only fully at peace, on the contrary, when everything stops, or drops off my shoulders, and I am busy only with pure nothing."

"The Journals of Thomas Merton, Volume IV, p. 135

* * *

Merton said this about his writing:

"And I realized the futility of my attachments, particularly the big one "my work as a writer. I do not feel inordinately guilty about this, but it is a nuisance and an obstacle. I feel hampered by it. Not fully free. But the love of God, I hope, will free me. And this important thing is simply turning to Him daily and often, and preferring His will and His mystery to anything that is tangibly 'mine.'"

"The Journals of Thomas Merton, Volume IV, p. 150

* * *

November 6

"At a certain point you must make a choice in painting between the process and the product . . . You cannot serve two masters. You cannot embrace product and process at the same time. If you paint freely, you will most likely end up loving what you do because of your intimacy with it, but in the meantime it is necessary that you let go and surrender. You do not need an incentive. The process is enough . . .

"Ask yourself, 'What do I really want?' If you want a technically pleasing painting, then work for it; you might get it. But don't fool yourself: this won't bring you closer to the aliveness you long for. Passion is elsewhere; it has nothing to do with the result, only with the doing."

"Life, Paint, and Passion: reclaiming the Magic of Spontaneous Expression, Michell Cassou and Steward Cubley