

Returning From Pilgrimage

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

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“Just as Kṛṣṇa does not take a step away from Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa’s devotees also do not like to leave Vṛndāvana. However, when he is tending to Kṛṣṇa’s business, he may leave Vṛndāvana.”

—Śrīla Prabhupāda

Contents

- 1 So Far Away From Vṛndāvana 1
- 2 "A Strong Sense of Love is Required" 18
- 3 Resuming Writing 34
- 4 Letting Go 48
- 5 "The Whole World is Waiting, Mr. Mitra,
For Our Spiritual Revolution" 90
- 6 Trying to Clear the Dust From the Heart 144
- 7 Hope Against Hope 203
- 8 Following the Six Gosvāmīs

Chapter One

So Far Away From Vṛndāvana

"Today the ship is plying very smoothly. I feel today better. But I am feeling separation from Sri Vrindaban and my Lords Sri Govinda, Gopinath, Radha-Damodar. The only solace is *Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita* in which I am tasting the nectarine of Lord Caitanya's *lila*. . . . I depend fully on Their mercy, so far away from Vrindaban."
—From the Jaladuta diary of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Sept. 10, 1965, quoted in
Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, Vol. 2, p. 1

December 28, 1991, Gītā-nāgarī

I want to keep a journal which will be true to my experiences since coming back from Vṛndāvana to the West. The point of this journal will primarily be self-discovery as I read *rasika* books and continue to think of and hear the teachings of Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja; self-discovery as I again encounter Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and teachings with the increased understanding I gained in Vṛndāvana. My two main themes since coming back have been how to assimilate what I learned from Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, and the separation I feel from the *dhāma*.

A brother told me that our development toward *rāgānugā* is gradual; it cannot be rushed. And yet I must go forward. This inner life may die if it is not given attention.

I realize I cannot write of Vraja as the Six Gosvāmīs do. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura writes in *Śrī Vraja-rīti-cintāmaṇi*, "I yearn to be able to write as well as Lord Caitanya's Rūpa Gosvāmī, but I cannot write as well as he, and neither can I write as well as his followers who wrote many wonderful, perfect books, which everyone should read and remember. Compared to their books my little book can hardly be considered poetic" (text 4). A few verses later he says, "Although I am not qualified to describe Vṛndāvana I shall describe it a little bit, just as someone unlearned in music may strum a lute and pick out a few melodic fragments here and there" (text 32).

This is my experience of re-entry into the West: I was more or less alone in Vṛndāvana, but now I am plunged into a crowd of my disciples who are here to celebrate my Vyāsa-pūjā. I am prepared to tell them that I am practicing Vṛndāvana-bhajana. I want to tell them all to do the same, but I hear their concerns—their struggles to make money, their going to psychologists to find out what went wrong in their childhoods, their attempts to remember Kṛṣṇa in a non-Kṛṣṇa conscious world. They tell me that those endeavors sometimes don't leave much time for even the minimum practices of chanting and hearing. How can I tell them to practice Vṛndāvana-bhajana when their hearts have other concerns? What is Vṛndāvana-bhajana? It is going on *parikrama* to Kamyavan and praying in the dust there, "Please forgive my offenses. Please make me a *dāsī* of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī."

What I do not dare say to them I want to record here. What does it mean to live within? What is it like to be an inscrutable wise man who doesn't reveal his mind to those he talks with?

~

December 29

I have a new sleeping bag. It's a cold night, but this bag can take twenty degrees easily. I crawl in and within an hour I have a vivid nightmare. "This is hell," a dream character says, and then the dreamscape changes rapidly. Everything becomes alive with threats and punishments. (I read this line just before taking rest: "A devotee sometimes accepts a sinful person as his disciple, and to counteract the sinful reactions he accepts from the disciple, he has to see a bad dream" [*Bhāg.* 8.4.15, purport]). I even suspect the new sleeping bag for causing my nightmare. But now I am awake, staring into the dark.

Later in the night, I dreamt of ordinary times, riding on the Staten Island ferry. It seemed to be going to Vṛndāvana. Someone, a Śiva worshiper said, "Śiva-pūjā is not prominent in Vraja."

~

Assimilation: "The process by which nourishment is changed into living tissue; constructive metabolism." This is the definition I am seeking to achieve—turning my Vṛndāvana self into a real person.

There is another dictionary definition of assimilation which I don't like: "The process whereby a group, as a minority or immigrant group, gradually adopts the characteristics of another culture." If I "assimilate" in this way, gradually I will lose the distinctive feature of an aspiring follower of *rasika* life. No, let it not be true! Before that happens, I will go back to Vṛndāvana if I can.

Rūpa Gosvāmī says one should live in Vṛndāvana, but if that is not possible, then one should live there in one's mind.

The dictionary's definition of "separation" doesn't carry the meaning of union in separation, of *vipralambha*. The dictionary refers only to becoming disconnected or severed, as in "discharged from employment or military service." As in, "You were in Vṛndāvana for a few months and now that is finished, *bās*."

Let it not be true.

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It's after midnight on this rainy winter night. I put on the earphones and hear Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja commenting on the *sahajiyā* who cheaply tells a disciple his *siddha-deha*. It cannot be taken like that from a *sādhaka bābājī-guru*. It comes from the *rāgātmikā-jana* themselves; it descends; it is given internally.

This reminds us that internal Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to be cultivated privately. It should be kept "so sacredly." We don't claim we know our eternal *rasa* or our particular form, but our desire to pray has been awakened. We repeat the *śloka*s of Rūpa and Raghunātha Gosvāmīs and pray, "When will there be a day that I will be like so?"

"O Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, O Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, I am standing by your side. You are seeing all these things. May I see like you all these things and may I serve behind you?"

"We are only praying, we are not going to merge into that pastime."

•

December 30

The assimilation will be demanding. A heavy schedule of meetings and classes means you have to use up living time. Does this mean I will exhaust the nourishment I have gained from Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja in Mathurā? No, it doesn't work that way in Kṛṣṇa consciousness—when you give out, you don't diminish. But I will have to keep in touch with my private life. I can continue speaking in a covered way, drawing on a secret center (the fact that I have heard much *rasika* talk from a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava and the fact that I have been invited to practice it), but I will not be able to continue drawing from the bank unless I keep making deposits. And for that, I need the peaceful time, more than the sixteen rounds chanted "to get them done."

When we used to see Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, especially during Kārttika, he complained, "I am so unfortunate, I have no time for reading, writing, nothing. I have not chanted my rounds. I have no *bhajana*." He was meeting people all day long. We admired his self-sacrifice, but I didn't want to live like that. I think at the present

time (late December and early January), Mahārāja is enjoying more his own time and maybe working on the five small books of Viśvanātha Cakravartī he is translating into Hindi.

❧

I can't pretend. I don't have much depth at all, but a willingness to read of Vraja and to recall recent good association. After all, I only visited India for four months. Am I not like any other ISKCON devotee with good feelings from a pilgrimage just passed, but doomed to be assimilated into the demanding pace of life in the West—the way an immigrant is doomed to lose his home culture when he interacts in the new land? As Vraja is powerful, so the West (non-Vraja) is also powerful (*māma māyā duratyayā*).

❧

Mahārāja said: "One cannot put limits on greed [for *rāgānugā*]. It can come at any stage, whether right or wrong. But when greed comes, there are so many symptoms of *āsakti*."

Desire to have greed is also a sign of greed. It is coming from Rūpa Gosvāmī and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, and by hearing the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

❧

A disciple of mine is reading *Govinda-līlāmṛta*. It is on sale at the Sunday feast in the New York temple. I heard about this while I was in India. I wrote her that she should be guided by the spiritual master in her reading, so today she came here and showed me my letter and asked about it. I cautioned her about reading *Govinda-līlāmṛta*, although I didn't forbid her. I invited her to write down any questions she had and I would answer in a letter.

Now I have to guide disciples who want to enter *rasika* thought. They have heard that the conjugal affairs of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are the summit of Vaiṣṇava philosophy. If I don't guide them, they will continue their studies on their own. I will have to ascertain the *adhikārī* of each person, and determine whether he or she is qualified; whether they have greed.

I told her that *Govinda-līlāmṛta* is a very advanced work. It would be better that she gradually enter *rasika* topics and allow me to give her step by step advice and a recommended reading list. I wasn't really prepared for her request—none of us are prepared—yet I have access to very valuable guidance. What would Mahārāja say in this case? What would my Godbrothers from our Vṛndāvana group say? I cannot ask them now. I must be guided by what I have learned in their association. I told

her, “*Govinda-līlāmṛta* isn’t something to be advocated. We don’t preach to people to read it. It is read privately.” Tell her also, “No *kalpana* (imagination),” no meditation that you are with Kṛṣṇa in the *aṣṭa-kalīya-līlā*.

❧

Dec. 31, 1:15 A.M.

Last night I spoke covered versions of *praṇāma* prayers. As if I know the uncovered versions! I don’t know anything. Someone asked me how to observe *ekādaśī* ... And some in the audience think even fifteen minutes of prayer before beginning their *japa* is too much.

Where is some sign that my *sādhana* is being improved as a result of my “knowledge” of the *rasika* life of a devotee?

❧

Around ISKCON, various devotees delve into sacred books as they become available. Do they know what they are doing? Other devotees issue blanket condemnations of this practice. I thought, “The two big dangers are *māyāvāda* philosophy and the practice of *sahajiyā*.”

What was confidential in Vṛndāvana remains confidential in the West. How can I continue to write books for six or seven people?

Śrī kṛṣṇa caitanya prabhu nityānanda śrī advaita gadādhara . . .

❧

The *sahajiyā*’s mistake is that without knowing his *svarūpa*, he meditates on Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s *aṣṭa-kalīya-līlā* and imagines himself a participant in a specific liberated form. Another mistake the *sahajiyā* makes is to take his *svarūpa* by the process of *siddha-praṇālī*. He wrongly cites examples from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *Jaiva Dharma*, in which the guru gives this information to his disciples. The *ācāryas* warn us not to practice *siddha-praṇālī*; learning of one’s *svarūpa-siddha* should not be taken cheaply. We can hear about the pastimes of Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, but we have to recognize that our greed is very undeveloped in the beginning stages. We have to enter very carefully.

❧

Vṛndāvana: land of monkeys, land where a neophyte gets sick and doesn’t appreciate the *dhāma*, land where men with sticks beat Western devotees and steal their fortunes from their money belts. Vṛndāvana is a land of extreme temperatures—it is so cold and then so hot. ISKCON is the same in Vṛndāvana as in other parts of the world, yet it is different.

This writing hasn't proved itself yet, hasn't proved its right to exist. I have some inner turmoil. I know that for a long time, I will have to be patient and wait and accept my neophyte condition. Wake to the truth by humble admission.

I am waiting to admit to myself and to the holy name the simple fact of my position as a poor chanter. People criticize me—"If he has doubts, how can he lead you back to Godhead? People who committed so many sinful activities in this life cannot be pure. Śrīla Prabhupāda was pure from birth." Let me admit it. I have to. I cannot bluff. I even told them at the initiation lecture that we are all cheaters. I am also a cheater if I claim to be a pure devotee—but let us all minimize the cheating.

❧

I have no access to the woods for walks where I am staying at Gītā-nāgarī, but I can read. I gather books like a squirrel and put them here and there in boxes. I cover some of them with protective paper or tape the edges to prevent dog-ears.

❧

This lake is known as Kusuma-sarovara because of the many blossoming flowers, destined to become *gopīs* in the future, that grow in its waters. Simply by once bathing in this Kusuma-sarovara, Nārada Muni attained a *gopī*-form. This fact is directly confirmed in the words of the enchanting Supreme Personality of Godhead.

—Śrī Vraja-rīti-cintāmaṇī, Chapter 3, verse 27

❧

I can no longer forget that Kṛṣṇa is the lover of Rādhā and the *gopīs*. Even when I hear other pastimes of other incarnations, I cannot forget that the real Kṛṣṇa never leaves Vṛndāvana. My knowledge is theoretical in any case . . . but . . .

Keep it a secret! Even from yourself! Don't dare to say, "I have a special interest now." And yet cultivate it. There is nothing to declare because as yet I have nothing in my heart. But I need to associate with someone—out of loneliness and to remind myself that it is not a dream—because I did hear repeatedly from a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava. He taught the *siddhānta*. To remind myself, I write.

❧

I beg a drop of mercy for chanting. "I will beg, borrow, or steal the nectar of the name."

❧

January 1, 1991

Be as honest as possible, but first, pause and put a drop of Rādhā-kuṇḍa water on your head. Admit you have no greed, yet you are interested. Don't mock whatever interest you *do* have. Don't write a hype journal of "separation."

Rāma-rāya dāsa has come to Gītā-nāgarī at my request. I proposed that we read together for an hour a day for the next two weeks. He brought some things from Vṛndāvana—a tape of Jagadīśa Goswami singing on the night of Prabhupāda's Disappearance Day, 1991; a framed picture of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in which Kṛṣṇa is serving Rādhā. We used to think Rādhārāṇī was important only because Kṛṣṇa favored Her. Now we have heard the speciality of our *paramparā*: we are interested in Kṛṣṇa only because He is the beloved of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Rāma-rāya also brought color photos of the Deities at Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandira. Seeing the bare legs of the Brothers and the rose garlands on Their bare chests reminds me that I want to return there in the summer. He also brought a small necklace of *guñjā-mālā* and suggested I use it as a garland to attach to the picture of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, which I have done.

Taking gentle, deliberate steps to revive the mood of Vṛndāvana is desirable.

A note to myself: "Write on fears of minimizing Śrīla Prabhupāda—how I dealt with it in the beginning, how I feel about it now." Yes, that is a topic, and I am willing to write on it, a bit at a time. I remember going to the second floor of the *samādhi-mandira* and praying in my notebook, "Prabhupāda, please protect me." In the beginning I saw that my approaching Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja might be a threat. I said to Śrīla Prabhupāda, "If you just indicate that it is not pleasing to you, I can stop on a dime and turn the other way." But now I have crossed beyond that doubt. Why am I still worried? A change has occurred and I need to examine it carefully, but how can I look at it carefully as I rush through the day keeping appointments? I am waiting for a quieter time (in two weeks) to be able to discuss this with Baladeva.

That same disciple who is reading *Govinda-līlāmṛta* expressed to me her interest in the advanced stages of Kṛṣṇa consciousness where one is always meditating on the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In her own way she is already practicing various kinds of *smāraṇam*, based on pastimes in *rasika* books. She needs a guide, but her present course is not inauspicious. Since she is going to Vṛndāvana soon, I gave her the names of two ladies there who were part of "the group." I advised her to serve

them and inquire from them. I said, "By hook or by crook, by begging, borrowing, or dacoiting, get their association."

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Our *sampradāya* has produced a vast ocean of literature but our minds are so small. At least let me recognize that there is no time for diversions, even diversions which appear to be edifying in some way. How much can you read and absorb in one lifetime?

Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja: "Any *śloka* which has even a little scent of *vrajavāsī* is most *priya* to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa likes these and not *ślokas* by Brahmā and the demigods. *Ślokas* by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura or Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī where Kṛṣṇa is attached to Rādhikā and Kṛṣṇa is serving Rādhikā, these *ślokas* make me so happy. Bilvamaṅgala has prayed to Kṛṣṇa, but Rādhikā is seen as inferior and subordinate, always trying to please Kṛṣṇa. Rādhā is doing *arcanā* of Kṛṣṇa. Our *gosvāmīs* are not in that mood, but Kṛṣṇa is giving *puṣpa-mālā* on the neck of Śrīmatī Rādhikā and She becomes so much pleased."

•

From a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda, San Francisco, 1968

Tamāl Krishna dāsa brahmacārī: Prabhupāda, you tell us wherever Kṛṣṇa is, that is Vṛndāvana. If Kṛṣṇa is present within our hearts, does that mean within our hearts is Vṛndāvana?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Yes, one who has realized, he is living in Vṛndāvana. A realized saint is always living in Vṛndāvana. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said a devotee may seem to be living in some place which is far from Vṛndāvana, but he is living in Vṛndāvana. That is a fact."

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No time for that inner life? Don't complain. You will get back to it. Now get up and greet a man and his wife and baby. I will get back to this. And the meeting is service: if I don't begrudge it, it can be an asset.

•

I don't claim I am practicing *rāgānugā-bhakti*. I am praying or aspiring for it; I haven't attained it. But I am attracted and prefer it over all discourses and interests in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Mostly this depends on the association of Mahārāja. He says it depends on our past and ongoing *guru-sevā*, our faith in and service to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Based on association, one wants to hear these discussions exclusively, like a bee drinking honey from a flower.

The question arises: "How can such a devotee keep his inner, private meditation alive while addressing devotees on a lower platform? How can he speak on the same subjects he has always spoken on but fill them with his inner, deeper realizations?" I don't know much about any of this. I am not attempting to write a manual on *rāgānugā*. I am recording my neophyte attempts. I do this to help myself and to leave a record for those who will also be attempting this.

So far, it is like a game. I speak of one thing while thinking of another. I fear to speak too openly, not only because the audience is not qualified, but because I sense it is too tender and sacred even within myself. It will not sound right if I try to voice my new realizations to anyone but those who already know what it is or who have the greed. (Thus I am writing for the most important audience—those who care for me and with whom I can share this important part of my life.)

Mahārāja has discussed how descriptions of Rādhā are more beautiful when they are covered, if they are pure, as in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

But the question is, does that "secret" energy enter the normal discourse? And if not, isn't it a bit unfulfilling or dry to speak of lesser instructions? Others have asked this question. They have responded to my own asking like this: we will learn how to infuse the energy of *parikīya-rāsa* into all our discussions as we ourselves enter the energy, not before. Compassion for *jīvas* will inspire us to instruct them on the lower levels. We also have to be realistic: we too are on the lower level. We ourselves need to hear about humility, *sādhū-nindā*, and the rules and regulations of devotional service.

As for preaching "lesser" instructions, there is an art to staying enthused even when speaking basic Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and an art to experiencing a spark of the inner dimension even in those instructions. Śrīla Prabhupāda was a master at this. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja said that when there is no scent of that inner mood displayed outwardly, that is a sign of genuine *bhakti*. It is just the opposite of showy fervor.

I am obviously at an awkward stage. I need times of undiluted immersion in *rasika* texts and hearing. I need friends. I need to keep it alive.

•

7:30 P.M.

After an hour of singing songs by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura in the temple with devotees: what are you waiting for? The pure state is already here, already flowering, the secret is out. "One day while performing devotional practices, I saw my house transformed into Goloka Vṛndāvana . . ."

"O companion of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, please be merciful to me. Now that I have attained Your reddish lotus feet, please do not push me away. Except for You, who is my shelter?"

Longing, attainment—both are experienced by the *ācāryas*. By hearing—just by hearing—our hearts open up.

On my way out of the temple, a devotee handed me the bouquet which Rādhārāṇī had held in Her hand as an offering to Dāmodara. "Except for You, who is my shelter?"

•

January 2, 1:30 A.M.

The electricity has gone off in this small trailer. India is not the only place where such mishaps take place.

When I first arrived back in the West, I wanted to share my Vṛndāvana *bhajana* mood. Aside from the standard reasons for confidentiality, other obstacles arose. The devotees in the West are faced with the problem of money-making. This "*rasika*" journal may not be the place to discuss that problem, yet what does *rasika* mean but emphasis and priority in life given to *śravaṇam-kīrtanam kṛṣṇa-smaraṇam*?

If one works thirteen hours a day in a shopping mall (they call it "getting mauled"), then where is the life of chanting? The old ISKCON answer to this problem was to share all expenses communally. "No longer feasible," they say. But living in one's own house also does not seem feasible for one who wants to claim his or her own life. Thoreau says, "Superfluous wealth can buy superfluities only. Money is not required to buy one necessity of the Soul." Also, marriage and children create great obstacles.

It appears that great devotees like Rāmānanda Rāya and Pundarika Vidyānidhi developed their sublime level of spiritual thought even while engaged in household life.

Enough from me. I am naive. I am not a perfect example. But I have the privilege of *sannyāsa* and must use it now. Gratefully use your time to write and help others.

•

Madhu, Rāma-rāya, and I had our first reading of *Vidagdha-mādhava*. It was delicious. You have to be simple and pure and faithful and that sometimes takes some adjustment. You can't be cynical or be demanding entertainment like a TV audience. *Vidagdha-mādhava* has drama, but it is rural, pure-hearted, the story of a beautiful boy and girl and Their village friends. The main characters are the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His pleasure potency, Rādhā. Their friends are all pure

devotees who are free of the modes of material nature. The setting is the forest of Vṛndāvana, the unlimited ocean of spiritual bliss. It takes adjustment, but we are doing that. I like the company of the devotees I am reading with—just to see their faces as they hear!

I noted that Rūpa Gosvāmī began by describing his audience. He said that those who are unacquainted with *rasa* will be indifferent to this drama, whereas those who are qualified will be very pleased to hear it—he is writing for them.

As the drama begins, we discover that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa have never met. On hearing the name “Rādhā,” Kṛṣṇa loses His composure and is embarrassed. Even before seeing Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā first hears His flute and She is overwhelmed with a desire to meet Kṛṣṇa.



Hearing from Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja is always a direct hit: “When will the day come when I will serve Śrīmatī Rādhikā in *rasa* as Rūpa-mañjarī and Rati-mañjarī and Tulasī-mañjarī do?” When you hear this with faith, it knocks you out, charms you, calls to your inner self. It strikes as the culmination-yearning of all we have been striving for in ISKCON—it is what Prabhupāda has been training us to do and which he has expressed repeatedly. Now we see his statements everywhere in a new way. In his Introduction to *Kṛṣṇa* book he states, “Before death comes, we must be *fully* Kṛṣṇa conscious.” Go back to Godhead and dance with Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa never leaves His flute. When the *gopīs* steal it, He becomes anxious, but when He sees Rādhā, His *varṇśī* falls from his hand and His peacock feather falls over. When Kṛṣṇa sees Rādhā looking at Him from the corner of Her eyes, “He becomes faintless.” This is the superiority of Rādhā-*prema*. Kṛṣṇa has *prema*, but His *prema* is divided into all the *rasas* and *bhaktas*. The *gopīs* are single-minded, so their *prema* is higher. We always remember Kṛṣṇa as Rādhākānta.



Any *śloka* describing Kṛṣṇa is simply asking for the *rasika* commentator to explain it. If Kṛṣṇa is described as *kandarpa-koṭi-kamanīya*, then we may ask, “How does Rādhā figure in this mood of Kṛṣṇa? What pastime is involved?” The *ślokas* (like that of *Brahmā-Saṁhitā*) are like *sūtras*. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Rūpa and Raghunātha Gosvāmīs, and Prabhodānanda Sarasvatī, come and give us that nectar.

This discovery has paralyzed me and bewildered me in a nice way. My pen doesn’t know what to do. I too want the *rasa* and don’t want to write of lesser things. But I can’t. For now I want to write down what the *rasa* masters have said. I am only a child running to the edge of the waves as they break on the beach. Just when I

thought I could write endlessly on many topics as a maturing, Kṛṣṇa conscious literary artist, I discover that I am a complete neophyte, unqualified to write in the most important subject. This discovery is very good for my spiritual life.

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I write this in between a reading of *Vidagdha-mādhava* and the lecture I have to give in the temple. During the reading, I reached over and wrote on a pad: "I must write or I'll lose touch." I am anxious that I may lose the sweet and strong convictions I had when in the presence of Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. A little later I wrote, "If 'honesty' means admitting I don't have attraction [for cultivating *rāgānugā*], then I don't want that honesty."

Vidagdha-mādhava is about intense new love. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are just meeting. It's delightful to take a turn and read aloud. It's a pleasure to see the emotions on the other devotees' faces. How nice to raise your voice and express the words of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*. Rādhā wrote a love letter to Kṛṣṇa saying wherever She turned, She saw Him. On behalf of Rādhikā, Viśākhā gave a garland of red and black *guñjā* berries to Kṛṣṇa. He was bewildered by love and took the garland off and returned it. Then Kṛṣṇa and Madhumaṅgala realized that Rādhārāṇī might feel rejected when She received the garland back. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa decided to write Her a letter. "In what color ink shall we write the letter?" Madhumaṅgala asks. Kṛṣṇa tells him that there are red roses in a certain grove that He will use for the ink. As they go to that rare grove, Rādhā and Her friends also go there, and They meet.

But just as They are coming closer in Their new love, Jaṭilā enters like a cloud to cover the moonlight, just as the *cakora* bird was about to drink the nectar of the moon's rays.

Gray Pennsylvania, leafless tree branches against the sky. I have many little duties to attend to, but at least I took the time to write this.

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January 3, 1:05 A.M.

Do what is favorable for my Kṛṣṇa consciousness; avoid what is unfavorable.

Remember Mahārāja describing the *parokṣa-vāda* method of praising? I can do it too. "I love a person. He lives mostly in Mathurā. He was an intimate friend of our Śrīla Prabhupāda. He is very fond of the writings of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. He is also a staunch follower of his spiritual master. Lately, Western ISKCON devotees have been going to see him and he speaks to them from sacred books like *Vilāpa-kusumāñjali*. He wishes he had more time to write and to translate the five small books by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, but people are always taking up his

time. He says many of the people he meets are *viṣayīs* with no greed for transcendental *rasa*. The Western devotees are persistent too; they also take up his time. He kindly agrees to see them because although he says they too have no greed for *rāgānugā*, yet he detects some interest, and a lean and thin form of shadow greed. He sees them, we think, as a service to his friend and *śikṣa-guru*, Śrīla Prabhupāda."

In a similar, indirect way, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is described in every chapter of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. You have to go deeper and see it, but Śukadeva Gosvāmī has put it there. I saw it last night when reading the exalted *Śikṣāṣṭakam* to devotees, in the verse, "*Ayi nanda-tanuja kiṅkaram*."

We may take the meaning in a general way, that all souls are eternal servants of God, but I recall that Mahārāja loved the word "*kiṅkari*." He said it is a "soft, fragrant" word that has no English equivalent. It means a *sakhī* or *gopī* friend of Rādhikā. Thus the *Śikṣāṣṭaka* verse means, "O Son of Nanda, I yearn to approach You in *gopī-mañjarī-bhāva*, but now I am suffering in a fallen state. Please give me direct service at Your lotus feet by granting my prayer to become an assistant of the *gopīs* in Rādhārāṇī's camp." The *sannyāsa-mantra*, recited three times daily by all ISKCON *sannyāsīs*, says this directly.

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I told someone just a little bit of what I am thinking. I explained the difference between imagining oneself in Kṛṣṇa's Vraja pastimes and praying to Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī to one day enter the pastime, but for now, *not* visualizing oneself as a participant. My friend responded, "It would seem that one would want to see oneself *in* the pastime rather than just watching it?" Fools rush in. The hearing is itself entering and tasting. It is an act of *wanting* to see oneself in the pastime. But there is no *kalpana*, no imagination. Participation comes in *svarūpa-siddha* by direct indication from one of the *līlā* participants. Show your greed now by hearing the *gītās* of the Tenth Canto. Delight in the freedom from mundane association. Pray always to be free of that, and act strongly in favorable practices of *vaidhī-bhakti*.

Don't imagine. This is the way.

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"Go on trying. Go on preaching. I think all this is going on by the mercy of your spiritual master."

In India, following him to Mathurā, Vṛndāvana, Bombay, or Delhi, we waited all day to sit with him for an hour. At the time, it was a test of patience for me. I had no other duties except for that one hour of hearing from him. I wanted to fly away to places where I could pursue my own duties. But I stayed nearby so that I could get

that hour. And now that I am away, the so-called *tapasya* of waiting is forgotten and I am thankful for the amassed treasure.

"Today it is good that we are meeting only five. Yesterday, so many persons came." Yes, it is very good. The crows are cawing outside. We sit on the edge of our seats. How attentive and eager!

❧

I am hopeful that the demands of hearing *rasa-śāstra* will be good for keeping me humble and a firm practitioner of those acts of *vaidhī-bhakti* which are favorable to *rāgānugā*. You must control the senses and avoid bad influences, as described in the first and second *śloka*s of *Upadeśāmṛta*. So I start each day more clearly admitting I have not attained the desired state. And yet while being humbled, I speak strongly in lectures, urging us to strive, and speaking of the wonderful nectar we aspire for. *Rāgānugā* aspirations, therefore, when properly guided, make for a healthy *sādhana-bhakta*. Now beyond mere duty—for-duty's-sake, there is meaning worth living for. And this much greed: I will not let this day go by without giving myself the tonic of *rasika-śāstra*.

"Devotedly follow the path of the great devotees in the past. Properly using your body and mind, don't neglect either the regulative devotional practices or the remembrance of the Lord's pastimes.

"Always reject the company of the impious. Give up attraction to nondevotional songs. Leave the *karmīs* and *jñānīs* far away. Only associate with the devotees. Take pleasure in hearing the nectar descriptions of pure love for Kṛṣṇa. Become flooded by the nectar of the narrations of the Lord's pastimes in Vraja" (*Prema-bhakti-candrikā*, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Verses 2-3).

❧

4:45 P.M.

Our reading in *Vidagdha-mādhava* began with me at point zero. I listened, unable to enter. I felt left out. My companions laughed happily at what the *gopīs* said, but I couldn't understand the conjugal humor. I recall Lord Caitanya saying to Sanātana, "Vṛndāvana is very soft due to the conjugal *rasa* there." I lack the softness and the clear intelligence.

I don't know whether Kṛṣṇa is being shy or taking advantage to touch Rādhā. I don't know Rādhā's mind—is She afraid or bold? I can't understand the poetic and clever explanations of Viśākhā and Lalitā. Like a dolt, I miss the points and puns. Due to my past conceptions of mundane sex which are still clinging to me, I stumble and am left behind.

We are not qualified to hear *Vidagdha-mādhava*, but still we want to hear it. It is not bad for us to hear, but we can understand only a fraction of it.

Now I want to keep far away from those worldly sex-mongers who think sex enjoyment is everything and who think *ṣṛṅgāra-rasa* is merely a by-product of material, illusory *kāma*. Let me not see their faces, even in dreams. O *rasika-gurus*, O mind, please protect me. Keep me always in the company of my *brahmacārī* friends who worship these loving dealings.

“O friend [Viśākhā says to Rādhā], You do not know how glorious You are. Although Śyāmasundara has become affectionate toward You because of Your intense love for Him, You still nevertheless fear that You are impure.”



Go do your duties and speak to a room full of expectant devotees. Talk with them about how to be loving and to help one another. I shouldn't pretend I am above the problems that entangle them. And if I am free of marital distress and economic hassle, that is the privilege of *sannyāsa*—it's not some great merit of my own.



January 4, 1:20 A.M.

At least I am up looking for it. M. mentioned that we shouldn't be pursuing *rasika* narrations with the spirit of enjoyment, so he tries practicing little austerities. As soon as he said this, I guessed, “He's going to say he is trying to eat less sweets.” Sure enough. But is that foolish? No. What do I do to curb myself, to demonstrate that I appreciate the devotional *vairāgya* of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī? You can't follow the path of material enjoyment and at the same time become a follower of the *gopīs*. “As long as the mind is too much absorbed in materialistic thought, one cannot enter into the kingdom of Vṛndāvana.” I thought, “Maybe I can offer penance by a cheerful willingness to do those duties such as counseling; although they appear to drag me away from study, they are necessary.”



If a devotee is committing no *nindā* (offense to others) and is always thinking of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes one after another (like a garland of *smaraṇam*), we should serve such a devotee as our life and soul. How should we serve? By the *upadeśa-sāram*, the essence of all advice (*Upadeśāmṛta*, text 8). That means *vraja-tiṣṭhan*, living in Vṛndāvana, and especially following the guidance of *rasika* Vaiṣṇavas. How lucky are my brothers and all others who actually live there! (Why do we live elsewhere? Is it actually my duty or am I just asserting my independence?)

If the *rasika* devotee is merciful to us, and if we always remember the names of Kṛṣṇa in His pastimes—Dāmodara, Rādhā-kānta, Rādhānātha, Gopīnātha, Rāsa-bihārī.

The pastimes will be merciful to us. The *līlās* are Kṛṣṇa Himself and they will appear in our hearts. We cannot buy these *līlās*, but by the grace of the *hlādinī-śakti*, remembrance will come. Mahārāja explained all this when comparing *rāgānugā-bhakti* to the eight steps of Pantañjali yoga, beginning with *yama-niyama*. Describing *āsana* he said, "To be in a place, not going hither and thither, always remembering." Try to remember. The mind won't be fixed on a certain *līlā* or name, but when we try, anything is possible . . .



My friend Baladeva is traveling around the United States. We will meet in a week. A week after that, we will go to a writing-study retreat. On the phone I told him, "I've gone through internal changes. I can't tell you over the telephone."

"I understand," he said. But when he comes here, what should I say? Should I tell him to read *Pilgrimage*? Better I convey it briefly right now. But that won't do my experiences full justice. And how much have I actually changed?

Say: "I met a *rasika* guide and I left him in Vṛndāvana." Baladeva has always known me as guided only by Śrīla Prabhupāda; thus he has faith in me. I hope to express to Baladeva things as yet unknown to me about my *new* relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda. At first, I will feel hesitant to express it to him—the possibility that anything could have changed in my attitude toward Prabhupāda, but he will hear me out patiently and realize that all change isn't bad. In fact, it's inevitable. We will admit that my meditation and love for Śrīla Prabhupāda wasn't perfect, that it needed something more than a doggedly loyal following. We will admit together things I am afraid to admit alone, but I hope to find the very thing Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja said to me, that we are now pleasing Śrīla Prabhupāda more than before. Śrīla Prabhupāda is guiding us. The invitation to hear *rasika* topics comes by his mercy. If I can see this, then I can go forward wholeheartedly by praying to Prabhu-pāda: "I love you as you appeared to us, and I follow your teachings. Please reveal your inner mood to me." Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings are not on a lower platform. I have to think out the actual situation; what did Prabhupāda teach us, why did he teach it, and to whom did he address his teachings? It is with his blessings that I hope to study his books deeply, and to study the books he has recommended to us.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Narottama dāsa says further, *rūpa-raghunātha-pade hoibe ākūti*. 'When shall I be very much eager to study the books left by the Six Gosvāmīs?'

Ākūti means 'eagerness.' Because Rūpa Gosvāmī is the father of devotional service, he has written a book called *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* . . . These topics are also dealt with in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and other books, and we have given the summary of those directions in our book *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*. . . Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura directs us not to try to understand the conjugal love of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa by our own endeavor. We should try to understand this *yugala-pīriti*, conjugal love, under the direction of the Gosvāmīs" ("*Lālasāmayī*," purport, *Vaiṣṇava Songbook*, p. 65).

❧

4:45 P.M.

How easy it is to let a day go by without your attention fixed on *rasika* pastimes. Time grips you and doesn't let you breathe freely as your secretary arranges for you to meet one person after another with no space in between. And of course, you eat a big meal and then sleep. Whenever you stop to think about Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-*līlā*, it is something else you haven't done, something else you have to do.

Fortunately, we kept our appointment to read *Vidagdha-mādhava*. It goes over my head. Why did Kṛṣṇa go to Candrāvalī? How should we feel about this? Now Rādhā has stolen His flute. He places His crown on the ground before Her and begs Her to give up her *māna*. Lalitā instructs Rādhā to remain firm in Her anger. Kṛṣṇa acts like a debauchee; like a bumblebee, He goes from one *gopī*-flower to another. What to make of it?

❧

Be grateful to your friends who want to hear this from you, and who want you to advance into the nectar lake. Thank them who tell you, "Whenever you get a chance, record the real life. This is a unique time for you—it won't happen again quite like this, so capture the moment, even if it's just a midday lament." I am fortunate to have such friends.

Chapter Two

“A Strong Sense of Love is Required”

“If he doesn’t practice remembering Kṛṣṇa while he is struggling for existence, then it will not be possible for him to remember Kṛṣṇa at the time of death. . . . A strong sense of love is required here.”

—Bg., Introduction, p. 28

January 5, 1:15 A.M.

I am trying to remember the whole thing—my change of life in Vṛndāvana and my entrance into hearing Kṛṣṇa’s amorous pastimes—with tender feelings. Kick out the demons. But how is it possible for a busy person? This can’t become a complaint page. Too many complaints or too many arguments means you have no greed.

❧

At first, remembrance comes only intermittently. Later it comes like a stream of honey—no break in the flow. When we sit near Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa with no anxiety, “in the same stage as They,” this is called *yoga-upāsana* (coming near to hear).

Where do I get such expressions? I just heard them from Mahārāja.

❧

Of all the *aṅgas* of the body, the eyes are the best. *Līlā-vilāsa* can be done with only the eyes, especially by glances from the corner of the eyes.

❧

I attempt to concentrate on the practices of *rāgānugā-bhakti* while following a busy schedule in the West. I want to report success. A devotee asked me how one can practice constant remembrance of Kṛṣṇa if he or she has plenty of work to do? (She was implying that I am free to practice *smaraṇam* because I am a *sannyāsī*.) Then I had to defend the right to be busy and admit the possibility of success under those circumstances. I quoted *Nārada-bhakti Sūtra*. In verse 36 Nārada says, “One achieves *bhakti* by worshiping the Lord ceaselessly.” Then in the next verse he says, “One achieves *bhakti* by hearing and chanting about the Supreme Lord’s special qualities, even while engaged in the ordinary activities of life in this world.” The outstanding

example of a person who remembered Kṛṣṇa under stress is Arjuna. Śrīla Prabhupāda told us, "The Lord never suggests anything impractical." It requires a strong sense of love. Then it will be possible to discharge our duties and at the same time remember the Lord. (" . . . we should always remember the supreme lover, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and at the same time perform our material duties very nicely" (Bg., Introduction, p. 28).

But what if I lack that love? The only recourse in that case is *vaidhī-bhakti*. I have to find *some* time, although my time is *stolen* by rising early and writing in a rush. At least we have that hour's reading in our afternoon schedule, by hook or by crook. Even now when someone needs urgent counseling, three of us sit privately as if "doing nothing" and read aloud from Rūpa Gosvāmī's drama.

No love? Complaints? Arguments against? Doubts? Then you lack the qualification. To you we say, just practice *vaidhī* and you will eventually come to this point. (But who will allow himself to be dropped lower like that?) No, once we have been allowed to enter, we can never go back.

This week (and the coming weeks scheduled for travel) will be a test. I will have to fight for the right to hear of Kṛṣṇa's smiling and His sometimes embarrassed state when Madhumaṅgala declares something he shouldn't have. Insist: "I've got a phone call coming," and then run and hear about Lalitā reprimanding Rādhā, "Don't give up Your *māna* if You want to control the mad elephant, Kṛṣṇa."



Mahārāja explains and describes the amorous pastimes with affection and no trace of worldly conception. Rādhārāṇī's youthful body is "very beautiful." It is necessary to be with Mahārāja—to hear him speak and to see him speak. Although we read the verses on our own, either we feel shamed by our own material conditioning or the verses seem abstract. Association is required. I will have to go back to Vṛndāvana. I do remember, though, that Mahārāja said that even if we hear no more from him, we have already heard enough to proceed. It reminds me of 1967 when Śrīla Prabhupāda went back to India in ill health, perhaps never to return. How would it be possible for such fledglings to fly on their own? But Prabhupāda came back to us and gave us more.

Anyway, don't worry too much about it. Practice, travel away from Vraja because you have duties in other places, but plan to go back to hear from a person who is very faithful to Prabhupāda and who speaks of Rādhā's youthful beauty—and of Kṛṣṇa's scratch marks on Her body—with pure smiling and spiritual enthusiasm. Full of wonder, we drink it in. We lap it up like starved kittens drinking milk left at

the doorstep (or like the dogs at Rādhā-kuṇḍa who follow the circumambulating pilgrims' leaking milk pots).

Now I have run out of time. If only I could take some of these thoughts into my *japa*. And while I teach.

Midday lament

What if the taste disappears? Could it all just go away? It *could*, yes. But it won't. It is the most substantial spiritual conclusion of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. It is Lord Caitanya's mission and His inner mood. He wants us to have it—the service of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. So in that sense, it is not going to disappear like something I found in a dream.

But is the special entrance I was granted going to be taken away? No, you can keep it. But I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda lecturing today and he said you have to pay for something valuable. You can't go into a store, ask for their best product, and pay only ten cents.

Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, I have not yet entered Your intimate service. But I have been given a special chance.

I have to prepare my course (a seven-day seminar) which begins tomorrow. I must get into my subject even though it isn't stressing *parakīya-rasa*. A teacher should be compassionate enough to teach students on their own level. And in anything related to Kṛṣṇa, the seed of *gopī-bhāva* is there. It is always close, especially in this course on "Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndāvana Pastimes." I pray to teach it with love. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "In the preliminary stage of devotional service they relish the transcendental pleasure from the service itself, and in the mature stage they are actually situated in love of God" (Bg. 10.9).

*ārādhya bhagavān vrajeśa-tanayas tad-dhāma-vṛndāvanam
ramya kācid upāsana vraja-vadhū-vargeṇā va kalpitā.*

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda Mahārāja, is worshiped along with His transcendental abode Vṛndāvana. The most pleasing form of worship for the Lord is that which was performed by the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana.

—Caitanya-matta-manjusa, by Śrīnātha Cakravartī,

January 6, 1:15 A.M.

As the feeling of separation and *rāgānugā* become integrated, a wholeness may occur. Nevertheless, I have to make a pointed, specific reading of the literatures which remind me that the *ācāryas* are *Rādhā-dāśī* and that I aspire for that too.

But when I don't consciously want this, no alarm signals to tell me that something is wrong. One simply dies and doesn't notice. I come to this page to pinch myself.

Among the devotees, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī is extremely expert at relishing the transcendental nectar of love of God (*rasika-bhakata*). When the stones hear his *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. and *Govinda-līlāmṛta*, they begin to melt in ecstasy. In spite of this, I have no appreciation in my heart.

Furthermore, I refuse to even associate with the friends and companions of these great souls. How sad is my tale. I have spent my life uselessly. Fie, fie on Narottama dāsa!

—Prārthanā, Song 3

Narottama also says, "*na bujhinu ragera sambandha . . .* I am completely unable to understand the *sambandha* of *rāgānugā-bhakti*."

What is my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda? What is my eternal service? None of us know this. But at least we should be going forward and hearing with eagerness from those who are *rāgātmikā-jana*—the Six Gosvāmīs, Nanda and Yaśodā, Subala, Sudāmā, Balarāma, and especially the *gopīs* (*vraja-vadhū*). I am pinching myself. Unlike Narottama, I cannot even lament. Neither will I imitate it. I sit wondering, "What would it be like to lose sleep because of suffering from love in separation from Govinda (*govinda-virahaṇa*)? I would not like to have my rest intruded."

॥

The *kajjala* (black ointment) around Rādhā's eyes is very important. Rati-mañjari wants to apply that *kajjala* to Rādhā's eyes because by just a glance from Her eyes, Kṛṣṇa will be bound up tightly like a mad elephant in spiked chains.

This is my exercise book for writing down the lessons of *līlā-vilāsa*. I am a very young schoolboy learning spelling and basic composition: "John meets Mary. John gives the ball to Mary. John and Mary run and play." In this way, I begin to learn who they are and what they do, and I learn to speak of it. The *līlās* come into my

mind. I learn what *kajjala* means and how it is worshiped both by Rādhā's *dāsīs* and by Kṛṣṇa Himself. *Kajjala* is very important. Indeed, anything black reminds us of *kajjala*. When the *gopīs* asked Kṛṣṇa, "Why are You black?" He replied, "Because I was born during a dark midnight." No, they said, this isn't the main cause. Another *gopī* said, "Your mother gave You milk from a black calf." No, that is not the main reason for His blackish color either. He is Śyāmasundara because He is always absorbed in thinking of the *kajjala*-annointed eyes of the *gopīs*. He wants to kiss those eyes and He doesn't know anything else. A glance from Rādhā stuns Him. This is called *netra-vilāsa* and the *mañjarīs* want to apply that *kajjala* to Śrīmatī.



I want to remind myself of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes as much as possible, especially before chanting *japa* in the morning. It isn't a failure to need this reminder. Neither is my *japa* a failure. Whatever I do is to my eternal credit. But there are awkward moments where I trip up, or gaps in my practice. Don't be embarrassed by them. When I first tried to ice-skate, my ankles turned in and I fell constantly. I just had to endure that until little by little, I gained strength and became graceful and confident. Now again I am the laughing-stock among those who taste *rasa*. Ask them, "What does it mean? What if I still have lust? Can you give me some proofs and arguments that the stories of Kṛṣṇa are not myths?" These are useless attitudes, but they still come to mind. So I must keep coming into the association of *rasika* Vaiṣṇavas and learn by faithful hearing. I also want to render service. I desire to assimilate their instructions and repeat them in my own words.



Can this writing itself produce greed? I just saw a bottle of Dawn dishwashing detergent in the kitchen. The label reads, "Keeps Grease Cutting Power Longer." Can writing do that?

A devotee asked, "What is the relationship between patience in Kṛṣṇa consciousness versus greed for advancement? When can you step forward? And when you think you can step forward, where do you get the confirmation that it is right?" I answered, "You need the association of a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava. As for greed, it simply *is*. You either have it or you don't. When the server offers us seconds on sweet rice, some want it (and thirds!) and some don't. Greed can be developed. Even if one is not so good in other areas of life, even if he is a sinner, greed can come to him by the mercy of *gurudeva*. If it is actual greed, he rises at once to *āsakti*.

Thus it should be obvious that we do not have any real greed; we have only a lean and thin shadow of greed.

Greed for *rāgānugā* knows no wrong or right, but it needs to be guided. I am being guided. Why do I hesitate? Can I go faster? Maybe not. I cannot abandon my regular duties. In fact, *vaidhī* is never abandoned, as long as it is favorable. But the writing, does it possess grease-cutting power? Can it bring the dawn? Prabhupāda used to say, "You *can't* bring the dawn no matter how powerful a flashlight you beam into the sky. You have to wait for the sun to rise." Then let us cry out in the dark before dawn (*brahma-muhūrta*)—"O master of my life, this person places an appeal before You. O Govinda, O moon of Gokula, O source of all transcendental bliss, O beloved of the *gopīs*, please cast Your glance upon me" (*Prārthanā*, Song 5).

"O Devī, with the medicine of the red *lac* from Your lotus feet, please bring back to life this person now dead from the bites of the black snake of not seeing You" (*Vilāpa-kusumāñjali*, text 9).

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An unnameable feeling during *japa*—a little regret, a little longing—but if I relax too much, I grow drowsy. Seems like I have to keep wide awake, shouting from a rooftop, "Hare Kṛṣṇa! Hare Kṛṣṇa!" I am a lookout to chase away the demons. No scope yet for slackened heart and tears. I play a Bengali *bhajana* low in the background. I am seeking a genuine mood.

~

1:00 P.M.

I catch myself becoming proud of my advanced, secret knowledge. This is followed by shame and a hollow feeling—my position is shallow.

This morning I gave the *Bhāgavatam* lecture. Then I gave the first lecture in the week-long seminar on "Lord Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndāvana Pastimes." In both talks I let out some *rasika* information. In the *Bhāgavatam* class I quoted the verse spoken by Raghupati Upādhyayā in *C.c. Madhya*, 19.106: "The form of Śyāmasundara is the Supreme form, the city of Mathurā is the supreme abode, Lord Kṛṣṇa's fresh youth should always be meditated upon, and the mellow of conjugal love is the supreme mellow."

I praised *mādhurya-līlā* as the superlative *siddhānta* of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. After the lecture, a senior devotee asked me whether a mature devotee absorbed in the 10th Canto *mādhurya-līlā* like Rāmānanda Rāya or Svarūpa Dāmodara has any interest in or use for the earlier cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I replied that for preaching, pure devotees pay attention to all the cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, as Śrīla Prabhupāda advised. Then I repeated an example I heard from Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja about how the teachings of Dhruva and Prahlāda can be compared to offering grass to a

cow to entice her to follow you, in this case, to the 10th Canto. I said, "Another answer is that a mature, *rasika* devotee can see *mādhurya* meanings even in the earlier cantos. He sees them even in the first word of the *Bhāgavatam*." The devotees seemed pleased to hear this. In the seminar lecture, I mentioned that Viśvanātha Cakravartī says that when Kṛṣṇa praises Balarāma (at the beginning of the fifteenth chapter of the 10th Canto) when They are in the forest of Vṛndāvana, He is actually praising Rādhārāṇī by an indirect method.

Pride is foolish. If I am not humble, I will lose everything I have gained. From time to time, I may "leak" out some nectar and share it, but cautiously. Also, I shouldn't think I am the sole repository. Others know too, from reading the available literature and by their sincere service.



Even now during this teaching session, we are planning to go somewhere for an extended period of study. Do I dare set aside seven weeks for it? There is plenty to read. I have many volumes of Jīva Gosvāmī's *Sandarbhas* and a method for studying *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*—using three or four different reference books, and using nectar books and tapes. Maybe I will do a śāstrically-based writing assignment. Mahārāja recommended we follow "the line" of his teachings. By doing our homework, we can be with him. Even if we cannot personally associate with a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava, we can improve by eagerly studying and worshiping the books left by the Six Gosvāmīs. I hope this will deepen my commitment. After that, I can travel and preach because that is equally necessary.

Seven weeks is not too much. I won't be idle. I look at it in terms of my remaining life duration and it seems to be a necessary investment. It is Kṛṣṇa's mercy—the road ahead is clear.



A disciple writes me, "Is it that we just have to keep struggling on the *vaidhī* platform, chanting, hearing, waiting for mercy? What can we do to really help ourselves?"

My response:

"Dear Prabhu,

"You ask, "What can we do to help ourselves?" To make the *japa* time more than *vaidhī*, the early morning *bhajana* is crucial. And *read* in this area. Associate with friends who will share this, if you can find them. Maybe think ahead (even if it takes years) when you and your daughter might visit Vṛndāvana. (But don't go if it turns

into a heavy austerity—I saw this with several mothers with children in India. It was almost hellish for them and their children and they were glad to leave. OK—then make your home-life like Vṛndāvana. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja said thinking of Vṛndāvana while away from India can be even better—the *mind* is what counts.)

“Keep working at that early morning *bhajana*. Sounds like you have a good start—2 A.M. chanting and stopping to read books.

“Other books? They divide into two—theory and tasting. Both are needed.

Tasting: Songs of Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

Stavāmālā by Rūpa Gosvāmī

Stavāvalī by Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

“You mentioned *gopī-mañjarī*. In a sense, there are very few books directly on this. But it is the main focus in our line. So *Vilāpa-kusumāñjali*—from *Stavāvalī*, Vol. 1—is hard to understand without commentary. But some of it can come through for you. Read it again and again, aloud. Or make a tape of yourself saying it. The prayer is to serve another *mañjarī* in service to Rādhā. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī is Rati-mañjarī and he desires to serve Rūpa-mañjarī (Rūpa Gosvāmī). Another rare book in this same mood is *Saṅkalpa-kalpa-drumaḥ* by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. To grasp this point even intellectually brings great happiness—our goal is to enter *parakīya-rasa*, but not to be directly with Kṛṣṇa—a *mañjarī* would never accept that. She wants to serve Rādhā.

“Go on learning from books and inquiring if something isn’t clear. (I know very little, but will try to help.) Keep your *basic sādhana* clear—and life free of sin, pray to chant with regret at your fallen condition. (Please pray for me that I may do this. This first stage of spiritual regret is profound.) Humility is the foundation—or else It is all vain talk of ‘*rāgānugā*.’

“Enough for now.

“P.S. You ask, “Do we just go on struggling in *vaidhī*, chanting and hearing, waiting for mercy?” In one sense, ‘Yes.’ In the three key verses on *rāgānugā* which occur in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, the third verse stresses the continuation of basic practices:

*śravaṇot-kīrtanādīni vaidha-bhaktyuditāni tu
yānyaṅgāni ca tānyatra vijñeyāni manīṣibhiḥ*

‘As hearing and chanting is done in *vaidhī-bhakti*, know that it is useful in *rāgānugā* as well.’ But it should change in nature, from mechanical to yearning. How to

specialize in a way that is favorable, even in chanting and hearing, is taught in *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*.

"Enough of this. As if I know! But this is the way, rest assured."

❦

January 7, 1:15 A.M.

Come here and write as a way to help yourself. Soon I want to listen to Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja on tape. I already wrote that I am looking forward to a study retreat and hope that the study will also stimulate writing.

The period of traveling away from the *dhāma* in separation from my *śikṣā-guru* (it's the first time I've written that word outside Vṛndāvana) is full of positive potential. I simply have to use it well. Keep with the momentum. It is a matter of following Mahārāja's instructions to read. While we were in India, one of the brothers said of himself, "I keep going to hear from Mahārāja, but I never do any of the reading he recommends." They say that I have an opportunity to read since I have no management responsibilities. "You have a clear road ahead." It is true—a clear road. I also have limited time left in this life. Move on, brother. Don't look for more confirmation than you already have. Run after the lotus feet of the Six Gosvāmīs. Know you have the order to do this from Śrīla Prabhupāda.

❦

Assisting Rādhārāṇī by putting black *kajjala* in Her eyes, Rati-mañjarī knows that it is like putting Kṛṣṇa in Her eyes. It is better than decorating Her with jewels and gold. Kṛṣṇa doesn't kiss gold. "So for Your happiness and for Kṛṣṇa's happiness, I want to worship Your eyes by this *kajjala*. When she puts the *kajjala* in the eyes, so many pastimes come in the heart of Rati-mañjarī. And by Rati-mañjarī's remembering, Śrīmatī Rādhikā is remembering all these pastimes. She becomes so happy and gives Her necklace to her."

❦

An old college "friend," who calls himself "an atheistic *karmī*," read my poems and said, "I suppose you know they are fatally parochial." People in the late 20th Century don't want to hear from a "weird cult of Hinduism." I say, "Okay, I am writing for the devotees. I am satisfied with that." But now I am writing things that are not to be told even to most devotees. It may seem like I am not interested in the audience, but ironically, my risk now is that I *am* popularizing too much.

This week, the cover of *Newsweek* announces: "Talking to God." It is an overview of the private prayer trends in America. The photos and journalistic treatment, with emphasis on polls (how many people pray according to Gallup, what percentage are

women, what percentage blacks, etc.) tends to cheapen prayer. I am afraid, as Mahārāja is sometimes afraid, of uttering the sacred thing.

But I have brought my readers this far by my writing self. I have told them of so many struggles and about my frustrations and pleasures in traveling in my van, rising early and not being able to chant from the heart, and I have lamented my lack of direction, my dryness, and my bankruptcy. One reader even said, "I like your honesty, but when are you going to win?" So how can I suddenly become silent just when there is finally some good news?

Be careful, *jīva*, this may be an excellent trap set by Māyā to capture the elephant in a pit of pride. "Just see, I'm becoming successful in love of God! In my old age, I am providing the happy ending to the autobiographical opus!" Oops! Falldown. Overexposure. Cheap popularization. Worse—offensive to the tradition of privacy for these subjects.

But there are indications that I can share these topics carefully and gradually with *qualified persons*. May those who have no greed never read these lines or else find them unappealing and turn away from them. I hope to preserve a sincere record for a few. And I don't guarantee that I am making great gains. But how can I keep silent when I promised to share?

•

Mahārāja: When Rati-mañjarī offers Rādhā an ornament or personal service, she always remembers the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa which are connected to that ornament. "So when we are praying all these things, we may remember. May we do *sevā* like this under the direction of guru-sakhī."

Sarasvaki upāsanā: A chain of remembrances. When a qualified devotee does this, he remembers one pastime after another, like flowers in a garland. Even if he meditates on only one *śloka* (*mantra-upāsanā*), he continues in a chain of *līlā-smaraṇam*. Our experience is different. When we sit and hear nicely from Mahārāja, our remembrance is like a chain, but on our own, we are constantly interrupted by the *cañcalā* mind.

Mahārāja said we should not attempt *sarasvaki* now, "It will come of itself." He said when we meditate on a verse, it is neither *sarasvaki* or *mantra-upāsanā* because we have not entered the pastimes. We are only hearing. "After this, effect will come, that we will go into this. Surely it will give fruit now and then. I hope. You have served so much your *gurudeva*. He has mercy upon you—by and by. You have not done any effort for this. It has come by his mercy. You never tried for it . . . And so easily it is coming."

A brother said, "Someone is making it very easy."

Mahārāja: "Your *gurudeva* is making it easy. I think that seed has come and it will grow on. It will sprout and leaves and flowers will come. And at last fruit will come, first unripe, then half-ripe, and then it will be so sweet. It is not *sahajiyā*, because it is coming by the grace of guru. We should go slowly and slowly."

It will go on. Greed will come. The seed needs water and if you are thirsty, you will seek the water and find it.

•

8:00 A.M.

In the question and answer period after *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class, several ISKCON *brāhmaṇa*-intellectuals discussed the need to "fight fire with fire." They referred to the Western intellectual criticism of Vedic *śāstra*. In fact, the mundane scholars take us as naive for even using the term "Vedic," which they say applies only to the first nine books of the *Ṛg Veda*. The *Bhagavad-gītā*, they say, is a product of evolution. So ISKCON has to defend against this with rigorous logical and historical arguments—just as in former times, Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* fought the logical attacks of Buddhists and Śāṅkarites. Today, one of the devotees said, "Sometimes we may think that we are not supposed to get embroiled in these arguments, but Śrīla Prabhupāda states—when discussing the inability of Tapanā Miśra and Candrasekhara to defeat the Māyāvādīs—that a devotee's advancement in spiritual life is tested by his ability to use logic."

I accept all this. I look up to the strong intellectuals in our movement and hope that they can actually get down to work and produce the treatises which they say are needed. They constitute a very important arm of the ISKCON movement, which Prabhupāda personally pushed and asked for in the form of the Bhaktivedanta Institute. Prabhupāda said that he himself was not a scientist, but that his disciples who were scientists should take his ideas and present them in the bombastic language of scientists in order to convince them.

And where does this leave me in my life of approaching *rāgānugā-bhakti*? We all take shelter of the great *ācāryas* of the past, and we are indebted to the arguments of Rāmānuja, Mādhvācārya, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and others. My personal faith is based on hearing from Śrīla Prabhupāda, the Six Gosvāmīs, and now from Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja; in these cases, the teachers did not emphasize logic and argument. The *śāstras* state that in matters which are inconceivable, we cannot know the truth by logic and argument. There is territory to be covered by all different devotees in ISKCON, according to their talents and capabilities. I am thankful to have big

brothers who can fight with Western speculation when it is blasphemously applied to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But I am thankful for Prabhupāda's pointing out that the Western intellectuals are, in one sense, irrelevant. We don't have to listen to them. They are poking their noses into a place where they have no jurisdiction. When I have my own doubts about the spiritual world, I will attack them with the presentation Prabhupāda has given us, a positive method of entering more deeply into spiritual experience. I honor those who are fighting the intellectuals of the West, but I can't be intimidated. It is not that we cannot worship Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa until our men present their treatises. We can go forward with guru, *śāstra*, and *sādhū* as our authorities. If nothing else, this morning's discussion made me quite aware again that preaching in the West is different than living in Vṛndāvana, India. By hearing the discussion, I have contracted a headache. I am more suited to accepting Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a simple way, and it is best to fight in a way that is suitable for me.

~

7:30 P.M.

I mentioned to Madhu that my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda is going through a change. It is a delicate thing, difficult to talk about. I said that I would write about it in *Returning From Pilgrimage*. Madhu suggested that maybe it wasn't something I should attempt to write about even for a few confidential friends. I tend to agree with that, but I will at least hint at it.

For many years I have been professing loyalty to Śrīla Prabhupāda. I am still loyal, but now my loyalty is taking a different shape. I am loyal to his desire that I make all advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If I do that by taking help from Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, that is not in opposition to my loving debt to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

~

January 8, 1:10 A.M.

I shy away from the most open form of free-writing. I want something to say. But I could wait forever. Go forward, spirit soul.

Vaidhī-bhakti is "the same old thing," devotional service performed under fear of transgression. But it is also the bedrock upon which we rest when the *rāgānugā* yearning seems nonexistent. Also, there is such a thing as enthusiasm for *vaidhī*, for rules and regulations. But when spontaneous *utsahā* occurs for hearing and serving Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in their *mādhurya* Vraja pastimes, then there is hope for *rāgānugā*. Without that Vraja inclination, one has not aroused his desire to "go back to Godhead" in the fullest sense of what Prabhupāda means by going back home, back to Godhead.

There is an isolation for me now. I am not with any members of our group who went regularly to Mathurā. (According to the calendar, many in that group will gather in Vṛndāvana again in a week and start visits to Mathurā, but I won't be among them.) Partly, I write here to remind myself of basic precepts. This used to be accomplished just by exchanging a few words with those like-minded friends in Vṛndāvana. There are devotees in the West who like to read and speak of intimate Vraja-līlā, but it is not the same without affection and *śraddhā* in hearing from Mahārāja. Now Madhu has reminded me that some things ought not to be put even on paper.

~

It seems nebulous to some. They ask where to connect. The connection is when we recognize and feel that *mahājānas* like Viśvanātha Cakravartī are our *śikṣa-gurus*. And we turn to our spiritual master as *dīkṣā-śikṣa-guru* to guide us and bless us for entering further into Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Rūpa Gosvāmī is the *śikṣa-guru* of all the *śikṣa-gurus*. Śrīla Prabhupāda said when we devotedly study *Nectar of Devotion*, we are worshipping Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. And this recognition of Gauḍīya *śikṣa-gurus* ought to be done in preference over all other *śikṣa-gurus*, such as psychiatrists, astrologers, Christian mystics, newspaper men, poets, and philosophers, healers, and so on. Rūpa Gosvāmī is not just a shadowy figure in our lives.

Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says that Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Govinda-līlāmṛta* can melt the stones. I want to enter that process of submitting my stone-like self to the heart of this fire.

Furthermore, each of these *śikṣa-gurus* has an identity as a *mañjarī*. I don't know all their names, even theoretically. Mahārāja says they will all manifest as one makes advancement. They will all be merciful to us when we reach a more advanced stage. We have come a long way up from our previous, sinful life. Now we aspire to traverse an equally long distance to the stage of pure love of God. We continue hearing, chanting, and preaching with an understanding of what the advanced stage will bring. We continue doing the same activities, but, we hope, with a new effect.

Mahārāja: "In *vaidhī-bhakti*, we will hear *hari-kathā* of Prahlāda Mahārāja, Citra-keṭu Mahārāja, Dhruva Mahārāja, Nārada, and Vyāsa up to 9th Canto. This is *śravaṇam*, when we have greed that only *this hari-kathā* (Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vraja) will satisfy us. And we will go to certain persons, not everywhere. In *vaidhī-bhakti*, we were chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, but now something will be chanted according to Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura or Gopāla Guru Svāmī, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, etc. Gaura-kiśora dāsa Bābājī used to chant loudly with tears in eyes:

*kothāi gaura me prema-mayī,
rādhe, rādhe, rādhe
kṛṣṇa vakshe vilāsinī
rādhe, rādhe, rādhe. . .*

"This will create more greed how to do all the *sādhana* and *bhajana* of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Eventually it will come to a fixed point where one is Rādhā-dāsī. This is called *rāgānugā*."

"By your mercy."

Mahārāja: "Not my mercy, but the mercy of Śrīmatī and *gurudeva* who has brought you from hell to this stage. Everything is going on by the lotus feet of that spiritual master. He was so merciful. At that time, he could not give you, but he has willed to give you."

•

Now do your own *bhajana*, haunted by your own karma and bad smell of lingering *aparādhās*. Churn out imperfectly composed *mahā-mantras*, yet under the auspices of Prabhupāda and the *paramparā*.

•

Madhu wrote me a note after the night's reading session. I wrote him back:

January 8, 1992

Dear Madhumaṅgala dāsa (You are lucky to have such a *rasika* name),

Thank you for taking the time to write that note appreciating our evening readings in *Vidagdha-mādhava*, etc. I think both you and Rāma-rāya are helping me—we are helping each other—to cross the ocean of lusty desires. We are still hampered by memories of that mundane sex—but I like your prayer in the morning for a clean heart (*ceto-darpana-marjanam*). And I can see in your faces and hear in your voices that you are crossing over the lust-ocean when we read together. Let's continue slowly but surely. I respected your previous reluctance to read with us and it humbled me. But I much prefer your being with us.

•

January 9, 1:10 A.M.

Passionate writing, pushing, and seeking to say something. (I don't even know what—what use does such vagueness have in the life of this devotee right now?).

I get up early to read and immerse myself in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. I have to keep trying to get beyond superficiality. Ordinary empirical doubts, or just preoccupation with troublesome relationships prevents me—I can't cry out. The end result? Kṛṣṇa does not reveal Himself to me or invite me to participate in devotional mellows. He does not see enough desire, enough willingness to give up material attachment. When Kṛṣṇa awards someone pure devotional service, He gives Himself. Therefore He doesn't award it cheaply. He has to trust the devotee fully.

I have to face my unworthiness. That is the first stage. I have come so far by Prabhupāda's grace. I have climbed free of the suffering that results from disobedience to God's law. But in terms of pure love and surrender and nonenviousness, I have barely progressed at all. The proof is I cannot call out, "O Gopīnātha, this sinner who is weeping and weeping begs for an eternal place at Your divine feet. Please give him Your mercy."

•

The *rāgānugā-sādhana* of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was ideal, inspiring even for a *vaidhī-bhakta*.

Perfection comes from the *rāgātmikā-jana*. *Sādhakas* hanker for this perfection.

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī is simultaneously in *gopī-mañjarī-bhāva* and practicing as a *sādhaka*. This is described in "*Śrī Ṣaḍ-gosvāmyāṣṭaka*."

I want to go deeper into the flower of *rasika* devotion. I want to learn how Kṛṣṇa is the topmost *nāgara*—how He renders service to the *gopīs*. Associate with the descriptions of their activities, and then tell us something genuine.

•

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī controlled all his senses and his eating and sleeping. He also visited all the holy places in Vṛndāvana and made *daṇḍavat-praṇāmas* to all the Vaiṣṇavas and associates of Kṛṣṇa. Bowing down for Sanket, Yaśodā, and other associates of Kṛṣṇa, and weeping, "You should give me Vraja-prema. O Lalitā! O Viśākhā, where are you? O Kṛṣṇa, where are You?" Praying to Giri-Govardhana, Yamunā-devī. This is *rāgānugā-bhajana*.

He didn't talk with anyone but an intimate associate. He was always thinking he had no time to speak *hari-kathā* to ordinary persons.

A *rāgānugā-bhakta* has a shadow of *siddha*. He has some connection with the *rāgātmikā-jana*. He has some idea of perfection. Therefore, if we hear about Raghunātha

dāsa Gosvāmī, if we hear how he prayed, then *bhāva* will arise in our hearts: "He becomes joyful, how beautiful those *bhāvas* are coming." In *rāgānugā* practice, there is no worldly disturbance.

~

I may laugh at my infant-sized devotion, or better, I should cry. But I must go on with the attempt to practice *rāgānugā-bhakti*. I want to impress upon myself, "Dear mind, take this up firmly. Clasp the feet of your superiors and beg to serve them. Be satisfied in chanting. Be, however, unsatiated with your inability to remember Kṛṣṇa and be always ready to hear more pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Store those pastimes in your memory. This is my advice to you. Follow in faith and then you may keep an inner diary."

There are some things I can't think out all alone. I would do better to discuss them with friends, except I have very few like-minded friends. For example, is it true that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to learn how to advance past *vaidhī-bhakti* to spontaneous love of God? He seemed to stress *vaidhī-bhakti*, and he definitely stressed becoming a preacher on the *madhyama-adhikārī* level. Is this different than what Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja teaches us? I think I can see my way through these "dilemmas," but I can't explain it well if it becomes a debate topic.

Is the "assimilation" diary the place to come out with such shocking reflections? After all, you do anticipate readers. Should assimilation go on quietly or privately, at Kṛṣṇa's pace? Yet I must work for it also. Right now I am unsure what to say and what to withhold. Also, even if I speak, it will be awkward; it will be painful for some to hear; it will be controversial. Some things shouldn't be discussed.

~

January 10, noon

For two days I have been knocked out with the flu. This puts me in a new place, having to reconsider some things. I was taken away from the evening readings with my friends and I couldn't write in this journal. Furthermore, I am getting increasingly swamped with letters to answer, homework papers to read and grade, devotees to counsel, and so on.

~

January 11, 1:55 A.M.

This morning I spent my writing time in prayer. I want to pray to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja advised me in my first meeting with him last year that it is more important to pray to Prabhupāda than to pray to *caitya-guru*.

Chapter Three

Resuming Writing

"One should write transcendental literature to purify oneself, not for credit. By writing about the pastimes of the Lord, one associates with the Lord directly. One should not ambitiously think, 'I shall become a great author. I shall be celebrated as a writer.' These are material desires. One should attempt to write for self-purification. It may be published, or it may not be published, but that does not matter. If one is actually sincere in writing, all his ambitions will be fulfilled."

—C.c., Ādi 9.5, purport

*January 15, 12:30 Noon, 3 1/2 days after ceasing to write
"Returning From Pilgrimage"*

The sight of a stack of "Ecology" legal pads turned me on. I am gearing up to resume *Returning From Pilgrimage*.

I stopped writing because I suspected it was not true enough to my actual experience, but that's not a reason to stop writing, is it? Better to keep writing and make it true.

I also had a feeling that my experience should be private. It seemed too intrusive, to dig into sacred areas like my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda. The soul should be allowed a quiet time, seven weeks to read *rasika* works and to do whatever is best for my growth. I thought, "Why am I so eager to write a book?" Thinking like that, I convinced myself to focus the retreat on reading and *japa* reform. I decided to leave the "ambulance chasing" journalist behind.

Now that I have arrived at Śamika Ṛṣi's and I am pleased to live in the new room he created for my use—the writer doesn't seem to be such a bad guy after all.



Was I trying to write a romantic version of my re-entry into the West? Does that now make me a post-romantic? Still I read of Vraja; I am still true to what happened there.

4:25 P.M.

This is my *japa* chair. It is probably a bit too comfortable, but it is placed before a small table that is filled with pictures of holy Vṛndāvana. It also holds two votive candles. I plan to sit here and chant in the early morning. If I catch myself yielding to the too-soft nature of the chair and falling asleep, I will get up and walk. Other aids: a tape player and *bhajana* cassettes which I will play on low volume to help set the mood.

As time drew near for this scheduled retreat I thought, "Why not use it for the most important thing—the thing I do so poorly—*japa*? Make a sustained effort at improvement and take advantage of this solitude. It is more important than writing."

But it is inevitable that I turn again to writing. I don't want to write at the expense of my desire for *japa* reform. Therefore, I write about *japa*.

Mahārāja has helped me to understand the stages in *japa*. There is more to it than merely paying attention to the sound. But since I am still committing *pramāda*, I have to strive for *attention*.

My goals:

- 1) Attention to the sound of the names as I speak them clearly.
- 2) Regret at the fallen state of myself as a chanter.
- 3) To mix the recitation of *harināma* with remembrance of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-līlā. This can be aided by interspersing readings, looking at pictures from time to time, etc.
- 4) To intersperse *japa* with prayer, and before I begin, offer *praṇāma-mantras* to the *paramparā*.
- 5) To do *japa*-writing for self-help. *Nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇaś . . .* "The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is transcendently blissful. It bestows all spiritual benedictions for it is Kṛṣṇa Himself, the reservoir of all pleasure. . . ." (*Padma Purāṇa*).

•

Hear and remember the mild December evening when we sat beside Mahārāja on his bed. Some of us sat on the bed beside him while others sat on the floor. It was a rare chance to have him to ourselves for over an hour.

I asked him if I could write commentaries on *Prema-bhakti-candrikā* for Westerners. He proved that they who don't even practice *vaidhī-bhakti* and who don't know the ABCs of spiritual life, cannot possibly relish the *śṛṅgāra-rasa*. He said the poems of Narottama and devotees like him are exclusively for devotees who have that *bhāva* in their hearts. Mahārāja invites us, when we hear *śṛṅgāra-rasa* from him, to

pray that we too develop in our hearts the pure predilection for service to Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

It is essential to hear this again on tape and to recall and recapture it. Keep the flame alive.

January 16, 2:00 A.M.

I am an efficient chanter as I move through my *japa*, fingering the beads and reciting the holy name. I think of some *Padyāvalī* verses I read yesterday, that as soon as one begins to chant, Yamarāja goes far away. His accountant, Citragupta, worships the chanter's feet. Feel your way along.

I thought of reading about the life of Gaura-kiśora dāsa Bābājī, if I could find a reliable biography in translation. Great *sādhus* like him completed all their *bhajana* in intense *japa*. They lived outdoors and had no duties to perform in order to secure food and shelter. He gave his full time to chanting. I am not on that level, but it makes me think, "What duties do I perform in order to be given food and a place to rest?"

At present I have given *japa* good priority. You know you have slipped below the minimum level when you chant just to get the rounds completed. The chanting is Kṛṣṇa Himself. Everything you desire in spiritual life can be accomplished by fully serving the pure name—all Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes will manifest and everything will be understood. Pray: "Please let me use this precious early morning time, brief as it is, for the best activity." Pray not to lose or misuse these hours. Keep *trying* to enter the ocean. (I don't mean the ocean of *nāmāparādhās* where I usually helplessly dwell.)

It is the life I have waited for, to be alone and read and chant without pressure. If I actually have no inner life, then there is nothing interesting to say in this routine—but if I can enter a better world . . . *śravaṇam-kīrtanam*.

Last night, Madhumaṅgala and I took turns reading aloud from *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvan-āmṛta*. It was fun hearing Kṛṣṇa's breakfast pastimes, and before that, the private joking between Kuṇḍalatā and Rādhārāṇī. I think we will read it again at the end of day. I am putting together a routine of sublime activities; if I actually do them, then all I have to do is write them down. (But don't do them *just* so you can record them.)

Kṛṣṇa's minister of joking, Madhumaṅgala, invented his own analysis of "*rasa*" based on eating food. His ecstasies involved separation from sweet rice, and the fac-

tors which stimulated *prema* included seeing well-cooked *samosās*, etc. It reminded me of the jokes ISKCON devotees sometimes make; we take a few swipes at transcendental humor, but Viśvanātha Cakravartī expertly created a whole Sanskrit parody. Thus even pure devotees have fun in the company of Kṛṣṇa and His friends.

~

When I was in Vṛndāvana, a Godbrother said that the abrasion I feel by mixing with my brothers is good for me. He said I should laugh at myself for being so sensitive, and stay in the association of equals—how else can I learn of my shortcomings? He said that if I choose to stay alone or with a few disciples, then I will not have such problems, but neither will I be able to overcome my faults and make spiritual advancement.

I accept this line of reasoning, especially when there is some tangible gain in the association of peers. I stayed with them in Vṛndāvana because it was required if I wanted to hear from Mahārāja. I tried to serve them and take my subordinate place.

On the other hand, I don't think I should conclude that I shouldn't be alone. One shouldn't be afraid to mix with others nor to be alone with oneself.

My theme is not confined to reviving memories of Mahārāja in Vṛndāvana. There is also the theme of solitude: being alone with oneself to assimilate Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Being alone allows one to feel separation more fully. The scriptures say that one should practice *rasika-bhajana* by living alone and chanting and hearing.

~

I have begun a comparative reading of *Nectar of Devotion* and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. The second verse by Rūpa Gosvāmī states, "Although I am the lowest of men and have no knowledge, the Lord has mercifully bestowed upon me the inspiration to write transcendental literature about devotional service. Therefore I offer my obeisances at the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who has given me the chance to write these books" (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.2).

Verses like these inspire even tiny writers who aspire to follow the path of Rūpa Gosvāmī. I shouldn't doubt that Śrīla Prabhupāda has ordered me to write.

~

When we arrived here two nights ago, my room wasn't ready and I had to wait in Sarvesh's room. He is a freshman in college and has paperback books on his shelf which I knew were part of required reading in some American Literature courses. I saw *Winesbury, Ohio*, by Sherwood Anderson, *Black Boy*, by Richard Wright, *The*

Pearl, by John Steinbeck, *The Old Man and the Sea*, by Hemingway, *The Great Gatsby* by Scott Fitzgerald, and about ten others. He also had a few "Cliff Notes" (those little booklets that tell college kids the plots and meanings of the novels, so they can pass the exams without having to read the novels themselves). Why do I mention this? Because just now while chanting my thirteenth round and looking out the window, I felt drowsy. In that state of bondage I thought, "My chanting is like Sarvesh's reading of the American Literature Classics. They are essentially foreign to him and he is reading them only because he *has to*."



Listening to Mahārāja

Kṛṣṇa is *ātmārāma* and *āptakāma*. Although Kṛṣṇa is self-satisfied and all His desires are always fulfilled, yet He becomes hungry when He see His Vraja *bhaktas*. He goes to the lap of Yaśodā and takes her breast milk, and He goes to the lap of Nanda-bābā to receive kisses and hugs and a *laḍḍu*. When He sees Balarāma walking with the cows, and Śrīdāmā, Sudāmā, and Madhumaṅgala ready to go to the pasturing grounds, then He at once runs out of His parents' house to taste *sakhya-rasa*. When He sees the *gopīs*, He tries to satisfy them by doing whatever they want. "But when He sees Rādhikā, He becomes "out of sense." He forgets everything and he begins to serve Śrīmatī Rādhikā and to taste His *prema*. The *gopīs* taste *kṛṣṇa-prema*, but Kṛṣṇa is tasting *rādhā-prema*. (And to fulfill this idea, He came as Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu.)"



4:00 P.M.

There is always pain somewhere in the body with only brief respites in between. No pain can be stopped permanently. Time is getting shorter and my death is coming closer. There is no time to waste.

I try to spend my time in these two rooms constantly, enjoyably, studiously, prayerfully, moving from reading to writing. Let there be no duality between my search for Kṛṣṇa consciousness in *japa* and hearing and my expression of that in the written form. Like most ISKCON devotees, I am following Śrīla Prabhupāda's directions to maintain Kṛṣṇa consciousness in places all over the world. "Vṛndāvana is inspiration only. Our real field is worldwide preaching." I am at a stage where I had to leave Vṛndāvana, yet for the first time in my life, I am seriously trying to maintain the mood of Vraja which I tasted on my recent pilgrimage there.



Mahārāja is so strongly inclined to *gopī-mañjarī-bhāva* that just by being with him, one takes on that inspiration. If the audience has some greed, then Mahārāja exudes

the nectar of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa pastimes in the mood of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. His personal association is the crucial element for me.

January 17, 1:15 A.M., A dream

We were on our way to the San Francisco temple. It was a very rough neighborhood. We were stopped again and again and gradually robbed of everything we had. There were people in the neighborhood who didn't attack and rob, and they agreed to accompany us for a few blocks if we paid a "protection" fee. Then we stopped and did some work pushing carts underground, but there was so much traffic from people and horses pushing carts back above ground that it was difficult. We were treated just like horses. Then we had to spread paint. In the group I was with, there were always some who were interested in going to the temple, but it didn't seem we would ever arrive. As we discussed it, we realized that we didn't know where we could stay once we did arrive. Although I may have had some status as a senior devotee, that seemed to diminish and finally disappear as I became another struggling person just trying to avoid being knifed or robbed or thrown into perpetual distress.

When I awoke from this, I thought that my desire to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness is based on my attempt to avoid suffering. It reminded me that if I can't go back to Godhead at the end of this life, I might be thrust into this hellish material world where everyone is fighting.

I also thought of the theme of being far away from Vṛndāvana. Going to the San Francisco temple was a Western scene. Once you are in the West, this is what you have to face. There was no question of savoring *rasika* books now. This makes me think that while I have retreat or study time, I should use it completely and thoroughly.

I also have to understand the value of periods of solitude. Someone might say that *real* work means struggle, and that in solitude, one is trying to hide from that reality. One of the persons in the dream was a controversial, ex-ISKCON leader. I remember he was there even when I went to Vṛndāvana. My experience of Vṛndāvana was not one of getting away from the world—the ISKCON world is full of mixing. There is value, therefore, in finding a place alone. Being alone can give one strength. It is a luxury, a privilege, the blessing of guru. It can be used to build a foundation for the inevitability of coming out and dealing with the world.

When you start to think more of Prabhupāda, it will be obvious that you are deeply indebted to him and that you get all your strength from him. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja never said otherwise. If you think Prabhupāda's influence is less, that is your own immaturity.

•

What about the challenge that savoring the *bhakti-rasa* of Vraja is hiding from the real world? Śrīla Prabhupāda used to face the challenge that his disciples in the West were becoming escapists. We disciples used to sometimes reply that if one is in prison, then it is good if one can escape. Why stay? Why disbelieve that there is freedom once we get over the wall?

So the land of Vraja is the place one goes—never to return—once you escape the world of repeated birth and death. It is Kṛṣṇa's abode, not a *nirvāṇa* or void or temporary suspension of ego. One goes there by knowing and loving and serving Kṛṣṇa in this world. Loving to serve Kṛṣṇa in His Vraja feature is imperative. Knowing His topmost Vraja feature is the teaching of Lord Caitanya. By the highest attraction in the spiritual world, we will be pulled out from the lowest attractions and sufferings of the material world. Certainly it is a great blessing conferred by the *guru-paramparā*. Don't refuse it or say, "This is too good for us; we are fallen. We don't want to escape from the sufferings of this material world."

The charge of escapist might stick if we avoid the duties our guru has given us and if we do not preach.

•

Let the fear of the street remind you not to space out during your protected time for *japa*. Pray to the holy name for deliverance and to be released from sin and sinful reaction. Pray for the higher taste, you who have been constantly bounced around in the material world. Stay awake now during the time for spiritual enlightenment.

Always feel gratitude to your spiritual master and to all the bona fide Vaiṣṇavas in the Gauḍīya line. Never think Prabhupāda gave you something less. Your current intellectual-spiritual understanding of this may not be accepted as the official conservative policy of the institution, but we hope the time will come when it will be accepted. Don't be afraid to face your current conclusions, to refine them, and to be progressive. Prabhupāda wants nothing less than that.

•

Was it only a month ago that I was hearing Mahārāja speak in Bombay? It seems longer. He says Kṛṣṇa is the Kālanidhi and Rādhā is the Kalāvati. The conclusion is that although Kṛṣṇa possesses all the arts, Rādhā is the superior artist. "When there

is comparison, Kṛṣṇa will have to learn something from *prema-guru* Rādhikā. What to speak of Rādhikā, He will also have to learn from Viśākhā and Lalitā. So He comes to Godāvarī and meets Viśākhā there and learns so many things. Then He returns to Gambhīrā and tastes all these things. Without their help, He cannot taste all these things."

In this verse of *Vilāpa-kusumāñjali*, Kṛṣṇa is called Muradvīṣa. Why is Kṛṣṇa called by this name in a *rasika* verse? If one's heart is like Mura, he is not qualified to read the *līlā* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. He will have to first remove the demons. I pray that my Mura demons of sloth, past lust, and so on, may be driven out . . . I want to hear as I did that night, honor it with *faith*, and continue hearing.

~

I don't feel up to a heavy, disciplined study right now, but at least I should read regularly, both the books filled with philosophy and those that are pure nectar. That includes Prabhupāda's books.

Restlessly looking for something to start, I pick up Volume One of *Bhāgavata-sandarbhā*. Jīva Gosvāmī begins by defining Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān. He refers to Vyāsa's trance (as reported in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.7.4–10) in which Vyāsa saw that the Lord is different than the *jīvas*.

I think I need a diet of this sort and not exclusively *parakīya*. My lacking is the same no matter what I try to read and hear. I fail to love Kṛṣṇa as Rādhākānta and I fail to love Him as the controller of the *jīvas* and the material energy. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "The living entity is also required to revive his natural love and affection for the Lord and that is the highest perfection of the living entity. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* treats the conditioned soul with an aim to that goal of life" (*Bhāgavatam* 1.7.5).

I stand in danger of being like the man who lost his caste by eating with a Muslim but remained half-hungry. I have somehow lost my religious practice of reading Prabhupāda's books and yet I cannot enter the *rasika* texts.

Another problem: I read and forget. The more I read, the more I forget. Even if I spend all my time reading, I will recall very little of it. Yet that little bit . . . Any remembrance means I am in touch with Kṛṣṇa.

This is what I am seeking at this retreat—to connect deeply with reading and *japa*. I just want to return to the basics.

It is a great transcendental science and begins with the process of hearing and chanting the name, form, glory, etc., of the Supreme Per-

sonality of Godhead. Revival of the dormant affection or love of Godhead does not depend on the mechanical system of hearing and chanting, but it solely and wholly depends on the causeless mercy of the Lord. When the Lord is fully satisfied with the sincere efforts of the devotee, He may endow him with His loving transcendental service. But even with the prescribed forms of hearing and chanting, there is at once mitigation of the superfluous and unwanted miseries of material existence.

—*Bhāg.* 1.7.6, purport

I try to keep up with Mahārāja's pace, but I can't . . .

During *rāsa* dance, Kṛṣṇa leans against Rādhā and She leans against Him. He holds His *vaṁśī* in His right hand and His long left arm goes around Her left shoulder. His hand hangs down. Kṛṣṇa is in a very pleasant mood and is tasting all *mahā-bhāva*. He is changing colors.

Kṛṣṇa is sitting in the eyes of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and Rādhikā is sitting in the eyes of Kṛṣṇa, and They are talking only by the eyes. They speak by the corners of Their eyes what the tongue cannot speak.

When Kṛṣṇa sees all the *gopīs* playing with Him and dancing with Him, and when He removes the sweat and dust from their faces with His hand, then He is the supreme *rasika-nāyaka*. He is not behaving as Bhagavān, but as the best *nāyaka* in the whole world. Even Rāma and Nārāyaṇa are not so beautiful. And yet now, the *gopīs* think, "He is under me." The *gopīs* become fully mad, drinking this wine of possessive happiness.

Rādhikā saw, "Kṛṣṇa is such a cheater and a liar, *dhūrta* . . ." Kṛṣṇa tells Her that She is His best beloved, but now She sees He is loving all equally. "I will not look at Him or talk to Him." She became *mānini*. Kṛṣṇa tried to think of what to do.

He took Rādhā forcibly and disappeared from the *rāsa* dance. The other *gopīs* began to search for Kṛṣṇa in their *gopī* groups—Candrāvalī's group, Śyāmala's group . . . But Rādhā's group sought both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

The *Bhāgavatam* describes it indirectly. "Surely Kṛṣṇa must have loved this *gopī* the best." Kṛṣṇa is controlled by Her. Viśākhā, Lalitā, and the *mañjarīs* see Rādhā's footprints and they become cheerful that Kṛṣṇa has not gone alone, but with their *svāmīnī*.

Then from a distance, Rādhā's group saw Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the forest. Kṛṣṇa said, "Oh, the *gopīs* are coming. At once we should go to another hidden place."

Rādhā said, "I can't move." She was thinking, "I am so ungrateful to all my *sakhīs*, leaving them who are serving nearly and dearly to me, who give their lives to Me, leaving even Kṛṣṇa, they want to serve Me. So I am now tasting *kṛṣṇa-prema* alone, leaving all of them? Here is no Lalitā, Viśākhā or My Rati-mañjarī, Vilāsa-mañjarī . . . I don't want such love. I am the creeper and they are the leaves." So She pretended She could not move, hoping they would come.

But Kṛṣṇa saw that if the *gopīs* came and saw them together, they would become envious. They would quarrel and there would be no *rāsa* dance.

All this is being seen in an internal mood by Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī as Rati-mañjarī. He wants to serve and worship the all-fortunate shoulders of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī whom Kṛṣṇa embraces. Coming to his outer senses, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī begins to weep.

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It is evening and I have nothing to say. After all, this is not Vṛndāvana. There is a soft, white moon in the blue sky. It is mid-January, 5:00 P.M. Isn't this also God's country? But it is not Vṛndāvana. I burn a votive candle and feel the quiet of this house. The moon is so white and full through the branches of the leafless trees. The heat creaks through the wall panels and a neighbor's dog barks a few times.

In Vṛndāvana I knew I could write whatever I observed and it would be close to Kṛṣṇa. Vraja is special. Where am I now? Is it worthless to record my vision of the full moon because it shines over Pennsylvania?

~

7:00 P.M.

When I was in India, one of the devotees wrote me several times that I shouldn't allow myself to fall back into my former *vaidhī* conception of things just because I was becoming bewildered—as when I made awkward steps in my relationship with Mahārāja, or when my patience was tested in various ways. That advice occurs to me again. It seems easier to go back to former ways and to justify it as loyalty to Prabhupāda. How can I imply that the *rasika* cultivation is unreal for me? But the fact is, something new has happened to me. I will have to make a significant adjustment in my life. This is a separation phase now. The white winter moon is picturesque and within Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but don't forget Vraja.

~

January 18, 2:20 A.M.

I overslept. Last night was filled with dreams of no special import. When I finally awoke, I recalled that at least once during the night I heard the word “Rādhikā” as if spoken by Mahārāja. Or maybe I heard it on waking.

•

Doing rounds at a faster clip. *So what?* But I can’t be cynical about small improvements. Sitting straight up on the floor instead of on the soft rocker was a big improvement. And I didn’t drowse. But I don’t *listen*. It’s no wonder because I don’t put any feeling or prayer into the words. I recall a line from *Prema-bhakti-candrikā* where Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says, “Tell the ear to listen and it may rebel.” I am fighting against strong, old habits. These habits are not just from the vast stretches of time in my pre-Kṛṣṇa conscious lives, but the years of mechanical *japa*. Hope for reform is quixotic, it seems. But if I persist sincerely, then Kṛṣṇa may help, and all mountains of doubt and bad habits can be smashed to powder.

Besides, even if mountains aren’t leveled within the next few months, I have to give *japa* priority time. Keep noting it, without fear of repetition: “You don’t actually feel or hear what you are doing”.

•

5:00 A.M.

Girirāja Swami speaking on *Nectar of Devotion*: one of the six characteristics of *uttama-bhakti* is its rarity. Even if one performs many years of *sādhana*, one cannot attain *bhāva-bhakti* until Kṛṣṇa is pleased. Girirāja Swami said that pure *bhakti* occurs in the *sādhana* stage too, as does the *guru’s* mercy, but we receive that mercy in installments. Some mercy comes in the *sādhana* stage, some in the *bhāva* stage, and some in the *prema* stage. The science is all laid out; gradually, slowly we traverse the ground. But it is rare. Also, Kṛṣṇa has to *give* Himself to a pure *bhakta*, so He wants to be sure of the *bhakta’s* purity before allowing Himself to be conquered. What if the devotee actually wants something from Kṛṣṇa? Kṛṣṇa sees what is in our hearts.

•

“What?”—Mahārāja says it bluntly, and yet he is soft. As I write here, I find it hard to think anything that isn’t borrowed from someone else. Last night, Madhu, squint-eyed and puffy-faced from the flu said, “I am trying not to be attached to this body.” Sickness teaches us that all bodily identification results in misery. So that’s our fate—attached to the body and not to Kṛṣṇa. We push on with our *vaidhī-bhakti*. Pure devotional service is very rare.

•

Remember shovelling snow? Get out there and work. The snow keeps falling and I will have to shovel again in a few hours. I relate this to my *sādhana* attempts, my chanting and reading. Everything is getting blanketed in heavy forgetfulness, but I keep going out to shovel. I have new, warm gloves now.



You can think of Mahārāja, but you can't go and see him in India without a great endeavor. Did you think you could nod out at your desk and walk in your mind across seas and continents to be outside his door? In your mind's eye, you can see the brown Berkey shoes Girirāja Swami gave him, and beside them, the wooden slippers with some flower petals thrown on them. You can put your head there. But in any case, it wouldn't be easy to speak with him alone. Besides that, I don't have much to say. "I am trying to assimilate. I hear the cassettes. I have to travel. I write . . ."

(On the *Nectar of Devotion* tape, someone asked G.S. a question about who is referred to by *guru*. G.S. said, "All Vaiṣṇavas are *gurus*. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī bowed to one hundred and eight Vaiṣṇavas every day just to get the dust of their lotus feet on his head. So the more dust from the more Vaiṣṇavas feet you can get, It is good for you." I liked to hear that. It is so simple and clear in Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*.



"Child Kṛṣṇa approached a *gopī* and carefully placed His lips against her lips, His neck against her neck, His eyes against Her eyes, and His forehead against her forehead. Speaking sweetly, He explained that He was, after all, only a small child . . ." (*Padyāvalī*, verse 136)



Have faith in each little step you take. Each step is *sādhana*; it is bona fide, it is sincere. You read a few verses from the beginning of *Bhāgavata-sandarbhā*. You don't write an essay on it or memorize it or turn to read a similar section in Prabhupāda's purports. Those would be additional, ambitious acts, but they don't negate the little good of your own reading. Similarly, you write down something and you keep on chanting. All these little goods added together will equal *daivi-saṁpat*, accumulated spiritual assets. That is how I am looking at it.



Am I trying to launch too many reading boats at once? Mahārāja said that when he reads *Gītā-Govinda*, he doesn't want to read anything else. He goes on living in it and re-reading it exclusively. Then when he is reading the *Gopī-gītā* (or whatever else), he experiences the same absorption.

I am trying to taste different books. I can't taste every book to the full extent yet, so sometimes I think reading a different book will be more suitable for me right now. So I have turned to Śrīla Prabhodānanda Sarasvatī's *Śrī Śrī Rādhā-rasa-suddha-nidhi*, as it is translated by Daśaratha-suta dāsa. His introductory material is appealing. He quotes Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, " . . . it is without a doubt matchless in the entire universe. By reading this book, one experiences a happiness that has nothing to do with the happiness felt by those who are fond of reading ordinary books."

I have heard criticisms of the translation, but I want to enter this ambrosia. I begin with faith. I am voluntarily hopeful. Also I have some trust that my critical faculties will separate what is good for me from what I cannot use.

I began reading aloud, a good method if you can do it. I want to pursue the mood of *Rādhā-dāsi* and this is one of the main books.

•

A working principle in all that I am doing, as described in *Bhāgavata-sandarbha*:

"O Supreme Lord, because You are self manifest (*svanu bhāvat*), unless You choose to reveal Yourself to someone, there is no other means to understand You" (*Bhāg.* 10.14.6). To this Jīva Gosvāmī adds, "Although no one has, by his own merit, the ability to understand Kṛṣṇa, if one worships Him by performing devotional service, the Lord voluntarily appears before that devotee."

•

Mahārāja tells how Kṛṣṇa gets up in the morning:

"He is sleeping late because He was up all night with *rāsa* dance pastimes. Mother Yaśodā is calling to Him, 'O Lal, wake up! Śrīdāmā, Sudāmā, Madhumaṅgala, and Baladeva are here, and the cows are waiting.' She leans over Him and sprinkles some water on His face. Paurṇamāsī is with her. Yaśodā carefully examines Kṛṣṇa's body to see if there are any scratches. The boys sit on His bed.

"Mother Yaśodā asks, 'How did You get these scratches?'

"Madhumaṅgala replies, 'He was playing with the *sakhīs*.' (*Sakhis* in Sanskrit can mean either masculine or feminine.) Kṛṣṇa signals to him with His eyes 'Don't tell.' These waking pastimes of Kṛṣṇa are being told at *Yavāṭ* to Rādhā by one of Her *sakhīs* who witnessed it at Nandagrama."

Hearing the sound is not as full as being there with Mahārāja and the others—and yet the softness and fragrance is there. Faith comes by hearing. This is what I want to tell my friends, that Mahārāja creates the reality of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes for us. I don't

want to lose this. But I don't know how to keep it except to hear it, tell you, and then go back for more.

॥

I explained to my intimate friend whom I haven't seen in six months: my spiritual life is composed of ninety-eight percent *vaidhī* (like a big land mass that starts underground and rises up like a mountain). On the top of this is a new two percent flourishing aspiration to hear *rāgānugā* topics. I want to acknowledge my ninety-eight percent identity and yet not jeopardize the little creepers blowing in the breeze who desire to push out flower buds like *tulasī-mañjarīs*.

॥

Hopes the night before

I always feel hopeful about the next morning's *japa*. Maybe It is not warranted. Let me not analyze it so much; just accept it. See the sitting mat, votive candles in glasses, three shelves of pictures, boxes of memoirs from Rādhā-kuṇḍa and other places, a bottle of Rādhā-kuṇḍa water, incense, my beads

Try tasting some of it directly now, *harināma-japa*. And your humble plea in writing, "O *Harināma*, please forgive my offenses. When I come to You in the morning, please overlook my mistakes. Please appear in my heart."

Chapter Four

Letting Go

"We have not taken a vow to boycott the *gopīs*."

January 19, 2:45 A.M.

I finished eight rounds while sitting up in a darkened room. The votive candles illumined the holy pictures, and the moon shone full through the windows. A few times, I tried recalling that my nature is very fallen.

This is a brief report of it: Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa.

I may not make full progress in this lifetime. It isn't the worst thing that could happen to me, but it seems likely that I will have to take birth again. Will I ever just accept it as a matter of fact, that the higher powers will transfer me to my next life? Let it be, as Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura prays, as an insignificant life in the family of devotees. At least give me proximity to the pure chanting and hearing of Lord Kṛṣṇa's name and pastimes.

As I wait for death, I don't want to waste my time in defeat. Go forward expectant that someone like me can still make significant gains. Be happy to begin to taste the nectar.

But you have to admit this (and care about it): so much about me seems closed and implacable, like a wizened Chinese man. Who knows what goes on within his mind and heart? Is there a warm heart at all? Before I can feel regret, I will have to admit that I am closed to those feelings. Why don't I open to the truth about myself, the real truth, and live in *that*? Why am I living in the back room of my self with only a small light on?

•

My mornings are long and filled with the heavy training befitting an Olympic athlete. Be alert. Even as I run through my *japa* like a conscientious runner, there may be moments when I find myself on my knees begging to serve. Watch for that moment.

•

... Conversing with the Lover of Vraja ...
Each and every syllable
discharging oceans of sweetness
swelling with the purest honey-nectar of *rasa*
Śrī Rādhike!
When will I ever hear such talks of Yours
from close by?

—*Rādhā-rasa-suddha-nidhi*

We are usually so busy that we don't even notice we weren't able to read books like this in the past. Now, we might also fail to appreciate that this "little" gain is worthwhile: "I slowed down and was able to hear the nectarean music of Kṛṣṇa consciousness." After a class last week, a serious devotee asked me, "When I read about Kṛṣṇa's flute, there is no way I can relate it to any experience. What can I do?" I want to be able to answer such questions from my own experience and realization.

•

I have to become more humble. You say you want to improve chanting? Then the most essential element is *trṇād api sunīcena* . . . For example, guruship is a great responsibility. You cannot goof off and be silly with hundreds of people expecting you to guide them in the most important way. There are many ways to be a silly ass; you have to strive to avoid them.

But humility doesn't mean being focused on yourself as grave, as guru. You have to be able to laugh (or cry) at yourself. Humility includes being a well-loved servant of the devotees. It means not indulging in sensual or mental gratification. It means not living only for yourself.

Think of what it means to be humble. If you have no idea and no practice, then how can you chant the holy name? How can you read in that mood?

•

One thing I would like to write of is Prabhupāda talking about the *sahajiyās* in 1976. I heard it on a tape this morning. I felt annoyed that a few of the ISKCON leaders seemed to be setting Prabhupāda up to "kill" a deviant group. The leaders themselves did not seem fair or even learned about what it meant to hear and chant the Tenth Canto pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. Still, with all those possible distortions of time, place, and persons, Prabhupāda gives a heavy warning against the *prākṛta-sahajiyās*. He emphasizes that hearing Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa-līlā* is for liberated persons.

There are different statements to this effect in Prabhupāda's books. Sometimes Prabhupāda writes liberally that the hearing of Kṛṣṇa's *mādhurya* pastimes will cure our material disease. Other times, he states that we should not hear *mādhurya-līlā* until we are completely cured of the disease. If hearing is properly guided as in the *Kṛṣṇa* book, and if the hearers are at least qualified by following the rules and regulations and by being serious in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then Prabhupāda allows it. "We have not taken a vow to boycott the *gopīs*." In Prabhupāda's quick response to the "*sahajiyā* menace" in 1976 in L.A., he criticized people who didn't follow the rules and regulations and who were interested only in hearing about the *rāsa* dance in order to support their own illicit sex.

Prabhupāda's morning walk in 1976 has a historical context. It cannot exactly be applied to devotees now, more than sixteen years later. Those very same devotees who were condemning inquiry into the Tenth Canto, and who were citing to Prabhupāda the reference that we should not read past the First and Second Cantos until we become free of material desire—those same devotees are now sixteen years older. It may be that they have studied the first nine cantos of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and are ready for the Tenth. It may be that if Prabhupāda were present and they approached him now, not with the aim of lynching a group who were misusing their new-found curiosity in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but to sensitively inquire about *rasa*, he might have responded differently than the impromptu smashing he gave the "*Gopī Bhāva*" club in 1976.

Some of the points that Prabhupāda made were no doubt in the category of permanent instructions. For example, one should be very careful not to listen to Rādhā-kuṇḍa *bābājīs* who disagree with the conclusions of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. There are still *bābājīs* at Rādhā-kuṇḍa who propagate conclusions opposed to the conclusions of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Prabhupāda's warning still stands. But we can study the bona fide teachings of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who is favored by Rādhārāṇī, whose teachings are described in his *praṇāma-mantra* as "enriched in the conjugal mellows of Kṛṣṇa consciousness," and who is a follower of Rūpa Gosvāmī. The time has come that we may understand with proper guidance Prabhupāda's teachings in the fourth chapter of *Ādi-līlā*, the eight chapter of *Madhya-līlā*, and most of the *Antya-līlā*.

•

I can't tell of that round I just chanted because it was devoid of *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. Some things were better today, like when Sarvesh asked me to help him write his term paper on the history and literary value of the *Vedas*. Or when Śamīka Ṛṣi asked me,

"What is *siddha-praṇālī*? Is it required for one to go back to Godhead, or can you learn all that when you enter the spiritual world?" I repeated to him Śrīla Prabhupāda's criticism of the so-called *siddha-praṇālī*, but I told him he would have to know who he was before he could serve Kṛṣṇa directly in Goloka Vṛndāvana. These were some of my better moments today, although it meant being interrupted by meetings.

•

Unlike *Shack Notes*, I seem to be waiting for a particular mood before I can write. I keep thinking that I have to first build up credit before I can spend it in the writing. But that's not true, is it? Shouldn't I go on living and writing in any mood? There is the example of the expert dancer who dances even on a hill. The unqualified dancer reported that he did not perform his art. "Why not?" "Because there was a hill."

Don't be so distrustful of yourself that if an hour goes by without reading, you will have to cancel your contract to write about your study retreat. Don't doubt your intentions so much. Just try to describe whatever little drops you can capture from the ocean of *bhakti*.

•

January 20, 1:30 A.M.

I am not waiting until I look cute or have fresh *tilaka* on my forehead. Later I'll bathe and dress, but now . . . Śrīla Prabhupāda told me that although it is all right to prepare my lectures in advance, I should be ready to speak at a moment's notice. Prabhupāda, you know I love you. You know you saved me from hell. You know, Śrīla Prabhupāda, that we are born *mlecchas* and have deviation and quarrel in our blood. You wait for me patiently. You had to be stern. I am working my way back.

•

Cintāmaṇi-prakara-sadmasu kalpa-vṛkṣa . . . I wake with the strains of Jagadīśa Goswami's melody in my mind. I want to hear it again as he sang it in Prabhupāda's room on the anniversary of his disappearance this year. They asked me to do the *ārati*. I blew the conch in long, sustained "trumpet" sounds filled with feeling. Someone said that that time in the room (1991) changed his life permanently. I thought to myself, "Permanently? How can you say? Time will test you."

Keep going. Worship your Lord. First offer *daṇḍavats*. Pray to Prabhupāda and then to the *paramparā*, going back through the *ācāryas* to Kṛṣṇa. I try, but I become restless before I reach Yavāṭ and Nandagram. What? No time to think of Kṛṣṇa milking the cows and blowing on His flute? No time to think of Rādhā swooning in happiness when She hears His flute song? "Well," I think, "better get to actual *japa*. Start counting them. I'll think of Yavāṭ later."

Cartoon: A boat on the water. One big smoke stack, smoke blowing eastward. Two stick figures on desk. One asks, "Where are we now?" The other replies, "Just keep going." Far to the left we see the word "Goloka" surrounded by effulgence.

Caution and greed.

Greed don't mean eating sweet balls and muffins. You can't digest so much, and Prabhupāda said, "An old man can't eat too little and a young man can't eat too much."

Prabhu, I like to hear you say "Prabhupāda said." You say, "A young man can't eat too much!" Do I have a young man in me too?

Sure you do. We're all young boys.

On my tenth round, I drowsed. Better quit for now. I'll be back. Know who you are. Pure devotees with *ruci* don't do as you do. Their taste is not distracted by other thoughts that come into the mind. It is Kṛṣṇa they think of, and Rādhā, in the combined names, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

I advise you to keep distant from so much mail when you want to chant. I know those other thoughts are sometimes useful in service, but they do frighten away the birds of *harināma* that were resting in your tree. "You invited us to chant and then you got distracted. You disappoint us. But we are coming to expect it."

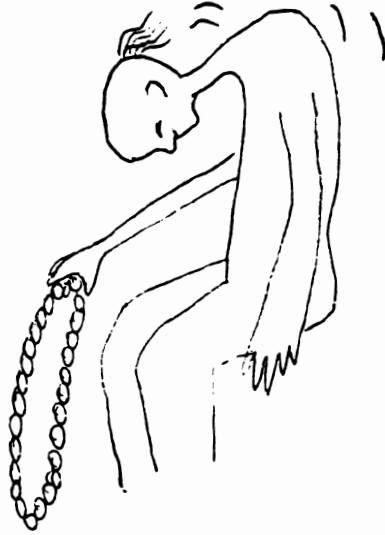
You know those "home programs" in ISKCON congregational life where Indians and others come together for *kīrtana*, lecture, and *prasādam*? Often there is more social mixing than anything else. It is beneficial in any case, since a *sannyāsī* speaker is usually present, and the meal is offered to Kṛṣṇa and honored as *prasādam*. But mainly it's socializing. Well, my *japa* is something like that. The deep purpose is missing.

I can't keep awake.

Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā appear in Their names. It's the hardest thing to do, to control the mind. It's like trying to control the wind. So you try to stimulate your attraction to Kṛṣṇa by hearing of Him.

Woman trying to attract a man: she walks by in his mind. Sleep visits him and throws a fistful of "sand" in his eyes. He starts thinking sleep is good, it is wakefulness which is violent and unnatural. No. . . I don't want to slide over. Sleeping is a waste of . . .

That man has his head forward, leaning toward his chest. I don't know what we can do for him. Give him a spoon of Chyavan Prash. He needs *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, but you have to stay awake to take it.



Mahārāja's accents, expressions, how he sometimes softly claps his hands. "Rādhikā says, 'I don't remember anything of what Kṛṣṇa did with Me. I don't remember. I know We met, but I was in such a state then that I can't remember it. Going to see Kṛṣṇa was like wandering on a dark, moonless night. Meeting with Him was like seeing the sudden flash of lightning in the dark. It has blinded Me and left Me in even deeper darkness. But I am feeling great separation from Him.'

"Śyāmala then says, 'Rādhā, You should go again to Your *prema-guru* and He can teach You what You say You have forgotten.'

"Rādhā says, 'O Śyāmala-sakhī, you are so brilliant. You remember everything. So you should go to Kṛṣṇa.'

"Śyāmala says, 'I have come to see You this morning just to bathe in *prema-sarovara* (the ocean of prema which is Rādhā's love for Kṛṣṇa).'"

Mahārāja encouraged me to repeat in my own words what I have heard from him.

Mother Yaśodā is worried that Kṛṣṇa seems to be growing thinner every day. How will He grow stronger and wiser? So Yaśodā calls Paurṇamāsī and asks her what to

do. "My son doesn't eat anything I cook. He just picks at it indifferently. But I have heard that Jaṭilā's daughter-in-law has received a benediction from Durvāsa Muni that whatever She cooks will be delicious and give long life and power to whoever eats it. Therefore I want Rādhā to come here and cook for Kṛṣṇa. I have loved Rādhikā as my own daughter ever since Her birth. Can you arrange for this, Paurṇamāsī?"

Paurṇamāsī says, "Jaṭilā is very quarrelsome. She will take it as a lowering of her prestige to send her daughter-in-law to you at your request. But I will try to arrange it."

Kuṇḍalatā went on behalf of Mother Yaśodā. When Jaṭilā heard the request she became furious. "Yaśodā should send *her* daughter-in-law to *my* house! I won't send Rādhā there."

Then Yoga-māyā went to Yavāt. Jaṭilā and the young *gopīs* all came out and worshiped her feet. Paurṇamāsī returned the blessings. "May you be blessed with your desires." For Rādhā this meant, "May Kṛṣṇa come under Your control." Rādhikā and Her companions smiled and returned to their rooms.

Then Paurṇamāsī said to Jaṭilā, "Are you all right?"

Jaṭilā replied, "No, some of my cows have died and my son has no child, so I am unhappy. My wealth isn't as great as Nanda-bābā, or Vṛṣabhānu, so I pray to you to give me all these."

"Oh, you want my blessing? I have heard that Vrajarāṇī sent a message to you and you rejected her request. That is why your cows have died. And I see in my meditation that if you don't carry out Yaśodā's orders, then all your cows will die and everything will be spoiled. If you give Yaśodā her request, you will have everything: a grandson, wealth, cows, and so on."

Then Jaṭilā ordered Kuṇḍalatā to tell Rādhā She could go to Yaśodā's house to cook. Kuṇḍalatā says, "I told Her but She said, 'I will not go in any case. I am not a cooker of anyone. So I shall not go. They abuse Me, especially my mother-in-law, that I have an affection for some black person. I don't want to see His face. I will never go.'"

Jaṭilā thought if Rādhā didn't go, then Paurṇamāsī's predictions would come true, so Jaṭilā requested all the *sakhīs* to convince Rādhā. Jaṭilā also heard that Yaśodā had many gold ornaments and would give them to Jaṭilā. This made Jaṭilā's mouth water.

The *gopīs* requested Rādhā, but she still refused. In the end, she agreed.

Rādhā looks at Herself in a mirror. She thinks, "If Kṛṣṇa sees this beauty, He will be cheerful." Rati-mañjarī knows this inner mood of Rādhā. Rati dresses and decorates Rādhikā.

In this mood, Rādhā, Rati, Lalitā, Viśākhā and all the *sakhīs* go to Nandagram. Halfway there, they reach Ter Kadamba where Kṛṣṇa is wrestling with the boys and showing affection to the cows and calves. When Kṛṣṇa sees the *gopīs* he thinks, "How shall I reach them?"

Lalitā addresses Rādhā, "We should go by another path. This path is dangerous because of that black boy. He is like a black snake who can bite."

Rādhā says, "I am *not* afraid of Him. I will go by this path." Kṛṣṇa is milking on the side of the path, waiting anxiously for the *gopīs* to come near enough for Him to do something. When they come close, Kṛṣṇa squirts milk from the cow's teat and Rādhā's face becomes white. All begin laughing.

~

Tufted titmice fly onto snowy branches. New snow weighs down the evergreen boughs. The neighbor's young prince is pulled around on a plastic sled in his backyard. I feel a twinge in my eye, so I won't go for my walk today. A friend sent a new medical book saying the source of headaches could be anger. "So when you feel the first signs, stop and think. 'Am I becoming angry? Why?'" Even if you can't trace your anger, the doctor claims the headache goes away. Sounds too simple.

The breeze blows snow into the air. The path leads into the woods where my summer shack is. I received a letter from a Christian whom I wrote to while I was in Vṛndāvana. I had alluded to him that I was entering further into specifics of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship and I tried to hint that this was much better than the impersonal speculation he was indulging in. I also wrote him frankly that ecumenism didn't interest me so much anymore. Today he wrote back to tell me he has given up impersonalism in favor of simple devotion to God the Father, as exemplified by Christ. He is feeling new gratitude to Śrīla Prabhupāda for teaching pure *bhakti*. He wrote, "I want to become a Kṛṣṇa conscious Christian." He says that my speaking of my own adventures in Vṛndāvana gave him "shivers." Maybe he thought I was saying I am becoming very advanced, so to correct that I wrote him today, "I have come back to the West and discovered I have the same *anarthas*."

Tufted titmouse, will you return?

~

6:10 P.M.

I have to push myself to do this free-writing. Is it *vaidhī* or *rāgānugā*? Am I a big husky guy or am I skinny and sallow-faced? Who am I? When the body dies, can the soul speak of its own journey as Nārada directed him to do when the son of Citraketu died, or the son of Śrīvāsa?

It snowed a bit in the afternoon, just a few slow flakes. My headache gradually eased and I was able to resume my reading of *Nectar of Devotion*. It has been a quiet day. I hope to be better tomorrow. Nothing extraordinary may happen, but at least I can keep going. That's the important thing—not to stop. I may have the face of a monkey, like a *vānara* assistant of Rāma. Why do I think that? Why does that image hover so palpably in the air?

~

O Vraja, I am so far away from you. Please, can I directly address someone? My spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda? Don't say (who says?) that I cannot address anyone because if I can't, then I am utterly alone. And God doesn't want me to feel that way.

It is cold out. That means a bottle of whiskey for some, or crime—the jagged panes of anger. All are told, "Love God and be kind to others." What can it mean to someone shivering in the cold of illusion? There are millions of cities—all bigger than that little dirt town of Vṛndāvana in Uttar Pradesh, India. Vṛndāvana has poor electrical lines—sometimes they glow and flames shoot out—it has no central heating; it is an insignificant place. But from our viewpoint, Vṛndāvana is the hub of the world. Boston is not the hub, or Chicago, or New York or Los Angeles or London, Paris, Moscow. A small town named Vraja is the hub.

When that earth tremor occurred, all the Vraja-*vāsīs* started shouting, "Rādhē! Rādhē!" and running to the Yamunā. They took it as a divine manifestation of *prema-bhakti* and were ready to die in some *līlā*. The poverty and elegance of New York City are appalling and ignorant compared to Vṛndāvana.

~

January 21, 1:10 A.M.

Tambula is also known as *pan* or betel. The *mañjarīs* prepare it by finding the fresh leaf, putting spices on it, and then folding it into a cone. Respectable Vaiṣṇavas don't eat it nowadays, at least not where I come from. But in India it is a little different. We are so far away from the traditions. One day we were sitting with Mahārāja and a follower presented him with a *tambula* leaf. He broke it into small pieces and gave us each a bit. I put mine in my mouth and since I avoid chewing leaves (even *tulasī*

leaves) because they stick in my teeth, I took it out while no one noticed. Later a brother said to me, "That was a first-time experience, eating *tambula*. What did you think of it?" I had nothing to say.



"Dear Lord of the *bhaktas*, I don't want to go back to Godhead leaving behind the poor fools." That's what Prahlāda said. But Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura also said we should ignore the demons, as is befitting a *madhyama* preacher. Mixing with demons only increases their ridicule of the Supreme Lord, "thus further deteriorating their polluted existence." The preacher should avoid imitating the Lord's pastimes of apparently hating the demons and he should avoid them because "there is danger that his mind will become bewildered by such association [of powerful atheists]" (*Bhāg.* 11.2.46 purport). So the Vaiṣṇava preacher meditates how to save envious people, but he discriminates in how he gives them mercy.

We follow directions like these. Tricky decisions have to be made constantly along the way. *Mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*.

I pray my hesitating pen will find the right course.

But what conviction do I have that today will be any different than yesterday? What hope that I will become that much more advanced? Partly I could tell myself, "Have faith in the process itself." We all have to have that. Then I could tell myself to apply myself more. Reading sacred texts will have a good effect. As for making huge, quantam leaps ahead, why should I expect it to be so easy? Prayer is prayer. When it is sincere, it always seems to bring us back to the beginning stage. We have to admit we are struggling to remember Kṛṣṇa, that we don't really *love* Kṛṣṇa, and we have to beg for tears of remorse. Our goal is to one day assist Kṛṣṇa's intimate associates. We need to practice more and more.

Pray to serve, and serve, and serve. I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda say with conviction—and experience—in his voice, "The preacher is not afraid to go to heaven or hell for Kṛṣṇa. He *will go to hell to preach*." The devotee-preacher will do whatever Kṛṣṇa wants; he takes the holy names and distributes them to everyone he meets.

For me, this preaching spirit should be nondifferent than my internal cultivation. They are both ultimately part of the same state. They are both part of spontaneous love. Neither preaching nor prayer is external. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura prays, "My offenses ceasing, taste for the name increasing, when in my heart will your mercy shine? . . . When kindness to all beings will be appearing, with free heart forget myself comforting, Bhaktivinoda in all humility prays, now I will set out to preach Your order sublime" (*Kabe ha'be bolo*, verses 1, 8).

Vṛndāvana is the place to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, the best place to relish Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is what we hope for those to whom we give free meals at our "Food for Life" booths.

Japa report

While chanting early this morning in the perfect quiet, I began to hear the far-away drone of a small-engined airplane. I wondered, "How could such a small plane fly at 3:00 A.M. over an unlit area?" Then I thought of the lonely pilot in the cockpit. Somehow, I too am hovering high above, lost, not focused.

I don't think and feel when I chant. I get up and restless, turn on the light. A verse from *Padyāvalī*: Kṛṣṇa's tricky flute music stuns the *gopīs*. They leave their homes without consideration of family or protection. But I wonder, "What has that got to do with me chanting my fourth round?"

The purpose of this written "report" is not to hit myself on the head. Poor *japa* is punishment in itself. I am thinking of my thoughtful Godbrothers who also work to improve their *japa*, and of younger devotees who look to us for a sign. How can we help each other?

I have no doubt in the process, but for myself, I can't seem to focus. I wander like a little plane in the sky with no worthy mission, it seems.

"Why fly at this hour? You're just an amateur. You have no radar. There is nothing you can do that can't be accomplished better by the big jets. Why don't you come down and stop disturbing our sleep?"

That pilot won't listen. He *must* fly. He's a *vaidhī-bhakta*. He is deeply impelled by something beyond himself.

I ask forgiveness. "Where am I in comparison to the all-auspicious chanting of the holy name of Lord Nārāyaṇa?" (*Bhāg*.6.2.34). Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says, "I fall at the Lord's feet having taken this *mahā-mantra*" (*Aruṇodaya-kīrtana*).

Olympic decathlon: they go from swimming long distance, to running cross-country, to leaping hurdles, to lifting weights. We have our own devotional decathlon—our *japa* and prayers and reading and *kīrtana* and writing . . .

So what do you want, a gold medal? Rādhē! I hear Prabhodānanda Sarasvatī's verses of glorification. I want to hear more and more, to go on hearing even when I travel in airplanes, even when I am walking or meeting others or alone in my van in Europe. I want to hear how Rādhā plays a duet with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, She on *vīṇā* and He on flute, as They sit on the banks of the Yamunā. I want to hear how Rādhā's

*mañjarī*s want nothing else but to stay near Her forest cottage and to hear the soft tinkling of Her bracelets as She speaks softly to Mādhava.

~

Not waiting for inspiration, no time left in this life for studying Sanskrit, not much use left for English structures either.

My morning *sādhana* practice is like practicing jump shots in a big empty gymnasium. I used to practice those one-handed jump shots until I got good at it, but I was always too short and too shy to be a “jockstrap” in my high school days. Ah, if only I had known of devotion to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa then. If only I had known the protection of my guru. What a wasted youth! So now in the swiftly diminishing hours of my life, I burn a candle and wish I could pray. To become a deer living in Vraja, or a peacock messenger, something connected to *mañjarī* service, to *guru-sevā*. Thank you, Gurudevā, for rescuing me. Please allow me, O Lord of the senses, some life duration and concentration on chanting and hearing the most splendid pastimes, beyond all study; let me practice my Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *mantras* and one day please You in a simple way.

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Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī said that every creeper, every tree, every creature in Vṛndāvana is an eternal associate of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. They help Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā* of meeting. I bow to them all and desire the dust of their feet.

Mahārāja said that he heard from a reliable source about a man who came to Vṛndāvana to do *sādhana* and *bhajana*. This man used to pass stool in the groves. But once when he sat down, he heard a sweet voice saying, “What are you doing here? I am doing devotional service for Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and you are so shameless? You are passing stool here?” The man did not answer but felt ashamed. He realized that every creeper in Vṛndāvana is a devotee. He bowed down and cleaned the area.



So many things are seen in Vṛndāvana. If we want to do *bhajana* there we should not see faults in the residents of Vraja. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu warned devotees not to live for many days in Vṛndāvana because they will commit offenses. They will think the residents ignorant fools. We should offer *praṇāmas* to all.

When Sanātana Gosvāmī went from village to village, he would ask people, "How are you? Your sons are better? Your daughters and wife?" He collected all the news even though he had no relation with such worldly matters. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī said, "If I am invited to Dvārakā or Vaikuṇṭha, I will never go, but I will go to the doors of the *vrajavāsīs* and hear of their family matters. I will take the remnants of their food, even dry *rotis*. I will be in Vṛndāvana, in Rādhā-kuṇḍa, and never go anywhere else."

Mahārāja spoke in this mood one night in Bombay, but I had forgotten about it until just now when in my room in Stroudsburg, I heard the tape. I cannot estimate Vṛndāvana or appreciate it, but at least I can hear the praises spoken by the devotees of Vṛndāvana. Mahārāja *wants* us to hear, not only some nebulous descriptions of Vṛndāvana spoken by those without love; he wants us to hear of the *aprākṛta* realm, the place one can apparently travel to today.

•

Reading remarks

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's "*Rūpānuga-bhajana-darpana*" is filled with crucial information on *rasa*, all worth memorizing. Am I capable of that? Write it on index cards?

The joy of reading—you advocate finding that joy even though you don't put in such long hours searching for it yourself.

Without regular reading, how do you expect to recall Kṛṣṇa's Vraja pastimes? And if *those* pastimes are not on your mind, then what is? You know.

I have to use my eyes to read. The optician said my vision is like 40-80, but with glasses, I see 20-20. He gave me a glossy pamphlet about glaucoma and other eye diseases with hard-to-pronounce names and told me they are likely to come with old age. If one is not careful, one can gradually become blind, but even for one who takes good care of his eyes, the light will gradually dim. When this happens to me, I will be forced to listen to others reading. And if my hearing goes, I will be dependent on my memories. Ultimately, I can just touch the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇavas and run my fingers over the stones in the *dhāma*. I can just smell the air and feel the breeze and try to remember as long as my mind allows.

Kṛṣṇa, I want to be Your devotee as the *śāstras* direct. I want to follow the new indications. A friend reads what I am doing and says, "Who can begrudge you for this attempt at entering the ocean of nectar . . . Seems to me you are attaining a sort of spiritual 'puberty.'"

~*

Make a setting for another early rising. It is the way of the Vaiṣṇava saints and I will follow them. A mat is placed before the altar. Matches, incense, candles, pictures, *japa-mālā*, the room itself is solitary, the house quiet . . . The scene is set with external details, but the *bhāva-sevā*, the inner *arcanā*, cannot be substituted by creating an atmosphere. You must have heart, attention, prayers of contrition.

The page and pen await me too. As in *japa*, so in writing, the pen is merely the medium: there must be a *person* praying to *gurudeva*, praying to Prabhupāda, "Please accept me. Give me the taste of my unworthiness. Please give me the holy name. Keep my greed to hear of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa alive. May I write from *bhāva-sevā*. May I write from anything you like, whatever is serviceable."

~*

January 22, 1:15 A.M.

I dreamt of undergoing many hardships while living on a farm. It started out with me searching for my *candana* piece in my *sūci* kit. Then there was no light and no mirror to see if I was applying my *tilaka* neatly to my forehead. The cows were wild and dirty. The man in charge assured me that when this new farm got organized in the future, I would be recognized for my spiritual qualities.

Out of this dream, where to go? Mentally stumbling, I splash my face with cold water. Can I wash those thoughts away with the shock of the cold water hitting my face? I am so far away from Vṛndāvana.

Remember how at the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandira guesthouse, the floor is made from Indian cement. There was no rug and every time I moved the wooden chair at my desk, it made a loud scratching sound. I kept thinking I must be waking everyone up on that floor. What could I do? I tried writing anyway, and sometimes it worked, although I filled some pages with the sound of pigeons flapping their wings. I was trying to get beyond the externals, although I know I didn't always succeed.

The *śāstras* are vital to my life. They are the key to leaving behind my dreams and the pigeons and to entering the association of the *rasika* Vaiṣṇavas. I have so many unnecessary demands, but one sincere moment with the *śāstras*, or the sincere offer-

ing of *daṇḍavatas*, or the sincere recitation of *praṇāma-mantras*, can take me beyond those demands.

I will not be saved simply by returning to Vṛndāvana. I have to prepare myself to meet the same obstacles and probably new ones, and to practice deep, purifying *sādhana*. How can I engage my mind and senses in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and awaken *bhāva*? This retreat is supposed to give me some practice at that.



Lord Caitanya wandered in the Rāḍha-deśa portion of Bengal thinking He was headed for Vṛndāvana. That is *sannyāsa*. "As Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was en route to Vṛndāvana, all the ecstatic symptoms became manifest, and He did not know in which direction He was going, nor did He know whether it was day or night" (C.c., *Madhya* 3.10).

"Still in His ecstasy, the Lord began asking Advaita Ācārya, 'Why did you come here? How did You know that I was in Vṛndāvana?'"

"'Wherever You are, that is Vṛndāvana'" (C.c., *Madhya* 3.32–33).

Śrīla Prabhupāda states that Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsa* means going to Vṛndāvana. It is not a matter of a formal change of dress, it is service to Mukunda. *Sannyāsa* is for preaching. The preacher, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, sought out Kṛṣṇa's land instinctively in so much ecstasy that He did not bother to consult maps. We signify this mood by taking a *sannyāsa-mantra*, recited three times a day, aspiring to become the *dāśī* of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. These are the inner meanings of *sannyāsa*.

Why do I state them again? I am prodding myself. I am trying to make a political argument against those who don't think a *sannyāsī* should go to India or reside in Vraja-dhāma. I am making propaganda with my greatest opponent—myself. Tell him will you?—Oh my dear Satsvarūpa, "do not be afraid. Go to Vṛndāvana, for there you will attain all things." (C.c., *Ādi* 5.195)

(A friend wrote me, "The air is filled with caution and delight. It makes me want to say to you—go to India as much as possible. . . you've got to get more now. . . otherwise, what chance is there for fools like me. . .")

And don't forget this one—"My dear friend, if you are indeed attached to your worldly friends, do not look at the smiling face of Lord Govinda as He stands on the bank of the Yamunā at Keśi-ghāṭa" (BRS 1.2.239, quoted in C.c., *Ādi* 5. 224).



I am telling about the scraping chair in my room at the guesthouse—and I want to mention the heat of summer and my headaches and my losing weight. Sometimes I was too tired to move. There are so many diseases to be caught there, although I

Beg, borrow, or steal to get the nectar of the name. I will be back for more; there is hope. I can simply chant and hear, driving single-mindedly into the place of no return, the place where I will simply hear like a madman. Kṛṣṇa takes pity on the lost fool trying to chant *harināma*.



Stumbling on the Sanskrit of *Rādhā-rasa-suddha-nidhi* from 4:00 to 4:30 A.M. I am recording it so I can hear it later on the plane. The authors often say, "When will I be able to accompany Rādhā to Her tryst, or when will I fan Her or speak on Her order in this way?" As for me . . . I am tired of apologizing for my presence . . .

Reciting the sublime verses is good for me. Despite my skeptical nature, and my selfishness, bad qualities, and doubts, surely it does me good to chant and hear of the splendid activities of Rādhikā:

Bowing and touching Your feet
a festival of *rasa* for Govinda
deep-hued like the blue lotus. . .
—To go and submit Your messages to Him
—To go and clean up
Your most pleasant solitary bower-houses
—To bring and offer flower garlands, sandal paste,
perfumes, luscious *betel* and divine drinks
O sole deliverer of *rasa*!
When will I ever become Your maidservant
fit for running so many errands for You?
—Śrī *Rādhā-rasa-suddha-nidhi*, verse 61



Kṛṣṇa played the *purohit* (*brāhmaṇa* boy priest) at the Surya worship. No one could recognize Him due to His disguise. No one recognized Madhumaṅgala either. Jaṭilā brought her daughter-in-law to worship the sun god, and she was very impressed by the beautiful *brāhmaṇa* boy who refused to accept any alms and who said He could not touch her daughter-in-law because He was a strict *brahmacārī*. He chanted mantras and Rādhā responded, but the Sanskrit had double meanings by which Rādhā was able to worship Kṛṣṇa through the so-called worship of the sun god.

When the *pūjā* was completed, Jaṭilā offered the priest some gold and *laḍḍus*, but He refused. Madhumaṅgala, however, stepped forward and said, "I am His assistant,

I can take it. He does not have a good stomach for digestion, so He cannot take." Madhumaṅgala took the gifts and tightened them in a knot in his *gamchā*.

Then Kṛṣṇa went to Kusuma Sarovara where all His *gopa* friends were waiting. It was now midday and they sat around Kṛṣṇa for taking *prasādam*. They sat in many rows around Kṛṣṇa, and each boy thought Kṛṣṇa was only with them, exchanging and laughing only with them.

Madhumaṅgala sat gravely in their midst, not giving or taking. He was guarding his treasures (from the *Surya-pūjā*) with a stick in his hand. Baladeva guessed that Madhumaṅgala must have something. He said to the other *gopas*, "Do like this." So Subala and Sudāmā came up from behind Madhumaṅgala, pushed him and took his *laḍḍus* and gold. They passed it around and divided it up. Madhumaṅgala became furious and like Durvāsa, took his *brāhmaṇa* thread in his hand. He said, "I will curse you all! I will go and complain to Kaṁsa Mahārāja. I am a *brāhmaṇa*!" Then he began to cry.

Kṛṣṇa then fell at the feet of His *brāhmaṇa* friend and asked forgiveness. Kṛṣṇa brought more yogurt and *laḍḍu* and they all played together.

Raghunātha Gosvāmī prays, "May I, Śrī Rādhikā, be Your aid in these *Surya-pūjā* pastimes and carry the ingredients for the *arcanā*? May I always be with You and when You order, I will take off Your ring, and whatever You order just by Your eyes, I will do. Please be merciful and allow me to write my name in the register of Your *dāsīs* so I may taste all these pastimes and see them with my own eyes."

❧

It is exactly 32° Fahrenheit. The sun is shining. Time to go out for a walk. I have full support from my friends to go on writing. My editor says I sounded melancholic in the last chapters of *Pilgrimage*, written just before having to leave Vṛndāvana. I am mining it now. Looking out the window at a beer bottle thrown on dead leaves. In Vṛndāvana it was just as bad—I couldn't even get up to look out the screened porch because it was likely I would see monkeys fornicating. I had to turn within . . .

I am not afraid of the world, but I don't enjoy it. I seek out like-minded friends or I seek out solitude.

The air is for breathing; it is a gift of God. Before I go, Lord of my life, let me see You in my heart. Let me see You in every atom. Draw me to Your abode.

❧

Seems like a stricter criteria now. Not anything that passes through my mind is worthwhile. And what the senses perceive—like the Bush and Coor beer cans strewn in the woods where I walk, indicating night beer-drinking (also indicated by

the tire tracks), or the neighbors' dogs barking—so many things are not worthwhile. But neither can I claim that my reality is focused on Vraja. So a question is, "Should I write only of Vraja, or is that untrue to my present experience? And if you want to admit more of your actual experience, then where do you begin and where do you cut it off?"

It is good to admit shortcomings, such as the perfunctory way I bow before the plate of *bhoga* and say three *praṇāma* prayers. I was doing that better *before* I went to Vṛndāvana. I was praying with thinking-words to Prabhupāda to please take the offering so that I wouldn't be eating sense gratification but *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*. I asked him to make my prayer to him more significant to me than my eating, my relishing with the tongue to fill my belly. *Please* make spiritual love more important.

Then somehow—I don't blame it on Vṛndāvana or what I learned there—but somehow, I have become a bit confused about speaking to Prabhupāda to accept the food. I have lost my patience and simple faith in this act. It is due to a lusty tongue and impatience. I dismiss the time needed to pray and tell myself, "After you say this prayer, you can do more important *rasika* duties than this offering. You will be forgiven if you don't do this offering carefully."

So writing which exposes some defect like this is useful: You need simple acts of devotion (*patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam*) if you want to go on to rarer acts.

I think I may have become confused, thinking I can't pray to Prabhupāda like that in his *sādhaka* form. I have to hear more about it. *Who* eats? Previously, my prayer was simpler, less demanding in terms of theology. It is not "Christian" or "*vaidhī*" (although it may be called neophyte). It is not *rasika*, unless you count the *rasa* of submission and hope in that category: "I don't know how to do these things, but please accept this food. They made it for me, but I want to offer it to you, just as when I sometimes worked for you, Prabhupāda, in the days when I was your servant."

I don't want to abandon these moods and memories.

•

I don't think there is a great mystery at work here. I have so little to say; I am just a tiny devotee. Inner censors continue to carp at me.

I would like to prove those censors wrong. They think that my attempt to write more freely and to pour out in my writing is a waste of time. They tell me I have no depths to plumb. But I want to exhaust myself to the point of surrender. I want to run out of words so that the Lord will teach me what to say. I surrender.

•

Madhu and I just read the swing pastimes of Rādhikā and Kṛṣṇa. It reminded me of Jhulana-yātrā in our temples. At Gītā-nāgarī, we take Rādhā Dāmodara outdoors to swing. It is more than *vaidhī-bhakti*. Now, having read these *līlās*, I will be able to attend Jhulana-yātrā with more understanding. By hearing *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta*, I will see a red worm and think of the red on the *gopīs'* feet. Who can see blue flowers and not think of Kṛṣṇa? Who can see goldenrod or black-eyed susans and not think of Rādhā?



There is a wonderful communication going on between Śrīla Prabhupāda and his avid, serious readers. Śrīla Prabhupāda delivers faith in Kṛṣṇa and the experience of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. His readers receive it wholeheartedly. They can attest to his mercy in their lives which they in turn, dedicate to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda does more than point in Kṛṣṇa's direction. He gives more than academic knowledge. He gives more than spiritual knowledge. Only his readers know what he gives them, and they share it with one another. They also desire to share it with the whole world by taking his books into the streets of the world and distributing them to everyone.

There has been abuse by persons citing the authority of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. There have been quarrels between those who differ as to what Śrīla Prabhupāda actually meant. But Prabhupāda's wonderful gift will persist and be available to future generations. That gift exists in private reading where it creates faith and intimacy with Prabhupāda, and understanding of Prabhupāda's presentation of Kṛṣṇa.

As devotees read more in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, and as more books become available to us in translation, there is a tendency to compare what Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to what the commentators said in their original writings. There is a science of Kṛṣṇa, and Śrīla Prabhupāda did not invent it. He comes to us as a representative of *paramparā*. Yet when we read him, we come away with *his* understanding. When we explain the science, we have to account for why Śrīla Prabhupāda said things exactly the way he did, why he simplified certain points, why he omitted other points, or why he gave a particular expression with an emphasis that may differ from the previous *ācāryas*.

This should not be a cause for bewilderment. Reading privately, deeply, with submission, opening up to him, making no critical comparisons—Kṛṣṇa becomes revealed to us. He settles deep within us. We become convinced.

Prabhupāda's books carry this gift for each of us. I don't ever want to lose this gift, even in the name of searching for more thorough explanations of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. I want to regularly read him.

~

January 23, 1:17 A.M.

Expressing some dissatisfaction with your writing, you used the word "pose." You fear, deep down, that your *rasika* cultivation may be a pose. The dictionary calls this "a sustained posture," especially "one assumed for artistic effect, an *adapted* way of speaking or acting. (The dictionary is heavy and wild—on my way to see pose, I saw "prayerful" and "posthumously.")

What do I mean? *Rasika* interest is not wrong, but I refer to a fear that I may be deliberately "adapting it."

~

Which activity of mine suggests "pose"? Maybe the fact that you label yourself as experiencing a period of "separation," like a person in official mourning.

I am impatient with myself, desiring more honesty, more excellence—more good results. But I have to accept my daily self too, and not rip up my sense of *niṣṭhā*.

I think I am experiencing some waves of separation. I miss Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. But right now I don't want to reach out—especially by telephone or by breaking my solitude—to seek relief with a like-minded, influential friend. This is a time put aside to hear within myself and to ask Prabhupāda and to pray for answers.

One symptom of my restlessness is my desire to write more freely and openly. It is a sign that I need to think.

~

Prabhupāda, I read something in *Pilgrimage* that said the *śikṣa-guru* is more a friend, not one served out of fear. I don't want to imply any criticism of you or my love for you by that remark. You handled me expertly, with love and with the sternness I needed. I worship that relationship. If things are a bit eased up with Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, that's all right. There is nothing like the strong order you gave me, Śrīla Prabhupāda, which sustains me in all cases. You too are ready to receive me in a spiritual *sakhī* friendship. But as you often pointed out, "Where is the question of such all-liberated *sakhī* behavior and talk if we still have lust and envy? And where is the preaching mood to save others?"

There is so much inner tension that it is hard to take. I do love Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, and I am taking to the path he pointed out. Neither do I want to jeopardize my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda, call it *vaidhī* or whatever. Intellectually, I see no

conflict, although there are definitely some differences, but emotionally, it is sometimes difficult. This difficulty is on an unconscious level and is hard for me to deal with.

~

I am not just looking for any old loosening up. I want a deepening. Send a signal now to my unconscious selves: "Please meet and discuss the issue of possible conflict in my obedience to Prabhupāda and my new love for Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. Don't be afraid to discuss this. What have we to lose by being open and honest, at least among ourselves?"

At the same time, perhaps I can discuss some of this openly with others or in the writing, but I have to recognize that it is mostly an emotional issue, not an intellectual conquest.

I don't have enough time or energy, even on a retreat, to accomplish all I want to do on a daily basis. Also, it seems there should be an element of relaxation here, too. I don't need to be all revved up, pushing the accelerator to the floor, reading, reading, reading *rasika* books, Prabhupāda's books, writing books. And writing. And throwing myself at the feet of the holy name. And writing. Trying to gain back the weight I lost in India, trying to avoid headaches, resting, editing, answering at least some mail . . . "Again I cannot chant with love."

~

After japa

We know you don't chant attentive *japa*. You don't have to tell us that.

~

I read in *Padyāvalī* that Rādhā and the other *gopīs* were disturbed when they first saw Kṛṣṇa by the Yamunā and He glanced at them. "Since that time, My heart is always very agitated. It no longer allows me to do My household duties." This reminds me that those who have plunged into love of God are not exactly peaceful. It is different than the *śānta-rasa* meditation of the peaceful *yogīs* in the Himalayas.

Unfortunately, my agitation is not like that.

I prayed in between a round to all the *ācāryas* and to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and to *hari-nāma*: "Please let me chant." Prayer is one way to stop thinking so much of one's self-image. As a tiny, simple worker in this world, call out to God in His Names. "O Holy Name, You alone can render all benediction to living beings."

I played a tape of Śrīla Prabhupāda singing but then thought he would rather I simply heard the *mahā-mantra* as I vibrate it with my own tongue.

“O my Lord, Your holy name alone can render all benedictions . . . You have invested all Your energies in Your holy name. . . unfortunate as I am . . .

Real progress is when I can break down crying, “I don’t want this crazy mind stuff. I want to do better. I am sorry. Please teach me.”

~

Aho! Before I move into another frame of mind,
now while the rhythms of *Rādhā-rasa-suddha-nidhi* still
vibrate, say something, brother.

Indescribable, sweetness, my goodness! Allowing for
excesses in our translator, yet I like him,
and as for the nectar that is Rādhā’s maid service,
just consider her *sakhīs* speak so boldly they
don’t even worship God, they say
their Swamiṇī’s service is desired but unattainable
for Nārada, Śiva and Śukadeva. . .

I think by intoning out-loud the Sanskrit
of delirious sober Prabodhānanda Śarasvatī who is
sakhī Tuṅgavidyā in eternal service,
I too am uplifted beyond service cares,
don’t care for lines in my forehead,
I just want to recite. That’s greed—
and wish to hear it every day,
the rhythms of Rādhikā’s poet dancing,
outpouring his own mood of
dumbfounded wild. . .

Worship Her lotus feet, approached by worshiping
the lotus feet of Her maidservants, approached by
worshiping the lotus feet of the *rasika-gurus*,
the dust of the feet of all followers
of Lord Caitanya’s Rūpa Gosvāmī.
Rādhā is approached by me and you
by worshiping the holy names.

~

9:15 A.M.

The air is foggy gray. The snow has melted off the roofs and from patches of earth. If I stop to listen, I can hear the endless whoosh of the highway, can imagine the rumble of wheels on concrete. If I stop to listen.

But I am tired. I consider this person I have to work with. There is a photo I keep with others that tells me his story, at least in part. It is a snapshot taken the day our group discovered Gaurī-kunḍa and Mahārāja sat with us there for a few minutes. The picture shows Mahārāja smiling, his face and body turned to one of the most prominent brothers. I am on the left side, receiving no direct attention. The look on my face is unmasked pain. It was a hard day. I am wearing a wet *gamchā* around my neck, applying it sometimes to my head to stave off a headache.

Why does that person within me recoil at the necessity of being a “thief” to get attention from Mahārāja? Now that inner person has come with me to this quiet retreat. He puts no pressure on me now. The words of one brother come back to me: “When you go to your retreat, there is no pressure, no problem, but you don’t make advancement.”

It isn’t true. In the end, I found a way to capture his attention, despite my lackings. Mahārāja says I am sincere. I am lean and thin, but I write books. I sent secret messages to Mahārāja and went to see him on off-days with my assistant. We accepted his food remnants; we made a contract with the servant of the *rasika* Vaiṣṇava and gave him an empty tiffin as well as things he needed for his service to his spiritual master—raisins, containers, pens. You can’t buy love. But you can steal it.

I am savoring that stolen nectar now, alone. I call this “assimilation” and “separation.”

And I have to admit, I am enjoying my *śānti*, *śānti*, *om śānti* alone by the highway in the gray winter fog.



Things to think over: why don’t we feel Prabhupāda’s presence more? If I felt his presence more, would I still be interested in taking *śikṣa* elsewhere?

Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja called me on that point the first time I inquired from him last year. I asked, “In the absence of Śrīla Prabhupāda, I find myself turning more to *caitya-guru*. This seems normal to me.” He said, “I never once thought of this question. Your *gurudeva* has not left. Pray to him. Supersoul is already taking care of you and watching over you. Pray to your ever-present Prabhupāda.”

The fault, dear Brutus, is in ourselves. But even if I say I feel Prabhupāda’s presence strongly, I think he wants me to hear from his friend and ease the ache of

his absence in that way. I am dissatisfied with my mechanical *japa*. I am dissatisfied with my preaching. I ache to love Kṛṣṇa. I ache to hear of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's sweet pastimes; I ache to experience the wonder of this new territory in my Kṛṣṇa consciousness which has been charted by the *ācāryas* and which is the essence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava perfection. And the ache is to confirm all this with *my ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

~

After two days of trying to chant *japa* in the thick-cushioned rocking chair, I gave it up. Now I sit on the floor. That's a gain.

~

Afternoon japa

What is it? It's so subtle. Hold onto the sound of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa. Hold it in your mind. It is not like the breeze or the rain, not sensual like that. The mind is more subtle.

The mind eats up plans, ruminating like a great beast. Recent impressions carry it away.

My prayer is feeble. I utter my prayers and my inattentive *japa* at the base of Tulasi's table. She sees me chanting without attention, staring blankly.

~

I "finished" my rounds for today, a bare sixteen. I also finished breakfast, a walk, lunch, brushed my teeth. Tonight I'll swallow a spoonful of *triphalla*. *Japa* is one of those things I do; it's part of my *sādhana*.

What is blocking me? Did I commit a serious offense to a Vaiṣṇava? Did I spit an ant with a straw? Am I suffering some past life karma or is it something in this life I have forgotten or that I refuse to face? We say atonement is unnecessary, but where does that leave me?

There is a stone in the throat of my desire to love Kṛṣṇa by serving His holy names. Brothers and sisters, please pray for me to unlock this mystery. Let me be free.

Do you doubt that anyone chants nicely? Do you look to see if they get bodily transformations of ecstasy? No, no, I can't know what they do or feel. That's not my business. Bowing at the base of Tulasi's table, please let me pray to remember Nāma Prabhu and to ask, "Please let me chant sincerely, as service. Let me know what I can do to improve and give me the strength to do it."

~

5:00 P.M.

It came! Something from India. Why are you sitting here as if there is nothing to say? On my desk was a parcel from California containing shoes, a book and letter from New York, and a small envelope with no stamp at all. This was from India from one of the devotees in our little group. It contained a tape of a meeting with Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, December 22. I already had a copy of it. Then some beautiful photos: the one on top was of the Śiva-*liṅga* in a new dress, Gopīśvara Mahādeva. Another picture I recognized, "Pathway beside Govardhana," with red flowers blooming on the bushes. The path worn down by the feet of the parikramers. Another photo of Govardhana with little rocks and stones piled up. A photo of Śrīdāmā at Vamśivāṭa where Śrīdāmā waited and waited for Kṛṣṇa to return—and where we went with Mahārāja the day I felt the agony of envy and neglect.

With the pictures was a short note written on December 26:

"Things here are quiet. We went (my husband and I) to see Maharaja. Maharaja was catching up on mail, and it is very cold. The Math was quiet and sombre (maybe it's the weather). The flurry of activity that came with our visits seems to have died down. I am feeling close to him, but obliged also to do some catching up on general devotional duties. The study of the tapes and trying to get the transcripts ready is essential now. But I don't feel separate from him—even though that intensity isn't there. Like he said—we have to work on the *nistha* to create a foundation, only for this.

"I hope your experience is similar. It's easy to slip back into a very general mood, but immediately I feel some lacking—you may also experience something similar? That lacking pushes us to try and particularize our understanding of *bhakti*. Although we are trying to do so now individually, I find that Kṛṣṇa helps, and guru helps very much and it gives confidence."

•

I can't comprehend the *līlās*, such as Kṛṣṇa drinking honey with the *gopīs* and their becoming intoxicated. I have heard that great devotees like Lakṣmī-devī aspire to enter the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa with the *gopīs* in Vṛndāvana, yet Lakṣmī is unable to enter because she cannot relinquish her status as the opulent wife of Nārāyaṇa. Entering the Vraja mood means becoming an assistant of the *gopīs* in Vṛndāvana.

I drink nectar although I have no knowledge, but still the experience is sweet. I hear of the supramundane *mahā-bhāva* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa without understanding, but I pray for blessings. And I don't stop hearing. The confusion is due to identification with the mundane—with this male ego and body.

I don't feel this misidentification so strongly when I hear from Mahārāja. Yet he has asked us to study the *rasika* texts and commentaries on our own. Reading them without Mahārāja's charming enactment of the *līlās* is much harder. I totter, but I sense the benefit, so I continue. Let me at least remind myself, that Kṛṣṇa, who behaves like a debauch in the *kuñjas* with the *gopīs*, is the supreme, original Personality of Godhead. He is worshiped by all the great sages and *devas*, either in His form as Kṛṣṇa, or in one of His many Viṣṇu-tattva expansions. He is the eternal, transcendental, supreme Person who exists alone before creation, who alone sustains creation by His energies and agents, and who after cosmic annihilation, remains alone. When He desires to enjoy His own spiritual pleasure, He associates with His dearest devotees, especially the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana led by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Kṛṣṇa gives the *gopīs* cups of intoxicating honey and forces them with His glances, "Drink! Drink! Drink!" It is the same Kṛṣṇa.

January 24, 1:00 A.M.

In my dream, it was very important to have a gun. I lost a hand, but I had a gun.

I'm making such small gains it seems. When I slip into unconsciousness during sleep, the dreams come. Most are devoid of Kṛṣṇa. I have to wake up and piece it all together again—my desire to be a devotee, my desire to investigate *rasa*, to talk it out. I glanced into the other room to the table where Śrīmatī Tulasī-devī comes to visit me every afternoon at 3:00. The *japa* puzzle comes to mind and I chant: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare. (I once read an interview with the poet, William Carlos Williams, when he was seventy-nine years old, just before he died. It ended with his wife showing the interviewer new editions of the poet's works in foreign languages, and Williams saying, "I'm alive! I'm alive!" Because I read that, it comes back to me now.)

Yesterday I attempted to look more deliberately at what has happened in terms of my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda. As a result, I feel relief and a reconfirmation. I immediately wanted to tell some Prabhupāda stories; I have known him so long. He has always protected me. Nothing can replace Prabhupāda in my life.

And then in the afternoon, suddenly a little envelope with pictures. Do you know the story of Śrīdāmā at Vamśivāṭa? Did I tell it before? Please listen. When Kṛṣṇa left for Mathurā, Śrīdāmā accompanied Him as far as Vamśivāṭa. Kṛṣṇa said He would return by the next day, so Śrīdāmā decided to wait at Vamśivāṭa until Kṛṣṇa returned. "Otherwise, I will die here," he said.

Kṛṣṇa told Śrīdāmā not to worry, He would be back the next day or the day after. But Śrīdāmā had to wait a long time. Today, there is a deity of Śrīdāmā at Vāṁśī-vāṭa, playing a flute and still waiting in acute separation, hoping Kṛṣṇa will return to Vraja.

When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to Vṛndāvana, He visited Vāṁśī-vāṭa and called out to the deity and embraced him, “Śrīdāmā! I have come back.” Many other great *ācāryas* visited there in that mood.

So we shall have to wait while we perform our *bhajana*. Our *gurudeva* and the scriptures have told us that if we chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, Kṛṣṇa will appear and dance on our tongues. They have also told us, in the words of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, to “tell everyone you meet about Kṛṣṇa.” In that way, Kṛṣṇa will always be with us.

But although sometimes we preach to please Prabhupāda, and sometimes we stay somewhere to try and improve our meditative *japa*, it still seems that Kṛṣṇa is far away. Why is that? Why doesn’t He come closer? It is because we do not chant nicely. We commit *nāma-aparādha*. So we go on chanting, just as Śrīdāmā went on waiting, and we try to remain cheerful and patient.

There is also the story of Mukunda. Lord Caitanya stated that Mukunda had displeased the Lord by attending Māyāvāda lectures. Therefore, Lord Caitanya said that Mukunda would not be able to intimately associate with Him for millions of births. When Mukunda heard this, he began to dance jubilantly, thinking that at least at some point in the future, he would again be allowed into the association of Lord Caitanya. Then Lord Caitanya embraced him.

We may have to wait longer than this one lifetime for the pure name to appear in our hearts. In my case, the diary tells of what I’m doing while I’m waiting.

•

Japa talk

It seems advantageous to lead a simple life and to chant in that way. How is it possible to chant nicely when a million thoughts press through your mind while you are trying to chant? Of course, even in a quiet, mode of goodness dwelling, the mind can be filled with extraneous thought. But as the Beatles used to sing, “Give Peace a Chance.” The peaceful life is helpful.

•

It was windy outside, but I didn’t notice it until after several rounds of *japa*. I suddenly heard something bumping outside and realized it was the sound of the

wind. Trees silhouetted against my dark window were swaying back and forth. Then back to the holy names.

A young devotee wrote that he's been having a rush of serious troubles lately. The immigration is threatening to deport him from the U.S., he's being laid off at work, he is being forced to consider marriage to avoid the deportation, and his roommate is defecting from ISKCON. Yet through all this, he is becoming detached and is taking shelter in Kṛṣṇa's names. "I am savoring simply hearing the syllables of the mantra." So one can be driven to that shelter—just the opposite of arranging for a simple, quiet life.

Sometimes busy devotees with *karma-kāṇḍīya* inclinations, regard the chanting as unimportant. The real world is for making money and for family life. Chanting, they think, is for later in life. They think it would be irresponsible on their parts to give time to the chanting when they have to provide a good standard of living for their families. They say, "Besides, even if I wanted to . . . " Or, "It just isn't possible . . . " Or, "There's no time. I am cursed."

I should do better than that. But this is another sad predicament: the *sannyāsī* who cuts off the ties of family life, is given alms to live, secures himself a silent, protected time for praying *harināma*—and is as distracted (almost) as the morning-rushing worker. No, to tell the truth, the *sannyāsī* is much better off. At least he is grateful. He is even attached to this life of freedom from worldly care. But, pleased as he is with the religious reclusive life, he understands that he is not a recipient of the full mercy of the holy names.

Therefore, Kṛṣṇa is pushing us all to cry for the mercy. Kṛṣṇa, do not elude me, do not avoid me. You have given me such nice facility. You give the *karmī* a pretty wife, nice children, credit cards, and a passion to work. You have given me peace and religious prestige. But we cannot allow ourselves to be "bought off" with Your payment for our petty desires. We want *You*, we want pure service. We have tricked ourselves and You can see this, Lord. So please, teach us what to do. Lead us to surrender by the method You have prescribed for all souls in Kali-yuga.

If before I can taste the names, I have to pass through some scorching, dry period, then let me do it and not fail. I have no strength to face such a task, but whatever it takes, I want to do it. Be with me and lead me on, Prabhupāda, you who gave the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra to this fallen soul.

Aho! Aho! Rādhē! I am not fit to utter
Rādhā *japa*, Rādhā-nāma,
yet we say Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma.
I am not fit to hear yet my
spiritual masters allow it.
But be careful! Pray to drive out
the polluted male mentality.
In vain I tried to enjoy in this life—
curses on what it has done to me.
Never knew it would bar me
from *rasa* in Vṛndāvana.

Forget *me* and hear of *Them*;
pray to follow your *guru mahārāja*,
his path as a *sakhī-gopī* leads you,
pray now as you hear
Tuṅgavidyā's praises of Rādhā's beauty.
Kāna's forceful enjoying of Rādhā
viewed through the lattice in the *kuñja* by
pure-hearted maidservants. When?
Will I be able to hear it and
not come under the dark cloud of my old passion?
Free me, Rādhā,
by killing the demons in my chest.

I should not have spoken addressing
myself to You, but I am under the spell
of Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī's magic—
spinning firebrand dancer of *rasa-prema* he is,
and we've come within range of
his songs of the parrot, songs
of the *gopīs*. Now, let's go back

to the rudimentary *japa* that earns
guru-niṣṭhā—
chant God's names praying one day
I may hear *Rādhā-rasa-suddha-nidhi*
in the mood of a *dāśī*
who lives only for the service
of her Queen.

•

There is a slight powdery layer of snow, very slight, on the cement walk. The wind is up.

I want to write as much as possible. I read mundane writers in books like *Writers at Work* and it knocks me off the transcendental platform completely. Then I scurry back to hear from Mahārāja on tape, as if I had never read the *Writers*. But as the ghee of *rasika* words sticks, so does the other.

In an interview, Celine starts out saying a writer doesn't have many books he can write, maybe two. Why do I listen to that? So many *opinions*. It isn't even true. I read *Writers* only to get tips for my craft. One Godbrother who also writes and who also reads about writing, said we crave this outside reading because we have almost no devotee friend with whom we can discuss writing. But it might be better to be lonely, with Kṛṣṇa and guru and one's pen—and the readers and the world (reflected world) and the spiritual dimension.

Celine says we only have two books in us, but Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had a hundred. Śrīla Prabhupāda had over sixty volumes. Prabhupāda says we cannot even count the volumes written by Rūpa and Jīva Gosvāmīs.

•

Prabhupāda says that tears are a way of expressing the consummation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In another place he says tears are the price one pays for love of God, meaning that one should cry to have one's specific service revealed. Now with the recent changes and teachings, it comes up again in a very basic way. We understood gradually from Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja that one of the primary ways to practice approaching *rāgānugā-bhakti* is by one's *bhajana*, and that *bhajana* mainly consists of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. But now, as with other practices, there should be special emphasis on practicing it, not just mechanically, but by raising it to the point where one can think of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. One is supposed to hanker to live in Vṛndāvana, and feel real separation for Vṛndāvana and the *vrajavāsīs*.

But before one can feel these things, he has to pray for the mercy of the holy name and cry in the mood of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's "Gopīnātha" prayer about our unworthiness and our sinfulness. This is relevant to us now because it faces us just where we are at now—we do chant mechanically, and we don't know how to feel deeply when we chant the holy name. Of course, crying and spiritual emotion cannot be imitated. Spiritual emotion is given to us by Kṛṣṇa's grace.

I realize that it is one thing to study the texts and to try to assimilate them, and it is another thing to get below the surface, below the intellectualized-verbalized discussion and emerge as a new person with deeper convictions in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and a very definite focus. What that means is breaking through my mechanical attitude and attachment to practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a certain way—in a *vaidhī* way—and trying to make specific advancement. Intellectually, one can grasp the *rāgānugā* teachings without fully surrendering on the spiritual side. I expressed this to one of my Godbrothers in Vṛndāvana when I was first becoming caught up in the meetings with Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. I told him that I saw the danger of becoming "hip" to *rāgānugā* without really surrendering. Surrender means a change of heart. It would be like knowing about the latest music or literature, what was happening on the *avant-garde*, without taking it to heart and actually making advancement in chanting and *bhajana*. In the material world, just being "in the know" constitutes realization, but devotees want to go beyond the intellectual into the soul.

•

When I last wrote at this desk, the fir trees looked chilled in the early morning cold. Now the sunshine pours in. Can I drag myself back to the disciplines—to the studies I want to pursue?

My day goes up and down. I have the most exalted books in the world within my reach; at least physically I can take them off the shelf and try to read what's written on their pages.

•

7:00 P.M.

Before our *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta* reading, I read Lord Caitanya's statement to Vyeṇkaṭa Bhaṭṭa as to why Lakṣmī-devī could not partake in the *rāsa* dance in Vṛndāvana. Lord Śiva, Nārada, Vyāsa, and Śukadeva are also excluded. Therefore, we should be aware that Kṛṣṇa's sports with the *gopīs* are the topmost sacred activity of the Supreme Lord and His internal energy. Keep this in mind and defeat your own tendency to see Kṛṣṇa's water fights and honey-drinking with the *gopīs* as material affairs. I am the one who fails, it is not the fault of the *līlās*.

After that introduction, I was able to hear better tonight. I read with animation and fun, pleased to hear the witty words of the *gopīs* teasing Madhumaṅgala when Kṛṣṇa lost in the dice game to Rādhikā. One day, I will be able to give up all the doubt in my dirty heart.

I petition You, O Lord of *rasa*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, You are so omnipotent and loving that You satisfy all the *gopīs* at once while simultaneously responding to the *sādhakas* of this world. Please help me to hear about Your pastimes and to relish them with love.



Oh Rādhikā, when Lalitā reprimanded you and spoke harsh words, I understood a little of how You undertake any humiliation in the cause of Your loving service to Your beloved. You are the most chaste girl and yet you relish all for Kṛṣṇa.



I have been asking myself the question whether my heart is big enough to accommodate Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja along with Prabhupāda, but I am realizing that what I really should be asking is, “Is my heart big enough to accommodate the Six Gosvāmīs and all the servants of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī along with Prabhupāda?”

To answer this question, I have to look to Prabhupāda’s own example and teachings. In ISKCON, there is a general conviction that all of the *ācāryas* are available only through Prabhupāda. If we attempt to reach them on our own, separately from hearing their teachings from Prabhupāda, our association with them or our respect for them will only be theoretical.

I think that that conviction isn’t necessarily wrong, but I also think it may be a little distorted due to our neophyte interpretations. We have to grow in our understanding without in anyway diminishing our faith or our affection for Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda himself was a staunch disciple of his spiritual master. Still, Prabhupāda often conveyed to us his own faith and devotion to Kṛṣṇa. He had a relationship with Kṛṣṇa—through his spiritual master—but it was very personal. He expressed his relationship in various ways, and mostly we saw him express his love for Kṛṣṇa by glorifying and defending Kṛṣṇa against the atheists. Prabhupāda represented Kṛṣṇa by how he presented *Bhagavad-gītā*; he defeated Kṛṣṇa’s enemies, the atheists, demons, impersonalists, and so on. When we think of Prabhupāda, we also think of Kṛṣṇa.

But what about the other *ācāryas*? Did Prabhupāda have a relationship with them? When we study Prabhupāda’s purports, we can see that Prabhupāda was following the commentators on *sāstra*. When we read *Bhagavad-gītā*, we can see that he

dedicated his book not to his spiritual master, but to Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. He told us that his father was a pure devotee, and he dedicated *Kṛṣṇa* book to him. He spoke of himself (and us) as a *rūpānuga*, a follower of Rūpa Gosvāmī. He also lived at Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. We can understand that he had a relationship with Rūpa Gosvāmī as he wrote his books there.

Beyond this, it may be difficult to say exactly what Prabhupāda's relationship was with other *ācāryas* because he kept so many things private. But I think it is safe to say that through his spiritual master, he had access to all the great *ācāryas*.

By following Prabhupāda's example, then we also should not think that being faithful to the spiritual master means not developing a big heart. Of course, Prabhupāda is a *mahātmā*, he is great-hearted, and he expressed this in his compassion for the suffering of the world. It's not that he thought he was following his guru and therefore, that was the only reason he came to the West. He had his own personal conviction that the world needed Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

So we are growing up. Why shouldn't we develop relationships with other spiritual personalities? In one sense, ISKCON devotees are so cautious with Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja because he is a contemporary figure. We were so insulated and protected by Prabhupāda that we practically don't know how to understand contemporary Vaiṣṇavas. But Rūpa Gosvāmī is worshipable and he is accessible to a devotee who grows up. Rādhārāṇī and Her followers are also accessible. When we understand that, then we can extrapolate that to appreciate and understand contemporary Vaiṣṇavas. If we have captured the essence of Prabhupāda's teachings, we will give up our xenophobic version that, "Yes, I'm a follower of Prabhupāda. So when I see genuine *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* in another person other than Prabhupāda, I spit on it and I'm afraid of it and I make bad stories about it and I don't want anybody to hear from that person because it's a threat to my spiritual master." Who trained us like that? Where did we get these ideas? What other Vaiṣṇava thinks like that?

Of course, we have to discriminate between a Vaiṣṇava who is favorable to our spiritual master—one who is genuinely willing to help us make advancement—and someone who is envious of Prabhupāda's movement. But how can I say there are no Vaiṣṇavas outside ISKCON from whom I can learn? The test is this: does this Vaiṣṇava strengthen my faith in my spiritual master and not diminish it in the name of leading us into *kṛṣṇa-līlā*? Fear of deviation is a genuine fear, but we should not allow that to cripple us or paralyze us from following the actual Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*. Our *siddhānta* is to serve the guru and the Vaiṣṇavas. When we find a Vaiṣṇava to whom we can surrender, we should hear from that Vaiṣṇava and serve his

lotus feet. We should advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness under his guidance—that includes advancing in our *guru-niṣṭhā*—and we should thus please Prabhupāda.

January 25, 1:10 A.M.

It has been a month since we left India.

Improve the quality of prayer. Hardly an inch do I pray. Or maybe I pray and don't credit myself for it. Kṛṣṇa will decide if I am praying.

Then how much can I help myself? I recall a devotee asking Śrīla Prabhupāda, "You say we should surrender to Kṛṣṇa, but then you write, 'God helps those who help themselves.' So?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied: "How does one help oneself? By surrendering to Kṛṣṇa." That's the only way we can help ourselves.

This is not Vṛndāvana where I can write with the awareness in my heart and body and being that I am in the special place. The advantage to my retreat here in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania is that I have to become more internal. Is Vṛndāvana within? Yes. Pennsylvania forces me to go within because I cannot just stay focused on how I took my walk on Brislin Road and how I felt when the cars passed me. There is junk and distraction in Vṛndāvana too, but it is totally different. If I could have had more presence of mind there, I could have written like a madman, noting down all the details. I would have captured many motes of Vṛndāvana dust on paper. Somehow I didn't quite do it. I also have to go within in Vṛndāvana.

Outer Vṛndāvana doesn't seem to tally with what we read in *Kṛṣṇa* book. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja also writes in the beginning of his *Vraja-maṇḍala Parikrama*: "You cannot go to Vraja on your own. You need the guidance of a Vaiṣṇava. It cannot be seen by mundane eyes, cannot be experienced by the mundane senses, cannot be felt by the mundane body. Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala can only be realized by the mercy of a Vaiṣṇava . . . revealed within the heart and mind of a devotee."

Head on in—pray to write truth as best you can.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, I place my head on the floor and pray by reciting your *praṇāma-mantras* first thing. Get me out of the dream-stuff. Please guide a sleepy-eyed person where to go. And now, face and mouth washed, sitting at a desk writing by reflex with a professed good intention, please tell a covered, frightened person what to write.

Lord Caitanya, while experiencing the mood of *vipralambha* said: "What should I do? Where shall I go to find Kṛṣṇa? Who will tell Me?" The watchman in Jagannātha Puri temple took Him by the hand and said, "Come quickly, Your Lord is here!"—and led Him in for *darśana* with Lord Jagannātha.

My bewilderment is not like that, a blazing fire of *mahā-bhāva*. "O Lord of the Universe, O Master of the senses"—the words run through my generalized, impaired memory.



Prabhupāda, please somehow keep me honest. I *cannot* live forever in this body. How can I expect to go back to Godhead at the end? You once lectured, "Deathlessness begins at initiation." You say going back to Godhead at the end of this life can be done. You speak of "devotees" and seem to include all your sincere followers. You say Yamarāja cannot touch them. When death comes, you say, it is "merely official," just a quick transfer, a waking up and discovering we are in *Goloka-dhāma*. You said we would experience this because we love and serve Kṛṣṇa. I believe what you say—I know it is not an exaggeration—but you yourself know it applies to some and not all. You warn us, "Don't leave this Kṛṣṇa consciousness." You want us to constantly preach *hari-kathāmrta*. You are calling us for complete surrender.



When I think of prayer I think, "You would pray if your life was threatened. You are too comfortable for that now." But I don't want the high tension of a physically dangerous, oppressed situation. At least I don't want to pray for that. I think it is valid to desire to pray in an outwardly peaceful place. Many devotees have an opportunity for it. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to be regulated and that means peaceful life in his temples. Prayer should be impelled not only by danger, but by meditation on Kṛṣṇa's qualities, *līlā*, and paraphernalia. Not just crying out because the crocodile has his teeth clamped on our foot when we're trying to enjoy. Those moments will come, but in this rarely attained human life, we have the opportunity to pray with composed mind, body, and words. Time is so fleeting.

When we can actually pray and remember Kṛṣṇa during a time of relative peacefulness, we will be better equipped to remember Him during crisis. King Kulaśekhara prays, "Now is the time to pray, when I am not harassed by death. Because when death comes, it will be so physically difficult that I won't be able to pray nicely." He even says, "So now let me die when I am able to chant in a blissful *kīrtana* with devotees, and when my mind is sporting happily in remembrance of

Your Pastimes by chanting and hearing." He desires the state of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prayer is not only for oneself, but for helping others. Use a brief respite from ills and oppressions to help others. This is inner life.



I cannot approach the *kuñjas* and
the nectar love pastimes, and
you know why—
dirty heart and lack of love.
But I won't dwell on that, I'll
hear as the *ācāryas* allow,
hoping the downpour of ecstasies as sung
by Tuṅgavidyā-devī,
will wash me off
from hundreds of lifetimes of filthy mind.

I wish I could sing and
tell of times together with friends
who are eligible to relish Rādhā-dāśī,
who laugh when the *gopīs* defeat Kṛṣṇa,
who smile at Madhumaṅgala's jokes and his
conniving to get the biggest sweets.

The day is already here when I
spend my time enjoying the conclusion
that Rādhā-dāśī is the topmost.
One no longer wants to hear *Vedas*,
or saints' characters, *varṇāśrama*, etc.,
but hears with a friend the fierce
water battles of Kṛṣṇa with the *gopīs*,
while *sakhīs* and Madhumaṅgala watch from the shore;
cheering on Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā
to victory in the Yamunā!

The day is here,
I grasp at it,
the secret religion—
worshiping the Youthful Lovers.
I cannot hear it,
but I hear it and vow never to
sully my devotion with sin.

•

I need to think about the difference between *śikṣa*- and *dīkṣā*-*gurus*. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja told us that the *śikṣa-guru* tends to be more of a friend to the disciple than the *dīkṣā-guru*. The relationship with the *dīkṣā-guru* is that he trains us in *vaidhī-bhakti*. Therefore, he may tend to emphasize discipline and obedience and the disciple may feel more awe, even fear, of his guru. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja told us that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura discusses this point in *Kalyāṇa-kalpa-taru*.

But what does that mean for me? In my case, Prabhupāda gave me *dīkṣā*, but I also consider him my main *śikṣa-guru*. The scriptures say that there can be many *śikṣa-gurus*, so I am not wrong in seeking additional *śikṣa* from Mahārāja. I think Mahārāja's instructions are an extension and enhancement of Prabhupāda's instructions. We weren't ready to understand *rāgānugā-bhakti* when Prabhupāda was here, so in that way, Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja is directing us to go deeper into Prabhupāda's (and the Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*'s) teachings. In that sense, he is like a near and dear friend to us.

I spoke to Baladeva about this. He suggested that I don't see Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja in conflict with Śrīla Prabhupāda, but that I try to see from the positive side how they are enhancing each other. He said I could see the distinction between them—that they have different roles in my life—rather than see one as usurping the other. His suggestion made me clarify my fears a little more: I don't want to relegate Prabhupāda to the role of stern master in my life. I have to see him as someone I can exchange love with, not that our relationship is limited by his role as heavy teacher.

Some of my Godbrothers have commented on this. One Godbrother said that we weren't able to express our love for Prabhupāda in a very familiar (but not contemptuous) way. For example, we didn't touch Prabhupāda's feet. Prabhupāda certainly didn't invite us to do this basic act, and we were too much in awe of him to even consider it. We see with Mahārāja that everyone touches his feet—ladies, children, everyone. They visit him practically just to do that. As we saw so many people behave with Mahārāja like that, we gradually began to touch his feet too. It increased our love and respect for him—it seems right to touch the feet of the person you

regard as your spiritual master. Someone said that if Prabhupāda were here now, we would insist on touching his feet, but we never did it in the past because we too afraid to express that kind of love for him. And it is true, at least partially. Since I started touching Mahārāja's feet, I have crossed that barrier in the temple room and begun to touch the feet of Prabhupāda's *mūrti*.

Prabhupāda had a very different role in our lives. Mahārāja said, "He saved you from hell. He had to clean out the dirty pot." I responded, "Yes, it was a very dirty pot." Prabhupāda tackled our marijuana-smoking, our LSD-spirituality, our gross lust. He spoke to us when we had never even heard of Kṛṣṇa. He gave us love, and he also looked through us and convinced us of our nonsense. He didn't give us too much rope. His technique was to give us a little freedom and then jerk us back to his lotus feet when we looked like we were misusing it. When I was at Villa Vṛndāvana last time, I told some stories about my association with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Afterwards someone asked, "All your stories were about being chastised by Prabhupāda. Could you tell any stories where you had some affectionate exchanges?" But we needed him to give us mercy by disciplining us.

Now twenty-five years later, I have met someone who is part of my spiritual family, literally a cousin. We sit with him on the same level on the floor, and although we see him as guru, we enjoy the relaxed atmosphere. It would be too difficult to try to replay our relationship with Prabhupāda with Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. The more I think and talk about it, the more I realize that there is nothing wrong with these differences between Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and Śrīla Prabhupāda—they just have to be understood.



From 1:00 A.M. to 7:30 A.M. is a long stretch. I flag toward the end.

I am reading *Nectar of Devotion* and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* with the commentaries of Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī.

Baladeva just suggested two projects: a biography of Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and written commentaries on those sections of Prabhupāda's book which teach *rāgānugābhakti*. I wrote back to Baladeva, "Once you get the scent of the trail, you really go for it, don't you?" They are bold ideas. Coming out of the closet. It reminds me of the night we spoke at Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja's *māṭh* in Vṛndāvana before many ISKCON devotees. ISKCON *sannyāsīs* were asked to give brief speeches. One gave a particularly affectionate talk of appreciation for Mahārāja. I thought, "But this same brother told me we have to keep the lid on this." Later I wrote him a note and said his lecture reminded me of a popular song which went roughly like this:

Once I had a secret love,
that dwelled within the heart of me. . .
all too soon my secret love
became impatient to be told.
Now I've told it from the highest hill,
even told the lowly daffodil . . .
Now my secret love's no secret anymore.

He wrote back and said there was nothing wrong in expressing appreciation for a "friend," and that this didn't compromise the need for secrecy regarding seeing Mahārāja as guru. But my brother said he also had been thinking of a song like, "You've got to hide your love away."

But, "How long will they keep it in?"

A biography. Mahārāja would probably not like the idea and I would have to write it almost without his cooperation. It wouldn't be easily or quickly accomplished. A natural assignment for me. An excuse to go see him. But a secret.

And gathering Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements that *vaidhī-bhakti* doesn't please the Lord as much as *rāgānugā*—and that we are meant to follow Rūpa Gosvāmī on this high path—hmmm.

~*



The kids (I guess it was them) piled rocks on the desk out here. They have frozen to the surface.

What else? Don't mind the cold for awhile. Come and write.

But what?

I read . . . in Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura . . . *rāgānugā* is. . .

But that's just repeating a book.

Yes, but not an ordinary book. *Rāgānugā* is impelled by love. It begins when you are attracted to hearing the Vraja pastimes from a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava.

I heard that before.

Well that's my message. Like a backyard Daniel Boone, I have come out in sub-freezing weather to note it. Last summer, I didn't know what I know now, so I am informing myself in the shack. I also notice the ghosts of my inner censors are out here, but I am willing to face them and get past them.

Prayer is no longer vague. Let me come nearer to those faraway figures. Let me hear—wild claims!—the flute, the shouts, the tinkle of ankle bells. Or let me hear the words spoken by the Vaiṣṇava on these topics, from their pure desire.

O Kṛṣṇa! Can one fool utter Your name and call to You? I do so through Your representatives, on their order. O Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa. Please help me to help others. Am I too attached to the ‘art’ of writing and to books with my name on the cover? Let my *karma-yoga* become pure *bhakti*. Let my male ego dissolve and become pure servant of you and Rādhā. Let the gurus find me an eager young aspirant to carry out their order. Let me stop to hear others and give them some direction based on my own experience.

I pray—You know—to chant the holy names. I won’t be too embarrassed to repeat this petition (“What, he still has problems with *japa*? He *must* be an offender.”) Putting shame and fear aside and looking within for a grain of undulled sincerity I pray, “Let me break up the frozen indifference. Your servant is calling You. Please find the way to bring me back to You.”



Learn what it means to live within. Did you ever do it before, maybe as a child? Children have their own worlds. Those worlds are real and children sustain them, but they are internal. Now my own inner world revolves in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa, of Vṛndāvana, of chanting and praying.

I have heard of people entering a cave that opened into a world of lakes and skies and trees. They had to enter deep within the cave to find the interior world. They had to crawl through the dark crevices and hear the bats screech overhead before they found their paradise. I am entering the cave of my mind. I sing *bhajan*s to ward off the bats and I hear and remember pastimes to get past the obstacles of my mind. I write my way in. The obstacles try to convince me that the “real” world lies in a realm of the senses. “Step aside,” I tell them, “my guru wants me to hear the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and the sounds of Kṛṣṇa’s eternal realm.”



Chapter Five

“The Whole World is Waiting, Mr. Mitra, for Our Spiritual Revolution”

“*Caitanya-caritāmṛta* advises those who are neophytes to give up all kinds of motivated desires and simply engage in the regulative devotional service of the Lord according to the directions of scripture. In this way a neophyte can gradually develop attachment for Kṛṣṇa’s name, fame, form, qualities and so forth. When one has developed such attachment, he can spontaneously serve the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa even without following the regulative principles. This stage is called *rāgānugā-bhakti* . . . in the *mādhurya-rasa*, characterized by conjugal love, one can become like Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī or Her lady friends such as Lalitā and Her serving maids (*mañjarīs*) like Rūpa and Rati. This is the essence of all instruction in the matter of devotional service.

—*Nectar of Instruction* text 8, purport

January 26

One realizes that humility is the great attainment; to be personally humble. Yet who can write better books but devotees of Kṛṣṇa? Devotees understand that the real credit belongs to guru and Kṛṣṇa, and some of us are embarrassed that we don’t write something brilliant considering we have received the gifts offered by being connected to the *paramparā*.

It impels me to continue despite my lackings to read *Writers at Work*. I read these books so I can improve my writer’s craft. All those writers don’t seek the connection with Kṛṣṇa, don’t even *want* a connection with Kṛṣṇa, but they are sincere writers, sincerely writing themselves into the void. Devotees of Kṛṣṇa, even beginning devotees of Kṛṣṇa, can do something vital—they can point the way to surrender and loving service.

No doubt all the best books have already been written, yet there is room for more. More readers are coming—the children born into this world are growing up. We have to write for them.

•

Kṛṣṇa, You live in a warm climate with Rādhā, although I read some mention of a chilly season in *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta*. Down here in Pennsylvania, it is a hellish cold. But how warming it is to the heart to hear of Your daily activities, Your coming home in the evening. I like to hear how Rādhā and the *gopīs* go up on the watch tower at Yavāṭ and look over to the *gośala* at Nandagram. One *gopī* comes from Nandagram to tell Rādhā the details of the latest dialogue between Sudāmā and Kṛṣṇa, how they proudly boast in front of each other and the other cowherd boys, or how Mother Yaśodā and Nanda-bābā love to encourage Kṛṣṇa to eat supper nicely. Hearing this latest *kṛṣṇa-kathā* keeps Rādhā alive in her devastated feelings of separation.

•

What was I going to say? Oh yes, when will I cry?

•

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes we should long for the day when tears will come to our eyes by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Imagine trying to squeeze out a few tears—ridiculous. And yet the dry, macho resistance to this is also ridiculous. I don't think of my desire to cry as a hankering for an advanced stage; more, it is an awareness that I am stuck at a very preliminary point—an inability to feel regret. Sometimes I don't feel anything.

Shall I appease myself and say, "This is a nice stage of advancement. This is a time for patience and don't you know, patience is a virtue too?" You think, "Kṛṣṇa doesn't give me a chance to feel anything in His holy names. One day, He may choose to reveal to me the reasons why the nectar of the name isn't mine. He is in the heart and from Him comes remembrance and forgetfulness. Until He does this, I will go on faithfully counting rounds."

The Vaiṣṇava *kavi* prays that he could not attain the nectar of the holy names. He thinks he must be cursed by Yamarāja. What is the sense of living? Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura states, "With every rising and setting of the sun, a day passes and is lost. Then, why do you remain idle and not serve the Lord of the heart? This temporary life is full of various miseries. Take shelter of the holy name as your only business. . . . Drink the pure nectar of the holy name. There is nothing but the name to be had

in the fourteen worlds. It has filled the soul of Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura" (*Aruṇodaya-kīrtana*, verses 5–6, 8).



Be patient, be patient. Don't be dull. Pray to your *gurudeva* to reveal his form in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* to you. Pray to be able to *speak*. Pray to go beyond timid conservatism. Don't be idle for a moment. Forget your comforts. Care for others. Give them Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Be patient. It may take many lifetimes. Sit down and chant and praise Kṛṣṇa without worrying how advanced you are.

Be patient. Be happy. Be satisfied and grateful. Tell Prabhupāda stories if you can.

Be like the lady of the house who makes *capātīs* every day, and simple *sabjīs*, *dāl*, and rice. And yet . . . we think of Śrīla Prabhupāda impatiently telling the medical students at Jhansi to "Join this movement." We think of him up all night speaking and practicing *harināma harināma harināma eva kevalam*. "The whole world is waiting, Mr. Mitra, for our spiritual revolution." What follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda doesn't feel at least a little of this?

I have hundreds of disciples, but still I am patient. Patient and looking for deeper humility. But, Mr. Mitra, the whole world is waiting.



Japa

It is 3:00 A.M. Sirens sounded as I chanted my seventh round. At first I thought it was sounding from the local fire station, or maybe it was a burglar alarm. Then I thought of air raid warnings—nuclear war, bombers on the way. Then I thought, "But the Cold War is supposed to be over. Remember in the 1950s how we had regular air raid drills?" As school children we hid under our wooden desks and schools displayed posters that showed what to do if an air raid horn sounded while we were walking on the street. The poster showed a picture of a fiery cloud generated from an atomic bomb. We thought that disaster could strike at any moment.

The mind roams and roams.

O holy name . . .



I appreciate the words of the *śāstras* regarding the mercy and power of the holy name. Great devotees chant day and night, even when eating and sleeping. They have discovered that all attractive-Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā are fully present in Their names.

My chanting wasn't much improved today, but I watched the holy name. By that I mean I gave my time to it, just as I give time to writing. I recognized that my offering was broken and probably of little value, but I offered my chanting anyway, with hopes for the future.

I have to not be afraid to see how much I actually *need* the holy name. Life is fearful, *therefore I need to take shelter*. Kṛṣṇa is beautiful and friendly and present in *harināma*. Let me take shelter. Please give me courage to see the necessity of pure chanting.

~

"O My Lord, Your holy name alone can render all benediction to living beings and therefore You have hundreds and millions of names like Kṛṣṇa and Govinda. In these transcendental Names You have invested all Your transcendental energies."

I don't want to always be praying, "and therefore I have no attraction for Your holy names." Please teach me surrender. "Please pick me up from this ocean of death and place me as one of the atoms at Your lotus feet. O my Lord, when will my eyes be decorated with tears of love flowing constantly when I chant Your holy names?"

~

Give us abundance,
he's truly a madman,
Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī—lover
of Vṛndāvana, a *sakhī* who serves
Rādhā and Madhupati.
And we are pummeled by his words,
He calls one poem, "An attempt to describe Śrī Rādhikā's
Golden Face," and another,
"The Impossible Dream—To Become
Śrī Rādhā's *Dāśī*" —
"A Meditation to Awaken One's Spiritual Body
of a Maidservant."

Accept it, roll with it,
you'll find yourself involved,
gushing torrents of love sports, *prema*
nectar rushing . . .

Tuṅgavidyā and her translator are trying
to convey to our little hearts
the nature of *mahā-prema*
and plunge us into that ocean.

Bees in the *kuñja* (friendly nectar bees),
witness the intimate scenes we're not qualified
to see. We can follow the eyes
of the *gopī-mañjarīs* who see
what's unknown even in *Vaikuṇṭha*.

Rādhā-rasa-suddha-nidhi
rubs onto me
and leaves me spinning—he's got
the ultimate subject and he won't let it go,
the lotus feet of Śrī Rādhā.
"In that place which is surcharged
with grand ambrosial tidal waves
of talks about Rādhā's love sports
—within the temple grove's lovely terrace
by the bank of the Yamunā.
May my mind frolic playfully."

~

Mahārāja's line of thought isn't always easy to follow because it rejects argument (*yukti*). Where there is doubt "whether I am qualified to hear of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*," he sees it as lack of greed. When greed is present, one doesn't care if one is qualified or not. He gave the example of Prahāda Mahārāja who went on hearing and chanting *kṛṣṇa-kathā* even though his father and others objected. Similarly, we shouldn't raise our own objections—not if we have genuine greed, or at least shadow-greed, to hear *rāgānugā* topics.

Mahārāja said that Rūpa and Raghunātha Gosvāmīs didn't speak of Rāma and other *bhaktas*; they only spoke of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in *Vraja*, as in *Dāna-keli-cintāmaṇi* and *Vidagdha-mādhava*. As one advances, the interest in other teachings, even other parts of the *Bhāgavatam*, subsides.

I asked him, "What about preaching this? Can we tell others?"

He said we should carefully select who we speak to. He gave the same example Śrīla Prabhupāda gave. Lord Caitanya gave *harināma* to the masses, but He spoke of Rādhā-*bhāva* only with a *very* few intimate devotees. Lord Caitanya didn't even speak about Rādhā-*bhāva* directly with Rūpa Gosvāmī, but spoke of it only in *sūtra* form. Still, everything became manifest in Rūpa Gosvāmī's heart.

For us, we give the teachings of Prahlāda Mahārāja to the general masses, and also teach them the same instructions Lord Caitanya gave to Sanātana Gosvāmī. Special topics can be shared with special persons.

I am still working this out. It is difficult not to speak about what I am going through, especially when I am feeling some inner turmoil. How can I pretend that there is nothing churning within me in the early morning as I read *Rādhā-rasa-suddha-nidhi*? Still, the injunction is to keep silent. If someone follows my example without qualification, they may ruin themselves. Or if they are not inclined toward *gopī-bhāva*, they will not hear what I have to say. They may even criticize.

But my tendency over the past six years is to be open and honest about my experiences. I have told of my headaches, my pride, my reform attempts as guru, my shames and inadequacies in *japa*, my wanderings into the realm of Christian saints and haiku. Now that I have reached the pinnacle of good fortune and "right on" *siddhānta* under the best guidance, now that my search for Śrīla Prabhupāda has opened up and been rewarded in Vṛndāvana, now I am supposed to be silent?

Mahārāja himself "tells," even at the risk of being criticized. So perhaps another symptom of greed is to speak, even if others say don't speak. If I speak purely from *śāstra* without elaborating on my own intimate pastimes with Kṛṣṇa, what is the harm?

Remember the story of Rāmānuja? His *guru* told him not to share the mantra which had the power to deliver the conditioned souls. Rāmānuja transgressed that order thinking, "If the mantra can benefit others, then I must tell them, even if I will be punished for it." But in my case, I have to examine whether my motive is really to save souls.

Mahārāja explained that for different types of devotees, Lord Caitanya manifested Himself in His various incarnations. For Śrīvāsa, He manifested as Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, and sometimes He became Rukmiṇī in a drama for Jagadānanda Paṇḍita. (His point was that we should deliver the various Kṛṣṇa conscious teachings according to the mood of the audience.) Lord Caitanya also made efforts not to express His views, as when He was with Vallabha Ācārya in a boat crossing the Yamunā. "So we also should subside our views."

The mission and meaning of *rāgānugā* stirs in you and develops as your main interest, yet no one knows it!

Mahārāja also told us that sometimes the intimate devotees cannot “subside” their feelings of intense love for Kṛṣṇa. He gave the example of the physician Mukunda who fainted when he saw the peacock fan. Mahārāja said that valuable things should be given only to those who are grateful.

I said, “This explanation helps us to understand our Prabhupāda because he was very grave and private.”

“He used to tell us and talk all these things,” said Mahārāja.

Mahārāja’s position is *apparently* paradoxical. He’s not afraid to “tell” *Vilāpa-kusumāñjali* to us, and yet sometimes he is afraid.

So I have to pick up the various precepts and examples from Śrīla Prabhupāda and Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, and assimilate them according to time, place, and persons. Then I will speak or not speak according to what little I know. I pray for guidance, and pray that since I am bent on writing about what I am going through, I write it in a way that I and the teachings will be protected from harm (and blasphemy).

•

Today I came upon a paragraph in Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *Shri Chaitanya Shikshamritam* which jumped out at me, regarding the importance of self-examination and truthfulness:

Aspirants for devotion should always notice carefully their own state. They should consider what they were yesterday, and what they are today, and what improvement they have made. By noticing for several days if they come to know that no improvement has been made according to the above evolutionary method, then it will be understood that some hidden evil or offense stands in the way. Detecting that offense they will try to avoid it and by the company of devotees they will rectify it. By constant cultivation and supplication to Krishna they will guard themselves so that such offence may not reappear. Those who have no eye for this evolutionary stage, their unnoticed obstacle will cause delay to their improvement. Therefore, O devotees! Take special care about this.

•

Noon,



I don't like having to hear the daddy's loud voice outside. Of course, it's a lovely winter day with a little less than an inch of snow from last night's snowfall. It's a sunny Sunday, a day of rest, so what do I expect? I mind my own business. Some ride on snow buggies and some come to pray and ask themselves pertinent questions.

I haven't got very far, the *rasika* teachers make that quite clear when they delineate step-by-step progress (as in *Mādhurya-kādambinī*). Where are you on the *bhakta* progress chart? *Bhajana-kriya*? Your "*niṣṭhā*" is unsteady. You have some terribly neophyte symptoms in *japa* and hearing. Unsustained interest in *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. Attraction to women, food, comfort. All right, I haven't come out here to list all that. But take stock quickly and admit: *I am not very advanced*.

The *ācāryas* bring us down to reality, yet they encourage us to go up by the *bhakti* elevator. Śrīla Prabhupāda used to use so many encouraging analogies: take the elevator, don't walk up the stairs; hitch your bicycle onto the back of a moving truck; accept a million dollars from the magnanimous Lord, and all your ten dollar troubles are over; catch hold of the rope lowered into your well. Just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and dance, and when you get tired, take *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*. Plant roses for Kṛṣṇa, write an essay, dovetail your consciousness in the service of the Supreme. "It is not at all difficult. Not at all."



Kids looking for a good hill to sled on. Fine powdery snow falling off the branches in noon sunshine. Shouting as they play. The highway is clear for commerce. Why shouldn't I play and make commerce too, in my own shack?

Such a pure blue sky. I need to breathe long enough to clear my head. My breath evaporates in a frosty puff. This body is quite a contraption, and it doesn't last long. Just see how mine is gradually wearing down.



Back indoors. Girirāja Swami gives a basic definition of *vaidhī-bhakti* in his class: following the rules and regulations without spontaneous attraction. Obedience to the injunctions of the scripture and the spiritual master *without spontaneous liking*.

That's the problem. It seems to me I should be beyond this—I should *like* it by now. I do like sweet rice, beautiful Deities, early morning writing, and many other things, but the very basic activities of chanting and reading my spiritual master's books I do without *bhāva*. Until I went to India last Kārttika, I thought "spontaneous attraction"

meant being enthusiastic about the same duties. But now I see better: spontaneous love, *bhāva-bhakti* or *prema-bhakti*, is a specific, spontaneous absorption in Kṛṣṇa's intimate service in Vraja.

My aim is right now; I have a clear idea of the goal. Still, I am a *vaidhī* practitioner, although I *see more clearly than ever the nature of its inferiority*.

But the problem remains: I am stuck in *vaidhī* due to my offenses. Simply reading advanced texts doesn't do the job in itself. Even the association of a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava doesn't work automatically. I have to practice, do *sādhana*. Not just *vaidhī-sādhana*, but *rāgānugā-sādhana*.

I know all this already, but I am repeating it here because it is elusive. Especially for one who lives outside Vṛndāvana, unless I tell myself again and again, it is easy to slip back into the generalized way of practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "Repetition of something is necessary in order that we understand the matter thoroughly, without error." (Bg. 2.25, purport)



Śrīla Prabhupāda told us to make a vow to practice something without fail, something we can actually do. Performing that vow will help us advance. I am trying to gradually focus and pray for improvement.

In *Shri Chaitanya Shikshamrita*, in the chapter called "*Nāma-bhajana*," Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura eloquently advises us how to improve the quality of chanting: "At the time of taking *nāma*, the true meaning of *nāma* should be cultivated with fondness, and prayer should be made to Kṛṣṇa with piteous cry" (p.203) He also instructs us on the meaning of the words in the *mahā-mantra*: "Hare" means "She who can rob the mind of Hari by Her unprecedented love and affection, and this is applicable only to Śrīmatī Rādhikā." Kṛṣṇa means all-attractive. And according to the Purāṇas, "The meaning of Rāma is He who is God of transcendental, erotic *līlā* and who is always engaged in amorous play with His eternal playmate, Śrī Rādhā. So 'Rāma' signifies Kṛṣṇa only and no one else" (p. 202).



In "*Nāma-bhajana*," Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura seems to say that as one increases in taste for the holy names, he will also increase the quantity of his chanting. In other places, he states that the cure for *nāma-aparādha* is to chant constantly. I think I should chant more, but I don't want to give up precious hours that could be used in writing and reading. Then I read this balanced statement in *Nectar of Devotion*:

... one should not neglect following the principles of devotional service, nor should one accept the rulings of devotional service which are more than what he can easily perform. For example, it may be said that one should chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra at least one hundred thousand times daily on his beads. But if this is not possible, then one must minimize his chanting according to his own capacity. Generally, we recommend our disciples to chant at least sixteen rounds on their *japa* beads daily, and this should be completed.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 63

•

7:45 P.M.

In Delhi, we stayed at the home of the Buddhi Rajas. While we were there, Mahārāja said I could write about *rāgānugā*. Rāmacandra dāsa prodded him in that direction by saying that I was hearing from Mahārāja now, so I would probably write about it according to my realization.

Mahārāja replied, "He can do."

Then I asked, "But previously you said it has to be kept hidden. So if you tell me, then I can do it."

Mahārāja said, "You can do. I am giving not so hidden things. This is also for the mass. The level should be high. Only *siddhānta* you can give, what I am telling."

Rāmacandra said, "If he doesn't give us hints, then how will greed come in us?"

Then I said, "Another reason why it is good you are doing this is that older ISKCON devotees know that *rāgānugā* is the culmination of our philosophy. So if they don't find *rāgānugā* practice in ISKCON, they will go to the Rādhā-kuṇḍa *bābājīs* or someone else."

Mahārāja: "That is why I am giving. At first they had an idea that their guru, Śrīla Prabhupāda, was only of *sakhya-rasa* and could not give these things." Mahārāja said that he had proven in open lectures that Śrīla Prabhupāda was certainly of *gopī-bhāva*.

Remembering this now firms up my resolution to write what I know. It is important, it is needed, it is not forbidden. I have been asked to do it.

•

January 27, 1:10 A.M.

Hurry along, hurry as they rush you through the Indian temples—you can only see the Deity for a moment or two. Life is short and everyone has to pass through these doors, your father and mother, and before them, their father and mother, and

before them, their father and mother *ad infinitum*. It is a wonder people don't think they are going to die, as if anyone is an exception. I can preach on this point using myself as an example, then after the lecture, some people will touch my feet. Like other *sādhus* I will then ask, "Where do we honor *prasāda*?" It is the most wonderful, amazing thing in the world.

And who likes the old, the feeble, the dying anyway? Don't they get in the way of our vigorous lives? Don't they disrupt our plans with their measured slowness? Don't they sometimes act in disgusting ways? Śrīla Prabhupāda detected this disparity in his own followers and he commented on it: "They don't like me. They think I am contaminated?" We faithfully went to his bedside and chanted with him, but there was no activity. He wasn't speaking. So we went back to Delhi and caught our flights back to Los Angeles or Germany or London, back to work on Prabhupāda's behalf. Business as usual.

Why these 'morose' thoughts on this cold winter morning? My Lord, my guru, I pray that on my deathbed, I will think of You. I want to savor that verse as I savored it during my outdoor walks in Ireland near Clare Island—"Whoever, at the end of his life, quits his body, remembering Me alone, at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt." (Bg. 8.5)

Now Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja has pointed out, with reference to *Rāga-vartma-candrikā* that the destination, "My nature," may refer to many different abodes and relationships with the Lord. It does not automatically mean one goes to Vraja. We are meant not only to cultivate Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but Vraja-consciousness. We hadn't thought of that much, but now we will never forget it. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Anyone who quits his body in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is at once transferred to the transcendental nature of the Lord." This statement is like a *sūtra*. If you put it together with all the other statements in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, we will understand that he also is telling us to think of Kṛṣṇa in a particular way—according to the mood of the residents of Vṛndāvana.

Of course, Śrīla Prabhupāda first had to convince us of the basics in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "If one wants to achieve success at the end of his life, the process of remembering Kṛṣṇa is essential. Therefore, one should constantly, incessantly chant the *mahā-mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare" (Bg. 8.5 purport).

At the end of the *Gītā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda makes it clear that by "Kṛṣṇa" and "Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra," he is referring to Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana—" . . . the very form with two hands carrying a flute, the bluish boy with a beautiful face and peacock feathers in

His hair. . . . One should fix his mind on this original form of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. One should not even divert his attention to other forms of the Lord" (Bg. 18.65 purport).

Śrīla Prabhupāda had to first gather us in. He had the responsibility of gathering in the whole Western world. Therefore, when someone asked about Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Prabhupāda would sometimes respond in a debating spirit, "Why talk of Kṛṣṇa? Kṛṣṇa is far, far away. First understand that you are spirit soul. Do you agree?" Often the guests did not agree that they were eternal spirit soul or that Kṛṣṇa was God. How could Prabhupāda speak of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa with such persons?

~

I praise my spiritual master and fall at his feet again and again. I worship his preaching mood and beg from him a drop of that vigor so I can represent him wherever I go. May he bless me to go on learning in the unlimited science of Kṛṣṇa, to become fit for guiding his many followers over the long haul of human life. Let us appreciate the wonderful depth and playfulness and beauty of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in all its varieties. O Prabhupāda, I am a fool. But I desire to join you in your *nitya-līlā praviṣṭa*, if there is a place for me, and if I can rid myself of *anarthas*. Fortunately, there is so much work to do in this world preparing ourselves and others from the lower stages upwards. Seems like we will never get done—so much to do!

I say "fortunately" because we need to be busy. We don't need time to waste. No shortage of favorable engagement, no dearth of topmost welfare work. No shortage of people who want to hear, or need to hear. Never a dull moment. Working to return to you (including Kṛṣṇa and all His Vraja *pariṣads*) led by my eternal spiritual master in his form in Kṛṣṇaloka.

~

So now when I look at you imploringly, still begging favors and begging questions, what do you think, Śrīla Prabhupāda? I like to think that you are welcoming me in my interest in *rāgānugā*.

You told the story of the day-dreaming potter who had only a few pots for sale. The potter began fantasizing how he would eventually become a millionaire. Then he would get a wife, and if his wife dared to argue with him, he would kick her. The potter kicked out his foot and smashed his only pots!

I don't want to smash my basic *śraddhā*, my obedience as your *śiṣya*, my place in ISKCON. But it's time to go forward.

~

I tried reading aloud,
the most intimate descriptions of Śrī Rādhā's love.
It was good for me.
But can I sing a song?
Śrīmatī is far beyond me,
but I am hearing from Her *rasika* devotees.

Spiritual master, you have brought me this far.
You know the sinful state I was in
and you know I am still not
cleared of the scent of sin.

"When I hear the name of Rādhā I think of
Rādhā, the barber's wife."
Those fools, perpetrators
of licentious paintings
and the perversions of Indologist scholars . . .
I leave them behind.
By hearing, enter a *kuñja*,
hear *mañjarīs* talk of cleaning up the bower
and what Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa did.
Let me look sharp, be ready
to take any service they may give me.
Don't just stand there, take some water
sweep up broken flower garlands . . .
No! Don't imagine anything,
but hear and pray.

"Glorifying Him in so many ways,
cleaning His most lovely temple of sports,
sprinkling sandalwood-scented waters all about—
Will I ever become drowned
in a lake of liquid *rasa*?"

ॐ

6:30 A.M.

It is still dark outside and way below freezing. I am looking for the right combination of circumstances. "Act in such a way that Kṛṣṇa sees you." My walks don't mean I am taking a vacation from prayer, although it's good to get out and *not* concentrate for awhile, just be who I am and be easy about it. I look around and think of Kṛṣṇa. He's in my heart—not in the street or the beer can-littered forest. He's not even loitering in Loi Bazaar.)

❧

They say I should face my feelings. My relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda is the major thing—for me and for every disciple.

I heard a devotee say in a lecture, "I think Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote *Nectar of Devotion* with neophytes in mind." The statement sounded offensive to some. But as he explained it, it was all right. *Nectar of Devotion* is deep, true to Rūpa Gosvāmī all the way. But to appreciate that Śrīla Prabhupāda was encouraging Westerners who had never heard of Kṛṣṇa, assuring them that even their first efforts at "dove-tailing" were pleasing to *guru* and Kṛṣṇa—this is not to slight Śrīla Prabhupāda but to praise him for his work. He did what no other *ācārya* did, and he stayed and gave of himself and worked with compassion.

But he didn't give us all the esoteric *mādhurya-rasa* in detail—he didn't even emphasize it—because it wasn't right for us, we couldn't take it. That doesn't mean we have a perpetual vow to remain unqualified to hear the full message of Rūpa-Raghunātha. But it is touchy, sensitive. I want to bring out my feelings and face everything in relationship to Śrīla Prabhupāda—if it will help me to love and serve him.

❧

Why do I doubt that what I am doing now—my writing and my interest in *rāgānugā*—will be pleasing to Prabhupāda? I have learned to serve Prabhupāda from Prabhupāda himself. I have learned that serving him has more to do with surrendering to his will than with the particular form of service a disciple may end up performing.

Here is an example: a disciple of St Francis of Assisi, St. Bonaventure, was quite different in temperament than Francis. Francis was simple and he distrusted theological scholarship—unless it directly developed love of God. Bonaventure was a scholar and became the head of a worldwide mission of Franciscans, but he loved and served his master, Francis.

The disciple can grow with a different temperament, but he should use it to serve his guru. He should also understand that there may be awkward moments in the process of serving.

ra

As soon as I hit the street this morning I thought, this is it. This is the best time of the day to walk. It is cold out, but I am warmly dressed. The sky is beautiful, as the sun just crowns the horizon and the pale halfmoon is still visible. There's no one in sight.

Entering "The Woods" I got some ideas. It occurred to me that the different drives should contribute toward one goal. The writing should push the chanting and reading. The writer-self can tell them, "I am being honest with myself and really trying to cry out. So why can't you do the same when chanting *japa*? And why can't you read with reverence even though you've read the books before?" Similarly, the reading and the chanting can help the writing. Otherwise what do I have to write about except my own self-centered ruminations? I can write about the absolutely important subject of chanting the holy name, and reading can supply me with accurate *siddhānta*. Each part of me should fuel and support the others.

I saw a deer and its fawn while I was out. It was the first time I have seen such a sight in all the years I have been coming here. This morning's walk felt so good that I decided to take such a walk every day, even though it meant delaying breakfast a little. But when I started back and was about a block from Śamika Ṛṣi's house, I entered a scene that ruined everything. The first thing I saw was a man with his dog on a leash. He was standing in the middle of the road, looking in my direction. Then I saw a few kids who I guessed were waiting for the school bus. As I came closer, I saw four different cars parked, motors running, all with parents inside waiting with their children for the school bus.

My first impulse was that this was going to ruin my plans for a daily walk at this time—too many people—but I tried to make the best of it. When I came quite close to the man, I raised my hand and said, "Good morning!" He just stood there staring at me without the slightest acknowledgement. I then looked down at his dog who was straining on the leash toward me, so I tried making a slight comical acknowledgement of the dog. But all I got was stares from the father, and the kids seemed to join in a xenophobic dressing down of the stranger who suddenly came out of the woods and walked down "their" block. They probably continued to watch me after I walked passed.

So now I have several alternatives. If I like I could continue to walk the gauntlet each morning and try to just brush off the negative vibrations—the walk is the spiritual world, but coming back means re-entering through the material world. Or I could just cancel these early morning walks. Another alternative is to have Madhu pick me up in the car after I emerge from the woods. I can play the suburbanites' game and ride by in the car.

11:20 A.M.,



I hesitate to place *The Nectar of Instruction* on the desk because it is so cold. You don't want to freeze up Rādhā-kuṇḍa or Rūpa Gosvāmī's *samādhī*. So alien, in exile, is this land.

Everything is a pose, or tends toward pose, and one has to fight to be real. In the *prema* stage, all pose is destroyed. Then one can be sincere without a care. *Prema* means riding up and down on the waves of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *rasa*.

I did this, I did that. *Writers at Work*—they got me all eight volumes. I go through an interview in about two minutes, just glancing at the questions mainly: "What is your daily routine for writing?" "Do you use a typewriter?" Those are the ones that interest me.

As usual, I want to get it out of the way. Same with Henry Miller. I wanted to get the *Colossus of Maroussi* because he said it was his best book and that it was full of joy, but I was immediately disappointed. The book is just about him telling where he went in Greece and his heavy opinions on everything—himself the last word, the "*Vedānta*" on everything in the universe. Why even read these books in the first place? The answer is not, "I need the association of writers." The answer is I am on a much lower rung of *bhakti* which can be defined as one who is interested in Kṛṣṇa, who professes Him to be the Supreme Godhead and all-attractive Person, but who still has other interests and cannot sustain constant attraction to the Lord and His *kathā*. The advanced devotee is *always* Kṛṣṇa consciousness and has no interest in "secular aestheticism."

Mahārāja told us not to get discouraged. If a devotee knows it will take hundreds of births before he can attain *kṛṣṇa-prema*, then he thinks, "Good, it is fixed. I shall attain it one day."

At least I am mad enough to come out here in the snow and write.

Śrī kṛṣṇa caitanya prabhu nityānanda. Dead leaves poking through the snow, everything bleached like a black-and-white movie. Where is summer's green? The only constant is truck traffic, as long as America lasts. And daddy and mommy and the kids and houses and cars and suburbs, the American way.

Nectar of Instruction, please don't mind that I have put you on the cold desk. I need to look at something to remind me. You are transcendental to the weather, yet I should not expose you to the cold outdoors. Just stay with me a few minutes. Give me your warmth, the voice of my master:

Caitanya-caritāmṛta advises those who are neophytes to give up all kinds of motivated desires and simply engage in the regulative devotional service of the Lord according to the directions of scripture. In this way a neophyte can gradually develop attachment for Kṛṣṇa's name, fame, form, qualities and so forth. When one has developed such attachment, he can spontaneously serve the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa even without following the regulative principles. This stage is called *rāgānugā-bhakti* . . .

. . . in the *mādhurya-rasa*, characterized by conjugal love, one can become like Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī or Her lady friends such as Lalitā and Her serving maids (*mañjarīs*) like Rūpa and Rati. This is the essence of all instruction in the matter of devotional service.

—*Nectar of Instruction* text 8, purport

❧

What next? I am slow at 9:00–10:00 A.M., tried reading and dozed off. But still I saw valuable information. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes (and Rūpa Gosvāmī also in *Nectar of Devotion* and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*) that the injunction, "Don't take many disciples" applies to recluses, not to preachers. If gurus don't make disciples, then the *sampradāya* will die out. But they also say that taking many disciples leads to the tendency for *priya*, adoration, pride—and that is opposed to *bhakti*. No one should think, "I am a guru." One should think, "I am a postal peon (mailman) delivering a check." If one takes even one dollar for himself, he will be dismissed.

Also—a big question—what is permissible to accept as facility for one's service? A snowsuit? Another hat? Two sweets or only one? When does watchful renunciation become dour and counter-productive? What does a writer need? Who will judge?

❧

I have to cast across the continents, as with a short wave radio, "Vṛndāvana are you there?" I sit in an attic like a ham radio man who knows nothing else, or who cares for nothing except his contact with that output ten thousand miles away.

"Hello! Vṛndāvana, this is Satsvarūpa dāsa in Stroudsburg. Hello? Can you hear me?"

"Yes. Please accept—"

"Please accept *my* humble obeisances."

"What are you doing there?"

"Thinking of Vṛndāvana. Sometimes. And eating a lot. And writing—and reading when I don't fall asleep. And you? Are you going to hear from Mahārāja in Mathurā?"

"Yes, we'll send you the cassette. Here's the news . . ."

My fingers are getting stiff from the cold.

•

Niṣṭhā: it is a complicated, technical, Sanskrit term. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us this definition of *niṣṭhā*: "No matter what nonsense anyone says, you remain steady." Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja says *guru-niṣṭhā* is the basis for being eligible to hear *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

I have been steady for twenty-five years. But I want people to honor my silver jubilee. Hmmm, isn't it ISKCON's jubilee? Anyway, *niṣṭhā* isn't enough. I may be steady, but there's more to go. Keep alive and keep on working.

There are Godbrothers who are so technical in their discussion of the steps of *bhakti*: *ādaḥ śraddhā, tataḥ sādhu-saṅgo ta bhajana kriya . . . up to niṣṭhā*." They stand at the blackboard and ask the students, "Measure yourself. Who has attained it? Who dares to say they are steady in faith? Do you know all the symptoms listed in *Mādhurya-kādamini*?"

•

Japa

Sleepy-eyed boy, spacy-eyed boy, can't stop THE MIND.

It is Prabhupāda's order and I love the emphasis he gave to the names.

Japa go on
japa at death
again and again
on red beads,
your noose-rosary,
Cry—sing—walk,
talk—vibrate—Hail!

It is a fight with those two heads, the one with his eyes closed, "Sleepy," and the one called "Spacy." They always grab hold of me and lock with my mind.

But things *can* change. Revolution *can* occur—like Communist Russia that changed for something else. Why not a *japa* revolution to topple the powerful regimes of Sleepy, Spacy, and their evil union with The Mind? Pray for the day for such a change to occur.

~

Imitation

It is called *kalpana* in Sanskrit, and it's not good for the practice of *rāgānugā* or *vaidhī*. The *sahajiyās* imagine, making believe they are *gopīs* with breasts and *sarīs*, even though they still live in their male bodies. They say, "Oh, I love God! Oh, I am a *gopī* follower." It is imitation, not the real thing.

I am defining it for you. It is a bluff, just cheap affection—so don't do it. Beware. The phoney will finally be exposed.

We are followers. We are meant to be obedient, to do what the spiritual master says, humbly, like a soldier. We are meant to live for facts and not for dreams. But we can *yearn*. We can pray for love of God to become a reality. We don't want to become so fearful of imitation or of deviation that we don't budge in our spiritual emotion. That is how we will become repressed. We are meant to feel.

Being afraid to be real means you won't allow yourself to be real. We shouldn't pretend we are better than we are or worse than we are. We should yearn and pray and follow the advanced, kind-hearted *rasika* Vaiṣṇava who leads us into the safe realm of hearing about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, who guides us in our hearing. It is possible that in this life, we may become an *anurāgi*, a follower, a *kiṅkari* maidservant, real and humble and begging to serve the guru in his *mañjarī* form. For that, we should *dare* to aspire.

~

January 28, 1:15 A.M.

... mādhyurya-līlā-guṇa-rūpa nāmnām, prati-kṣaṇāsvādāna-lolupasya vande guroḥ śrī caraṇāravindam.

They ask, “Does the guru actually always chant the glories and pastimes of Rādhā-Mādhava? Does he assist the *gopīs* in making tasteful arrangements in the *kuñjas* for the conjugal pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa?” Every day we sing our praise of the guru who assists the *gopīs* in the *kuñja*. Mahārāja says that this song of praise for the spiritual master is Viśvanātha Cakravartī’s realization; we may not share this realization at our present stage. Still, we accept the prayer for Prabhupāda, and we estimate that all bona fide gurus should measure up to this. All ISKCON devotees do insist the verse *nikuñja-yūno rati-keli-siddhyai yā yālibhir yuktir apekṣanīyā* does apply to Śrīla Prabhupāda. That itself is proof that he is in *gopī-maṇjarī-bhāva*. And since we follow Śrīla Prabhupāda, we should follow him in making arrangements in the *kuñja*.

One popular interpretation of the verse is that “assisting the *gopīs*” means arranging for book distribution, but how can we avoid the direct meaning as well? All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda, to whom we sing with wholehearted faith all the verses of *Śrī Gurvaṣṭakam*.

By signs like these I see I want to make a case for pursuing the path of the *gopīs*. And the *gopīs*’ assistants are the best of all. That’s the way of Rūpa and Raghunātha, Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and Śrīla Prabhupāda who is their representative. Why should we prefer to study the *Upaniṣads* or the *Mahābhārata*? Are we so unqualified?

❧

A little spot of time, a little frame of bones and flesh and thumping heart. It will be wiped away like a drop of water on my desk. While here, hold on to that which is eternal.

❧

O *Śānta-rasa*, I do aspire to stay in a solitary room and keep the trucks and noise and thumping of people far away. I do want the quiet prayer hours with no other duties. But now I cannot accept as guides, those who contemplate on the feature of Time or material illusion or God’s inconceivable nature or a kind of inactive eternal union with Him. I want peace from material agitation, but as a basis for hearing the daily pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. And those who actually partake in these pastimes are ever-active and often not so peaceful. They suffer in separation from Kṛṣṇa and they are very fond of associating with like-minded lovers of Kṛṣṇa.

Because in the time of pain from separation, only the devotees can give peace by pouring the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes into our ears.

Japa

Are you afraid to meet God in His holy names? Afraid to meet yourself? Is that why I turn away from full attention? Do you fear Him as Arjuna feared the Universal Form? It isn't something I have thought much about. Why am I reciting His names day after day if I want to avoid meeting Him? But even great devotees like Dhruva Mahārāja were speechless and afraid when they first got Kṛṣṇa's *darśana*.

According to this theory, as soon as you seriously begin to approach Him by His holy names, you become afraid. Therefore, you allow your mind to go off. A whole lifetime could be spent in this way—afraid of what you will become in comparison to Kṛṣṇa when He manifests. So you prefer to keep it all distant, as a ritual, and you candidly confess, "It is very hard to control the mind." You expect your friends will sympathize because they also find it hard. I don't think my fear theory tells the whole story, but I glimpsed at it today.

Otherwise, I am left with my over-familiar, stay-on-the-surface bad habits. There is no way to bypass them it seems. Neither am I working hard to change them. I humbly accept a low state and count my blessings that I am up earlier than most, I am awake, and there are other services that I can do with more competence than my chanting. It's like accepting the fact that you lost your legs in a car accident or that your wife is unfaithful. You live with it: "I'm a poor chanter." Is that the way to go through life?

They have retreats now at Gītā-nāgarī in addition to the academic seminars. I suggested to the devotee in charge that retreats could be used for attempting conversion experiences. Ignatius Loyola introduced retreats to the Catholic Church hundreds of years ago. One person (or a group) goes into seclusion for a few weeks, and by guided prayer and counselling with an advisor, and by hearing lectures and practicing solitary prayer, one tries to meet God and make amends. Try to do something practical and internal so that when one comes out of it, he is better, healed, or whatever.

For me, I turn to writing. But the idea of a *japa* retreat . . . I don't want to devote time exclusively to this one *yajña* because I doubt it would change much. I have done thirty-two round *yajñas* for a few weeks before. It is special, but I come back to sixteen. The other activities seem equally in need of attention, like my reading. And my writing, and my preaching. Prabhupāda didn't recommend or practice extended

japa in seclusion. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura wrote against it, but in his youth he practiced it intensely and got the *darśana* of Lord Caitanya, who inspired him to come out and preach.

I am writing these things down without taking full responsibility, however, to at least say it and admit that I could devote more time to an increased *japa* quota—it might be helpful—but right now I think it is better to be more balanced in all the parts of my life. Perhaps in the future I will go off and chant more, with the blessings and permission of the Vaiṣṇavas. It won't be a fruitive expedition. I won't be thinking that after a few days, the Lord will appear. I will do it because "chanting produces chanting." And because I am sorry I have offended the most merciful holy name.

❧

Tuṅgavidyā is ecstatic, I fall far behind.
This book of Rādhā is meant for
those who can taste *rasa*.
But I have picked it up and read—
something charms me,
the rhythm, the words like "*nidhi nidhi*"
mahā-rasa, *prema*'s ocean, billowing waves,
even my dull brain is roused,
and I float along allowing
the Sanskrit magic of Vṛndāranya, *kuñja* Rādhe—
words like a river current, and
concepts like Rādhā's *dāsīs*
falling asleep massaging Her feet,
who delight to hear Her play, and
who asked Her for confidential advice: what to do
when Kṛṣṇa is following a *dāsī* asking for
a chance to meet with Rādhā?

I might as well not read, I am so out of it,
but I go on with it,
and expect a day in the future
when my taste will be free of *avidyā*.
When it comes,
I'll already know the pastimes

and persons and the place.
Especially I like to read how
dāsīs no longer care for other parts of the *Vedas* and
how Kṛṣṇa forgets Nārada, and even his *gopas* and parents
as He worships the paths leading
to the *kuñjas* where He plays with Rādhā.

This morning even my tape recorder
was unqualified and broke down,
and the tape also broke.
Am I being told not to enter?
But I keep thinking of that book—
where a blue cloud comes together with golden lightning,
where a golden vine embraces a black *tamāla* tree
and the bees go mad and parrots sing—
the topmost Vedic nectar
leaving behind
all ordinary studies.

•

6:30 A.M.

I just read Ravindra-svarūpa Prabhu's essay on going to the annual Māyāpura GBC meeting. He said he joined Kṛṣṇa consciousness thinking he would be a mystic, a visionary saint, and here he is now carrying overweight baggage full of complaints and proposals to the land of spirituality, India. Alas, he has become a bureaucrat in what Max Weber called the "routinization of charisma." But it is a duty not to be shirked, Ravindra reasons. The vision has to be upheld by doing all the nitty-gritty, detailed work. So he meets fellow GBC men at the airport and they discuss the upcoming meeting.

Everyone in ISKCON is a servant of the GBC, although not everyone does or should serve on its board. I am an ex-GBC man; therefore, I may sometimes have doubts whether I gave up my responsibility or whether I should still accept serving on the GBC as my duty. But I realize that I have a different role now.

Ravindra doubts, "Have I become a religious bureaucrat?" And I may doubt whether my writing is beneficial. But we all have to buckle our *dhotīs* at the waist and go on with confirmed duty.

•

Winter Walk Poem by A Serious Guy:

My new full-suit gear by Carhartt
is "as rugged as the men who wear them."
A 120-pound hulk, I veer down the road
hoping the school kids won't come out yet
so I can enter the woods alone.
As for my serious purpose,
I have already told: someone has to chart this
new territory. Don't take yourself *too* seriously,
but still, you've got to justify why you're out here
instead of at a temple and why
you don't sit on a committee.
So I told you: I am charting the unknown,
and I'm trying to pick up a poor *japa* standard
and making an open book for a serious purpose.
All this on the order of guru and *śāstra*
just as you too, brother, work under that order.
(Please excuse me if this poem has no music.)

As for play, yes, the deer tracks are fresh,
I raise my arms to the sky. I call it worship,
to taste the getting-smaller-moon sliver
and to report back to you.
A grateful prayer for health; though
I know it can't last.
I am not the rugged man,
befitting to wear a Carhartt
but I am
going my way
for the purpose of serving
in this world and the next.

I suppose we conditioned souls all continue thinking in ways we should not.
Whenever we think of certain persons, we become envious of them; when we hear
their voices, we find fault: "He's so slow and dry, he stutters, and he doesn't crack

jokes." A bad mental habit of mine is to think that Śrīla Prabhupāda and Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja are competing in my life. It is not like that. Stop tearing it apart. Stop always thinking how to package it and present it to others.

•

Sometimes speak as an instructor. Why not? You are not always a self-searching entity. Even then, you instruct. Be both, be alone and be yourself. Consciously teach what you've heard from your spiritual master.

•

11:15 A.M.

When I take my meals, mostly alone, I hear Prabhupāda speak on tape. Since I don't hear him much at other times and haven't been reading his books so much nowadays, I listen at meal times as a gesture of obedience. But it has been the most outstanding spiritual hearing I have been doing here in Stroudsburg. I start munching on a rolled *capātī* filled with ginger, and listen to Prabhupāda speak on the Ajāmīla chapters from the *Bhāgavatam*. He hits to the heart of my spiritual life. The scientists don't know the soul, they can't stop death, so why do they dare to call themselves scientists. There is a big hoax in the world and Śrīla Prabhupāda exposes it. He won't stand for it.

In one lecture he ranged widely. He spoke about *vastra-harana*. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Of course, we should not speak of these topics in public, but you are all interested in Kṛṣṇa. The *gopīs* worshiped goddess Kātyayanī that Kṛṣṇa may become our husband. He came to the river while they were bathing naked and took their clothes." Śrīla Prabhupāda laughed and his audience laughed with him. "In this way, Kṛṣṇa became the husband for all the *gopīs*." Then Śrīla Prabhupāda switched to attacking the scientists, and—I can't remember right now—but half a dozen other vital and interesting topics. It was as interesting as breakfast, which was quite interesting.

I hail to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, who speak so commandingly, and it comes through clearly even today.

•

So I have abandoned the plan to write almost exclusively on the theme of returning from Vṛndāvana and trying to keep my *rāgānugā* cultivation alive. I am cultivating, reading *rasika* texts, etc., but it is artificial to write as if I am pining away for Vṛndāvana. I *wanted* to come back to the West. Now I am eating so much I have indigestion. I am hiding out, as I hoped I would, writing. And my duty-tour is lined up for the Caribbean. So in honesty, I can't just write about Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*.

However, this may be a sign of my misfortune. Can't concentrate as much as I like on the topic I wish to dwell on. Can't turn attention to my *anarthas* and pray and feel, "What's wrong, Lord? What should I do?" I have got a nice schedule, friends to help me, and a degree of satisfaction with my endeavor. That's my reality—not *vipralambha*.

But I won't neglect writing the high points. And now when I turn to my motto, "Steer to Kṛṣṇa," it has a more particular meaning.

~

Hello, Vṛndāvana, hello. Let me leave a message on your answering machine. I still plan to return in about six months, although it will be hot then. I will be running around here in the West until then.

I am anxious to be in touch with you. This *is* separation, trying to do it on my own with books and tapes. You are fortunate to live there. Give thanks to Prabhupāda and Rādhā-Śyāmasundara. But I'm doing all right. Please write to me and send me things.

What else? Tell me what Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja is doing? Did he get my note and copy of *Nārada-bhakti Sūtra*? What did he say? What about Govardhana? Offer my obeisances, please, to my special Godbrothers. I am listening to their lectures and look forward to hearing what you are lecturing on now, especially, "The glories of Vṛndāvana." How is your writing course? I have to go now. *Haribol*.

~

4:30 P.M.

Please, Kṛṣṇa, clean our hearts. Let us enthusiastically hear of Your activities. And when we die, we pray to go on serving You eternally—either immediately in Goloka or by hearing of Goloka as we come back to work out our final imprisonment.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.

Can I still love? Is it too much for me, a fifty-one year old man? I have heard falling in love with Kṛṣṇa is like falling in love with a teenage girl. Am I afraid it will be too scandalous or upsetting to my routine and placid heart? But I am not fifty or sixty years old, and I am not a male. I am an eternally youthful soul. There is a good chance I may be a feminine servitor of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. That is the *rasa* line of our *sampradāya*. No, *sahajiyā*-ism please. But don't give us this too-staid-to-fall-in-love routine. You can do more than you think because Kṛṣṇa and His devotees are unlimited. Nothing is impossible. Don't calculate in terms of Dr. Frog's well.

I write to separate out the bogus feelings, to admit them, and then to grasp at the lotus feet of Vaiṣṇavas. Roll in the dust like a madman. The words are weeping. I make a prayer. It is a rather silly display sometimes.

We are all afraid our expressions will be awkward, even though we think we know what we want to say. Kṛṣṇa is bluish, like the sky holding a fresh rain cloud. He has a broad chest. He is not a human, but He sports among humans when He comes to earth. He is a promiscuous lover, but there is no trace of lust. He satisfies the desires of His devotees and also enjoys Himself, but he is not like the abominable debauch who uses women or anything else we are familiar with in this world.

I cannot understand Him, although I want to. The *ācāryas* say this *mādhurya* is fuller and more radiant and purely spiritual than all the other *rasas*. It leaves *śānta-rasa* in the dust. When devotees in *śānta-rasa* hear Kṛṣṇa's flute, they beat their heads and say, "Why have I wasted my time in indifferent meditation?" Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura said, "I was fixed in meditation on Brahman, but now my mind has been captured by a mischievous boy who wears a peacock feather in His hair."

~

Vṛndāvana, do you hear me? My clumsy call goes out to you this night. I picture you at Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandira, aware of the sublime atmosphere you live in, doing your duties, walking on the small campus grounds past the big, wooden doors before the altar. I picture you beholding Rādhā-Śyāmasundara and the green-leafed *tamāla* tree, even though it is winter. I picture the dogs and hogs and beggars and our *gurukula* kids in yellow *dhotis* playing during their free-time on the roof. Each of you alone with your own altar, one of you with Giri-Govardhana-*śilā*, chanting your *japa* . . .

~

January 29, 1:10 A.M.

Don't worry about the novelty of this writing. Kṛṣṇa is ever-fresh. You simply have to turn to him. The difficulty is that you are imbedded so much in the identification of the self with the body and mind. The Vedic teachings give plenty of proof to show us that we are not the body (*ahaṁ brahmāsmi*). After a while a devotee routinely accepts that he (or she) is spirit soul. With faith in gurus and *śāstra*, we do things that are favorable for Kṛṣṇa consciousness and avoid things unfavorable. Yet in many ways, our realization of "*ahaṁ brahmāsmi*" remains theoretical.

Some pure devotees have crossed over the bodily conception. They live as spirit soul and even when they seem encumbered by their bodies or the bodies of others—

they don't let it disturb them. Those who are free (*jīvan-mukta*) engage themselves fully in Kṛṣṇa's service. This is, in fact, a prime symptom of liberation—that one is engaged with body, mind, and soul in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

We strive for this ideal. Lord Caitanya didn't teach merely the negative renunciation of bodily ties; He taught of the positive attraction of the spirit soul for the Supreme. Chanting the holy names of God was Lord Caitanya's main method of reviving our lost consciousness.

❧

Trying to cut oneself off from matter. Dealing with the matter is part of it. For example, we try to see how Kṛṣṇa is working through the material energy, even when we get kicked by it. When Vidura had to suffer at the hands of wicked Duryodhana, Vidura "was not sorry, for he considered the acts of the external energy to be supreme" (*Bhāg.* 3.1.16). That is, he saw that even in material circumstances, the internal energy was helping him and offering him a way to improve his Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

This kind of analysis is favorable, but then one has to directly apply for the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. "Please pick me up and place me as one of the atoms at Your lotus feet." Chanting is not a ritual to pacify God; it is a heartfelt calling out to Him for mercy. Chanting is not meant to help us create a favorable, material situation (the eighth offense against the holy name); it is meant to free us from all material situations. But the dullness of body and the tricky nature of the *māyā*-influenced mind often render us incapable of pure chanting. If we can actually achieve *śuddha-nāma*, then we will be freed from the material world. We will then truly understand and act upon the realization of *aham brahmāsmi*. Such an apparently simple act as utterance of *harināma* in devotion can do all this. The *sāstras* compare pure chanting to a lightning bolt making dust out of a mountain peak. The mountain represents our accumulated karma and ignorant thoughts. We should beg for a lightning bolt to strike us, even if we are afraid of the jolt.

❧

What to do with the mind during *japa*? As if I can logically, reasonably, ready the mind to chant. I have tried different approaches. I have tried ignoring the mind. I have also tried simplifying my life to point where the mind's demands have no choice but to simplify. I have given myself lessons in the *sāstra* and I have tried to appeal to my higher nature. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura advises, when all else fails, beat the mind with a broom in the morning and a shoe at night.

When we cannot control the mind, when we are dull or paralyzed by illusory conceptions of ourselves, we can go on with our external utterances of *nāma-japa* with faith. We can also pray that the day will come when we can taste the sweetness of chanting, and when that sweetness will spill over into all our other devotional activities.

Speaking on chanting in a lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “We should not go to God for material things. We should go to God for begging how one can be engaged in His service. Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra means that. ‘Hare’ means, ‘O energy of God,’ and ‘Kṛṣṇa’ means, ‘Lord Kṛṣṇa, please engage me in Your service.’ Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare. *It is simply praying*, ‘O my Lord Kṛṣṇa, O Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, kindly engage me in Your service.’ Finished all business” (Lecture, Hawaii 6/8/73).

This is the desired mood, begging for service. And the immediate service, is loving utterances of the beloved names. But there is such a difference between chanting with offenses and chanting with a heart melted in perfect love of God. Chanting is the best and easiest way to attain love of God, but poor chanting is itself the main obstacle.

The *Nectar of Devotion* lists sixty-four offenses and states that these can be relieved by taking refuge in Kṛṣṇa. If one offends Kṛṣṇa Himself, then one can save himself by chanting. But according to the *Padma Purāṇa*, if one offends the chanting: “One must definitely fall from spiritual life if one commits offenses to Lord Hari’s holy name, who is the best friend of all” (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.120).

If someone were to ask me which offense in chanting is my “favorite,” I would have to state “*pramāda*, inattention, from which all the other offenses spring.” One doesn’t care enough—or he is otherwise *unable*—to pay attention while praying to *harināma*. Often inattention is a result of hearing or speaking *sādhū-nindā*.



Japa reflections

The truth is, my *japa* reflections are not about the holy name but about literary pursuits. My time is filled with lessons of what not to do while chanting.

All I can say is that my first hour of *japa* was filled too much with a mental review of *Writers at Work*. Doesn’t that say something to you? Do you actually want to think of William Faulkner and John Berryman’s *bon mots* rather than turn to the Supreme Lord and your own sincere attempt to practice *harināma*? This is not a vast interim period, this cushion sector between you and your death. What you are doing now is what you will be doing then. Where is the spirit of isolating yourself

from outside influences? Where is the attempt to live mentally in Vṛndāvana? Where is your mental chastity by which you invite and enthrone the Six Gosvāmīs and their followers to stay as your guests while you serve them and attentively hear their speech? Are you going to tell them, "Look, I'll be with you in a minute. I am going to check out this Raymond Carver interview"?

This guy can't be serious. His chanting is like the idling of a car engine while the driver muses on another world.

I read through fast enjoying intimate
things I shouldn't have heard.

We know it's not good to cheaply say, "Rādhē! Rādhē! Jaya Rādhē!"

She whose name is not directly
mentioned by Śukadeva Gosvāmī.

But we followed Tuṅgavidyā in her book
and we'll do it again.

"Unalloyed absorption in Rādhā-bhajana,"

"The Position Desired By

Far-Reaching Visionaries—Rādhā-Dāsi,"

"How a Maidservant Meditates On Her Own Sevā—"

who can resist such titles?

And Sanskrit music running,

"Śrī rādhē! rasikikendra rūpa-gunavad-gītani. . ."

And a prayer for remembrance of Rādhā's *kuñjas*

in all births: *yatra yatra mama janma karmabhir,*

"Wherever I take birth, may Rādhikā's

kuñjas remain ever-present in my heart."

Should we read this book or not?

Is it on the forbidden list?

Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī says,

"If you have the greed

to enjoy the most astounding bliss

then just take this prayer

named "*Rādhā-rasa-suddha-nidhi*"

and drink it by the pitchers of your ears,

O wise relishers!"
The inner meaning of all the *Vedas*
is rarely seen or taught,
but it is known in Vṛndāvana by relishers of *rasa*
who are pleased when they find worthy disciples—
I want to serve that inner form of truth,
as Satsvarūpa dāsa
I drink it down like the sweet balls and juice
in my spiritual master's worship room.
You say I have done wrong?
But it is you who taught me!
How could I resist?

~

7:15 A.M., *Coming back from the walk*

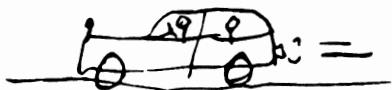
The walk. The white road with tire marks. Talking your plans for reading books that will explicitly help you with *japa* like *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* and *Śikṣāṣṭaka* . . .

Kṛṣṇa, I am far away from Vraja because I want to be. That sounds terrible and foolish. But what other reason is there? Perhaps we can say I am far away from Vraja because in the past, I greatly misused my free will and started a chain of sinful acts and their reactions so that I lost all memory of Your sweet association. Recently, Your Śrīla Prabhupāda has rescued me and I am gradually reviving my interest in serving and residing in Vraja (Gokula, Goloka). Maybe I still don't want to live in Vṛndāvana, but I'm getting better.

And even when I leave Vraja, it is not because I want to embrace *māyā*. I do have service outside the *dhāma*, including devotees to associate with. I can tell them of Vṛndāvana-*bhajana* and then I will come back to Vṛndāvana myself. I'm not sure what my long-range plans are.

O Father, my spiritual guide, O Best Friend Śrī Kṛṣṇa, O Lover of the *gopīs*, O Rādhā-kānta, my inner life is blessed by even a slight touch of Your mercy. I thank You and I am trying to reciprocate.

~



Squirrel in the snow . . . over dead leaves . . .
On such a short walk . . .
Kṛṣṇa is in my heart . . .

Inner life . . . is there.
Sitting in a warm car on a cold day
with a lifetime friend,
mutual love for Kṛṣṇa.
We don't have to talk but I
have to talk now,
in a hurry—like a U.S. Express Package
"Urgently rush to addressee."
Editing my dreams
take out the gibberish,
find something good.

Ice on car window,
The warm house,
a poem before breakfast
and if I am lucky,
a note under the door.

~

12:15 noon

Anything I write will have some falsity to it, a built in pose, because of who I am.
But I can try to control it.

~

Baladeva devastated my writing project by saying it looked like "Goldberg is in and Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja is out." (Natalie Goldberg is the author of *Writing Down the Bones* and *Wild Mind* and advocates the free-writing techniques which I have adopted.)

~

Now what? Keep a private diary, and concentrate more on *japa*, reading, and hearing tapes. Let writing serve calmly to help me in *bhajana*.

Do you even know anymore how to write like that in a private diary? How private is it if it is being typed minutes after you write it? Have I become so important that my words should be preserved, like President Nixon who recorded whatever he said in the Oval Room (and in the end implicated himself).

I announced that I will spend more time in *bhajana*. Now I have to do it.

•

It is strange that Baladeva, who is the last person who would want to stop my writing flow, did it. It struck me as hard, objective truth, although it was not necessarily so. Somehow, it has focused me better on the priorities of this retreat.

I have my own time and it is up to me to use it well. I know that books by themselves and even the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, may not fully purify me—unless I have the blessings of the pure devotee spiritual master. I am not trying to push on without Prabhupāda or Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. I am taking their instructions and *practicing* them. In Vṛndāvana, I could not concentrate so well on solitary *bhajana* because of the temple schedule, the socializing, and the other pressures. In our group, we would each admit that we were not able to give sufficient time and concentration to *bhajana*, which is so important in the life of one following *rāgānugā-mārga*. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja himself had very little time for *japa* or reading, and no time for writing-translating. This present retreat is supposed to be a follow-up to my time with Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. I seem to have forgotten that in my eagerness to write a book about separation. So back to basics.

•

I already know how to write down whatever passes through my head, but do I know how to pray? Can it be developed by practice? As for the study of books . . .

•

In Delhi (during that precious time when I was with Mahārāja for a few days), I asked him several times whether we can recite various *praṇāmas* to Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Mahārāja said that we cannot approach Her directly until we have greed in a *rasika* way. Even though some of the prayers, such as the song of the parrot by Kṛṣṇa-dāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī declare, “I worship You, Rādhikā” we cannot imagine that it is our prayer and our direct appeal to Her. Mahārāja said that Rādhikā is far away. Then Rāmacandra dāsa and I both asked, can we utter the prayers in a lowly way, even though we don’t understand Rādhikā? Mahārāja answered, “Yes, go on praying and uttering those prayers to Rādhikā.”

He wants to make it clear to us that we can only pray to one day enter that mood. We pray in the present—appreciating as far as possible the devotion of Raghunātha

dāsa Gosvāmī or Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī—that one day in the future we may pray as they do. Don't imagine we are praying directly to Her now in a *sakhī-mañjarī* relationship.

This means that my prayers right now should be more than general. Recite the intimate *śloka*s and pray to enter them.

~

When you chant in the early morning before your altar pictures, know and feel in your heart that *no power of your own can bring down the mercy of the holy name*. You need the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas and Kṛṣṇa. You need to make a strong effort, but that in itself that will not bring me *bhakti*.

~

January 30, 2:30 A.M.

I used my earliest rising time for *japa* instead of writing this morning. The whole quality I seek is prayerfulness. I know what that feels like, but maybe I can't express it here in words. Perhaps there is no benefit in trying to express it. I was prayerful for awhile, but then I lost my concentration. But I can return to it! I can also pray when I'm not chanting my beads. It isn't always easy. But then I'm not looking for it to be easy.

I don't know anything—who is Rādhā, who is Kṛṣṇa, who is Nāma Prabhu? But prayer is valid—you cry for the impossible. The blind man prays to see.

~

I don't want to pause during the time I give myself to write. I can't make this a deliberately "beautiful" diary of spiritual thoughts. True, I don't want to share ravings and mere mental doodlings or outright *māyā* with readers, but I have to write honestly, and that means going through rough patches.

Kṛṣṇa, please allow me to help myself by writing. We write for self-purification, Prabhupāda says, whether we know it or not.

~

The same idea came back to me about "constant" prayer. It can be the prayerful recitation in our minds (vocally or subvocally) of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, or it can be simple concentration on the Lord. Also, we can pray to the mind: "O my uncomprehending inner self, my dear brother mind, I humbly prostrate myself before you. Taking hold of your feet, I beseech you, please give up all pride and surrender fully to Śrī guru, to the spiritual abode of Vraja-*dhāma*, to the residents of Vraja, to all Vaiṣṇava devotees of the Lord . . . to the holy name of the Supreme Lord, and to the

ever-fresh and youthful Divine Couple of blossoming beauty, Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa . . .” (*Manaḥ-śikṣā*, verse 1).

❧

As for the literary game, I can’t figure it out and I can’t seem to escape it. You write for an audience, you write to preach. In the examples of liberated *ācāryas* who wrote (like Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura or Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī), when they pray to their minds or speak in humility, we understand that they are simultaneously speaking as teachers and genuinely feeling those emotions. I shouldn’t imitate them, but both elements are also present when I write—a desire to teach, and a desire to help myself by writing.

However, I have another element that they don’t have; that is, impure motives. What if I write for prestige? What if I become captivated by mundane aesthetics or literary expressions? What if I become captivated by something other than pure devotional service? When I detect a strong dose of this impurity, I become disgusted and think of giving up writing. Some brothers even tell me writing *has* to be given up, at least as a ruling passion, if we want to fully surrender to Kṛṣṇa’s will. And some say the *type* of writing I do, personal, confession, and self-centered ought to be given up.

I may be struggling with this dilemma until the end of my life. I can’t wait to become perfect before I write and share my experiences and realizations.

❧

Last night, Madhu said we were very fortunate to have permission from an authorized person to enter *rāgānugā* topics. He’s right, it is rare. To pick up *rasika* books and try to make progress without the guidance and blessings of a *rasika* devotee is not likely to result in direct progress. Of course, the previous *ācāryas* can give their mercy to any sincere soul. But I am grateful to Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja for unlocking the sealed texts with his generous and expert key.

❧

I have been writing a journal of assimilation and separation, but I think a false note of doing it as a literary exercise was creeping in. I am attempting to go more for the practices themselves—doing what Mahārāja called our “homework.” This is the best way to be with him. His servant, Navina Kṛṣṇa said that one day: “Mahārāja is best served by one’s sincere *bhajana*.” Let my writing also serve as sincere *bhajana*.

❧

How am I going to improve the writing and what do I mean by improvement? I would like to write superior level spiritual thoughts, a *mahā-bhāgavata's* journal! But that's not possible (except in a fiction).

~

Ionesco said that only Death would seal his lips. He also doubted if his writing had any value.

~

I read in Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's introduction to *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* that a *sādhaka* is one who has faith that all spiritual goals can be accomplished by the chanting of the holy names. Even in the beginning, before we have much *experience* of the transforming power of chanting, we can have that faith. Prabhupāda and the Vaiṣṇava *smṛti* affirm that chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa gives pure *prema*. Even if we still chant with offenses.

One who chants but doesn't feel ecstasy with tears in the eyes should know he's committing *nāma-aparādha*. Simple evidence.

~



I am writing this in the car with Madhu, after my walk. Now we'll ride back to the house and I have a half-hour scheduled for poems or whatever. Do you think poems are frivolous or too literary, a waste of precious time? Maybe. Yesterday I was more confident until I read that note, "It appears that Goldberg is in and Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja is out." How easily I am affected and my cause is changed. Don't be proud that you are so "sensitive" and easily impressed. A bit of stubbornness would help too. Know what you have to do. But poems? Oh well—poems, prose, just try to do something to help yourself.

~

11:15 A.M.

One hears sublime literature and the voice of one's gurus, but one's body, mind, and senses move along slowly. I read in *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* how Sarūpa taught the Mathurā *brāhmaṇa* of his blissful state in Goloka, but the *brāhmaṇa* wasn't yet touched with *kṛṣṇa-prema*. Then Sarūpa put his hands on the *brāhmaṇa* and conferred his full mercy upon him, whereupon that *brāhmaṇa* became joyful and went mad in ecstasy. Then they both heard Kṛṣṇa's flute and the sounds of Balarāma and the cowherd boys. Kṛṣṇa appeared there and told the *brāhmaṇa* his spiritual name in Goloka: Jayaśarma.

When will such things occur to me and to those who are my friends? I hear these things and go on in my routine ways, not losing sleep or my appetite, my petty attitudes or anxieties.

True Kṛṣṇa consciousness is transforming. Mahārāja told us that one day in Mathurā. He said we were sitting and enjoying talks of *kṛṣṇa-kathā* but we had no symptoms of greed, no tears, no shivering, no devastation. I may say I want these things, but I lack the intense longing (*lauḷyam*). One has to be willing to go through the suffering of separation from Kṛṣṇa when He isn't present, and one has to be ready to give up one's life to supply Kṛṣṇa whatever He wants.

~

Once again I listened to Mahārāja talking when I was riding beside him in the van from Delhi to Mathurā. It was very sweet. Those talks are rare. He encouraged me and the others to gradually go forward and develop our shadow greed. He criticized the arrogant neophyte attitude whereby one thinks, "I have *guru-bhakti* and now I know everything. I am full, *bās*." Although such a person knows nothing of *Vraja-sevā* or Kṛṣṇa's and Rādhā's *līlā*, and although such a person knows nothing about how to enter that *līlā*, and although such a person doesn't even know that entering that *līlā* is the *point*, he firmly says, "I will not go forward. What I have is enough." Mahārāja said that a mentality like this creates a Bhāvānanda or a Bhagavān—falldown. They must fall down if they (we) don't go forward.

~

The actual symptom of one who is entering *rāgānugā* is *trṇād api sunicena*. He doesn't think he is better than others, but he offers respect to all—with tears.

Now is a time for sane and quiet building. Build for a future. Read *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* and basic books like *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*. I cannot memorize them or vividly retain what I read, but I read in faith. This is my way to honor and follow Mahārāja's encouragement.

~

4:45 P.M.,



What has happened since yesterday? Well, I seem more sober. Not willing to do extreme antics and write down whatever comes. More careful to use my time here in reading. And now I give the first time in the morning to *japa* and writing comes second.

~

I seem to have lost faith in the writing process of “give me the moment.” I feel less inclined to say: “My pinky aches as I try to write with two layers of gloves on. The green wool is unraveling.” I want to sing before the sun goes down and it gets dark. The trucks roll. This and that . . .

You see? I am not so enthusiastic to write of *this* world and whatever comes up. That doesn’t mean I have to write less or less spontaneously. I can choose spiritual topics.

The sadness I feel—I am not sure what it is. Maybe something good. Oh, I am advancing. Or is it just self-pity at my lack of accomplishment?

Doubts, doubts . . . Is free-writing a defeat? Have I lost my brain for structured writing?

The open line to honesty. Now I have lost the directed topic of separation from and assimilation of Vraja meditation. There is more going on, other things—I can’t claim only that one theme. What about these other things that are bubbling?

~

There is no strict division between *vaidhī* and *rāgānugā*. *Rāgānugā* means that everything should change and deepen. I have to cry out in my *japa* and pay attention to the names—is that *vaidhī* or *rāgānugā*? All I know is that I need to take a remedial measure.

In his introduction to *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes, “. . . the singular procedure for chanting the holy name is to do it free from offense, incessantly and in a secluded spot—away from the hubbub of material activities.” At least I have a secluded spot in my room. Not offenseless or incessant though. *Remedial work*.

~

I came out here knowing it would get dark soon and I would have to go in. I like what happened out here. I feel more peaceful, firmer. I can’t expect wild leaps ahead everyday. I go ahead a little, then get knocked back, sit dazed, miss some time, then get up and start forward again. I desire to record it in writing.

~

7:40 P.M.

A nightcap note. I am reading the book I wrote on Prabhupāda. It keeps an intense focus on one subject and that makes it strong and interesting and profitable to read. My present “retreat” writing is different. It is not so intensely focused on a subject like “separation from Vṛndāvana” or “*rāgānugā*” or “what it means to accept a *śikṣa-guru*”—although these are main themes.

But I feel love for this writing nowadays. I am attached to its special characteristics. Maybe it's like being a mother. She loves her child. When she bears a second child, she loves that child too, even if he or she isn't as "wonderful" as the first child. If I can love my child, then my readers will also. It is wrong to think this quiet retreat is not an interesting story. I just have to live and write freely. Having friends helps.

•

January 31, 1:50 A.M.

I woke this morning, headed into my room, lit the votive candles, and started chanting. But I could not give myself entirely to calling on the holy names. The reason is I saw myself as a victim of attachment.

I am attached in many ways—although a *sannyāsī* in the classic sense should be without home or friends or relatives. Here I am chanting in a house full of my initiated disciples. Two are women typists. Then there is the owner of the house, his wife and four children. One of the typists also has a child. Then there is my direct *brahmacārī* assistant. And there is another assistant who comes and goes according to his business.

I put a lot of time into writing, but this morning I feel it is an attachment. And I am attached to writing notes and receiving notes of encouragement from my editor-typist. She seems to understand me. I am living in two private rooms. I never see the women and only briefly see the owner of the house, but the situation is one that breeds a closeness and comfortableness. I am not sure if these are the right words, "closeness," "comfortable," but the right word is attachment in the sense that Pra-bhupāda used it.

Baladeva brings me anything he thinks will help my service, a 24"x 36" newsprint pad for writing "clusters" (a free-writing method). He suggests I wear a snowsuit to keep me warm on my walks and in the shack, so now I have one. He brings me a new pen, although I already have several. Śamika Ṛṣi and his wife smother me with *prasādam*. In one sense, I don't eat much at all. I weigh less than 120 pounds and eat relatively small amounts, yet I suspect myself of overeating. I don't digest well—I have to endure flatulence and take three kinds of digestive aids. I also have to take *triphalla* for constipation. My assistant, Madhu, looks on at this eating with a disapproving eye. He has just finished a ten-day lemon juice fast and sees my ice cream desserts as an indulgence which kills the fire of digestion.

Am I attached to the meals they cook? Well, not really. I am ready to leave all this. But by submitting to it, accepting it, one becomes inadvertently attached. They are pampering me and I am accepting it.

If someone doesn't understand me or if I am stuck in my writing, I exchange notes with Kaiśorī and she gives me encouragement as the always-enthusiastic publisher and editor. So where is my loneliness—the kind of loneliness I should protect and thrive on? Where is the care of my *sannyāsa*?

An easy answer would be to run away, start moving, preaching, lecturing, abandon the retreat. Declare it a failure because I have allowed these attachments to build up and thus defeated the very purpose of the retreat.

But I think I can try to reform a few things and stick it out here. Good things are happening also. I may have to accept the fact that I have allowed these comforts and attachments to grow around me—face them for what they are and try to turn them back, because the basic situation is favorable. I am using my time well for early rising, reading, and writing. In other words, I have to see that I am burdened, but I can't escape that easily. Or I may also be able to "renounce" my surroundings by a change of attitude toward them. I can be more alone. Drop the ice cream desserts. Don't write so many notes seeking support and understanding. Don't collect pens and at least fully use the ones you have. Be careful.

Also, face the fact that in a situation like this, you are well set up for book production. I have rough draft versions for a *Prabhupāda Meditations* book I worked on last year. I have been avoiding the nitty-gritty work on it because I wanted to use all my time for reading and for writing *Returning From Pilgrimage*. But if I could finish off the re-writing and editing of *Prabhupāda Meditations* Volume 4 by pushing myself and others, then that's a real accomplishment. I am not alone in the jungle or desert. I am with people who can work and produce a book. So why not do it?

I am not fearless, but I do seek honesty. So when these self-revelations came this morning—revelations of myself as an attached author, as one suffering from indigestion, as a *sannyāsī* who has his comfortable, long-term quarters in the house of a *grhastha*—I had to accept the truth: this has happened, this is where I am at right now.

It reminded me of the calling out of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in "*Gopīnātha*." Or rather, I should say, not his cries to Kṛṣṇa, but the situation he describes himself in with home and family. Surrounded by relatives, lusty with material desires, "Worldly desires are awakening in my heart, and thus the noose of fruitive work is beginning to tighten. O Gopīnātha, when will I wake up and abandon afar this

enemy lust, and when will You manifest Yourself in my heart?" (*Gopīnātha*, Part 2, verses 2–3).

I could see clearly as I tried to look upon the pictures of the Pañca-tattva and the Six Gosvāmīs, that I was not free or materially destitute—not able to concentrate and feel love—exclusive love—for Kṛṣṇa in His holy names. "O Gopīnātha, I am Your devotee, but having abandoned You and thus having forgotten my real treasure, I have worshiped this mundane world" (*Gopīnātha*, Part 2, verse 4).

I am trying to take a positive and realistic attitude toward all this. We planned this retreat well in advance and it has a solid purpose. I do have more solitude in this house than at any temple. I am reading more and chanting with more desire to improve, and in an uninterrupted manner for a long morning stretch. I am able to write throughout the day. I am assimilating the recorded talks of Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and allowing time to reveal more to me about the changes I am going through since meeting him in Vṛndāvana. I don't think I would be happy or satisfied—or be able to find a better situation—by closing camp abruptly here and seeking something else. If it gets too "crowded" with dependent emotions, if I become too much a pet of my disciples, then I will have to get out and wander. But for now I am opting for tightening the situation here in some ways, getting more into the practices I came here for—and also trying to push through the work on *Prabhupāda Meditations* 4.

May Kṛṣṇa who sees all and knows all protect me and arrange what is best for me. "O Gopīnātha, I am certainly very foolish and I have never known what is good for me. Therefore, such is my condition."



Reading what I wrote on Prabhupāda last summer in my "pre-rāgānugā" life. In one place I reminisced of old days and asked, "Will things like that ever happen again?" Now I think the answer is no, we won't gather in Prabhupāda's room on Glenville Avenue, Boston, on a rainy day, and hear him tell about last night's lecture in Buffalo, New York. One day I will see him in his eternal form as a *mañjarī* and he will give me a new name and new duties. But one of the most important elements for entering *rāgānugā* is *gurupādāśraya*, hearing from the guru. This is not a *vaidhī* practice that is later given up during *rāgānugā* practice. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja said, "Without *gurupādāśraya*, one cannot have his greed satisfied. Hearing from guru, taking shelter of guru, and following of guru are all essential." Yes, now it should be done with deeper appreciation. But that is also based on my "old" realizations—that Śrīla Prabhupāda saved me from hell and I owe him my life in service. He is leading me to Kṛṣṇa.

Some things are favorable to *rāgānugā-bhakti* and some things are unfavorable, even though they are Vedic practices. *Gurupādāśraya* is always favorable and necessary. It is not an item to be neglected. For example, if one is so deeply absorbed in the *bhajana* of chanting and hearing that one forgets to circumambulate Tulasī-devī, that is not harmful to one's progress. But the order of the guru—or the loving remembrance of him—cannot be treated as a material item that may be dropped.

Therefore, my memories of my days with Śrīla Prabhupāda, and even my appreciative reflections on serving him—reflections made before I went to Vṛndāvana last year—are valid. They have permanent value. In fact, now I want to read them to help me increase and strengthen my devotion to Śrīla Prabhupāda. In this transition time, which I hope is a time of deepening, I am sometimes unsure of my old and my present and my future relation with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Hearing enthusiastic “Prabhupāda Recall” will do me good. And if some of it is a bit undeveloped—as when I say, “I don't care to know what Prabhupāda is in his eternal *rasa*, I just want to serve him in his guru form as he appeared to us”—then I can add to it. But not subtract a drop of affection and surrender.



Girirāja Swami was telling us in his *Nectar of Devotion* class how a pure devotee thinks. In the mood of *śaraṇāgati*, he feels Kṛṣṇa is his protector. If Kṛṣṇa wants him to die and take birth again, surely that is in the best interest of the devotee. If Kṛṣṇa wants the devotee to live longer, then it will be so and one needn't worry about survival. The devotee is always ready to do whatever is pleasing to Kṛṣṇa and to give up attachments that are unfavorable to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I accept this *śaraṇāgati* principle as “Articles of Belief” (like the “Apostles' Creed”). But I often wonder what Kṛṣṇa actually wants of me. Some of it He wants me to decide myself. I can't ask, “Shall I write poetry or prose, diary or a regular essay? Should I be bold for You or is it tinged with creative passion—and should I therefore be very conservative—or is that timidity?” One who is very intimate with Kṛṣṇa and guru can constantly converse on all those questions and get direction from Kṛṣṇa. Or, the intimate servant is so devoted to pleasing Kṛṣṇa that he knows by intuition what to give the Lord, even when Kṛṣṇa doesn't ask. I am going ahead cooking my offering as I please and as dictated by tradition, but sometimes I am not sure.





Sitting in the car. I'll speak with Madhu in a few minutes and tell him my plans for using some retreat time to work on book production, *Prabhupāda Mediations* 4. Madhu is inclined more for self-development, pure prayer and *śravaṇaṁ-kīrtanam* without always making a tangible product out of it. He says he represents that view for my welfare. He thinks one can better oneself regardless of whether he is writing another book. He honors the process of writing, but would make a more radical act to detach the writing from thoughts of publishing. He is a good friend, and so are the others who would put me into print.

~

I have to be a friend to myself. Viśvanātha Cakravartī, in the closing stanzas of *Saṅkalpa-kalpa-drumaḥ*, calls on the direction and mercy of his best friends, Vṛndādevī, Govardhana Hill, the *mañjarīs*, the principal *gopīs*, and even Lord Śiva. He asks them to award him *kṛṣṇa-prema*. Then in his final verse, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī asks for mercy from his own self:

All of you, the faculties of my mind, my feelings and emotions, please engage yourselves in solitary worship of Śrī Vṛndāvana. If you are not able to relish the taste from the ocean of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pleasure pastimes in Vṛndāvana, but at the same time cannot free yourself from an intense greed to be able to relish such sweetness; then with full faith (or even without faith, but by some means or other) quickly take shelter of this desire tree of my aspirations.

—*Saṅkalpa-kalpa-drumaḥ*, verse 104

As we say in America, "Give yourself a break." We know God and *guru* are on our side, so why should we be our own enemies? But how to help—should we be kind to ourselves or hard on ourselves?

~

I am watching the clock on the dash board: 7:24. A squirrel hops by. The temperature has gone up and most of the snow is gone. Seems I prefer to be buried in snow so I can be more inward. I want to tunnel into the snow when I walk. I want to feel that the world is shut down.

~

One day in Mathurā, Mahārāja explained a prayer by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura. It began with aspirations to serve in a Vaiṣṇava group, under the direction of one's guru in a *sakhī* form. Then the word *patita-pāvana* appeared in the prayer and Mahārāja dwelt on it in a way that pinched us, but brought us much mercy also.

He said that when he thinks of his own practice, he concludes that he is not doing any *bhajana*, nothing. A *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī* thinks he is doing very good *bhajana*, but a *madhyama-bhakta* estimates that he is doing no *bhajana* at all. "I am so unworthy, so unfit. I am actually doing no *bhajana*. Only I am taking good cloth, good food, good sleep, and taking so much praise from others that you are a very qualified Vaiṣṇava. But I think I am unworthy for all these things. Kṛṣṇa never comes in my heart."

Mahārāja said that in the sixth *śloka* of *Śikṣāṣṭakam*, Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, "When will the day come for me when I will utter 'Kṛṣṇa' and my eyes will be full of tears, my voice will choke 'jaga-jaga.' When the day will come?" Mahārāja asked us, "Do we pray like this? If not, we should pray for all these things, why these things are not coming. Because our hearts are like stone from so many offenses and *anarthas*. We can see the *anarthas* are there . . ." A *kaniṣṭha* devotee cannot even see them.

Mahārāja: "Then Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura prays that his heart can become soft only if the Lord confers mercy on him. At present, I am worse than a stone. Lord Caitanya made the beasts chant, but in our hearts, not a drop of tears comes. So Narottama becomes sorry. We should also be sorry so that all qualities may come to us for His *sevā*.

"Lord Caitanya and His *paramparā* devotees are offering *kṛṣṇa-prema* freely, but we are not taking. We are interested in worthless things and making no effort to do *sādhana-bhajana*. It can be achieved just by *kīrtana*, but we have no taste. All the *ācāryas* warn us against *viṣaya*, but our mind and senses don't obey. So what should I do? I ought to die. At least in another birth I can try to do *bhajana* of Gauracandra and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. In this birth I am too sinful."

❧

11:15 A.M.

I don't know what is beautiful and consoling for others. I don't even know much about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, though I am devoting my whole life to it. I imagine myself at the end, full of regret.

How do you make something in writing that's truthful and motivated by love? How do you know that it is Kṛṣṇa conscious? One could answer, "You'll know if it's Kṛṣṇa conscious by consulting *śāstra*. Your piece must have the words 'Kṛṣṇa' and

‘Rādhā’ in it and contain basic or advanced *siddhānta*. Why the confusion about what to write? Are you begging the question, asking permission to write something below the standard but pass it off as bona fide?”

So the inner critic speaks.

~

I try to catch myself. Disobedient mind and senses. Run after them in the backyard shack.

~


Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa. “No *bhajana*,” he said, “nothing.” It was consoling to hear. One thinks his diary is nothing, but that honest and humble recognition is itself better than complacent chanting and perfunctory study. I tried but I could not, I tried but I cannot; I will try but I will not be able to. And yet I try and maintain hope. And—in a sense I am succeeding, yes, don’t get me wrong when I whine. Actually, I am happy (sounds like a Dostoevskian underground man).

My lament is a more private thing. *Kṛṣṇa-prema* eludes me. One cannot expect to attain it quickly, but it looks as if I will never get close enough. One feels disappointed, although one should humbly accept and await the day.

~

B. Ueland is good for me. I can apply her book, *If You Want to Write* to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. She cites Van Gogh’s impulse to create and says, “It is a feeling of love and enthusiasm for something, and in a direct, simple, passionate and true way, you try to show this beauty in things to others, by drawing (writing) it.” So it needn’t be *rajo-guṇa*. For a devotee, this means being touched by feelings in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and conveying that love to others whom you love.

~

4:30 P.M., 

A week’s worth of mail arrived here, forwarded from Gītā-nāgarī. I was heading out the door when it arrived, so I kept going.

Earlier I told Madhu I wanted to start reading and editing my “Prabhupāda Recalls” toward producing another volume of *Prabhupāda Meditations*. I mentioned to him that it would be helpful for me to see if my reflections on Śrīla Prabhupāda were still valid. He replied something like this, “Prabhupāda came to give faith to the faithless. His teachings as you have understood them up until now will always be valid to people who are coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, who are not ready for

rāgānugā-bhakti, and we will always have to preach to such people from the teachings of Prabhupāda."

I should have written down what Madhu said earlier; now I am left with only a rough approximation. Often times, my statements come out awkward and with a scent of condescension toward Prabhupāda. I don't intend them that way. It only appears that we say Prabhupāda taught something lesser than Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. Prabhupāda actually taught everything from "you are not this body" to "Rādhā-prema," but he emphasized the basic teachings according to time, persons, and place. He was an expert *ācārya* who knew "there are many things to tell, but you cannot bear them."

Just today I read an explanation by a Godbrother of Śrīla Prabhupāda. He was trying to clarify how worshiping the *arcā-vigraha* is not idol worship. It was written for a Western audience, but it lacked direction and basic, convincing logic. By comparison, Śrīla Prabhupāda's psychological reasoning how we cannot see God's form, so He appears in stone to help us, and how the stone is not ordinary stone because everything is God's energy and can be turned from matter into spirit at God's command—these explanations are examples of strong preaching by ISKCON's founder-*ācārya*. The hardcore atheists may not accept Prabhupāda's examples and analogies, but hundreds and thousands of people with skeptical upbringings are convinced and converted by the Bhaktivedanta Purports. If he doesn't speak so much about Kṛṣṇa dancing with the *gopīs*, that doesn't mean there is anything "lesser" about Prabhupāda's expertise in empowered preaching. He is most effectively bringing people to the actual practices of *bhakti-mārga*. From there, they will one day make advancement toward Goloka Vṛndāvana.

May my speech never utter any hint of Śrīla Prabhupāda as lesser, and my mind never think anything slighting of him. But may he convey to me how I may enter the more confidential parts of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, as he desires of me, in the right way, at the right time.

~

Another pad, and another pad. Another Friday. Still time and opportunity remaining. To get a toe hold into Vraja?

Do you think you can do it just by hearing about it? A *brāhmaṇa* in South India worshiped Lord Viṣṇu only in his mind. The Lord of Vaikuṇṭha was pleased with him and brought him to Vaikuṇṭha. Just by hearing from the spiritual master. Just by chanting the holy names.

~

Kṛṣṇa creates through His expansions. He Himself sports free and independent in Vṛndāvana with the *gopas* and *gopīs*. He invites us back. When someone joins, He is very happy. He said to Sarūpa (in *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*), "I waited for you. When is he coming back?" And when a new *mañjarī* is trained by Rūpa-*mañjarī*, she makes a garland and Rādhā says, "Who has made this beautiful garland?" The *sakhīs* say, "It is a new *sakhī*." And you come before Rādhā, always under the protection of your *sakhī-gurus*, never independent. It takes a long, long time. But *this* is where we are heading. We are not heading west to Utah or to a Promised Land on earth, or a Svarga-loka, Brahmā-loka, Tapa-loka. We are not hell-bound or bound for more of *samsāra*'s cycles. Wherever we go, we are Vraja-bound under the care of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the *rasika-gurus* whom he recommends to us. Ask yourself, "What am I doing today to wind up my worldly business and to go forward to Vraja?" O Lord, O Energy of the Lord please engage me in Your service.

~

February 1, 2:00 A.M.

Temptations in the mail. Because of a previous purchase, I am on an increasing number of mailing lists for specialized publishers of books, audio tapes, and magazines. In the latest batch of mail, I was offered a free trial issue of *New Age Journal*—"With so much to gain and nothing to lose, shouldn't you at least take a look at *New Age Journal*?" That didn't grab me much.

A catalogue of audio tapes with nostalgic selections from the 1950s and '60s was harder to resist. A new catalog from *Ecce* book publishers offered me a 40% discount on their "Essential Poets" series with tempting new editions of the best of William Blake and Wordsworth . . . I try to justify buying something. "You know, when you get headaches, it's sometimes helpful to listen to relaxing sounds. Why not 'Relax With the Classics . . . 57 masterpieces by Mozart, Bach, Vivaldi, and many others [which have been] scientifically selected and sequenced to relax you while you listen. You'll come away with a sense of well-being, and, as a bonus, a familiarity with some of the world's greatest music . . .'" Sounds like what I have been looking for.

And how about the John Coltrane Quartet and Johnny Hartman? " . . . If you love jazz, you simply *must* have this beautiful, emotionally powerful recording." Well, I am not getting any of it, but it comes to mind during prime *japa* time this morning.

~

Lord Caitanya said to Sanātana Gosvāmī, "Vṛndāvana-*dhāma* is very soft due to the mercy of the Supreme Lord, and it is especially opulent due to conjugal love" (C.c., *Madhya* 21.45).

A letter from Navadvīpa dāsa from Vṛndāvana: he says he and his wife are going to see Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja twice a week. "We have been approaching him in a serious way, desiring to take his guidance in the matter of awakening *rāgānugā-bhakti*. We both feel that we are neophytes and not in the same category as you and the other senior devotees who are approaching him. Moreover, both of us feel very dependent on our spiritual masters . . . During the time of Lord Caitanya, these varieties of spiritual relationships were common and were not in any way the cause of dissension or confusion. I think our society has to mature a lot more to come to this point."

On reading this I immediately felt restless and left out. I have prepared a message for Madhu to read on the phone to Navadvīpa if we can reach him in Vṛndāvana:

Please make tape recordings of your visits with Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and send me copies. It is not good that you are hearing from him and not sharing with me. You are living in Vṛndāvana, but I am suffering in separation. Please write the questions you asked and the answers he gave for the meetings you already had.

Also in the mail is a letter from a man whose wife wants to divorce him, although he says he has done nothing wrong. There is also a letter from the wife who says he *has* done everything wrong. And a letter from their temple president asking me to get involved and help make a decision. I peeked at a few other letters. Each was entangling. I don't resent it, but still, I have come to Stroudsburg for reading and chanting and writing . . .



Nanda dāsa bound a book for me which includes all the "*Gītās*" from the Tenth Canto—the *Veṇu-gītā*, *Yugala-gītā*, *Gopī-gītā*, *Brahmarā-gītā*. Mahārāja recommended them as the basis for all *rasika* reading. Now I have them in a compact volume for travel. I will start this morning reading a chapter aloud. Mahārāja told me to read them over and over.



Look in the face of your own *japa* performance while you chant. For a few moments I beg for the mercy. How long will it take. One should aspire for feelings. Lord Caitanya asked for tears flowing from His eyes, but I think, "Why would one cry? Out of regret? Is it some kind of bliss?" Ignorant child.

What I want to say I forget. You chant by the clock, by the quota. Maybe I can help others by speaking of this honestly, even before I get much help for myself. Anyway, the morning isn't over. There is still time to enter the *rasa* of *harināma*.

~

There is something you get from being alone—I can't say exactly what it is—but it is invaluable. Therefore, Lord Caitanya also practiced His *japa* alone when He was in Vṛndāvana. At least for me, a struggling *sādhaka*, aloneness is good. I need to face Kṛṣṇa in His name.

~

Prabhupāda, I am starting to do the editing of *Prabhupāda Meditations*. Everything I do is guided by you.

~

In our reading of *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*, the thing that struck me the most was a statement that *gopīs* in a certain category are called greater or lesser according to their degree of love for Kṛṣṇa. Even among the *gopīs*, some love Kṛṣṇa more than others. Love is the main thing; other accomplishments aren't important. Our whole attempt is to love Kṛṣṇa so that He will be pleased. It should be our only desire. Those who understand this become actual lovers of Kṛṣṇa. Others remain stranded by their own so-called accomplishments, which are in fact awarded by Kṛṣṇa.

~

Sleepy eyes, you're not very alert as you read aloud the Sanskrit of the "*Veṇu-gītā* (Tenth Canto, Chapter 21). The sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute.

I am reading on faith. Mahārāja recommended it, so surely it will be beneficial. These Tenth Canto purports have many quotes from *Kṛṣṇa* book and from the commentary of Viśvanātha Cakravartī.

The books are spread around the desk. You have been given the human form of life for this purpose. There is no need to take help from *The New Age Journal*. Even William Wordsworth can't add to your life. I ask you—place your ears on the path of the *mahā-mantra*, and hear the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute.

~



The car engine and heater are running. It's Saturday morning—we're alone without the usual kids waiting for the school bus. Madhu is chanting *japa* softly in the driver's seat. A cold wind is up. Maybe I'll get my snowfall although the sky looks clear.

Baladeva will rejoin us tomorrow. Maybe we can take a walk together to talk about Prabhupāda. Who really *knows* him? Often we talk of ourselves in relation to Prabhupāda. When you tell an anecdote of Prabhupāda in action, devotees are satisfied. But no story can capture the total Prabhupāda. The stories are often superficial; we don't always realize the deep import of even Prabhupāda's smallest actions. The *Vedas* state that the pure devotee is unknowable; he appears to move in this world, just as the moon appears to be moving through clouds.

The fact that Prabhupāda has a *sakhī* form in Goloka Vṛndāvana does not put him beyond our reach. It is not an impersonal statement meant to alleviate us of our direct relationship: "What can we know? We can never reach him if he is serving in the highest way." And if we don't know the details of his form in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*, what can we understand about his form in Caitanya-*līlā*? It is also getting harder to retain a vivid image of him after fifteen years.

I have faith that all these things will be resolved with time. We know so little actually. We can only go on serving faithfully, as Prabhupāda wants us to do.

The car clock reads 7:17 A.M. A gray fox suddenly darts out in front of our parked car. We exchange looks and then he runs off, bushy-tailed over the gray, pebbled road.

No one's building houses here. The locals use it to come and park on Friday and Saturday nights, drink beer, and smoke. They throw their rubbish out the windows. I inspect it on my morning walk. Thoreau called himself "an inspector of snow-storms." I inspect my heart, but don't seem to get far.

Regarding separation from Vṛndāvana, I am feeling good somehow. I know I plan to go back. I feel a connection with Mahārāja. I wait for more tapes. I am reading. I'm not ready to live in Vṛndāvana full-time yet. I like this retreat and plan to use my time well in the remaining weeks. As long as I live.

My voice sounds cheerful but it's not my real voice, my true voice. To discover that voice I have to go through more changes. But this voice is all I have for now. The dry leaves are dancing. The plastic fluorescent pink and yellow strips marking the house sites are blowing in the wind. Kṛṣṇa is God and I am cheerfully trying to serve Him. O gurus, you are so kind and lenient to us, despite our slow ways. May we improve.

•

11:20 A.M.,



I am not so inclined to the scholastic, analytical study of *bhakti*. Even *rāgānugā* inquiry can become a matter of technical definition only. We should *feel bhāva*, but we should also know the meaning of *bhāva*. I cannot justify remaining an ignorant.

In the evening, Madhu and I recite the three hundred and sixty varieties of *gopīs* and their symptoms by Sanskrit definition. Still, I doubt we will be able to memorize even a fraction of it. We try because Mahārāja said it would be helpful to know the terms.

Mostly we know what Prabhupāda gave us and that's good enough for most ISKCON forums. In fact, some devotees don't trust "extra" terminology. Senior devotees have read books like *Mādhurya-kādambinī* and one is expected to know sooner or later the definitions of *vibhāva*, *anurāga*, *ālambana*, *vyabhicārī*, and much, much more.



I read of the different types of *gopīs*. They are rated according to their determination to serve and please Kṛṣṇa despite all obstacles. One class is hurt if Kṛṣṇa apparently mistreats them. They seem to lose their clear-headed desire for going out to meet Kṛṣṇa at night. In other words, they become involved in their own emotions too much and not in pleasing His senses. Another group desires to go to Kṛṣṇa but is stopped by a rainstorm.

The best group goes to meet Kṛṣṇa in any circumstance. Of course, Rādhārāṇī is the leader of this group of undaunted *gopīs*. She never thinks or does anything except in intense devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Her contrary moods are just another way to bring Him pleasure, and She is always successful in that.

When Her so-called husband, Abhimanyu, gathered some evidence that Rādhārāṇī was meeting with Kṛṣṇa, he became furious and yelled at Her. She just remained calm and quiet. However, in separation from Kṛṣṇa for even a few hours, She dries up in distress and needs to be consoled by Her intimate friends.

In the immature stage, we think of the *gopīs* mostly in terms of amorous dealings with Kṛṣṇa, as if they are victims of the ordinary Cupid. But the heart of the *gopīs'* dealings with Kṛṣṇa is their devotion, which far surpasses that of all other devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So we have everything to learn from the *gopīs*.

We can't rush forward and claim we are ready for direct instruction by the *gopīs* in the art of loving Kṛṣṇa. We have to hear from Prabhupāda and Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. We have to practice basic *sādhana*.

•

"Just see, he's falling asleep while chanting *japa*."

"Yes, but he got up early."

"So, what good is getting up early? I want to see the quality of *harināma*, not a schedule of early rising feats."

•

Learn that the states you hanker for are rare. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in *Nectar of Devotion* regarding "surrendering everything to the Lord":

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says that devotional service in friendship and devotional service in self-surrender are two difficult processes. Therefore such relationships with the Lord can very rarely be seen. Only for the advanced devotees are these two processes easily executed. The purport is that it is very rare to see surrender which is mixed with sincere ecstatic devotion. One must give himself completely to the will of the Lord.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 98

We sometimes complain and try to strike a bargain with Kṛṣṇa. We want Him to allow us reach the very advanced states like *lālasāmayī* in only a few weeks. But our behavior doesn't measure up; we don't deserve it.

It's ridiculous to be asking Kṛṣṇa for something so far beyond our realization and desire. This is why the *ācāryas* first recommend regret for past sins, regret for not being able to practice even the first steps of *bhakti-yoga* properly. The sincere estimation of lowliness could open doors for us.

•

Toward the end of my stay in Vṛndāvana, I asked Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja how I could develop my budding greed once I left his direct association. He replied that I should read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, the books of Rūpa Gosvāmī and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. He said, "Read these and your creeper will be so much . . . especially the explanations and books of Viśvanātha Cakravartī are so much helpful in this way." I appreciated his emphasis on reading because it seemed like something tangible that I could do.

Then I asked a question about Śrīla Prabhupāda. Mahārāja had previously said that Śrīla Prabhupāda's form as we knew him was spiritual and within the *līlā* of Lord Caitanya. But on another occasion, he said that if a disciple knows his guru only in his preaching form in the world and doesn't know his guru's eternal form in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*, then one is practicing *vaidhī-bhakti*. I couldn't get further than that in my preamble before Mahārāja starting replying:

"In one word all cannot be said. In one word we cannot explain everything." He then said that what Prabhupāda preached was all *vaidhī-bhakti*. "*Rāgānugā-bhakti* is not for preaching—for anyone. Caitanya Mahāprabhu has not preached *rāgānugā* or any of our *ācāryas*." He said preaching is for the general masses. They need to be told that they are different than *māyā*. The preacher has to rebuke the ideas of Śāṅkara and to establish *bhakti-yoga*. The preacher teaches *bhakti* but does not specify what sort of *bhakti* one ought to do. He does teach that we are all Kṛṣṇa dāsa.

But when a disciple develops a taste, then the guru will recommend *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Jaiva Dharma*, and the other books of the Six Gosvāmīs. From his reading, the disciple will begin to think of what kind of *bhakti* he should be performing.

The personal question I keep raising is how to remain enthusiastic to preach *vaidhī* when your personal interest develops for *rāgānugā*. *Rāgānugā* can't be discussed because people will take it the wrong way. They will consider Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* from the viewpoint of mundane lust. So we preach one thing publicly and savor the inner meaning privately or among select friends. I have been unable to fully grasp this in relation to preaching in the form of writing. I need direction.

The *siddhānta* of *rāgānugā* is not forbidden, but I have to learn more the art of leading two lives, private and public. Taking up the work in *Prabhupāda Meditations* will help me do this—give portraits and reflections of Śrīla Prabhupāda from my own point of view, which is that of a disciple who is fixed in *vaidhī* principles. Also, I can give hints that Śrīla Prabhupāda has a further dimension which we can only glimpse.

When Mahārāja began his reply to me, he said, "Everything cannot be said in one word." I think he meant that the word "*vaidhī*" or the word "*rāgānugā*" cannot explain in an exclusive way what Prabhupāda or any pure devotee is doing. Certainly Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja himself has always insisted that our Śrīla Prabhupāda is not limited to *vaidhī* practice, but is situated in *gopī-bhāva*. Yet Prabhupāda teaches the world *vaidhī-bhakti*, "surrender to Kṛṣṇa." Prabhupāda's position is not to be defined in either/or terms.

My position is more or less nowhere. I am still trying to gain a footing in *vaidhī-bhakti* while simultaneously cultivating the further vision.

~

4:20 P.M.,



I spoke with young Dāmodara dāsa while putting on my boots in the hallway. He was wearing a Snoopy T-shirt with the words "New York" stenciled across the front. I mentioned the fact that it was the weekend, that it might snow, and that today I had seen a very large bird that looked like a hawk. I also told him about the fox. He told me he had drawn a picture for me and he would show it to me when I got back from the shack. The kids watch TV and videos in a room I never enter. Sometimes they venture out to see me.

I am passing over thoughts waiting for one worthy to write down. The wood has a deep-chested wind blowing through it, pushing the trunks and branches back and forth. It overpowers even the highway sounds. The whole wood becomes like a stringed instrument played by the hands of the wind.

Last light. There are your tears, blinking from sheer cold. Your chest is also chilled. If you can't get ecstatic spiritual symptoms, you can at least thrill to be outdoors.

~

We finally reached Navadvīpa dāsa. He laughed to hear my request that he tape all his visits with Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and stop being a miser with the nectar. It makes me feel closer just to have made that contact and to anticipate what may come. By now, Mahārāja must have also received the copy of *Nārada-bhakti Sūtra* which I sent him with a note. I said, "I don't expect you to read this, but please accept it as a gesture of love."

~

Indigestion for me, fasting for Madhu, Baladeva is driving his truck to rejoin us.

~

Dāmodara's drawing

Kṛṣṇa is standing on some rocks on Govardhana Hill. His limbs are all nicely symmetrical. He holds a flute in His right hand, peacock feather on His head. He says, "Come on friends. We can play!" His friends are approaching from the right. They say, "We are coming." A bumblebee in the sky says, "Can we play too?" There is also a big tree in the picture, giving shade to Kṛṣṇa. At the bottom, he has written, "Age all most 8." I think Dāmodara put more *bhakti* into this drawing than anything I did today. "Can we play too?"

Chapter Six

Trying to Clear the Dust From the Heart

"The desire of those who fix their minds on Me does not lead to material desire for sense gratification, just as barleycorns burned by the sun and then cooked can no longer grow into new sprouts."

—*Bhāg.* 10.22.26

February 2, 2:03 A.M.

I am so low it is unspeakable. I mean, so tiny I can't even place myself or estimate my chanting. Unfortunately, I don't *feel* this reality of my position. To be tiny but unaware . . . unconscious.

A Godbrother asked me, "What are you trying to achieve in chanting, to think of Kṛṣṇa at every moment?" He seemed puzzled about why I keep protesting that my *japa* is no good. Does he think staying awake and being attentive to our own voices as we chant is enough? Some think that that is sufficient for now. There is a modesty in this viewpoint that is commendable. I obviously share this viewpoint and yet I also know it is *not* enough.

I am powerless to change. I automatically think of other things as soon as I pick up my beads; thus I treat *harināma* as something unimportant. It is neglect of the holy name. Someone comes to visit and because I have so little desire to associate with that person, my mind continues to flit from this duty to that thought to the clock, so much so that I can hardly hear or concentrate on the exchange I am having with that person. It is offensive.

I know my appreciation for *harināma* leaps up when I am in physical danger. I cling to Him, and utterly believe, and stay as close to Him as possible. Then there is no room for other plans or persons—just my relationship with *harināma*. I know at that time that Kṛṣṇa is nondifferent than His name. This transformation is understandable, and Prabhupāda describes it in *Kṛṣṇa* book on the occasion when Nanda Mahārāja became afraid that Kṛṣṇa might be in danger:

It is quite natural for a devotee in danger to think of Kṛṣṇa because he has no other shelter. When a child is in danger he takes shelter of his mother or father. Similarly, a devotee is always under the shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but when he specifically sees some danger, he remembers the Lord very rapidly.

—Kṛṣṇa, p. 63

I write this after having chanted my first six rounds. In a couple of hours I'll go back to chanting. I'll try again and, even if I fail to improve, I will take solace in the fact that *harināma* still visits me and is willing to stay with me throughout my life.

•

I read *Veṇu-gītā* yesterday and today I'll read "Kṛṣṇa Steals The *Gopīs'* Garments." I hope to read the Tenth Canto *gītās* regularly every morning.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Good lighting here. A fat pen, but slim thoughts.

•

Kṛṣṇa is the king of jesters.

I am unworthy to say

but I need to, want to—

speak and recall

His glorious *līlās*.

I don't want to hear any

blasphemy against Him,

I refuse to partake in that—

I'll leave the place.

I want to hear of His cheating
the *gopīs*,

and His playing with

His father and mother.

Nowadays I am less inclined
to hear His philosophical lecture
to Arjuna, but I know
it's good for me and I
will do it again—I
was happy when I could

read His *Bhagavad-gītā* words
where He personally advises us,
"Because My devotee,
you are My friend,
remember Me and Come to Me,
in this miserable temporary world,
take to devotion
unto Kṛṣṇa."

I want to serve His pure devotees,
and take in their pure faith.
Their words make scriptures live,
they give me faith
to perform my duties.
The Lord's saints are the
solace of the Lord.

I want to thank them and
thank you Lord Kṛṣṇa.
Please convey to me,
in my heart,
Your wish for me.
I want to come to You
in a pleasing way.
Please visit me
Please cure me.
I want to please You.
"Don't try to see Kṛṣṇa
but act in such a way
that Kṛṣṇa sees you."

•

"Stealing the *Gopīs* Garments" is sweet and innocent. I like the way the commentators make it clear that neither Kṛṣṇa nor the *gopīs* have material lust. The word lust (*kāma*) is used to describe the dealings between Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*', but it is a transcendental desire devoid of impurity. As long as I have material lust to enjoy sex, I am disqualified from knowing the "lust" of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*.


O fruitive mentality, go back to simple prayer. Your prayer is the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

One good sign: When I chant *japa*, I am reluctant to let go of the beads when I am finished my rounds. The reluctance comes from my hand. The hand itself feels like I am tearing away a valuable, lovable object.

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare. The “Hares” are Śrīmatī Rādhā-rāṇī. Try to remember that; Hare, Hare.

For persons who are not inclined to clear the dust from their hearts and who want to keep things as they are, it is not possible to derive the transcendental result of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. . . . As soon as one develops his spontaneous service attitude [under the spiritual master], he can immediately understand the transcendental nature of the holy names of the *mahā-mantra*.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 107–8

4:20 P.M., 

In the compilation, *Nāmāmṛta*, there is a heading: “One Develops a Taste for Chanting By Chanting.” The statement from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purports says that chanting is nectarean; the more you chant, the less you tire of it. The more you chant, the more attached you become to chanting. I agree, but I am unhappy that the statement doesn’t apply to me yet. A statement more in line with my experience is this one: “Attacked by jaundice, the tongue of a diseased person cannot palatably relish sugar candy. . . . *Avidyā* (ignorance) similarly prevents the ability to relish the transcendently palatable name. . . .” (*Nectar of Instruction*, text 7). Even this “jaundice” statement, with its assurance that “if he chants, he *will* develop a taste for chanting” is something that hasn’t happened to me. Another verse: “Unfortunate as I am, I commit offenses and therefore cannot taste the holy names.” So I can’t complain that the scriptures are too optimistic or lack detail. They pin me down. Another one states that if your chanting is invested with offenses, you can go on chanting for hundreds of births, but you will never attain *kṛṣṇa-prema*. It has all been spelled out.

Since I tend to complain and claim an injustice is being perpetrated on me, I also say, “There is no guide to take me through the required changes. No one has spelled

it out, such as who I may have offended (*sādhū-nindā*), or exactly how I can go about controlling my mind against inattention (*pramāda*)."

Response: "Be serious. Do the needful to improve your chanting. And you do have friends and guides, so appeal to them."

I wanted to take advantage of these retreat weeks to improve *japa*, but I may lack the heart or "guts" to do what is required. Besides, it's so subtle. I can't exactly grasp what it is exactly that I need to do. I am up at 1:00 A.M. helplessly rattling the beloved names, but there is no prayer of the heart, not even a prayer of the mind. What to speak of mixing *japa* with *rasika* pastimes.

❧

When chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, in the beginning one may commit many offenses, which are called *nāmābhasa* and *nāma-aparādha*. In this stage there is no possibility of achieving perfect love of Kṛṣṇa by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Therefore, one must chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* according to principles of the above verse, *trṇād api sunīcena taror iva sahiṣṇunā*. . . . Chanting is very simple, but one must practice it seriously. Therefore the author of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, advises everyone to keep this verse always strung about his neck.

—C.c., Ādi 17.32, purport

❧

I pray to the dry leaves and trees. I mean to say, I pray to God, in the presence of the leaves and trees, "Please let us all mentally, verbally, worship *harināma*. Make it a trend for me, an interest—not a fad—but let me understand that it is the royal gateway to the attainment of pure devotional service, both in *vaidhī-bhakti* and in *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Improving my chanting is one of the most crucial ways to continue the line of Mahārāja's teachings. It is also the way to faithfully serve Śrīla Prabhupāda who says that of all the rules and regulations, chanting sixteen rounds is essential. *Prabhupāda did not mean mechanical rounds*. He meant that we should chant with *prīti*, with love.

❧

The cold evening forces a tear on my cheek, not from emotion, but I'll take it as auspicious. My chest and arms are also shivering. The writer-self is helpful.

❧

Mahārāja said that in all devotional services, a *sādhaka* must have *utkāṇṭha*, longing. Whether he is chanting the names, remembering, or any *sevā*, one cannot

advance an inch in *rāgānugā* without *utkāṇṭha*. *Utsahā*, enthusiasm, is required for *vaidhī-bhakti*, so what to speak of *rāgānugā*. And where there is *utkāṇṭha*, there is *dainya*, humility. And don't give up *āśā*, hope: "I will have it."

A devotee who wants to enter *rāgānugā* thinks, "I have seen and heard that the *ṛṣis* have done severe austerities. For thousands of years they fasted, even from water." There must be *utkāṇṭha*. When the *gopīs* heard a little sound of Kṛṣṇa's *vanśī*, they went to Him, overcoming all difficulties.

Lord Nārāyaṇa increased Nārada's *utkāṇṭha* just to bring him more quickly to Him. Without *utkāṇṭha* we cannot do *bhajana*, and when *utkāṇṭha* is present, nothing can check us.



February 3, 2:05 A.M.

"The efficacy of the holy name depends on the quality of feeling of the chanter."

"Actually the Lord's holy name has such powerful potency [all sins are removed by one utterance of the holy name]. But there is a quality to such utterances also. It depends on the quality of feeling. A helpless man can feelingly utter the holy name of the Lord, whereas a man who utters the same holy name in great material satisfaction cannot be so sincere. A materially puffed-up person may utter the holy names of the Lord occasionally, but he is incapable of uttering the holy name in quality" (*Bhāg.* 1.8.26, purport).



Situations of dire distress drive us to feel helpless, but we don't realize that we are always in distress. We are so unaware. Here I am in a warm house in the middle of winter in the suburbs of powerful U.S.A. It is quiet here and I have protective hosts. I have a measure of spiritual favor from guru and Kṛṣṇa, and I accept the honor disciples and others offer me. Yet I don't know love of Kṛṣṇa and my life is slipping away. I feel no shame and little regret over this. Is this not a helpless situation?

As for making factual advancement in chanting, I am helpless. I tend to think that my yearning is a yearning just for the cherry on top of the cake which I already possess. So I am like the materially puffed-up man who occasionally utters Hare Kṛṣṇa.

I need the holy name. I want to reach out to save myself. I am stuck in a network of material amenities. I am stuck in the role of guru-preacher. I lack faith (or whatever) that the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa can fulfill all my spiritual desires and will be the most pleasing service to guru and Kṛṣṇa.

I don't have to figure out everything first, but just chant with feeling.

"A pure devotee knows that when he chants the transcendental name Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is present as transcendental sound. He therefore chants with full respect and veneration" (C.c., Ādi 2.11, purport).

We each chant alone. We get good advice, philosophy, practical pointers from learned teachers, but then we must go and chant alone.

The purports and verses often describe what a pure devotee knows or what an obedient disciple should do, but where are we? We must ask ourselves. No one else can know. We have to do something about our state ourselves. The devotee (whom we aspire to be) *knows* that Kṛṣṇa and His names are identical. But it's a huge step in realization to practice the chanting with that understanding.

Perhaps I realize Kṛṣṇa-God is His name; I know it to some little degree. Then how can I assume "feeling and veneration"? What else can I say but go on trying? The retreat, the *japa* worship, the daily best time saved for it, the listening to lectures on devotional science to keep me aware how the *aparādhās* will adversely effect me—all these are favorable. I am in the right place and in the right association. I *am* helping myself, and I *am* receiving divine assistance. So keep as humble as possible and hear the the sound vibration of my own utterance of Kṛṣṇa's holy name.

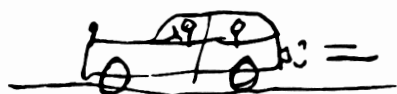
Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasized the simplicity of chanting. But we have to persist. Keep at the attentive, concerned forefront. Don't slip back from there. Know that chanting is very important in my life and *always* deserves my full attention. At least that much I should know. Then maybe the regret will come, and the gratitude for His mercy, and the attraction to His pastimes . . .

❧

"One must have faith in the holy name."

"One should understand that the name Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa are identical. Having such faith, one must continue to chant the holy name. . . . even a neophyte devotee is superior to the *karmīs* and *jñānīs* because he has full faith in chanting the holy name of the Lord" (C.c., *Madhya* 15. 105–6, purport).

More musts and shoulds. I don't scorn them. But . . . Am I superior because I have faith? Do I have faith? Yes, yes.



I am trying new tricks to improve. Started a notebook, "*Japa With Pen*." Been giving the very first time, when I first get up, to early morning *japa* and *bhajana*. Recorded my own *japa* to hear later what I do wrong.

Make a practice of reading these verses as often as you can. I say this privately to myself, not to everyone. When I read the Tenth Canto “*gītās*” of Kṛṣṇa with the *gopīs*, I am hearing the purest pastimes of the Lord with His best devotees. It is not the material love affair of a man with his mistresses. “Śrīla Madhvācārya then quotes from the *Padma Purāṇa* to clarify the essential point that one cannot be liberated simply by lusting after Lord Kṛṣṇa but rather only by possessing conjugal attraction in *pure devotional service*” (*Bhāg.* 10.29.15, purport).

Faith in the Sanskrit *ślokas* purifies me. I am being lifted beyond the modes of nature. To hear from Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as He speaks to the youthful *gopīs* in the forest by the Yamunā, while the full moon reddens the sky; to hear the *gopīs*’ submissive but angry reply when Kṛṣṇa teases them—He asks, “Why have you come here? You should go home at once. It is against religion and it is also dangerous in the forest.” There is so much to read, so much to do, and so little time.

•

I thought of an exercise to help me improve my chanting. I will invite voices within myself to speak how they feel about chanting *japa*. Then “I” will discuss it with them.

Voice: “The mind is the big shot. He’s the one who rules in this body. He’s everywhere, into everything. So he doesn’t want to just sit quietly and hear the holy name. If you want to hear from an influential voice, he’s the one.”

Voice: “I’m not sure I can just summon up a voice and claim it is The Mind, but I know what you mean. Without the cooperation of the Mind, we can’t concentrate or pray. Can he be our best friend? If he could only know that all his exertion and flitting around added up to nothing without Kṛṣṇa, then maybe he would tune in and become devotional and subdued during *harināma* and prayer. We’re not trying to become ‘No mind.’”

Voice: “Granted, that mind manipulates us all. Still, I can speak something. I am a voice within you. I don’t feel any love. Am I supposed to give love? Or is it supposed to come to us from the names? This lack of love is what I feel. I am willing to ascribe it to myself. But how to get started? How and who can I love? You can’t just command me, ‘Feel love for Kṛṣṇa.’ I’m sorry that I don’t. I am ashamed to even speak, because I know Kṛṣṇa is all-loving and not to be blamed. I want feelings but have none—can you help me?”

Me: "Feelings are important. We just read Śrīla Prabhupāda's statement about the quality of feeling in chanting. We can stop and take time to feel. We need to feel; be open, not closed to feelings."

Voice: "The beads get heavy and we get drowsy. It always happens. It is a physical thing, not a thought or emotion. Without conscious wakefulness, we're finished. It is not everything or even so important compared to feelings and love and all that, but we have to at least stay awake. Keep the body fit in general. And in a given *japa* time, don't sit in easy chairs or hot rooms."

~

Hare Kṛṣṇa, help yourself. Hare Rāma, pray to Rādhā. Talk with friends. Go alone and place the *trṇād api* verse around your neck.

~

Can't you see the signs of old age and death? Don't they move you to hurry up and surrender? Can't you hear the words of guru saying, "Without *utkāṇṭha* you cannot go an inch"?

~

You forgot to check Sunday off on your calendar. It's already gone. Turn the page to Monday. Almost three weeks completed here.

~

Since the mind seemed so elusive and all-pervading that I couldn't invite him to speak about *japa*, I decided to start a notebook, "The Mind Speaks."

I intend to place it beside me during *japa*. When my attention gets dragged away, I'll take a minute and record it. I take it that that's the mind. I'll observe what goes on. Maybe just by observing his patterns, the rest of me will be freer to focus on the sound vibration of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

~

11:20 A.M., 

A writer sometimes questions whether he is living just to write about it. In spiritual life, I have to be at least equally interested in *japa* and reading themselves—than in writing down my reflections on *japa* and reading. Spiritual practices are more than just good material for a book.

~

... one is understood to be an eternal servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead if he considers himself an eternal servant of the holy name and in this spirit distributes the holy name to the world. ... In

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu it is clearly said: *sevonmukhe hi jihvadau svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*. The holy name becomes manifest when one engages in the service of the holy name. This service in a submissive attitude begins with one's tongue.

—C.c., Ādi 8.16, purport

So serve when you chant. It is definitely in the *vaidhī* stage with me, done on the order of the guru. But by Prabhupāda's grace, that order is so deeply engraved in me that I never even think of *not* following it. I always want to chant better, although I can't. So call it *vaidhī*, but *vaidhī* is no joke. From here I wish to develop attraction.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says we should serve the holy name. Let me consider what that means. It is my constitutional position to serve someone or something, or do I claim to be an independent master, "the lord of all I survey"? Śrīla Prabhupāda always smashed that idea whenever there was a debate. We have to serve. So let me serve my loving God who has appeared most accessibly and fully in His holy names.

•

Mahārāja said Kṛṣṇa's rays are everywhere and therefore Rūpa Gosvāmī had hope (*āśā-bandha*) that the rays would reach him, although he felt unqualified for *bhakti*. One waits and does *bhajana* with the consolation that "one day Kṛṣṇa will do."

"When we analyze whether we have *bhakti*, we think not. Even if a friend says, 'You have so much *bhakti*!' we know it is not really true. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu also said He had no *bhakti*. We have *kāma*, *krodha*, *lobha* . . . We are envious, liars, selfish. All disqualifications. We have very little taste for hearing *hari-kathā*. We cannot chant with affection and love. It is not in our hand. We can chant something with the tongue, but how to get love?

"Only *utkāṇṭha* may be there. But by itself, longing is not enough. We will have to go in the process of Rūpa Gosvāmī and Raghunātha Gosvāmī. Then we may have *bhakti*. But if we analyze our own selves, we find not even a little *bhakti* is there."

After saying this, Mahārāja asked us, "What do you think?" We all agreed we were bankrupt. Then he spoke for himself. He said, "I think that certainly I have no *bhakti*. I only have a note from our *gurudeva*. Gurudeva has kindly given a hundred dollar rupee note. From *his kathā* and *upadeśa*, he has given, and we have heard something from his mouth. Now we are giving it as if it is mine. But there is no *bhakti* at all. We have no taste in chanting or any activities. But something, some *āśā* is there."

Of course, sincere humble expressions like that give us strength and inspiration. If Mahārāja can say that about himself, then I shouldn't despair. It is no wonder that I don't have *bhakti*, but I have received many valuable "notes" from Śrīla Prabhupāda—which I repeat in writing and speech—and this gives me hope and life.

•

I am keeping alive the connection with Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja by hearing his recorded talks and by following some of the practices he recommended. And I aspire to be in his association again, maybe in six months. I don't want to allow his teachings to lapse in my heart and for me to lose the edge of hope. I guess some dullness will be inevitable. But as he said, separation from him is healthy; it diminishes familiarity and creates a fire of *tapasya* and appreciation.

The value of a moment's association with the devotee of the Lord cannot even be compared to the attainment of heavenly planets or liberation from matter, and what to speak of worldly benedictions in the form of material prosperity, which are for those who are meant for death.

—*Bhāg.* 1.18.13

And just the opposite:

The infatuation and bondage which accrue to a man from attachment to any other object is not as complete as that resulting from attachment to a woman or to the fellowship of men who are fond of women.

—*Bhāg.* 3.31.35

•

4:25 P.M.,



At the time of taking *nāma*, the true meaning of *nāma* should be cultivated with fondness, and prayer should be made to Kṛṣṇa with piteous cry. Then by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, *bhajana* will improve gradually. If this is not done, it will take many a birth to attain success like *karmīs* and *jñānīs*.

—*Shri Chaitanya Shikshamritam*, p. 203

"The mind speaks" is kicking up some dust. I can't pay attention, but I try to spy on the process of distraction. By exposing it, maybe I can leave it behind.

Welcome, friend, and welcome to your project, *Returning From Pilgrimage*. It is your daily *bhajana* here and simultaneously it is a book you are preparing to print. Don't be afraid of it. It is what it is. Don't write hoping to impress people. Just share honestly and something honest will appear in what you write.



Caught you smiling.

Want to catch you crying.

Want to see you taking it easy and just opening up to Kṛṣṇa without always trying to exert will power.

Want to see you dying.

Want to see your pure chanting.

Want to see you praise and thus turn yourself into a poet and preacher.

Want to see you happy and generous to others without fearing, "What about my muse? She may go away."

Want to continue.

Want to follow Him where He leads me. Want to have some helpful and friendly association.

Want to be able to think and see clearly—wide open *vista*.

Want to do His will.



February 4, 2:00 A.M.

So this process of *hari-kīrtana* is very simple . . . we have all the instruments necessary to become fully Kṛṣṇa conscious with us—a tongue and ears. We have only to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and use our ears to hear this vibration, and all perfection will be there. We don't have to become highly educated scientists or philosophers. We have only to chant and hear. . . . what is the difficulty?

—taken from *Path of Perfection*, p. 119, and *Science of Self-Realization*, p. 142, cited in *Nāmāmṛta*, p.444

The fellow I am tracking in my notebook, "The Mind," is more like the "*japa gremlin*," a devious person who sits in my head and blocks the heart by filling my consciousness with a stream of things unfavorable to hearing the holy name. It is he I want to observe. He's powerful and has a long and deadly grip on me. I don't even

propose to fight with him. He knows too many tricks and has controlled me for too long. But I will be like a small, independent civil rights group who daringly goes into an oppressed country and monitors what torture and abridgement of civil rights goes on, records the incidents, keeps them on file, and works to disseminate the information. The dissemination is a way to put pressure on the torturers to release their victims.

❧

My chanting is weak but the holy name itself is powerful. Even shadow or offensive chanting strikes blows against our bondage. Reading (hearing) *śāstra* also works for my release. Keep up the battle.

When I introduced one devotee to free-writing, she liked it very much and said, "I can use the same principle in *japa*. Just keep going no matter what the mind does." I couldn't quite follow the analogy because *japa* shouldn't deliberately accept whatever comes. It has to go through the junk but not take it seriously. With free-writing, someone comes later and edits it. Who can edit the *japa*?

❧

Kṛṣṇa might arrange that we come back to the material world repeatedly for many lives, just for the purpose of increasing our desire to serve Him and be with Him. As we become more and more intense and pure, there will be nothing left materially. The cord of material attachment will be broken and we will be liberated. Face up to the fact that our *utkāṇṭha* and *laulyam* has to increase enormously—we have a long way to go. Joseph Conrad coined the saying, "Life is short; art is long." Similarly, "Life is short; pure devotion is long." Fortunately, we can come back and continue from where we left off.

❧

Of all sixty-four items of devotional service by which we engage the body, words, and mind in Kṛṣṇa's service, three are prominent, or five are prominent. Out of the three, chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is the easiest and most important of all. Beginners are recommended to take it up before anything else. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes, "In the course of counting beads always in *tulasī-mālā*, when constancy is gained and chanting of *nāma* becomes diurnal, some regard grows for *nāma*. In this state, the aspirant does not like to sit idle without pronouncing *nāma*. Then pronouncing *nāma* always with fondness, taste for *nāma* arises" (*Shri Chaitanya Shikshamritam*, p.202).

I can't give more time to *nāma* it seems, but I may write about its importance. Then in the approximately three hours I actually hold the beads and pronounce

nāma, I will get more sense of the importance of it. Śrīla Prabhupāda spent so much time distributing the holy names, and to do that, he had to put down his beads and do many things—travel, write, speak—all in the service of the holy names.

Another sense is that *kīrtana* is not limited to the recitation of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Any praise or preaching in *paramparā* is *kīrtana*. But even if we take it in the narrow sense of *japa* as *nāma*, then I am trying to help my *japa* and promote it for others by doing it (three hours daily plus a few sincere and sometimes “thoughtless,” carefree recitations while walking, sitting, singing—they can be the best of all!). That “*japa* promotion” takes place even when not fingering my beads.

In fact, it is not possible for conditioned souls to always chant on beads, and the attempt to do so is a mistake. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura writes, “My dear mind, what kind of devotee are you? Simply for cheap adoration you sit in a solitary place and pretend to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, but this is all cheating” (Song by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura).

Still, we have to come back to our *bhajana* and *kīrtana*, sitting or pacing the floor, chanting by the hour. Active preachers like Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura wound up all other forms of activity at the end of life. Practice now and don’t be a busy promoter who doesn’t know the serious daily work, the grim facing-off with the *japa* gremlin—and the happiness.

(Śukadeva to Mahārāja Parikṣit): “If one’s heart does not change, tears do not flow from his eyes, his body does not shiver, nor his hairs stand on end as he chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, it should be understood that his heart is as hard as iron. This is due to his offenses at the lotus feet of the Lord’s holy name” (*Bhāg.* 2.3.24).

•

I have a photo of Śrīla Prabhupāda fingering beads. He chanted on them to show us how to do it. He chanted one round and then gave us our beads. He was immensely pleased to do it. Who has done more to spread the holy name than our own Śrīla Prabhupāda? He gathered all the conclusions of the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* and humbly accepted the order of his spiritual master to go to the West and preach the holy name. No one expected him; no one knew anything about him or his mission.

He chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa. He chanted in the storefront, in the park, chanted and proved that Hare Kṛṣṇa was not just some Hindu mantra but the universal chant for deliverance. *Harināma* rolled across the world.

The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement has lost its innocence; it needs to be developed and purified; it needs to mature. But the holy name is never contaminated by *māyā*. It is complete. It is nondifferent than Kṛṣṇa. And Prabhupāda was completely aware of

the mercy of the holy name. “Rules and regulations can come later, but somehow or other—by chanting—fix the mind on Kṛṣṇa.”

Problems *did* come later, problems we hadn’t even dreamed of—“I never would have joined if I knew it meant this”—but Śrīla Prabhupāda got us to chant with faith.

Eternality comes from the chanting, whereas our idiosyncracies come and go. Prabhupāda, please keep us in your group. We don’t doubt your vision.

~

Reading notes

A devotee who is going to see Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja in Mathurā, wrote and asked me, “Now that I am becoming interested in *rāgānugā-bhakti*, I wonder if I should continue my Sanskrit studies. It will take a long time to become proficient. Also, I am studying the *Sandarbhas* now and every day I read a chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*. But since I have so little time to study, I wonder if my time would be better spent reading that which I wish to hear now, about Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*.” I told him not to make it an either/or choice. Just introduce the *rāgānugā* hearing.

I want to establish in my heart that Kṛṣṇa’s affairs with the *gopīs* are not material and are sweet to hear. I don’t have to avoid them. As Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says, “A person who, in the company of devotees, again and again hears the stories of pure love in the *rāsa* dance pastimes will attain Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is as dark as a monsoon cloud. A person averse to hearing these pastimes will never attain perfection. I refuse to hear the name of such an offender” (*Śrī Prema-bhakti-candrikā*, Song 9, verse 9).

I can’t claim that I read with greed. I am interested in scriptural injunctions to back me up. I need to cite them because they remind me that Kṛṣṇa’s sports are purely spiritual. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja told us about greed, and I want to follow the path that leads to that goal. It is not that as soon as he mentioned greed I felt, “Yes, I have it.” Perhaps it is another kind of duty that impels me to read *rasika* texts . . .

Whatever the reason, the seed desire for greed is also present.

Similarly, my attachment to Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja is a genuine spark, although it is in its beginning stage. When I think of what he is giving those of us in ISKCON who are eager for it, my sense of gratitude swells. I want to fully acknowledge it and do as he says—especially to hear the viewpoint of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and to grow “mad” for this only. I want to do what it takes to attain it.

These feelings may grow in separation, but only if they are cared for and nourished. “Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī quotes Bharata Muni’s *Nāṭya-sāstra*: *na vinā vipra-*

lambhena sambhogah puṣṭim āsnute "Direct contact is not fully appreciated until separation has been experienced" (quoted in *Bhāg.* 10.29.47, purport).

~

Hearing of the different groups of *gopīs*, we keep in mind that Mahārāja has taught us of the superiority of the *mañjarīs*. Even a confidential treatise like *Ujvala-nīlamanī* doesn't make that clear. The *rasika* Vaiṣṇava has to unlock the secret. More than that, he can personally encourage us because of our relationship with him to do as he is doing. It cannot be gained just by reading the *ṭīkā*s.

The group I was in is probably going to see him several times a week. Probably he is speaking from *Vilāpa-kusumāñjali*, or maybe a new book. I expect to get the tapes. I am writing this down and it is giving me consolation. I am also taking time to read the books he recommends. I am feeling increased attraction for what Mahārāja is teaching. I don't say this in an excited way, but I feel I am making a foundation, grounding myself for a serious life-long commitment to this path. It is not a passing fancy.

~



Madhu says his *gāyatrī*, finishes, spits out the window. I said all this before, how the car heater is humming and my fingers are cold. This is the cold retreat.

I spoke a simple clear admission on my walk, to the air, in the privacy of these trees: I am very grateful to Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja for the boost he has given to my spiritual life at a time when I very much needed it. He has put me straight when I was veering; he showed me the brilliance of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*. This was possible only by the direct mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who answered all my prayers. Now I have to go forward, although it is rather slow and gradual, due to my neglect of basic *sādhana*.

~

Keep an eye on your watch: 7:15. Each morning, after *japa* and reading and more *japa*, I spend about forty-five minutes answering mail. I can't let the whole thing rush in on my "retreat" or I will be swept away in a monsoon flood of other people's emotions, problems, suggestions for me to take up, and at the least, things to think about other than *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, *kṛṣṇa-līlā*, and *rāgānugā*. I have to answer my mail—it is my duty—but I have to keep it balanced and regulated.

In today's mail someone suggested I talk with a disciple who is having trouble. There is also a threat of legal action against a temple and a disciple is involved. That

couple who are thinking of getting married are still uncertain. Someone wants to know the meaning of "honor." I don't want to repeat any of it here since everyone considers their affairs confidential. Neither do I want to sound cynical about my mail. But it is on my mind.

Kṛṣṇa prayers, I used to offer them to some vague figure of Kṛṣṇa. Now I know Kṛṣṇa is the master of the *gopīs* and He sports independently in Vraja's groves.

One devotee wrote: "I liked your talk when you first got back from Vṛndāvana and you said we have to hear and speak Kṛṣṇa's pastimes as our main priority. And when that devotee asked you if we would go back to Godhead just by working hard you said no, we have to specifically think of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja if we want to go there—we have to be absorbed in Him and His *līlā*. So I am writing you and I'd like to talk about Kṛṣṇa, but I can't because I am not sufficiently attracted to Him." I have to slow down and listen and give what I can.



Just write from the heart.

Oh, and when I say "Kṛṣṇa," I mean "Rādhā." Rādhārāṇī is more important. Her *sakhīs* don't want to enjoy directly with Kṛṣṇa and they will never accept it. One time, Rati-mañjarī delivered a message from Rādhikā to Kṛṣṇa in a secluded place. Kṛṣṇa made advances toward her. She begged Him not to behave like that. She reminded Him that Rādhā was nearby. She even called Him "unintelligent." And then I'm sure she got out of His presence as fast as possible and *ran* back to Rādhikā.



Hearing from a self-satisfied *sādhaka*
is like having a fire in the fireplace in winter.
He's hearty and he frankly says the world is illusion.
His soul is red-cheeked cheerful with
kṛṣṇa-līlā—he speaks if you want to hear.
Otherwise he goes alone.
Like Sally Agarwal said, "The Swami was
the best guest I ever had because
when you were busy he just chanted to himself."
Of course she didn't know his bigger purposes
(felt sorry for him when he went
to Manhattan with only loose change)
but she appreciated he was
happy alone.

Even an ordinary *sādhaka* can read books
all day and be convinced that Kṛṣṇa
is the all-attractive Personality of Godhead.
He is silent and modest
but if you press him he'll admit
his is the best life,
he wouldn't change it for a
big house, car, beautiful wife and children.
No thanks.
Just give him a corner to read and chant.
"But then why have you come to New York?"
Because he has duty to perform—
his spiritual master told him
"Give Kṛṣṇa consciousness"
and so he is obliged to preach.
He translates *Bhāgavatam* all day long
(in those 1965 days in Manhattan),
and in the evening he sees a few people to whom
he speaks in ecstasy, with solid teachings.

In this poem I have not confused
Prabhupāda with an ordinary *sādhaka*.
I have spoken of both,
starting by venting my
satisfaction
and then I remembered
the greatest monk, preacher,
leader of saints and gurus—
who could be quiet
and who roared like the lion.
May he remember me
and bring me to him.

ॐ

11:20 A.M.,



You want to help yourself. Go in. You want to serve, to be happy. You want to carry a burden and feel right about it. Those were happy days when all you knew was the order of the guru and in a simple way, you felt the confidence of performing *bhakti-yoga*. Prabhupāda affirmed this in us.

I remember in the early days in Boston when I worked at the welfare office, I gave all my money to the temple and lived at the little storefront. I was working to keep our programs afloat, although we weren't doing such great preaching. But I was fully absorbed in it.

Time hasn't made it lesser; I'm not worn out or jaded. I am just more concerned with the fact that twenty-five years have gone by and my internal consciousness, while performing *vaidhī-bhakti* has not become tinged with *rāgā*.

Maybe there's no use getting into the whole thing again, at least not right now. I always come to the same conclusion anyway: trust Śrīla Prabhupāda. He is still present, he is still guiding me, I am still answerable to him. (It can be frightening to realize that we have to stake our lives on our offering to guru and Kṛṣṇa, and according to our devotion and detachment from *kāma*, our next life will be determined.)

One hopes for a late blossoming. Prabhupāda did it, started an extraordinary phase of his life at seventy years old. I am in a "*bhajana*" phase now, with a conviction that it is something I can do (most other things I can't or won't do for various reasons)—and it is something very much needed in the life of Prabhupāda's movement.

•

The chipmunk is noisy on the carpet of dead leaves. I am listening to Mahārāja speak about how Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī sometimes experiences separation (*vipralambha*) and sometimes union (*sambhoga*). I can only hear a little of it at a time. At the beginning of this talk, he said that some things should not even be uttered. He was in a cautious mood, telling us to prosecute preaching and all *vaidhī* duties, to wait and to look forward to a time when a more spontaneous stage could occur. The room was filled with Westerners and he thought it was too much. But still, he spoke on.


Sometimes Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī would directly experience the pastimes of Rādhikā (*pratyakṣa*). He would feel that She was present and that he was serving Her. But when that remembrance went away, he would weep bitterly in separation.

I find it difficult to concentrate for a full hour in the cold shack while Mahārāja describes in detail the different kinds of ornaments and cosmetics Rati-mañjarī used to decorate Rādhārāṇī. I can only hear a little at a time. Mahārāja always remains a Gaudīya Vaiṣṇava *sādhū*, yet he confidently and pleasingly describes all the feminine accoutrements of Rādhikā and Her serving maids. We watch him and listen, and there is no question that it is right for him to speak about these things. We enter by his permission.

In the external sense, I can remember the experience of sitting in a small, closed room in the Gaudīya Math temple listening and sometimes answering a question or supplying an English synonym. The clock is in view and I would see the hour go by. I would minimize tensions and distractions within myself so I could hear better. That's the external experience, but internally, I was closer than I ever imagined I could be to the intimate service of Rādhikā. I am not serving Her directly, but Rati-mañjarī is, and Mahārāja is the transparent medium. Or more than that, he is a nectar-tasting *śuka*.

When Rādhikā cooks for Kṛṣṇa, She removes Her ornaments and wears only a thin, white dress. At that time, She is even more beautiful. Rati-mañjarī prays to Rādhā, "Will the day come when I will apply red sandalwood to the part in your hair?" Seeing this, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī goes deeply into the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

•

4:20 P.M., 

Are you feeling guilty again—just for the sake of guilt? You worry you shouldn't have sought out a *śikṣa-guru*? If these doubts were expressed in a letter to me from one of my own disciples, I would say, "You're on the mental platform."

Why am I always wavering, sometimes happy about my progress, sometimes doubting the whole thing?

If I were to write a letter to myself I would say, "Have no doubt. It is all right that you are approaching Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. It is the fruit of *guru-niṣṭhā* to Prabhupāda. He is blessing you. But if alone you sometimes quake over the precious feelings involved—the need for absolute loyalty to one's guru, and the fact that all mercy rests upon his being pleased with us (*yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo*), and we also know how *guru-aparādha* destroys the creeper of devotion—it's no wonder we get occasional tremors." Climbers who scale the sheer face of a cliff thousands of feet above the ground with only a pick and rope, have every reason to move with

trepidation—and yet they also have to leave behind the hesitant, stumbling kind of fear. I am not a climber of *bhakti* paths, but the analogy comes to mind for whatever it's worth.

Am I not a foolish child like those who write to me, veering from their intense Vṛndāvana devotion to their basic doubts in self-integrity?



The air is not so cold, but if the temperature goes down a bit, it could snow over night. I brought my volume of *Nectar of Devotion* out here. In my triple study of *Nectar of Devotion*, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* with the commentaries of Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī, and Girirāja Swamī's seminar on *Nectar of Devotion*—all three are about to cover the topic of *rāgānugā-sādhana* in *bhakti*. Prabhupāda starts discussing it in Chapter 15, "Spontaneous Devotional Service."

I am reading with anticipation. I want to prove that even the soul in bondage is eligible to practice *rāgānugā-sādhana*. Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly states this in his translation of Rūpa Gosvāmī's verse as it appears in the *Nectar of Instruction* purport to text 8.

The chipmunk is popping around in the leaves. You see, I mention him for a purpose. It is healthy and not a nonsense indulgence. He's like a "Zen" grounding to my own uncertainty, my lack of genuineness—my lack of standing in higher realms.



A book is born today, *Here Is Śrīla Prabhupāda*. I mean it has been edited, it has a title, and we decided to publish it. Sixteen days of directed free-writing in Wicklow. I wish this present, longer endeavor had a sharper focus. I could have kept it limited more to "return from Vṛndāvana," but it seemed artificial, like fiction. I had hoped I would have been tightly fixed in my retreat practice and study of *rasika* books, but other things are also happening. There is book production. There is life without a label. Actual time flowing and my inability to do things at the highest pitch: Coming to terms with that. So in a sense, I *am* focused on returning from Vṛndāvana, practicing what Mahārāja taught, and assimilating it—and this is the story of what happens. It is truer than a story book.



When Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja seemed angry that he was teaching *Vilāpa-kusumāñjali* to too many unqualified persons, we suggested he speak on a more basic text for *sādhakas*. He seemed to agree, but then reached for his copy of *Vilāpa-kusumāñjali*. His presentation was more subdued then, different from his lecture in Bombay when we were all gathered close around his bed.

Rati-mañjarī presented a mirror to Rādhā saying, “Just see how beautiful You are.” Rādhā looked in the mirror, but not with self-satisfaction (narcissism). She thought, “If Kṛṣṇa sees this face and is happy, then I will be happy. ”

Even his “subdued” presentation was full of *rasa*. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are happy in Their embrace. The *sakhīs* are even happier to see Them embrace. “By the symptom of *mañjarī*,” the *sakhīs* feel as if Kṛṣṇa embraces them when He embraces Rādhā. This meeting is their fulfillment and they want nothing directly from Kṛṣṇa.

Contemplating this *līlā*, Raghunātha Gosvāmī comes to his own senses (out of the identification of Rati-mañjarī) and prays, “O Rādhikā, will I decorate Your *sindhura* so Kṛṣṇa will take the sign of it on His forehead and You will be so much pleased?”



6:00 P.M.

When I wrote of temptations in the mail, it may have sounded like I got away without ordering anything. But it isn’t true. I ordered one book because it was a diary and I am diarist. The ad read, “A fascinating look at an artist at work in a new medium.” That line was the bait and I bit at it.

The book arrived. It’s horrible. Within five minutes, I could see the book stunk of atheistic, jaded materialism. I looked at it a few minutes before our scheduled reading of *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*. It made me sour and unhappy at the prospect of trying to read Rūpa Gosvāmī after this. I felt bad that I had exposed myself, that I am even still interested in such things. I don’t want to interfere with the purity I am eligible for in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now I feel some real conviction to seriously swear off all nondevotee books. I have stuffed them in the bottom of a milk crate.



February 5, 2:20 A.M.

Bad dreams last night confirmed my fear of influence from outside reading. Before falling asleep, I had already begun to think my new vow was a bit fanatical. What’s the harm in a writer keeping abreast with the use of language by reading? But in the dream I was captured by someone who took away people’s identities and converted them into sex-inclined robots. I sensed it was coming from the artist whose diary I had just read. Better be a fanatic for Rūpa and Raghunātha Gosvāmīs. It would please Śrīla Prabhupāda and Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura swore off mangos when he was five years old. Why not swear off “literature” at fifty-one?



*nāmāparādha-yuktānām nāmānyeva haranty-agram
aviśrānti-prayuktāni tāny evārtha-karāṇi ca*

Even if in the beginning one chants [the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra] with offenses, one will become free from such offenses by chanting again and again (*Padma Purāṇa*).

Maybe it is not such a good idea to write down what the *japa* gremlin is thinking. It takes time; I could become distracted by doing it. But at least it is important to see the “gremlin” as separate from myself. There is a tiny self who aspires to love and hear the names. I consist of something more than the chain of thoughts that goes through my mind while chanting. Although I always desire a suitable time and place for chanting, if it is not available, I can still chant. Humble and small, just to be able to vibrate the call early in the morning . . . The “strong” chanting of the *vaidhī* vow. Someday, something more will come.

I have also lost interest in the “*japa* with pen.” The same time can be spent on the beads.



Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī had no time for *māyā* because he was always sincerely prostrating himself at the feet of the liberated souls in Vṛndāvana. He also offered *daṇḍavats* at such places as Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Govardhana Hill, and offered obeisances to every Vaiṣṇava he met, and to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes he took time to write some verses. He also had time to cry out, “Where is Rādhārāṇī whom I want to serve? O Devī, will I again be able to serve You at Yavāṭ in the morning, assisting the *sakhīs* in Your bathing and dressing? Will You send me on an errand?”



The day is still very young, I can do things. Keep mindful of their *quality*. The days are rushing by. You can’t gain immortality in *this* world except by acts which have the eternal quality of pure *bhakti*. They are the currency that can be used in the next life; other currencies all becomes useless at the time of death, just stacks of meaningless paper.

A strong wind is up. Heavy boards or something are shifting and sometimes slamming against the house. Reminders.

Don’t look up at your own reflection in the window. Keep concentrated.

Rūpa Gosvāmī writes, “My dear foolish friend, I think that you have already heard some of the auspicious *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which decries seeking the results of fruitive activities, economic development and liberation. I think that now it is certain that gradually the verses of the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, describ-

ing the pastimes of the Lord, will enter your ears and go into your heart" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 109).

•

The heaters are rattling. My stomach is asking for something or other. The world demands attention. Link the moments together by different methods of chanting and hearing Govinda's glories and *upadeśa*. I think this is sufficient for me.

The *gopīs* were shocked and bereft that Kṛṣṇa had left them. They were just like she-elephants who have suddenly been abandoned by the male elephant. They addressed the many kinds of trees in Vṛndāvana and asked if they had seen Kṛṣṇa. "O *kadamba*, O *mālati*, O *bakula*, O *bilva*, have you seen the younger brother of Balarāma pass by here? He must have been here only moments ago, because the trees are still bowing down making obeisances, and now the breeze carries the aroma of His garland mixed with *kuṅkum* from His beloved. . . ."

But the trees and plants do not reveal the whereabouts of Kṛṣṇa, nor do the deer. Although the deer seem to say, "Come, follow me and I will show you Kṛṣṇa," they move out of sight.

In the madness of separation, the *gopīs* begin imitating Kṛṣṇa.

You see? Although your voice was dull and frog-like, and your attention ran only along the surface, still, you have reaped the benefit. You heard again of the marks on the soles of Kṛṣṇa's feet and it grabbed your interest. As you mulled over the *ācāryas'* explanations—the elephant goad sign on Kṛṣṇa's sole indicates how His devotees may control their minds; the lotus sign under His big toes increases the greed of the bee-like devotees who meditate on His feet; the barley corn indicates all Kṛṣṇa's opulence—as you hear, your mind is washed of extraneous thoughts. Therefore, hear as much as you can.

•



This writing retreat would be a good time for work on further volumes of *Prabhupāda Meditations*, but I feel hesitant. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja says that knowledge of our *gurudeva* in his appearance as a *sādhaka* (although he is liberated, he acts as a *sādhaka* in this world) is a "good beginning." The perfection is to know our spiritual master in his form as a *sakhī* in Vraja. So I asked Mahārāja if books like *Prabhupāda Meditations* were valuable. He didn't answer in a direct way. Once, he said that our Śrīla Prabhupāda teaches the same things that Rūpa Gosvāmī teaches. Another time he said Śrīla Prabhupāda, in the form we knew him, is a part of Caitanya-līlā. And at

other times, he has said that Śrīla Prabhupāda taught mostly *vaidhī-bhakti*, as is appropriate for a preacher. But I still don't have my answer.

One way to answer the question is like this: Prabhupāda as we knew him, the confidential devotee of Kṛṣṇa who taught *vaidhī-bhakti*, came as a *sādhaka* to give faith to the faithless. Sharing thoughts about *that* Śrīla Prabhupāda will always be relevant and valuable. Most people aren't ready to hear of the liberated pastimes of the spiritual master. Since we have to preach to "most people," we will always want to tell them about Śrīla Prabhupāda who came to America, saved us, preached, wrote books, and so on.

Still, I am hesitant. My own interest has changed, and yet I have no realization and almost no information about Śrīla Prabhupāda in his liberated form in Kṛṣṇa-loka. I have *heard* that I may pray to him to reveal that form to me, but I don't pray like that. I pray for attentive *japa* and freedom from sex desire and the courage to tolerate adversities in this world. I am on the lower platform. But my interest in Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in Vṛndāvana has been aroused. I will talk this over more with my co-workers, how to continue writing about Prabhupāda.

❧

The groups of *gopīs*. Great friendships within each group, but back-biting between them. Yes, it exists even in the spiritual world. So we are in Rādhā's group, against Candrāvalī's. The group leaders, however, are exalted and grave, and they don't indulge in attacking rivals. The attacks are led by the "lesser" *gopīs*. Candrāvalī's *sakhīs* go to Jaṭilā, tell her that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are meeting in the forest, and urge her to catch them. Lalitā intercedes as Kṛṣṇa is being led away by Candrāvalī's aides—Lalitā convinces Kṛṣṇa to go see Rādhikā instead.

❧

Girirāja Swami said that greed (*lālasā*) for entering Vraja is independent of scriptural injunctions. There is scriptural support, but even if someone cites scripture against what we are doing, we won't care. Hanumān is an example. You can quote to Hanumān from scripture that the form of Kṛṣṇa is superior to all Viṣṇu-tattva forms, but Hanumān won't budge in his exclusive service to Rāmacandra. Greed. Greed, doesn't wait on scriptural injunction. It goes forward naturally, spontaneously, based on attraction.

Greed is promoted in oneself by longing (*utkāṇṭha*). I long for something. In this case, I long for the service of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. It is expressed in the song we sing to Tulasī-devī, *tulasī! kṛṣṇa-preyasī namo namaḥ*. It is for *mādhurya-rasa*,

that *bhāva*. But do I have the original seed? Taste and find out. (If I don't, there is no harm; all the qualities of *rasa* are contained within *mādhurya*.)

Greed. I can help myself by reading *rasika* books and associating with a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava. Go to Vṛndāvana. Seek longing in separation from Vṛndāvana. It helps to be away from the *rasika* Vaiṣṇava, if I use my time well. Pray for greed.

"What is that greed?" I asked Mahārāja. He said, "Do you see those boys who keep taking more sweet rice during the feast?"

Read Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura . . .

It is not just words.

Try to help yourself.

~

Now sitting on the floor, breakfast in ten minutes, fruits only, then a little rest. You're a comical character running through such a tight, self-imposed schedule, running by the clock. Have a laugh. This is how I do it. At least I am running from one good engagement to another.

Opulence. Comforts. Backaches. Don't say it—"Getting Older."

~

11:20 A.M.



In a poem by a Bengali Vaiṣṇava named Balarāma, he speaks the mind of Rādhikā. She says, in pain of separation, "If I knew in the beginning how cruel Kṛṣṇa was, I never would have given Him my love. He has trapped me by His beauty. Kṛṣṇa's nature is the same even in Dvārakā. He tells Satyabhāmā, 'I only love you and not other wives.'"

~

Kṛṣṇa consciousness includes the teachings of Prahllāda Mahārāja and the teachings of Nārada to Vyāsa. I do not abandon them. I am only a tiny student of the most basic teachings. But if you had the choice to hear of Lord Nārāyaṇa in Vaikuṇṭha or Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, which would you choose? And if you met a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava who was very respectful toward your *guru mahārāja*, and if he said, "Go ahead, specialize in the Vraja pastimes *if you have the greed*," what would you do?

If you looked within yourself and spotted a tiny sprout of greed, wouldn't you go for it? Wouldn't you also start to remember those sections in Prabhupāda's writings where he said Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana is best?

~

The trucks, the cold nose, unafraid of my inferiority in writing! Unafraid of the sunlight or the leaves. Unafraid that I like these things. Not afraid to admit, "I am afraid." Look around. Feel the shivering in your chest and arms. Up, out playing in the backyard in my shack. I'll go inside soon and keep warm. I have time to float to the back room—the new extension with large windows—and sit at the desk and type. And I may edit some "Prabhupāda recalls." I am not afraid to say this is my life.



When we read *rasika* literatures, they grab us and try to claim us as eternal *dāsīs* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. What can we do? Shall we resist? Shall we put the book aside and say, "Not for me"? What if we *like* it? What if we have faith?

Anyone who, having taken shelter of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and his direct followers and residing in Gokula (Vraja), sings sweetly these eleven verses that instruct the mind with clear understanding of the purports of these texts, will certainly obtain the priceless gem of devotional service to Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Manaḥ-śikṣā, text 12

You read this and say, "Let me read those eleven verses again and again." When it comes time to pack your luggage and you have to choose which books to take—and you can't take a hundred pounds—you find yourself choosing *Manaḥ-śikṣā*, *Mādhurya-kādambinī*, about six volumes of *Stava-mālā*, and four of *Stavāvalī*.

"In a mood of entreaty and overflowing love," *Manaḥ-śikṣa* ought to be sung.



Girirāja Swami points his students (in his VIHE course on the *Nectar of Devotion*) to the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* verses covering *rāgānugā-bhakti*. They are in *Madhya-līlā*, chapter 22, "The Process of Devotional Service." Here are some key verses:

The original inhabitants of Vṛndāvana are attached to Kṛṣṇa spontaneously in devotional service. Nothing can compare to such spontaneous devotional service, which is called *rāgātmikā-bhakti*. When a devotee follows in the footsteps of the devotees of Vṛndāvana, his devotional service is called *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

If one follows in the footsteps of the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana out of such transcendental covetousness, he does not care for the injunctions or reasonings of *śāstra*. That is the way of spontaneous love.

When an advanced realized devotee hears about the affairs of the devotees of Vṛndāvana—in the mellows of *śānta*, *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *mādhurya*—he becomes inclined in that way, and his intelligence becomes attracted. Indeed, he begins to covet that particular type of devotion. When such covetousness is awakened, one's intelligence no longer depends on the instruction of *śāstra*, revealed scripture, logic or argument.

—C.c., *Madhya* 22.149, 153, 155

In the Sanskrit to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* verse 155, the word *lobha* appears, which may be translated as covetousness or greed. Girirāja Mahārāja gave an example to explain greed. If a man sees a *rasagullā* for sale and stops to check his pocket to see if he can afford it, that is not greed. But if he decides he must have it, whether he must beg, borrow, or steal it, then he has greed. Similarly, if a devotee hears about the loving service of the *rāgātmikā-bhaktas* in Vṛndāvana and wants to go on hearing about it—and if he desires to serve as they are serving—and, if no one can dissuade him either by logic or scriptural arguments—then he has greed. A person with greed doesn't calculate, "I am too fallen, I am too sinful." He goes on following the devotional process, but now with *lobha*.

In the example of the man greedy for *rasagullās*, he may, to fulfill his desires, purchase a cow. Then he goes through all the necessary steps of milking the cow, boiling the milk, pressing the curd, simmering it in the syrup, until finally he gets the desired *rasagullā*. Similarly, a devotee with *lobha* continues to enact his Kṛṣṇa conscious practices, but his motivation changes. He doesn't hear and chant because the scriptures say so; he does it because he knows in the end he will get entrance to service in Vraja.

Working for *rāgānugā* is not sense gratification; it is service to Śrīla Prabhupāda. If we follow Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions with greed for Kṛṣṇa consciousness, won't that please him? He didn't write his books thinking we would always remain neophytes. Also, working for *rāgānugā* doesn't mean we stop our preaching. The practice of *rāgānugā* goes on internally at the same time that one prosecutes his outer duties:

There are two processes by which one may execute this *rāgānugā-bhakti*—external and internal. When self-realized, the advanced devotee externally remains like a neophyte and executes all the śāstric injunctions, especially hearing and chanting. However, within his mind, in his original purified self-realized position, he serves Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana in his particular way. He serves Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours, all day and night.

The advanced devotee who is inclined to spontaneous loving service should follow the activities of a particular associate of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. He should execute service externally as a regulative devotee as well as internally from his self-realized position. Thus he should perform devotional service both externally and internally.

—C.c., *Madhya* 22.156-157

There are many other verses and purports in Prabhupāda's books to guide us from *vaidhī-bhakti* into the first stirrings of greed. One who is interested should study all this with the help of devotees who are like-minded, and if possible, in the association of one who has greed for *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

•

4:20 P.M.



It's so touchy coming out here, you don't want to talk to anyone on the way. Don't they know? Know what? That I have to treat the thoughts in my head in a special way, honor them, and ask the words to tumble onto the page without interference.

I wrote a letter to Baladeva today. He asked me to consider what it is. I *have* to do. Do I think I have to write more *Prabhupāda Meditations*? Do I have to travel to the Caribbean and elsewhere? Do I have to associate with a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava?

While answering these questions, I told him some tenets of *rāgānugā*, how it is spontaneous and based only on greed. This led me to say that my writing is a spontaneous love for me. If someone offers logical or scriptural arguments why I should not write, it may stop me temporarily, but I always regain my determination. I don't *have* to write; I write from "greed."

After thinking it over, I wrote Baladeva a second note. I explained that spontaneity of service doesn't constitute *rāgānugā-bhakti*. The greed has to be specifically aimed at following a *rāgātmikā-bhakta* and desiring to do service like that *bhakta* in

Vraja. My writing isn't always spontaneous glorification of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa; therefore, it's not *rāgānugā*. When I visited Ter Kadamba, the place where Rūpa Gosvāmī saw *kṛṣṇa-līlā* in his heart and where he wrote about it, I prayed that one day my free-writing could become ecstatic praise of *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. Although I write of *kṛṣṇa-līlā* occasionally now, I am still always centered on that imperfect *sādhaka* (Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami) and his attempts and honest musings. When will the day come when my greedy writing will carry me into the realm of Vraja?

It makes me think I would do well to write in the land of Vṛndāvana, or at least near a strong Vraja influence (whatever that means).

If I write in Stroudsburg or Ireland, I may find more solitude, but it is bound to pick up on "the genius of place" (meaning the special atmosphere of each locality). And yet when I am in Vṛndāvana, sometimes I am not so inclined to write and I feel pressured by ISKCON duties.

All this means I am not ripe yet. O Lord, O Energy of the Lord, let me write from my place outside Vraja (where I have come to do my ISKCON duties), but let my mind be inclined toward Vṛndāvana pastimes. Right now, I'm sitting in an outdoor shack and removing much of the local atmosphere by writing quickly with a heart turning toward Vraja. In an hour I'll read *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*. Surely when we are in this world, we can think of Rādhā's *sevā* if we hear *rasika* books in sympathetic company.



In *Nectar of Devotion* Śrīla Prabhupāda writes that one has to be at the stage of *anartha-nivṛtti* to attain genuine eagerness to follow in the footsteps of the denizens of Vraja. "Sometimes someone is found imitating such devotional love, but factually he is not free from *anarthas*, or unwanted habits. . . . Such a manifestation of divine love is mere imitation and has no value. When one is actually spontaneously attracted to the loving principles of the *gopīs*, there will be found no trace of any mundane contamination in his character" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 126).

How can I claim to be a *rāgānugā-bhakta*? I can't. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja says we have no greed as yet. We have *something*, we have a shadow of greed. Even that little lean shadow impels us forward. We won't listen to arguments that we are *sahajiyās* or Śrīla Prabhupāda wouldn't approve. Prabhupāda said that if only one person became a pure devotee, he would consider his mission worthwhile.

In *Nectar of Devotion*, Śrīla Prabhupāda warns against "the so-called *siddha-praṇālī* of the *sahajiyās*." He quotes Rūpa Gosvāmī as recommending that we continue to follow the regulative principles even after the development of spontaneous love for

Kṛṣṇa. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in a way that definitely speaks to me and gives me encouragement about one's particular taste in service. Naturally, I apply it to my greed for writing:

According to the regulative principles, there are nine departmental activities, as described above, and one should specifically engage himself in the type of devotional service for which he has a natural aptitude. . . . In this way, everyone should act according to his particular taste.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 127

Some Godbrothers have implied that insistence on writing is like *karma-yoga* in which you give the fruits of your work to guru and Kṛṣṇa. Pure *bhakti* means surrendering to the guru and saying, "Whatever you want, I'll do." Yes, we have to surrender like that. But then Kṛṣṇa and guru say back to us, "What do *you* want to do? Which of these nine principles is most to your liking?" This is not so-called *siddha-praṇālī*, where an immature devotee chooses his eternal *rasa* in all details. But it seems to be a preliminary, valid stage of non-karmic-*bhakti*, when one follows his desire to serve Kṛṣṇa in a particular way.

If Kṛṣṇa wants me to shovel dirt and give up my pen, will I do it? I am not really as madly attached to writing as it sounds, but I do love to do it. It is a fact we have to go beyond all attachments—so that whatever we do, whatever we like to do—the real motive is only to please Kṛṣṇa. That's Rādhikā's standard and all Her *sakhīs* are up to Her standard. I am not yet so surrendered. May *gurudeva* find some use even now in my imperfectly formed *purīs*: "They are not standard, but they will do."

~

February 6, 2:15 A.M.

Waiting an hour before writing in the morning is humbling. I see I cannot chant in deep meditation on Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa—not as Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says, "At the time of taking *nāma*, the true meaning of *nāma* should be cultivated with fondness, and prayer should be made to Kṛṣṇa with piteous cry." How can I come to this page and write high-flying *bhāva* if I cannot even pray during *japa*?

And yet I do have a fondness for it. These times are very nice, sitting in the darkened room with a small light focused on the feet of the Pañca-tattva and extending its rays to the Six Gosvāmīs. The votive candles flicker in the warmth of the room, while outside, the wind reminds me it is winter. I sit on a blanket on the

floor, alone, and chant the holy name. It is the *act* that is successful, not my actual performance of the act. Even the *shadow* of the holy name . . .

Although there is no piteous cry yet—am I afraid to open my heart like that?—and I know this *japa* I am chanting is way below standard, still, my wish to improve is worth something. Improvement is not really in my power, so chanting becomes an act of patience, waiting on the Lord, as is written about the devotee who has developed *bhāva*, “He is always certain that Kṛṣṇa will bestow His mercy upon him.” Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Because I am trying my best to follow the routine principles of devotional service, I am sure that I will go back to Godhead, back to home.”

But when will the day come? Rūpa Gosvāmī says, “I have no love for Kṛṣṇa, nor for the causes of developing love of Kṛṣṇa—namely, hearing and chanting.” Śrīla Prabhupāda concludes, “. . . one should continue to hope against hope that some way or other he will be able to approach the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord” (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 137).



Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes, “If humility becomes very deep and intense, Kṛṣṇa will be merciful. In that case, feeling of Baladeva will arise in his mind and then these [*anarthas*] will be destroyed in no time. Then favorable and smooth cultivation of *bhajana* will gradually improve” (*Shri Chaitanya Shiksamritam*, p. 218).



I just had a passing thought that maybe it is time for me to compose a letter to Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. He said I could do so, not only when I had a problem, but just to keep in touch with him. I might mention that I have taken some time out to assimilate what I have learned from him, especially by reading, but also by writing down my thoughts. I would also like to say that a very basic inability to chant the holy name with attention stands in my way. If I cannot chant nicely, how can I expect to practice *mana-sevā* of the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa?

I have asked him how to improve chanting before. He has given me brief answers, saying I should consider the mercy of the holy name and that I should feel myself very fallen, in the mood which Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura expresses in his song, “Gopīnātha.”

I now want to ask if there is more I can do to improve *nāma-bhajana*. I have read about this in *Śrī Chaitanya Shiksamritam*. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says we should call for the Lord’s mercy to drive out *nāma-aparādhās* and that we should work to drive them out. But then Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura states something a bit mysterious. He

says, "This process is materially very secret and should be learnt from a good preceptor with a clear mind."

What does that mean? I want to ask Mahārāja to reveal the "secret," but isn't that a little like John Lennon going to Śrīla Prabhupāda and asking to be instantly zapped by whatever power Prabhupāda had? No, I don't mean that. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura said there is a secret. I think he means that more personal instruction is required and he cannot reveal it all in the pages of his book. The guru has the key to open the inner meaning of the book. It is the secret of guru-disciple relations. Perhaps I am ready to hear something I wasn't ready for years ago. But Mahārāja has also said that if I pray to Prabhupāda, he will do everything. It comes down to this: how can I pray?

One shouldn't pray out of fear of God or just to get relief from the jaws of the crocodile. We want tender feelings toward Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Before we can feel them, though, so many *anarthas* have to be removed. Anyway, I think it is a good idea to compose a letter along these lines. At least he will know what I am going through and I will get some of his attention. (I have seen him receive letters from my Godbrothers. He immediately opened them and read them silently, even while others were gathered in his room. Then without comment, he put the letter aside.)

~

This retreat is gradually gaining momentum. Using the time better. Aware of what I am after and also that it will not be an easy victory. Just when I finally get rolling, I'll have to leave this rhythm of long hours to myself for reading and writing and "floating" from one activity to another and go traveling. So be it.

~

Is it snowing out? Probably not. I can't tell yet, it's too dark outside. But the trucks are rolling. Walk by 7:00 A.M. Happy plans for book production with my co-workers. The first duty of a *sannyāsī* is to write and print books. Then to chant and hear. Prabhupāda said something like that, offering the Six Gosvāmīs as examples.

~

Reading notes

Kṛṣṇa left the *rāsa* dance to be with one special *gopī*. The other *gopīs* deduced this when they found the footprints of Kṛṣṇa and a *gopī* side by side. "Look," the *gopīs* said, "They have walked together here! And here, where there is only Kṛṣṇa's footprints, He must have carried His beloved." The *gopīs* who were rivals of Rādhā felt envy, but those in Rādhikā's group were joyous.

You feel confident when chanting the Sanskrit of these Tenth Canto pastimes. All *rasa-granthas* flow from these *ślokas*. Even Viśvanātha Cakravartī's elaborations come from this. Just repeat it in your own words. The *gopīs* said, "Here Kṛṣṇa must have stood on His toes to gather flowers from a tree branch, and here They must have sat down together while He twined flowers into Her braids." Then the *gopīs* saw only Rādhā's footprints. Kṛṣṇa had suddenly disappeared from Her. After that, they found Rādhā alone. The *gopīs* were at once sympathetic with Her. Prabhupāda says this is the test of Kṛṣṇa consciousness—one may be envious of another devotee at first, but when we realize their plight, we join with them and search for Kṛṣṇa. The *gopīs* all wandered deep into the forest until it became so dense that no moonlight was visible. Then they turned back and went to the bank of the Yamunā where they began chanting the glories of Kṛṣṇa, waiting and expecting that He would appear.

One day, in my own words, will I be able to compose a song of these pastimes? Can I speak them? Can I remember them to myself? I have my secret book to carry everywhere, all the Tenth Canto songs in one volume. May I find space and determination to read them everywhere. This is the purpose of the retreat—to set up some standards to be followed wherever I go. But to read this nectar one must pass Prabhupāda's test: "Only one who studies *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in the spirit of renunciation can understand the pastimes of the Lord which are described in the Tenth Canto. In other words, one should not try to understand the topics of the Tenth Canto, such as the *rāsa-līlā* (love dance), unless he has spontaneous attraction for *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. One must be situated in pure devotional service before he can relish *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as it is" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 110).

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Troubled voices and the faces of my disciples come through the mail. One is now more interested in Christian mysticism than in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "Yes, I am still (and always was) interested in Kṛṣṇa-GOD-consciousness," she says. So Kṛṣṇa is acceptable to her now in the larger (more nebulous) context of GOD. I myself dallied in Christian ways, so how can I condemn her? Hope she'll return and one day understand Kṛṣṇa is even better and sweeter than GOD.

Others have trouble with following the prohibition against illicit sex. I tell them to look for the higher taste. All things will pass in this world, our quick lives certainly, so maybe the bad habits and deviation of disciples will also pass as they

mature with time. But it could also happen that a whole life will rush by without them climbing out of the pit. Why did I initiate them? I took a chance. They were sincere at the time and they promised.

I took a deep breath in the cold air and felt a sense of life flowing by, not in compartmental units which I manage and control like a clerk—but flowing beyond control. It is an illusion—time seems to pass slowly as I move through my morning, but then it is gone. Then it is *all* gone. Lesson: do as much as you can every day.

•

Promised myself to be honest here. That means confession. Pen goes deep into the page, I see myself as a child, a kid . . .

But now my heart wants to be a devotee.

One time, Kṛṣṇa played a joke.

O Rūpa Gosvāmī, at night we appreciate your *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*. It is not merely a Sanskrit treatise on *mādhurya-rasa*, it is a shower of nectar. I see you as a poet composing the most beautiful stanzas—even in English some of it comes through. You are informing us of *rasa* with your pure verse, and you write it down for us with such beautiful imagery. And abundance! One after another, verse after verse. *Brahma-saṁhitā* states that in the spiritual world, “speech is song.” You give us a glimpse of that, Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, by the way Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* talk in your books.

May the sight of Rādhārāṇī’s *kila-kiñcita*-ecstasy, which is like a bouquet, bring good fortune to all. When Kṛṣṇa blocked Rādhārāṇī’s way to the *dāna-ghāṭa*, there was laughter within Her heart. Her eyes grew bright, and fresh tears flowed from Her eyes, reddening them due to Her sweet relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Her eyes were enthusiastic and when Her crying subsided She appeared even more beautiful.

—*Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, Chapter 11, p. 70

Anguished by Kṛṣṇa’s absence, Rādhārāṇī addressed the fragrant breeze: “O southern breeze filled with the fragrance of the sandalwood forest, O bringer of amorous happiness, please give up your contrariness and be kind to Me. . . . O breath of the universe, please place Mādhava before Me and make Me breathless.”

—*Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, Chapter 10, p. 66

Let me fly to the Goloka world. Then I can come back and honestly say, "My dear friends, you say Christianity is 'very rich,' but have you even tasted the nectar of Rūpa Gosvāmī's poetry? Have you heard the words of the *rasika* Vaiṣṇavas? Have you *any* idea of the supremacy and playful sweetness of black-as-a-raincloud Kṛṣṇa?" And I will honestly say, "This illicit sex life will be tossed aside by you when you enter the taste of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Why don't you do it? What are you waiting for?" Then I will loudly announce, "I chant first thing on rising in the morning and although I can't do it nicely, I surrender and love and worship that which I cannot yet attain. Please don't treat *japa* like a mechanical act; don't neglect it in that way. If you do, you will never taste the holy name and in the end, you will give it up."



Three weeks to go. Bright sun and cold. A breakfast of fruits only, so you can digest it. But I haven't been thinking of eating, I have been reading and chanting and writing.

There is no need to divide lines into poems.

Birds cry out in the bright blue sky morning. But it's so cold!



Evergreens: shadows and sun light on dry leaf forest floor. The holidays are over. Can spring be far behind?

What will you do next? I'll honor breakfast and then rest and then I'll chant and then and then and then—and then?

Always remember Kṛṣṇa.
Teenage Cindy Min writes to
me from Bath, Maine,
she's reading *Bhāgavatam*,
likes Bhakta Vic's writing
"he's a leader of Kṛṣṇa conscious youth."
I like him too.

All right, I have done my letter-answering today. Now let me turn to my studies—Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Nectar of Devotion*. Maybe I haven't earned it, but the road is clear and I am moving ahead, relishing and learning and getting ready. And in writing, trying to cut the cord to the literary, the false, the mundane influence, the attempt to impress readers, the habit of imitating myself,

the foolish, too self-centered—break the cord and force yourself and what comes o
your pen in the shack at 11:20. I'll meet you there. It's a beautiful day.

11:20 A.M.



All things fail without Kṛṣṇa. I have my pocket warmer, good pen, new warm vest and best wishes, but all depends on Kṛṣṇa, if He will kindly appear on the page. Otherwise, I'm just a clown.

I read one commentary where it said one has to climb over a Himalayas of earthliness and swim across an ocean of spiritual practices before one can reach *rāgānugā* greed. But I can climb and swim. "By the grace of the spiritual master, a lame man can cross mountains."

All *gopas* and *gopīs* . . .

How can I give a seminar if I don't have deep faith and love for the Lord? If I did possess these, I'm afraid people would come after me.

Bosh.

Foolish worry—yourself as a pure devotee and people bothering you. A pure devotee isn't disturbed. Anyway, if there are too many people around, then he can escape them, as Lord Caitanya did.

But you raised an interesting point—reasons to fear becoming a pure devotee. One big reason is you have to surrender your own desires. Kumbhā is cited as having some *rati*, but not *prema*. She desired to embrace Kṛṣṇa for her own pleasure, although she also wanted to please Him. But the *gopīs* of Vraja *only* want to please Kṛṣṇa. So you would have to give up all your desires. Fearing this is foolish. We smile when we see it in beginners—they fear they may lose money or be unhappy when they give up smoking cigarettes, watching TV, drinking beer. I can laugh at their attachments because *I* don't like those things. My tastes have changed. But there may still be things that I like to do which are not pleasing to Kṛṣṇa.

So you have fears of becoming more advanced. What if I have to give up periods of solitude or become a manager again? Who could convince me this was necessary?

Don't act in a way that is unfavorable for gaining Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In very basic ways I am lacking. There are holes in my presentation. Blind spots. Low-class envy and *aparādhā*.

Kṛṣṇa. I am cozy out here except for one thing—my right index finger is freezing. I can't warm it because it sticks out to grip the pen. The hand warmer can't reach it.

Mahārāja explained the disqualification know as *tarāṅga-raṅgiṇi*, which is described in *Mādhurya-kādambinī*. "We are chanting or hearing *hari-kathā*, but when any *viṣaya-kathā* comes, we remember and become so happy in remembering these things. We at once forget to chant *harināma*." We may continue to chant, but the mind is not there. He said, "Sometimes we see that the mind has gone so far away and for so many minutes it is not returning. When we will cross these things?"

So riding on the waves of things I did in the 1950s and '60s is bad enough, but why add to it daily?

To enter the realm of *rasa* we need a firm base.

~

I asked Mahārāja if looking at devotional pictures of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa was important in *bhajana*. He said, "Only for a moment they can do anything. Very little effect. But remembering the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa which are *anukūla* to us, favorable to us, this will effect more. Not photo. But to some extent."

He said, "We should try to chant and remember according to our stage. I am worthless, doing all offenses, no Vaiṣṇava-*saṅga*, *anarthas* are there—for this we should weep. And after that, the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa according to our *ruci*, this will help much."

He cited again the statement by Rūpa Gosvāmī, *tan-nāma-rūpa-caritādi sukīrtan-anau*, "We should try to follow Rūpa-Raghunātha for *vaidhī-bhakti* and *rāgānugā* both. We can follow *Jaiva Dharma* also. . . . *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* will be so much helpful in this, with explanation by Viśvanātha Cakravartī. . . . If we remember the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, we will have to go through [those *ācāryas*]. Everyone has followed *Veṅu-gītā*, *Brahmara-gītā*, *Gopī-gītā*, *Yugala-gītā*, and all other of Tenth Canto. . . . In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, examples are given from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Caitanya Mahāprabhu also takes always the *ślokas* of the Tenth Canto. . .

~

4:20 P.M.



I have been formed by Prabhupāda. It will always be that way. Don't trick yourself out of listening to further instructions because you need them desperately. You are *not* so strong.

~

I have definitely decided to write to Mahārāja. Can't tell him I am out in a shack with a cold chin, hoping my ink won't freeze, happy like a puppy in the woods, playfully free-writing. Who could understand and accept it in exactly that form? But I'll

tell him the truth, what I am reading and thinking—and ask for him to remember me.

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Madhu asked me to give him some time to discuss our travel plans. We can't stay here forever?

Trucks spinning and rolling along. I hear the whoosh of tires on a local street. The day slowly closing down. I still can't cry for my *anarthas*, although it is the very first stage. I am simply happy if I stay awake and pay attention. That gremlin. But why blame him?

•

I am talking to you who is inside. My outer composure is intact as it should be. My inner self can't yet manifest itself as a *gopī* or *gopa*. But can't it at least lift its head? Can't I at least reach inside and come out with a real identity? (I'm not exactly clear what I mean here, but it feels right to let it out.) Inner self is different than outer self. Outer self wants peace and composure and a regulated schedule down to the minute and numbers of pages written and typed each day. But inner self is separate. He wants to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Dear Kṛṣṇa, I can't figure it out, the difference. I ask for Your mercy. Fix my flickering mind at the lotus feet of Your names.

The breeze blows across this page, drying the ink. Time to do *gāyatrī* and go in. I feel satisfied.

Who feels satisfied? It is an external part of myself that feels, "It's all right, I'm doing what I can." I need a nice, sane, external self like that who doesn't eat too much. But *he* isn't going to change, it seems. He's not going to do as Mahārāja and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura say. He's just going to use everyday sanity—he's going to practice *vaidhī*—he's too sober for deep emotion. And he censors the inner person.

This writing is meant to allow the censored inner self his chance to speak. (My *vaidhī* self says it's time to leave the shack, even though we're discussing something important. His watch says 5 o'clock. His fingertips are cold and his neck is stiff.)

•

7:00 P M.

A letter has arrived from Vṛndāvana with a tape of a talk on *Vilāpa-kusumāñjali* by Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. It is dated January 24. The VIHE classes have begun at Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandira, with ninety students attending. "Everyone is busy and the atmosphere is hectic." The select group is going to see Mahārāja along with some new persons. "It's tight. Mahārāja is a little busier and the classes are scheduled more. . . .

After the month, Mahārāja will go to Māyāpura—no plans to meet there—and return here on 30th March. So I am also learning to live without being in his presence! I am doing well, *sādhana* improved.”

The letter confirmed how difficult it is to reside in Vṛndāvana just for the purpose of seeing Mahārāja. You are lucky to get a total of three hours a week with him. At other times, you are in the midst of the international congregation of ISKCON devotees—which is nice in some ways, but is not suitable for *bhajana* and study. I am very grateful to have the new tape, and I am also pleased to think that I am doing the right thing by staying on this retreat. Tonight we read *Ujjoala-nīlamanī* and although I wasn’t very attentive (Madhu had been going over travel plans with me), what I did hear was nectar. I appreciate Rūpa Gosvāmī’s outpouring of super-abundance. He is not stingy with his glorifications, but composes one superexcellent verse after another. Everything is focused on *parakīya-rasa*—which is the goal of all Kṛṣṇa conscious *kathā*:

At the very moment of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s meeting, Rādhārāṇī’s old mother-in-law, Jaṭilā, suddenly arrived on the scene. Kṛṣṇa quickly disappeared and Rādhā whispered the following words to Viśākhā: “I did not get the chance to drink the nectar of Hari’s words, and I did not get the chance to gaze at His face from the corner of My eyes. After a long time I finally obtained this delightful opportunity to meet Kṛṣṇa, and now unkind fate, disguised as this old Jaṭilā, has checkmated all My desires” (Ch. 12, p.78).

The letter from Vṛndāvana, and even the news that Mahārāja is harder to meet, encourages me to go on hearing the *rasika* books. After all, when we go to see him, what does he say? He says hear from Rūpa Gosvāmī. I think he would be pleased to know I am doing it. I don’t want to be over-confident about being able to maintain a taste without seeing him; therefore, we plan to return to India in August, knowing in advance it will be hot, hectic, and Mahārāja will be busy.

❧

February 7, 2:05 A.M.

Don’t make enemies. For example, your writing is a friend. And your *japa*, although distracted, is a good friend. I don’t mean *japa* as described in the scriptures—*nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇaś caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ*—but your own *japa*. My *japa* may not be *purṇa-suddho* or *nitya-mukta*, but it is all I have.

The trouble is distraction (which often means thinking of worthy projects). Everything has to be put aside during *japa*. Not doing that means a lack of faith, a lacking in my prayerful attitude. Still, something is there. “The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is the

highest nectar. It is my very life and my only treasure" (*Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, 1.9) Lord Caitanya said to Sanātana Gosvāmī: "Of the nine processes of devotional service, the most important is to always chant the holy name of the Lord. If one does so, avoiding the ten kinds of offenses, one very easily obtains the most valuable love of Godhead" (*C.c., Antya* 4.71).

~

If you can hear trucks, why can't you hear *nāma*?

~

Prabhupāda is fingering his *japa* beads on the back cover of *Nāmāmṛta*. It just happens to be on my desk. Reminding me. He's saying, "Do it like this and you'll be happy. Just chant and hear like this." I want to, Prabhupāda. Thank you for showing me.

~

I'll tell you all I can today. I'll start hearing that tape of Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja which they sent me from India. I won't miss my writing appointments. I won't lament. We're going to publish books. Even if America has lost confidence and can no longer see that things are always going to get better, even if at first we can't distribute books because people aren't ready to hear that Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja is actually helping us by infusing ISKCON with vital knowledge, we'll do our work, prepare our books, and pass at least a few around.

~

Zen folks say what's happening is what really *is*. They say this "is" has tremendous energy and freshness. Using that principle, I say, Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* is happening eternally. The recitation of it from Tenth Canto is as good as taking part in it, according to how much you are submissive and *there*. "Is" does not mean the energy of the trucks on the interstate; it means Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes, Kṛṣṇa dancing and loving and touching the *gopīs*.

~

4:30 A.M., *reading notes*

I heard someone discussing conjugal affairs, the division of *gopīs*, the rival camps, *kāmānuga* and *mañjarī*, in a class of fifty persons. It is such a delicate thing. In this case, there was nothing wrong except it sounded so technical and devotees laughed to hear of the rivalry.

I am chanting the verses of the *Gopī-gītā*. I have heard the simple meter which Mahārāja uses. Three verses stand out for me. One is the verse he elaborated on one day in Mathurā:

*praṇata-dehinām pāpa-karṣaṇām tṛṇa-carānugaṁ śrī-niketanam
phaṇi-phaṇārpitaṁ te padāmbujaṁ kṛṇu kuceṣu naḥ kṛndhi hṛc-chayam
—Bhāg. 10.31.7*

Another verse was recited by king Pratāparudra when he entered a garden and began massaging the lotus feet of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Lord Caitanya rose up and embraced the king when He heard this verse:

*tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanaṁ kavibhir īditaṁ kalmaṣāpaham
śravaṇa-maṅgalaṁ śrīmad-ātataṁ bhuvi gṛṇanti ye bhūri-dā janāḥ*

The nectar of Your words and the descriptions of Your activities are the life and soul of those suffering in this material world. These narrations, transmitted by learned sages, eradicate one's sinful reactions and bestow good fortune upon whoever hears them. These narrations are broadcast all over the world and are filled with spiritual power. Certainly those who spread the message of Godhead are most munificent.

—Bhāg. 10.31.9

The last verse in the chapter was a favorite of Śrīla Prabhupāda's. He often paraphrased it because it symbolized the perfect devotion of the *gopīs*:

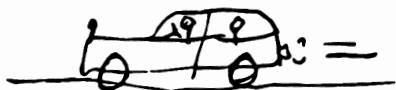
O dearly beloved! Your lotus feet are so soft that we place them gently on our breasts, fearing that Your feet will be hurt. Our life rests only in You. Our minds, therefore, are filled with anxiety that Your tender feet might be wounded by pebbles as You roam about on the forest path.

—Bhāg. 10.31.19

❧

I will have to chant the *Gopī-gītā* many more times and be washed of my mundane covering before I can taste the nectar. What's needed is some selfless sacrifice like that performed by the *gopīs*. I may be able to do it by working for Prabhupāda while remembering these pastimes. Also, I should look for the willingness, like the *gopīs*, to experience pain when Kṛṣṇa is not present. That is the essence of these songs—the *gopīs* are pleading with Kṛṣṇa to appear before them and embrace them because they know it will please Him. They strongly desire to serve Him in that way. " . . . expecting that Kṛṣṇa must return to them, they simply engaged in the chanting

of the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa—Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare” (*Kṛṣṇa*, Volume II, “Kṛṣṇa’s Hiding From the Gopīs,” p.207).



Madhu is chanting *japa*. My left thumb is over his name so he doesn’t see it. Band-aid on my right thumb. Leave your withered fingers and think of something to say.

Some nice ideas while walking—we have already planned to save time for full-time study and writing in Italy, after the Caribbean tour.

Trees. Sad news of the world. Young blacks in ghettos have higher death rate. Thousands of Americans are homeless, wandering the streets. The middle-class is worrying. The president is losing his popularity. One analyst says America is bewildered now that she has no formidable enemy in the U.S.S.R. Those things on my mind. Translated into worry about myself. This morning I worked on a few more Prabhupāda meditations.

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa. The thoughts may lead me to a penetrating center of honesty in my life.

The letter from India said, “Mahārāja is leaving for Māyāpura at the end of this month.” The letter was written January 23. But we all expected him to stay in Mathurā longer than that. Is it a fact he has already left Mathurā?

Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa . . . I am drowsy now and write partly to stay awake. Try to stay coherent. I want to develop internal Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I am a fool.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

The truth is I am not so much underslept, just groggy—“Beat hell out of me,” the boxer says to himself the morning after.

11:20 A.M., 

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes of *bhāva*, “Ecstatic love,” in Chapter 17 of *Nectar of Devotion*. He says there are two ways to attain it, “One way is by constant association with pure devotees,” and the other is to get the special mercy of Kṛṣṇa or His devotee, which is very rare. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “The purport is that one should execute devotional service rigidly in the association of devotees so that there will be

certainty in raising oneself to that ecstatic position." Later he writes, "Similarly, one should devoutly execute the regulative principles of devotional service and at the same time hope for Kṛṣṇa's favor or for His devotee's favor" (*Nectar of Devotion* p. 132).

I like that. Prabhupāda says there is a certainty. Actually, I am not that ambitious. I just want to get out of these low rungs of inattentive chanting. Want to be able to write honestly with absorption in Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Leave behind the relative world.

They want to list GN Press books in the new "Hare Kṛṣṇa Directory" and do a "press release" in *ISKCON World Review*. It's so people can purchase the books. But I have to be careful. No photo of the author posing on his retreat. "Author of two million books." "Author in ecstatic trance (*bhāva*) while composing."

Author asleep over *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. I'd better stop there.

~

I wrote my letter to Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. Quoted Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura about piteous cries and deep humility—how Kṛṣṇa will respond, and his statement that this is a secret to be learned from a bona fide preceptor. So I asked Mahārāja, "How can I aspire to something as devoted and pure as *rāgānugā* unless I can progress in something as basic as *japa*?" He has already told me three times what to do. But I need someone to get down on the floor and take my hands and show me.

In the letter from India was a transcript from my first meeting with Mahārāja on September 28, 1991. He clearly says I should be praying to Prabhupāda:

My opinion is that guru is always present but we are not seeing. . . . So, we need his mercy and to pray more to our beloved *gurudeva*. During the time when *gurudeva* was present, you served him and wanted his guidance, but you should not think that now your *gurudeva* is not present and therefore you must go to *caitya-guru*. *Caitya-guru* is present, but *dīkṣā-guru* is also present, so why should we not go to our *dīkṣā-guru*?

There is nothing lacking. *Dīkṣā-guru* is always with us, so we should pray to him and request him to reveal himself within our heart.

Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja turned me back to Śrīla Prabhupāda. That is the inspiration of the *śikṣa-guru*.

~

I give Baladeva these notebooks when they're finished, the empty legal pad with cardboard backing, as proof of purchase.

You didn't tell Mahārāja in your letter that you are at a retreat doing free-writing, how come? I told why in *Pilgrimage*.

Acknowledge, then, that you have your own world, your own way of doing things in which you don't invite him.

Strange, but I think Śrīla Prabhupāda knows more about the way I write because I am publishing so many books and he must see them. He sees me, so he must see this. I have prayed to him about it. For better or worse, he's my guru and this is my service. With Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, he knows I write a lot and he has his own opinion of it. Although he jokes with me that "you are better than me. You write so many books," he knows they are all written from the understanding of a *vaidhī-bhakta* and that I don't dare attempt what I don't know.

I have a special communication with Śrīla Prabhupāda on this point about my writing. I plead and offer and plead and offer. I feel good. He keeps me humble. I work for him. No one knows what it is like.

~

O nuthatch (or pewee), you have been chirping brightly all morning. Are you worried whether Kṛṣṇa accepts you or not?

~

Concise teachings from Bhaktivinoda Thākura:

Kṛṣṇa-līlā is the ultimate *rasa*. "But those who want to arouse pure *rasa* should be careful so that all bad elements of *jaḍa* (material) *rasa* may not enter into the *rasa* which they want to attain.

"The following five *bhāvas* are noticed separately in *rasa*, viz. (1) *sthāyī-bhāva*, (2) *vibhāva*, (3) *anubhāva*, (4) *sattvika-bhāva*, (5) *sañcārī* or *vyabhicārī-bhāva*.

Sthāyī-bhāva is the root of *rasa*. *Vibhāva* is the cause of *rasa*. *Anubhāva* is the effect of *rasa*. *Sattvika-bhāva* is the outward expression. *Sañcārī* or *vyabhicārī-bhāva* helps *rasa*. . . . *Rasa* is not the subject of knowledge but of taste" (*Shri Chaitanya Shiksamritam*, p. 221).

~

4:15 P.M.



When I was here last summer, we did some "Prabhupāda recall" sessions. We played tapes from two different '66 *kīrtanas* with Śrīla Prabhupāda leading the boys at 26 Second Avenue. Baladeva sat with me in the early evening and I relaxed, counted down from ten to zero, then heard Swamiji beating the drum in the *kīrtana*.

I got up and danced twenty-five years later, danced for about fifteen minutes, imagining I was back then. Then I sat down and started talking about it. In this way, we created some word impressions, later typed them up, and then edited them for *Prabhupāda Meditations*, Volume 3. I found them just today, tucked away in a forgotten file. So my question is, could I go back again like I did last summer and remember it with my senses? Or am I no longer interested in that since my “transformation” in Vṛndāvana? Or, now that I am different, could I sit down and listen to those same '66 *kīrtanas* and see what they do for me now? Just a suggestion.

•

Sneaking out the back door on a Friday afternoon on my way to the shack. The house is noisier than usual because the kids just arrived home from school. Maybe they are excited because it's the weekend. I am far away from Vṛndāvana. I ate *kichari* for lunch. I'm doing all right. It made me happy to find those memories from last summer, Swamiji's *kīrtanas*.

Listening to Mahārāja's January 23 talk on tape—about a third of the way through it. I can hear which brothers are there, especially the one who does most of the talking. Mahārāja is speaking about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and how She is called *kuṅkum-aṅgi*. He said that the whole *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Govinda-līlāmṛta* come out of the many *līlās* involving Rādhā's red *kuṅkum*. It goes from Her breast to Kṛṣṇa's head. And He puts red on Her feet . . .

Mahārāja speaks like no one else about these topics. We just try to get him to speak more. “Could you tell us why that is? Why does Kṛṣṇa consider it fun to bring the *pulinda* (aborigine) girls into the company of Rādhā and the *sakhīs* when they are with Kṛṣṇa?”

“It is for *rasa*,” Mahārāja says. Mahārāja is sweet and totally worshipful in the *Vraja* way, of the *rasika* dealings of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

A brother asks Mahārāja, “What is the significance of Kṛṣṇa playing the fifth note on His flute? We always read about the fifth note.” He expected a good answer. Mahārāja hesitated, then began singing a scale “*ṣa-ṛ-gā-ma-pa, dha-ni-ṣa!*” Everyone in the room was delighted, and me too, hearing it two weeks later in Pennsylvania. Mahārāja said Rādhā and the *gopīs* sing in seven notes, Kṛṣṇa in five. Who knows what it means? As Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura said, “*Rasa* is not the subject of knowledge, but of taste.”

Kṛṣṇa hears the *gopīs* singing and says, “O *sādhū-sādhū-sādhū*. What I cannot do, you can do.” Not only do the *gopīs* reach more notes, but they reach the sweetest notes.

My tape recorder sits on a volume of Natalie Goldberg. Ink splotted and frozer on the formica desk top. Empty pen cartridges flung on the floor. Me happy to be here and tell you of the fifth and seventh notes. If we cannot live in Vṛndāvana physically, at least we should live there in our minds.

~

I keep watching the clock. Soon it will be 6:00 P.M. and Madhu and I will sit on the floor facing each other over a low desk, taking turns reading aloud from *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*. When it is my turn, I will lean forward under the desk lamp and thoroughly enjoy pronouncing the words and comprehending as much as I can of the *rasa*. I sense it is a supramundane, amazing, beautiful description of conjugal *rasa*. During Madhu's turn, I will sit back and relax, close my eyes and listen intently. I like his slightly British accent as he gently, lovingly, speaks the intimate details. We won't speak much in between except maybe to remind each other from the *śāstra* that *mādhurya-rasa* is *not* the material perversion.

~

Now Mahārāja is telling of how Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu took *prasādam* with His devotees during the Ratha-yātrā festival. He fed them with His own hand, but at first they wouldn't eat. He asked Svarūpa-Dāmodara, "Why are they not eating?"

"Prabhu, they will not take until You take. So please sit down and take *mahā-prasādam*, and then all will take." Then at last Caitanya Mahāprabhu sat. "And when Mahāprabhu took it, He began to weep . . ."

~

February 8, 2:15 A.M.

How can a mind filled with publishing plans concentrate on the holy names with humble pleas? Śrīla Prabhupāda has written that in the beginning of devotional service, one is first attached to service and later develops actual love for Kṛṣṇa. I can see it that way—love and service can be distinct. You can work hard for Kṛṣṇa and love your work without thinking much about the Lord Himself. It is *your* work and the plethora of things you have to deal with that occupies all your waking moments. You may occasionally have a meaningful *darśana* of the Deity in the temple (and even then your mind is racing elsewhere, "Did the proofreader catch that mistake on page 214? When are they going to the printer? What will I write next?") It is good, healthy, to work for Kṛṣṇa, but when will the day come when I *love* Him? I wish on a daily basis I could start out with just pure entreaty, then I could take up the burdens of service.

My life is quiet compared to others. That's why when I speak to audiences on the importance of chanting, they always respond earnestly, but the first question is always, "How can we do it when we have so many duties and things to do and think about?" I don't know, I don't know, but maybe we have to let those duties tail off and save ourselves. Cāṇakya says, "For the sake of a family, a son can be sacrificed; for the sake of a country, a village can be sacrificed; but most important of all, save yourself." One thinks of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura closing the doors at the end of his life and fully entering the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Śrīla Prabhupāda remained open to us until his last hours.

Save yourself. How to do it? Ideally, while we are inevitably active, we can call out to Kṛṣṇa *impelled* by the burden of duties, "Kṛṣṇa, please help me to remember You." Kṛṣṇa says without lethargy or false ego, without abandoning your duty, remember Me and fight. Fight also means fight to pay attention as you utter the names.

•

I like taking quotes from *sāstra* and adding my own two cents. Śrīla Prabhupāda has given us that two cents. We are like the child at the dinner table who offers his father a particularly palatable morsel of food from our plate. The father has provided all the food, but he is pleased at the affectionate gesture. Make the gesture.

•

This will be a busy house when everyone gets up. One worries, "When will someone die here?" It reminds me of the story of the son (one of five) of Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura who died during a roaring *kīrtana* lead by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Lord Caitanya brought the dead body into the courtyard and summoned the soul to speak. The spirit soul then said, "Usually, whenever I have to die, I always experience great pain and distress upon leaving the particular body I happen to be in. But this time, I am only experiencing great happiness by discussing all these topics related to Your glories. However, my time is now up, so I must take your leave" (*Śoka-śātana*, Song 9, verse 4, from *Gītā-mālā*, by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura).

Oh, if death could only come to us like that. Survivors and the soul leaving the body needn't be plunged into grief. Go on serving Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. "In this way, everyone present was absorbed in various ecstasies. After performing the funeral rites, they all bathed in the river together" (Song 12, verse 9, p. 50).

•

Open the book and read something perfect yet human and interesting, something touched with humor and pathos. A devotee is praying and worshiping the Supreme

Personality of Godhead. "Similarly, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says to You, O Lord who is overflowing with compassion, that You may reject me if You like, seeing all of my offenses. But still, I will never be able to abandon You, for I cannot maintain my life under any circumstances without You." (*Gītā-mālā*, "Yamunā-Bhāvāvalī", Song 11, verse 3).

~

Open your door at 6:30 A.M. The universe of spiritual sound has passed through you. Oh, come on. What have you been *doing* alone all this time? Did you pray for at least a moment? Did you allow Kṛṣṇa to direct you? And now that the morning sun is up, will you continue calling to Him?

The holy names. Nothing can be uttered. How can we dare. The sacred cannot be pronounced. I know what they mean when they say that. But we say qualify yourself to utter the sacred. Don't speak casually. His name is sacred. His *Vraja-līlā*. Not just *anyone* can speak it. But cleanse yourself, hear from the *rasika* sources, then in humility, you can utter the sacred. It can flow from you.

~

Kṛṣṇa stands in the morning while His mother dresses Him. The cowherd boys wait impatiently. The first red light of daybreak is appearing over the horizon. "Hurry, Mother Yaśodā, dress Him. We want to go out and play with the cows." Kṛṣṇa smacks a friend with His flute while that friend tries to put on His anklebells. Mother Yaśodā lovingly tells the boys to hold on a minute until Kṛṣṇa has His lunch tiffin and peacock feather—okay, now you can go. "But dear Lal, don't go too far. And Śrīdāmā, Subala, you see that nothing happens to Kṛṣṇa. Go now. But wait, let me see My son again . . ."

~

4:20 A.M., Reading notes

These chapters are for reading and re-reading. I am not gathering information for an exam, but hearing, trying to understand and enter. It is in the Tenth Canto and the *Kṛṣṇa* book, how Kṛṣṇa returned to the *gopīs*. They greeted Him in amorous ways. He expanded Himself and each one thought, "Kṛṣṇa is with me only." He sat in their midst and they inquired why He had left them. They loved Him dearly, so why did He leave them?

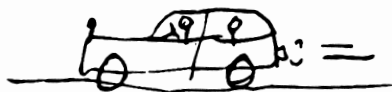
Kṛṣṇa explained that He had left them just to increase their love for Him. He said they had proven that they loved Him so much that there was no way He could repay them. He asked them to be satisfied with their own loving service to Him.

I may read and serve diligently, but unless I get Kṛṣṇa's direct mercy, I will never understand and taste Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Mechanical service to Kṛṣṇa does not attract Him. But how will I obtain His mercy? Through the mercy of His pure devotees. And that is gained by guileless service. As part of that service, I will go on reading of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vṛndāvana.

When I allow the picture to come to mind of Kṛṣṇa appearing to the *gopīs*, and when I see the eight principle *gopīs* coming forward—try to think deeply of that. One took His arm, one took His hand in hers, one bit her lip and looked at Him angrily. Rādhikā gazed at Him, and another *gopī* took Him into Her heart like a *yogī* in meditation . . . They led Him to the soft sandy bank of the Yamunā. It was the middle of the full moon night. They sat and spoke with Him in a romantic mood.

Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*—Śukadeva telling it, many previous *ācāryas* explaining it and paving the way for us through the centuries. Now we can easily take it up, although we were born so far away. The least we can do is hear and chant thankfully.

❧



Snowflakes dancing, welcome! Some things I may never overcome in this lifetime. I think, however, "Gradually I may begin to be more interested in Kṛṣṇa as a person than myself."

It is a long way from *śraddhā* to *prema*. *Bhāva-bhakti* is rarely attained. So you hope, although you are not qualified, Kṛṣṇa may show mercy, Kṛṣṇa and His pure devotees. You should make it clear to Him that you won't accept any lesser benediction—*mokṣa*, heavenly planets, even Vaikuṇṭha. Then He may say, "Very well, then be born again in this world and intensify your desires to serve Me."

❧

We sit hypnotized by this world, the falling wet snow and the words on the page. Millions and billions have come, pondered these things, and gone. It is all "decoration of a dead body."

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the process to awaken the soul from its torpor of bodily identification. We are enrolled in the movement. Don't waste time eating and sleeping.

My mind is drifting.

In the mail this morning, someone called me "a living saint." You know what that does to you? You lose shame. But I take it as a good joke and try to think of a punning reply, "Good saint? I'm more like a living faint."

Snow falls like pieces of cereal or little pieces of cloth. It gathers quickly on the dark green wool vest I wear over my overalls. This is not what I should be thinking of.

I wrote Madhu a note about going to Boston when this is over. As soon as I finish this car note, he'll want to talk about it, which flight to take, exact dates, etc. And that will be time and attention away from the deeper purpose.

The walk was nice because I stopped trying to push myself to think of something. I swung my arms and walked with a stride. I chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa better than I did in my room earlier.



So often I express doubts about the way I write. Better to be done with that. Someone remarked that all those sections of doubting my writing could have been spent in saying what I actually wanted to say, but am afraid to. I have to go through the doubts though. Then they said, "But I am independent to think as I like. I realize someone in your position has to be careful . . ."

Since I am now writing the diary I should (will) have faith in the process.

Should I write in all moods? So here is sleepy-after-the-long-stretch-from-1 A.M.-to-8-A.M.-pre-breakfast-doubt-and-fatigue.

"What?"

Kṛṣṇa is in Vraja
I love
to think one day I'll be able
to write nicely of His activities,
from a unique view,
peer into the forest . . .
I'll tell my friends
what Kṛṣṇa is doing.
My *sakhī* friends. . .
I like to think,
but . . .
for now I cannot imagine
so I am telling the truth—

It is snowing and after three weeks
we'll catch a shuttle plane
to Boston where
it will be sweet
to be with devotees
in that home-town ISKCON,
close to Rādhā-Gopīvallabha
and old friends
and interesting folks who come
to the dinner program.

Yeah, that's my level
of existence—the here and now
of preaching
and travel
and reading in books.

~

Mahārāja said Rādhikā gives up *everything* to run after Kṛṣṇa, Her practice, *arya-dharma*, *loka-dharma*, shame . . . If father-in-law and mother-in-law are there, still She runs after Kṛṣṇa. "I also want to run after Kṛṣṇa"—says Lord Caitanya when He tastes the *mahā-prasādam*. In *Rādhā-bhāva*, He reveals His mind to Svarūpa-Dāmodara and Rāmānanda Rāya at night.

And what about us? Kṛṣṇa's name is the same as Kṛṣṇa, as Kṛṣṇa's *prasādam*, but we don't taste it because of our *anarthas*. Kṛṣṇa plays on His flute and the *gopīs* hear the sweet notes, but we cannot catch them because we are *durbhoga*. If our *anarthas* become cleared, we can also have this.

Lord Caitanya, speaking in the "madness" of His *Rādhā-bhāva*, described a conversation between the *gopīs* and Kṛṣṇa's *veṇu* (flute). The *gopīs* said to the flute, "You are dry. You have no *rasa*. And yet you are taking our wealth, the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's lips."

The *veṇu* replied, "If you have the strength, you can come and take the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's lips yourself. But you will have to give up all shame, fear, and *dharma*. Otherwise I will stay here even in your presence and will drink everything."

~

11:20 A.M.



Exploring inner regions is useless unless it is done for Kṛṣṇa. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura encourages us to examine ourselves, to try and move forward and see that we are going in the way recommended by the *ācāryas*. Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "Tax your brain for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

•

I look around this strange world and observe it with my mind and senses. In false concept, I would think I am the owner. I would learn to speak and write about it as if I am the doer. But now I am offering all my faculties to You—and my writing—to You.

You are so kind that when we offer ourselves to You in this world, You give us entrance into the world beyond this one. And even from here, even while we are bound to this world, You allow us a glimpse of the spiritual reality. That is Your mercy, and the mercy of Your pure devotees.

•

I am becoming more humble. I stop jokes and literary flourishes and begin begging for something to say from the Lord. I want to write this diary, to write a book, to practice *bhajana* in my writing. Please direct me to *kṛṣṇa-kathā*.

How can I help myself by writing? Because that's the most important. Even if I take an assignment as a commentator on *śāstra*, that in itself won't help me to be humble or to chant better. Writing should be able to be used for direct, spiritual purification, and then shared with friends.

•

I am a writer-devotee who has good intentions but who is stuck. Still, I have hope that Kṛṣṇa will send help.

Green gloves across the page, a painful stiffness in the back of my neck, limited time. Cold fingers. Trying to artistically weave a journal without the weaving being too obvious. This life is small and contained.

It seems to matter less as I read the science of *bhakti*. I mean the details and the step-by-step progress. I have to care about essentials.

Bhāva is very rare. The Lord is not inclined to give Himself to impure *bhaktas*. *Bhaktas* can struggle at actually prosecuting the details and working at *bhajana* and *sevā* for many lifetimes, yet fail to attract Kṛṣṇa! One swallows those statements, understanding that they apply to me. Yet we go on. Business as usual. The dullness and slowness as usual. Breakfast and lunch as usual. Where is the keen desire?

The falling snow is still falling. Falling as usual, measuring time and witnessing my story. The snow isn't sticking, just falling and melting, falling and melting. I like to think that if the snow sticks, my devotional practices will stick. I will be buried in a safe world. Kṛṣṇa will come and visit me during the night instead of the ghosts of my past. But the snow isn't sticking, just falling and melting, falling and melting.

•

Notes from Mahārāja's January 23, 1992 talk to devotees in his room at Mathurā

I have already written some notes: Rādhā sings the seventh note. She is known as *kuṅkum-aṅgi*. And I told the story of Lord Caitanya honoring *mahā-prasādam*.

Then Mahārāja spoke a verse by Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura.

(It depends on my receptivity, but sometimes I feel like I am one of the devotees there crowded in the second or third row. I eagerly listen for the voices of my brothers and sisters to know who is present. I note the outside noises at the Mathurā *maṭh*, hear Mahārāja clearing his throat, imagine how he looks as he expresses himself.)

"When She tastes the *āmrta* [from Kṛṣṇa's mouth], She forgets *everything*!"

(But I am also waiting for the tape to end, almost looking forward to the ending. Then I can say, "Okay, that's it. I heard it all. I didn't miss any of it. It was the same kind of thing he said when I was there." I should know that I am missing out by not being present. These are strange emotions—sour grapes because I can't be there, trying to protect myself from hurt, maybe a fear of admitting how far I am from pure *bhakti*—Mahārāja brings that out—and fear to admit we are very dependent on his instruction. I almost want to rebel and say we don't need this, it's *too much*. Too much Kṛṣṇa! Give us a break! Strange feelings.

But mainly I want to continue belonging to that inner group. I am not merely monitoring a nectar session as a spy for the Kingdom of Satsvarūpa dāsa. I am aspiring . . .)

"Bās, today."

"Sarūpa was the brother of Śrīmatī Rādhikā?"

"So many brothers. Not only Śrīdāmā. If you want, you can also. You have tasted it? *Teekay*."

The devotees lingered and the leading brother said he had one "easy question." So Mahārāja heard and answered briefly. Then Navīna told the devotees that Mahārāja had spoken enough for today.

A brother said, "Dr. Navina. He is a very strict doctor." A few more words and then no more.

•

One reason I may be feeling less interested when I read the scientific description of *rati* and its subtle connections leading to *bhāva* and *prema*, is that I have to admit it is so far away for me. I can read about it. But then I have to force my *japa* and my tiny realizations. Perhaps there is a drop of humiliation in admitting my *rāgānugā* studies are abstract theory.

•

4:17 P.M.



All trace of the morning snow is gone. You like to think you are alone, facing some emptiness in yourself, and that it may be good to write in this condition. You wonder what Godbrothers would think . . . "Writing is certainly an acceptable practice, but what is your subject matter, what text are you explaining?"

I am not explaining any text, just trying to develop some self-honesty.

"But what good is 'honesty' without the guidance of the spiritual master?"

Oh, I never said I was attempting this without guidance from my spiritual master.

I like to think that if I lose the sense of "story" or "progress" or "breakthrough" for this retreat time, it will still be valuable. Face what comes. Earlier, you were interested in *japa* reform and in the intensity of separation from Vṛndāvana. These are still on your mind, but not in the sense of breakthrough. If I get another letter and tape from Vṛndāvana soon, that would be nice. But it may not come. As for *japa*, I have to wait for Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Śrīla Prabhupāda said a new wife cannot demand to give birth to a child; she has to be patient. Then out of her natural relationship with her husband, she will become pregnant. In nine months she will bear a child.

I have been waiting longer than nine months, but I am looking for the rarest thing. And I also persist in *pramāda*, madness.

I won't try to make "storybook" themes out of my retreat diary. I don't like seeing my life slip away. You go up and down in a given day, but you do many nice things. For example, you just washed and dried all three tiers of your altar and dusted over the pictures and put them back. Did you notice the features of Rādhā-Dāmodara? Why don't I start putting a photo of Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja on the altar in the morning when no one is here?

You do some nice things. But Madhu requested again to speak with you about travel arrangements. He has ordered a book called *How to Beat Jet Lag*. We will

discuss when and where to go for the next six months. That means I am willing to see beyond this retreat. When I started here, I would consider such a discussion as a disturbance to my continual meditation. Crying to God in the wilderness.

I was told not to speak anything that wasn't good for devotees' faith. His main point was that *rāgānugā-bhakti* should be secret. Speaking one's realizations openly will fade those realizations, he said. Vaiṣṇavas should keep some things secret—sleeping, eating drinking, *bhajana*, and *sādhana*. "If general persons see these things they will think, 'Oh, we are all the same.' . . . Everything should not be told. Only if it is for benefit of disciples."

How do I relate to that now? What about the demand in ISKCON for openness and honesty because of the falldowns of so many gurus? Mahārāja said on another occasion, "How long can he keep it in?"

I don't think the topic of honesty was fully covered in that short exchange with Mahārāja. The daily search for Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a search for truth, and to share that search with others can be a source of encouragement for all of us. I don't think that's the same as revealing things that should be kept private. Dirty thoughts, bodily movements, bad doubts, misbehaviors—better they not even occur. As Mahārāja said, "If I have an illicit connection, then I will have to hide it. So we should not have illicit connections with anyone which we have to hide." This implies that the *sādhū's* life should be open. To me, the commitment to disclose helps me to do things that are not forbidden. I want to *write* of a spiritual journey, *therefore*, I can't do nonsense.

But Mahārāja said, "Only *bhajana* and *sādhana* should be hidden." What to do? Am I disobeying? Can I claim an exception from this general rule for a higher purpose? My claim is that it is good for me and for others. If good things and hard lessons can be learned in *sādhana*, then why hide it?

One should not present himself as a saintly person, but *if you are my close friend*, if I have found a way to speak with close friends by writing, then we know *that* kind of *prīti-lakṣaṇam* revealing the mind, is a sign of love. It is recommended by Rūpa Gosvāmī.

I think, "I have nothing to hide." I have no secrets. Petty things—bad dreams and fantasies—I won't waste time or give them credence, but what does he mean by hiding your *bhajana*? Maybe I should ask again. But I don't seem capable of learning it right now in the quick exchanges, which is all I can seem to get.

My mind scans the scriptures to think of examples in my defense. Be open, don't be duplicitous. If you have had a good, Kṛṣṇa conscious experience, tell others.

Attract them to the practices by your success. And as a preaching tactic, admit your shortcomings in *bhajana* so that they will be disarmed and believe more when you say, "I am happy and satisfied in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and you will be too. If I could succeed, you can too." Honesty is more than a tactic, it is a way of life, but it may also be seen as a way of preaching.

All I am telling is what I read in the books. I *have* nothing else to write or boast about. So in that sense, I am not telling secrets. What secrets? When Kṛṣṇa visits me, then I will have to consider whether or not to keep it a secret, but at present, I don't have that problem.

❧

"You've Got To Hide Your Love Away."

❧

6:45 P.M.

Reading *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, it became clearer to me how disqualified I am. I don't have the kind of love which attracts Kṛṣṇa:

"In *samartha* love, the lover strives only to make Kṛṣṇa happy. In the other previously described kinds of love, however, there may sometimes be endeavors for one's own personal happiness. This *samartha* love (whose most intense form is called *prema*) is the most exalted form of love for Kṛṣṇa. Liberated souls and exalted devotees search after this *samartha* love" (*Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, Ch. 14, p.92).

Be humbled. At least benefit in that way. Hearing this shuts my mouth. You are out for your own happiness, even at your most ardent moments with desires to improve *japa*, read nicely, and write books. *Ye yathā mām prapadyante*—and Kṛṣṇa is reciprocating with you.

"The slightest scent of *samartha* love makes one forget everything except Kṛṣṇa."

Chapter Seven

Hope Against Hope

"One day while performing devotional practices, I saw my house transformed into Goloka Vṛndāvana. When I take the *caraṇāmṛta* . . . my bliss knows no bounds."

—*Śuddha-bhakata*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, *Vaiṣṇava Songbook*, verse 6

February 9, 2:10 A.M.

If your position is so hopeless for gaining *ruci*, *rati*, or *bhāva*, then why do you maintain hope? Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī considered this question in a humble way, in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

I have no love for Kṛṣṇa, nor for the causes of developing love of Kṛṣṇa—namely, hearing and chanting. And the process of *bhakti-yoga*, by which one is always thinking of Kṛṣṇa and fixing His lotus feet in the heart, is also lacking in me. As far as philosophical knowledge or pious words are concerned, I don't see any opportunity for me to execute such activities. But above all, I am not even born of a nice family. Therefore I must simply pray to You, Gopijana-vallabha [Kṛṣṇa, maintainer and beloved of the *gopīs*]. I simply wish and hope that some way or other I may be able to approach Your lotus feet, and this hope is giving me pain, because I think myself quite incompetent to approach that transcendental goal of life.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 137

A Godbrother in Germany once asked me after a *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class, "Why does Rūpa Gosvāmī say that his hope is giving him pain?" I could never understand this point to my satisfaction and so I admitted it to my Godbrother. Now reading the commentaries of Jīva Gosvāmī and Mukunda dāsa Gosvāmī, I can give more information. Jīva Gosvāmī says that Rūpa Gosvāmī speaks of "my hopes as another kind of impurity, a hope for attaining Kṛṣṇa with the desire for one's own

happiness, and not for the happiness of Kṛṣṇa only. So Rūpa Gosvāmī humbly claims that his own root of self-pleasure is not destroyed completely. Rūpa Gosvāmī laments, but then finds the solution by saying, ‘O beloved of the *gopīs*, You meet all the needs of those who are unworthy. I am most unworthy, so please transform my desire for my-happiness into Your-happiness. That is the real hope I am maintaining, even though present hopes are for my own pleasure.’ Jīva Gosvāmī states that Rūpa Gosvāmī’s humility is an example of *rati*.

Commenting on the same verse (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.3.35) Mukunda dāsa Gosvāmī sees Rūpa Gosvāmī’s statement of humility in this way: “Although I have no trace of *prema* at Your feet, yet my inordinate hope itself in You is giving me pain, that is, I am feeling the pain of not attaining You.’ Then Kṛṣṇa might reply to this as follows: ‘If you say you cannot attain Me because you have no qualification, then why not be happy by giving up all hopes of attaining Me?’ To this, Rūpa Gosvāmī would reply, ‘O merciful, compassionate One, You are always kind to the most unworthy. Since there is no one more unworthy than I, my hope for attaining You has taken deep root in my heart.’”

In *Nectar of Devotion*, Śrīla Prabhupāda comments, “The purport is that under this heading of *āśā-bandha*, one should continue to hope against hope that some way or other he will be able to approach the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord” (*Nectar of Devotion*, p.137). Śrīla Prabhupāda’s use of the English idiom “hope against hope” expresses well my own attitude. The dictionary defines “hope against hope” as “to hope without any basis for expecting fulfillment.”

I usually don’t even think it out. One goes ahead with *vaidhī-bhakti* because Śrīla Prabhupāda told us to. We keep hearing of the brilliant goal of back to Godhead, but as we read more, we also sense how disqualified we are and how rare it is to attain *bhāva-bhakti*. We also see more our stubborn, remaining *anarthas*. Yet we keep going. We think, “Oh well, if He likes, Kṛṣṇa may be merciful.”

My case is rather dull and not thought out. I think I am afraid to face the consequences. For example, Śrīla Prabhupāda says the atheistic hedonists are so afraid to face the consequences of their sinful acts that they summarily dismiss the facts of karma and transmigration of the soul. Similarly, I don’t face my own situation. That is my misfortune. That is the lack of contrition, the lack of piteous crying in *japa*. If we admit, even intellectually, that we are not qualified for love of God, and that we seem hopeless for reform—hopeless for attaining that intense, selfless love that drives the *gopīs* out at night, abandoning all pride, shame and morality, *just to please*

Kṛṣṇa—then why don't we feel remorse? Why don't we increase our attempts to attain real Kṛṣṇa consciousness before our lives are over?

I am still thinking of Mahārāja's advice to keep *bhajana* a secret. It pinches me when I go to make a confession in writing. This *āśā-bandha* prayer by Rūpa Gosvāmī may be taken as confessional, as are many other statements by the Vaiṣṇava poets. They sometimes confess their faults, but we take it as exemplary humility. Śrīla Prabhupāda says, however, that they actually feel that way. They also express their hopes to attain their eternal service to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vraja. They also sometimes state their great personal happiness: "One day while performing devotional practices, I saw my house transformed into Goloka Vṛndāvana. When I take the *caraṇ-āmrta* . . . my bliss knows no bounds (*Śuddha-bhakata*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, *Vaiṣṇava Songbook*, verse 6).

I am trying not to divulge things in an improper way. I pray my hopes for self-happiness may be transformed into desiring happiness for Kṛṣṇa! How far I am from this pure state! But Kṛṣṇa can do anything. "O Gopīnātha, You are indeed the wisest person. Please look for a way to bring about auspiciousness for this fool, and please do not consider this servant as an outsider" (*"Gopīnātha,"* Part 2, verse 8).

May my impure spirit become something pure. May I open my heart with desire for self-improvement—not so people will praise my success or that I will glory in my own spiritual happiness—but for becoming a fit servant of the servants of Kṛṣṇa.

Anything else? Please tell my mother and father that I wish them the best—may they think of God at the time of death. Ask them to give up any bitterness about what happened to me or anything else in their lives which they think is a reverse. Let go and go to God. And my sister too, and everybody. J.D. Salinger and all fictionalists and their followers, and the hordes of humanity in the oceans of pain. And the all-powerful Māyā who controls us all in material illusion—may they all relent somehow and hear the message of Lord Caitanya.

Don't divulge the secrets. That means (as in the ninth offense in chanting) don't speak confidential things to the faithless people. Don't tell people things you are doing which could mislead them. How might that happen? Well, say I tell devotees I am reading various nondevotee books. That could mislead them, even if I manage to come out unscathed. (Ha! Delusion!) This comes under the heading of not doing things that need to be hidden. So stop non-exemplary acts.

Then, even if you do something nice, it might not be appropriate to tell others. You think now, that by Prabhupāda's and Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja's grace, you are invited to taste the *bhakti-rasa* of books like *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, *Vidagdha-mādhava*, and so on. But why advertise it? If an unqualified person reads it and takes *mādhurya-rasa* as ordinary sexual affair, then he will ruin himself and you will be implicated for telling him it was nectar.

Your reply? These books exist and Śrīla Prabhupāda also mentions them. He says in *Kṛṣṇa* book that Viśvanātha Cakravartī has written *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta*, which is very helpful for remembering Kṛṣṇa. But Śrīla Prabhupāda gives us plenty of warning and guidance.

Why can't I tell the truth that I am reading these books and feeling good about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and at the same time not encourage misinterpretation? Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja told me in Delhi that I can write about what he has told me—the *siddhānta* of *rāgānugā-bhakti*—there is no harm. As for the intimate pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, I am relating only some of the things he has told us. The way he tells us is certainly far removed from material lust and I think it will please devotees and have a good effect on them if they hear some of it. He also said I could tell it in my own words.

But I am trying to keep this point of confidentiality more in mind—what I am writing down, is it going to be helpful to others? I can't claim I am perfect and know for sure that what I am doing is right or without any flaw. I beg my readers to forgive me and to be intelligent. If I say I am doing something foolish, obviously I don't mean that the reader should now also do that foolish thing. If I write that I just burnt my hand by thoughtlessly sticking it in the fire, that is meant to remind them to be careful of fire. It is not encouragement to join me in my pain.

Reading notes

A purport in the *rāsa* dance chapter states, "... even today devotees throughout the world sing the praises of Kṛṣṇa, following the example of the *gopīs*" (*Bhāg.* 10.33.8). I find my hearing is enhanced by reading other *rasika* books, as well as by hearing from Mahārāja.

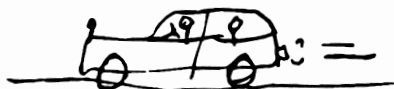
The *rāsa* dance is going on. What can I say to add to it? What "reading notes" can I make?

Each *gopī* thought Kṛṣṇa was with her alone. Demigods and creatures in Vraja watched with astonishment and bliss. They were dancing fast, youthful and full of grace. Sometimes a *gopī* felt tired and leaned on Kṛṣṇa's shoulder. Their ecstasies

knew no bounds . . . Worship this *rasa* dance, watching like a deer or blade of grass . . . joyful for the joy (you want to say) of one who loves Rādhā.

I have no entrance, I have no entrance. But they have given it to us. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "The *gopīs* wanted to please Kṛṣṇa, and therefore as Kṛṣṇa song, they responded and encouraged Him by saying, 'Well done, well done.' . . . [And Kṛṣṇa praised them, '*sādhū, sādhu.*'] The flowers within their hair were falling to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, and He was very satisfied" (*Kṛṣṇa*, Volume 1, "Description of the *Rāsa* Dance," p. 215–216).

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Let me take Mahārāja's advice, "Don't tell people something that will mislead them," in a positive way. When I go to write, think, "*What can I give that will be helpful?*" (That's not against my ethics of free-writing, is it?) Rather than any old thing that happens to be flying out of the top of my head, think of people and what's good for them. There's plenty of nourishment in Kṛṣṇa consciousness—food for hungry spirits and troubled lives.

And this isn't really so contradictory to the diary's honesty. I am immersed in rich, nectarean teachings, I practice disciplines that free one from sin and which grant liberation even when performed only in shadow form (*nāmābhasa, rati-bhāva*), so be honest and it will come out. Don't present a hyped-up version.

I just finished an hour's work of reading and answering mail. I feel talkative, ready to solve problems—like a doctor who comes out of his office into the waiting room and says, "Who's next?"

~

A plan to write letters (fictional?) to a friend when I travel; diary for "Among Friends"; in the future, to complete the *Prabhupāda Meditations* work that we have now begun . . .

~

One devotee wrote me, "How is it we can expect to do better than Lord Brahmā and go back to Godhead in one human lifetime?" I answered, "Going back to Godhead is rare. Vaiṣṇavas think they will be reborn in this world and pray only to remember Kṛṣṇa and associate with His devotees." In previous years, I may have emphasized that by Lord Caitanya's mercy, we will go back to Godhead soon, in a few years. But I wrote today that it is possible we can outdo Lord Brahmā, by Kṛṣṇa's grace.

11:15 A.M.



Sunny Sunday, twenty degrees. Someone's in the woods with a power saw.

I counted the writing days left and it came out to something like thirteen. I called for a last turning within for fulfilling our retreat purpose. I realize it's precious time and requires a special attitude. But other things are starting to intrude and get added onto the simple and centered meditation.

One thing is editing for *Prabhupāda Meditations*, and now I am thinking of another writing project which involves a fictional element. That one threatens my *personae* as retreatant. But I have come here anyway, and think I can write the way I want.

Retreat for reading means stop flitting around. Sit down and read the book. *Japa* means stop putting the beads down in the middle of a round to run next door for something more pressing than *japa*. I have been doing these things, stopped my thirteenth round midway because my new fictive voice was demanding to speak and warned, "If you don't let me do it right now, I may lose the inspiration." Then when I was going to read *Nectar of Devotion*, a little voice said something like, "It's not so important, it's an ordinary thing. Do something exciting." Various proofreading jobs, letters to write . . .

Rāgānugā cannot just be tacked on to a busy office worker's life. It doesn't work that way. Remember when I told Mahārāja the conception that some have, that a devotee can work hard and automatically go back to Godhead, even if he doesn't know his specific relationship with Kṛṣṇa? He replied:

This is certainly to misguide. It is a wrong *siddhānta*. Without *rāgānugā-bhakti* we cannot go to Kṛṣṇa certainly. If someone is full of *anarthas* and does not know *sambandha, nāma*, then by serving, selling, or increasing income in *koṭi-janma* (thousands of births), he will never go back to Kṛṣṇa . . . we should certainly follow *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

These remaining days ought to be protected.

~

The remaining pages to read in *Nectar of Devotion* and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* have to do with *prema*. My mind tells me, "*Rāgānugā* is one thing, but *prema* is far out of sight."

Madhu has the right idea when he says a prayer retreat should be done in a remote place. So what's this, a writing retreat?

Be honest.

I want to write, but there has to be a life to write about. Don't be too hungry after spiritual spoils. Therefore I ground you occasionally in the present moment, cold hands, scrunched note pad at a forty degree angle against the desk . . .

I wanted to come out here knowing well that it would be too cold to read and that it would be too hard to turn the pages of the book with two pairs of gloves on. What did I think would happen? I felt a bit threatened by my own personality splitting into various interests and thought, "If I go to the shack, I'll be able to retain it."

Power saw.

Ear plugs.



Śrīla Prabhupāda begins Chapter 19 of *Nectar of Devotion*, on *prema*, like this:

When one's desire to love Kṛṣṇa in one's particular relationship becomes intensified, this is known as pure love of Godhead. In the beginning a devotee is engaged in the regulative principles of devotional service by the order of his spiritual master.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p.143

Then he gets purified and develops attachment and taste, and in time, this becomes love (*prema*). Later, Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: "... if after undergoing all types of austerities, penances and mystic *yoga* practices one does not develop such love for Hari, then all his performances are to be considered a useless waste of time" (p. 145). And then he adds, "If a devotee is continuously in love with Lord Kṛṣṇa and his mind is always fixed upon Him, that devotional attitude will prove to be the only means of attracting the attention of the Lord" (p. 145).

And so my friends , that's it. It is not enough to just work. It is not enough to be peppy and zesty like I am at times when I am doing my favorite things (walking, writing, eating while hearing a tape, feeling the good results of work). It is not enough. You have to specifically think of Kṛṣṇa as the person you love. It is very simple. But we miss the point. We even think we are "authorized" in not loving Kṛṣṇa. But that's not a fact.

I am telling this mostly to myself. If the books are too scholarly-looking sometimes, then go to the beads. Or write, *but to the point*. "Oh, I could not attain the master of Mathurā! What shall I do now as I die in this state? O Dīnadāyādra, please have mercy on me." And that prayer I said so much so that it entered my blood-

stream, "My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, please have mercy on this sinner." I know better what it means now. This sinner has neglected You even though he has given up sinful acts. So he remains the worst sinner. Please have mercy on him and give him a drop of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* so he may love You.

4:17 P.M.



A cold way to face yourself. I am putting aside that new idea for a fictional character who would write letters . . . It seems trivial and indirect. It is a threat to my wholehearted efforts *here*.

I want to live only for those straight, Kṛṣṇa conscious topics leading to *bhāva-bhakti*.

Now, as we start thinking of the retreat and its end—have I achieved my purposes? That's a big question, too big. But this comes to mind, *reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's books with taste*. It is a major consideration and a way of answering the question "What is my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda now that I am trying to specialize in that which is favorable to *rāgānugā*?"

If I dared ask the question, "Is Śrīla Prabhupāda favorable to my immediate *rāgānugā* development," the answer is, "Yes." All right, then how should I approach his books? I think my answer may be to approach his books with new interest and deepened appreciation. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja has advised us that the entire *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is filled with *mādhurya-rasa*, in a beautiful, indirect way. Whatever is presented in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* by Śukadeva Gosvāmī (who is Rādhikā's pet parrot in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*) is filled with *rasa*, as stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.3:

*nigama-kalpa-taror galitaṁ phalaṁ
śuka-mukhād āmṛta-drava-saṁyutam
pibata bhāgavataṁ rasam ālayam
muhur aho rasikā bhuvi bhāvukāḥ*

O expert and thoughtful men, relish *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the mature fruit of the tree of Vedic literatures. It emanated from the lips of Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Therefore this fruit has become even more tasteful, although its nectarean juice was already relishable for all, including liberated souls.

I can read the Bhaktivedanta purports with that in mind. Śrīla Prabhupāda was directly writing not of *vaidhī-bhakta*, but *rāgānugā-bhakti*—pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa without the slightest trace of *jñāna* or karma; pure devotion in ecstatic love for Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana is present everywhere in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. I can approach it in that way. Also, I can approach honestly admitting that my own taste is not developed and that whatever Śrīla Prabhupāda is teaching is the best nourishment for my devotional creeper. Don't read him thinking, "This part is favorable, this part is not as favorable." At present, I am just beginning the second wave of his *Nectar of Devotion*, page 152. (The *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* edition of commentaries only covers the Eastern Division, and Girirāja Swami's classes also stop at the Eastern Division. So if I continue, it is with Prabhupāda alone—a good idea).

There is also nothing wrong with supporting my new-found interest in *mādhurya-rasa* by seeking out those sections of Prabhupāda's books where he deals more directly with those topics: *Nectar of Devotion*, *Kṛṣṇa* book, sections of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, etc. My point is, use the retreat to return to Śrīla Prabhupāda in his books.



Out here in the cold. I learned something from riding that wave of a new writing project which occupied my thoughts today. I saw it challenge my attitude for writing *Returning From Pilgrimage* and I didn't want that to happen. I am reclaiming my consciousness for this, rededicating myself, and valuing the things I have been discussing here. I can't take it for granted that I can do any old thing I like and still run out to the shack and write of separation from Vṛndāvana. It is a full-time pursuit, even when I am not here writing. I want it; I don't want to lose it. I have to be humble and stick to my floating between the two rooms for *japa*—which at least considers, "Where is contrition?"—and reading in *rasika* and Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. I can write as soon as it comes—that too has value—but I want to exclusively nurture my direct Kṛṣṇa conscious eagerness and yearning for as long as I am here.



Mahārāja told me the first time I met him last year, that *bhāva* is the goal. If we are not pursuing *bhāva*, as taught by Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Prabhupāda—the desire to render loving service to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya—and not preaching *this*, then our membership in ISKCON is invalid. Or ISKCON itself becomes invalid unless it lives for this inner purpose.

Everything is based on greed. There is no other qualification for interest in the topics of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. If you have the greed, you will go on hearing and being guided by *rasika* Vaiṣṇavas.

I asked myself to do “homework” before coming out here again. Well, I didn’t do much. I am in a sense bluffing, like a lecturer who doesn’t prepare and suddenly finds himself at the podium before his audience. If he is sincere, even if he is unprepared, he can speak from the heart and do all right in his speech, but how many times can he repeat that desperate performance? He should read up on his topic. At least he should live true to the principles he is representing.

For example, imagine that someone is teaching a course on writing. He was supposed to prepare a specific topic, but he didn’t find time to do it. However, since he is a dedicated writer, he *has* been writing everyday. So when he stands before his class, although he has no formal lesson prepared, he can speak from his immediate experience of writing and share what he has learned and how he practices his craft. Similarly, as long as I am contained within the desirable boundaries of retreat meditation, I can come out here and write my notes. Therefore, I was concerned to find myself getting a bit swept up into something else, ordinary books for the fictional letter-writing project and exchanging a rapid flurry of notes about it with Baladeva.

Back to basics. I did chant before Tulasī-devī. I will read *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* tonight. I have a budding resolve to return to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books in light of my *Pilgrimage* changes. I am also resolved to make peace with myself.

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“The world is waiting, Mr. Mitra, for our spiritual revolution.”

I don’t want my finger to freeze.

I hereby pledge to continue *Returning From Pilgrimage* for three more weeks, replacing one ink cartridge after another and bearing down with faith.

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7:25 P.M.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s summary study of *The Nectar of Devotion* omits much of Rūpa Gosvāmī’s Sanskrit terminology. In recent years, devotees have been going to other sources to learn the Sanskrit words referred to in *The Nectar of Devotion*. This enhances one’s ability to know what Rūpa Gosvāmī is teaching. But some of these sources are questionable, such as an Indian scholar’s book where the author sees it all as grist for empirical analysis. I have dabbled a little in some of these books and gained something, but I am so slow in analysis that I still can’t tell the difference between *vyabhicārīs* and *ālambana* or *uddipana-vibhāva*. Thus I stand the risk of “losing my caste while remaining hungry.” I want to return to *Nectar of Devotion*, read it on its own merit, even if some things are not outlined or spelled out in Sanskrit. Śrīla

Prabhupāda prepared *Nectar of Devotion* for people like me. What I really want is *bhāva*, *rāgānugā*, even though I may not be able to delineate all the exact distinctions between the various moods. I want to be happy serving Kṛṣṇa, I want to develop love for Him, attraction to His name and *līlā*. I want to give up selfishness in favor of desire to please the senses of the Lord. *Nectar of Devotion* can convey all this and more to me, if I read it submissively.

The gradual process of development of the stage of devotional service is explained in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, First Canto: "The beginning is to hear about Lord Kṛṣṇa in the association of devotees who have themselves cleansed their hearts by association. Hearing about the transcendental activities of the Lord will result in one's feeling transcendental bliss always."

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p.152

February 10, 2:20 A.M.

I want to give quality in my writing, I want to give Kṛṣṇa. But if I don't "have" Kṛṣṇa? Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say, "People claim God is dead, but a pure devotee can give you God"—he said it and gestured as if he were handing you an apple or something he held in his hand. The pure devotee is that powerful. But what about someone like me? What am I giving? A shrug of the shoulders? "Sorry, I don't have Him."

I open the *śāstra*, turn on a three-bulb floor lamp, and invite you to my desk. Let's look together and find Kṛṣṇa. Just see, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā are together. Look, Rūpa Gosvāmī is sitting under a desire tree writing, and Rādhā is appearing before him. He is writing down the pastimes as they manifest to him. The *kadamba* tree under which he writes is sometimes shedding leaves in ecstasy, and blooming flowers according to the *rasa* of Rūpa Gosvāmī.

We can look together.

I chanted seven rounds. As usual, my mind began its separate work. I thought of literary projects, new ones and reprints. Then I attempted to restrain myself. I reasoned: "You are looking ahead to when you will do those things. So why can't you do *this* thing now, hearing the names of Kṛṣṇa?" And certainly *harināma* deserves attention. Even the perceivable moment is right—a quiet room lit only by candle light, the best opportunity, the prayer for pure love of God *and* deliverance from

suffering, given to us by Kṛṣṇa and His *paramparā* in this easy form. I thought of "atonement" (the word Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura uses as a translation for *tapasya* in his "Pancha Samskara" essay), but responded, "I don't feel sorry right now for my poor chanting, although I do feel good about chanting my rounds." *Yena tena prakāreṇa manāḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet sarve vidhi-niṣedhā syur etayor eva kiṅkarāḥ*: the rules and regulations can come later; now somehow fix your mind on Kṛṣṇa.

❧

I do want to tell a success story, a report that's permissible, not harmful, and filled with a hearty "Haribol!" But you can't just say "Haribol" if you don't realize *ānanda*. Śrīla Prabhupāda: "It is also explained in *Bhagavad-gītā* that for one who has actually come to the spiritual platform, the first symptom visible will be that he is always joyful. This joyous life is attained by one's reaction to reading *Bhagavad-gītā* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, or else from associating with persons who . . . have made the determination to achieve the favor of Govinda . . ." (*Nectar of Devotion*, p.152).

Kṛṣṇa is so wonderful. I have heard about Him with faith. I have heard how Queen Rukmiṇī simply heard about Kṛṣṇa from Nārada Muni. By hearing about Him, she fell in love with Him and decided She must marry Him at all cost or give up her life. I have heard how Nārada became a devotee, attaining *bhāva-bhakti* at a very young age . . . Hearing these things has increased my faith. I want to make my hearing as free as possible from other *kathā*, and to make it free from doubt. Then my speaking to others will be something worthy.

❧

I heard Prabhupāda say that the *kṣatriya* must use violence against aggressors.

I'm coming to a stop as if I'm dead. No more messages from the brain.

I want to write for my own purification. It will help me in my Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

One way to purify yourself is to throw off toxins. That may not make for pretty communication. (Therefore, "*bhajana* is private.") Throwing off toxins is usually edifying to the self. We hear the confessions of Dhabir Khās and Sākara Mallika when they met Lord Caitanya. And we also read of the Lord's *mahā*-cleanup at the Guṇḍicā temple. He wants to see as much dirt as possible! Whoever has only a little dirt, He tells them "Look at your brother, do like him—there *is* dirt, you have to work harder to find it." When He finds someone working He says, "You have done well. Please teach this to others so that they may act in the same way" (*C.c., Madhya* 12.117).

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

The Lord was personally chastising and praising individuals in the course of the cleaning, and those who are engaged as *ācāryas* must learn from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu how to train devotees by personal example. The Lord was very pleased with those who could cleanse the temple by taking out undesirable things accumulated within. This is called *anartha-nivṛtti*, cleansing the heart of all unwanted things. Thus the cleansing of the Guṇḍicā-mandira was conducted by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to let us know how the heart should be cleansed and soothed to receive Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and enable Him to sit within the heart without disturbance.

—C.c., *Madhya*, 12.135, purport

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Are you cleaning nicely? Are you bringing your mind back from where it wanders and fixing it at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa?

"O foolish people," Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī says, "please read *Caitanya-Bhāgavata*." (And we say, "O humble Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, even more so, let us read your *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.")

Lord Caitanya says, "Always discuss *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and constantly chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. In this way you will be able to attain liberation very easily, and you will be elevated to the enjoyment of love of Godhead" (C.c., *Madhya* 25.154).

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Reading notes

The section I read this morning comprises Kṛṣṇa's entering the Yamunā to enjoy water sports with the *gopīs* and then coming out to stroll with them on the bank of the river. Several times, Kṛṣṇa is compared to a regal elephant sporting with his female consorts. At this point, Maharaja Parikṣit raises the doubt how Kṛṣṇa, who descends to the earth to uphold religious principles, could act in such an immoral way as touching other men's wives. Śukadeva replies that the great controllers of the universe are never effected by apparent transgressions of human morality, but we should never try to imitate them or it will cause our untimely death.

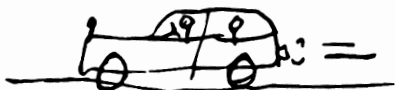
We get good reminders and substantial reasoning. Kṛṣṇa's pastimes with the *gopīs* are free of all material taint. "He who lives as the overseeing witness within the *gopīs* and their husbands, and indeed within all embodied beings, assumes forms in this world to enjoy transcendental pastimes" (*Bhāg.* 10.33.35). What is the harm if

Kṛṣṇa embraces some of the beings He Himself has created? “What fault could there be if the Lord goes with the *gopīs* to a secret place, since He already dwells within the most secret part of every living being, the core of the heart?” (*Bhāg.* 10.33.35, purport).

Kṛṣṇa’s human-like love affairs with the *gopīs* is His mercy to attract us to become dedicated to Him. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī glorifies the Lord’s conjugal pastimes, stating that “these romantic affairs have an inconceivable potency to attract the polluted heart of conditioned souls” (*Bhāg.* 10.33.36, purport). The concluding verse of the *rāsa* dance chapter states, “Anyone who faithfully hears or describes the Lord’s playful affairs with the young *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana will attain the Lord’s pure devotional service. Thus he will quickly become sober and conquer lust, the disease of the heart” (*Bhāg.* 10.33.39).

Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja quoted that verse to me when I met him. He said anyone who has greed to hear about Kṛṣṇa, even if he is impious, will be able to do *rāgānugā-bhajana* and by that *bhajana* he will be cleansed. “First comes *bhakti*,” Mahārāja said, “and then all these evil things go away. But greed must be pure and actual. Real greed.”

The lessons from Śukadeva and the *ācāryas* are necessary. When Śukadeva spoke the *Bhāgavatam* to Mahārāja Parikṣit, there were some *karmīs* and *jñānīs* present. They made doubtful expressions with their faces. So Śukadeva explained it. Similarly, within myself there are so many *karmīs* and *jñānīs*, nondevotees and lusty subpersons. They need to hear these lessons of Kṛṣṇa’s supremacy and the transcendental nature of the *rāsa* dance. I will read this tonight before we read *Uj्ज्वाला-nīlamanī*. I will also pray that my mind not revert to material conceptions. Then—go on hearing, go on hearing, as that mad, regal elephant sports with His internal energy, the beautiful young *gopīs* of Vraja.



Zero degrees. The walk was pretty much the same, but fingers colder—so far away from Vṛndāvana. Vṛndāvana in India can also get cold and there’s no heating indoors.

When we finish our reading of *Uj्ज्वाला-nīlamanī* there’s plenty more. The Gosvāmīs left a big wealth of writing specifically on the nectar pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Letters: a devotee in prison wrote me, "The Christians are strong here. They are telling people we are pantheists. What should I say?" Say we are not pantheists; we are monotheists. They can learn from us. We can learn from any humble devotee of God.

From Ireland: "Why isn't ISKCON merged as one with other Gaudiya Maths?"

From Connecticut: "I've stopped watching videos as an experiment. It's interesting—I'm able to control my mind better. I read Kṛṣṇa conscious books instead and talk with my wife about God."

Please—I pray to pray. I pray for reality.

From Italy: "I'm finally back in the West after four months in Vṛndāvana. It took me a month to feel at home here again. But I find it too slack. The other day I suddenly had tremendous doubts that maybe at death, we will find out there is no Kṛṣṇa, it's all a story, like my father said." I advised her what to tell her mind if it happens again, but she knows. She's just humbled that it happened at all.

❧

I want to see you go out to the shack in zero weather. That will *prove* you are eccentric.

❧

Singing songs and dancing with Kṛṣṇa who is the Lord of their lives, the beautiful-eyebrowed *gopīs* spent the whole night with Him in *rāsa-līlā*. But it was not an ordinary night. It lasted a whole day of Brahmā. How is that possible? Because Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and possesses inconceivable powers. His land of Vṛndāvana is also inconceivable and within its forty square miles, all the universes are contained.

❧

When I first asked Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja how to practice *rāgānugā-bhakti*, he spoke in different ways, sometimes encouraging and sometimes saying we should only practice *vaidhī-bhakti* and pray and wait. It was one of the first times I heard from him, so it was hard to feel the balance. Later I became more accustomed to his sometimes urging us forward and sometimes holding us back. On that first occasion, he said (among other things):

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, your spiritual master, and my *gurudeva*, were not in the mood that at this present time, all should be hankering for *rāgānugā-bhakti*. They wanted it to come in a proper

manner by real *bhakti*, and if greed comes it is so fortunate. But without greed, we should not think of all these pastimes.

It's tricky to understand. He says, "But practice reading or greed will not come." Then, by associating with a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava and by hearing, it can come. Greed has to be there—by past impressions (*saṁskāra*) and from the *rasika* Vaiṣṇava:

It is like this: if I love a lady, I see that lady and I love her. There is no reason, nothing. So greed comes by hearing the pastimes of the *gopīs* and *sakhas* and about their service to Kṛṣṇa, and by past *saṁskāra*.

I'm not confused now. He has personally invited me. ("If Kṛṣṇa chooses to give us mercy, he will do it through the *rasika* Vaiṣṇava.") But he has not invited us to *rush* forward. He says we can only hear from him now because of our years of *guru-niṣṭhā*, service to Śrīla Prabhupāda. We must go on serving Prabhupāda and at the same time hearing from Mahārāja, and to some degree specialize (with his permission—or with greed), in the *rasika* books.

It occurred to me today that I am Prabhupāda's man and in order to better equip me, Prabhupāda likes me to hear from Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. I have to be better able to guide people. Other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas claim to be in possession of advanced knowledge, so Prabhupāda's men should know it too, in an authorized way. This thought occurred to me in a simple way, how I fit in with Śrīla Prabhupāda and Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and how Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja is, in a sense, rendering this service to Prabhupāda to give some special training to us now that we need it.

In that first day of inquiry, Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja also said, "Those who follow the principles of *vaidhī-bhakti* should do it with full heart so that Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's *sevākas* (servants) can do *praveśa*, and they can enter in *rāgānugā-bhakti*. By their mercy we can enter into *rāgānugā-bhakti*."

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11:20 A.M.



A guy in a truck came to clean up a construction mess behind the house. He arrived just when I was scheduled to come out here. It was a black guy in camouflage fatigues. He had his radio tuned to loud rap music. I felt timid at first and thought I wouldn't go out back, but then I just changed my mind. I want to come

here and try. Besides, he's turned his music off. Now it's just banging and throwing things in his truck within view of my shack. I don't care what he thinks of me.

For *rāgānugā*, it seems so necessary to be in the Indian atmosphere, specifically Vṛndāvana. You can practice Kṛṣṇa conscious anywhere, but you have to be so innately internal. It's incompatible with loud rap music. It works well with taking a *parikrama* walk or a rickshaw to the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple on a day when you can't hear from Mahārāja.

In any case, wherever you are, if you can read and live a simple, quiet life—and if you have at least one sympathetic, knowledgeable friend, you can keep your concentration. When I visited Mahārāja last year, the best thing I did was stay indoors and read *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. My reading in Vṛndāvana was often interrupted—Stroudsburg is better for reading in that sense—but going to Vṛndāvana, enduring the situation, and gaining the association of Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja is vital. I have to qualify myself to go to Vṛndāvana by my own practice of *bhajana* and by my preaching on Prabhupāda's behalf.



I am a child reading *Nectar of Devotion*. Restless, but obedient. I want to believe, but it's beyond my control to sit still for long periods of time. At least I have improved my attitude within the last few days. I know the nectar is there and that it doesn't need to be supplemented by other books. Prabhupāda gives us the nectar in his own words:

The different types of *rasa*, when combined together, help one to taste the mellow of devotional service in the highest degree of transcendental ecstasy. Such a position, although entirely transcendental to our experience, will be explained in this section as far as possible, following in the footsteps of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 151

Śrīla Prabhupāda makes it clear that the person Kṛṣṇa, and His entourage, and their experience of loving exchanges, is beyond anything we know. It's true—I only know the *māyā* I've gone through, and then Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival, and the practice I have taken up on his order. Through those practices, we have been getting glimpses of the spiritual reality according to our faith and purity—as Kṛṣṇa has revealed Himself to us or not. This is certainly not a time to stop reading and say, "I

have already read *Nectar of Devotion* enough times." If I had understood *Nectar of Devotion*, I would want to read it greedily. Now, I just try to read with patience.

Beautiful Bodily Features: Ordinary persons, who cannot understand how exalted are the bodily features of the Lord, are simply given a chance to understand by a material comparison. It is said that Kṛṣṇa's face is as beautiful as the moon . . .

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 157

Hand-warmer pressed to chest. Maybe I'll get more letters from Vṛndāvana with tapes and transcripts of talks. I heard a bit of news today: Mahārāja is staying in Vṛndāvana for the month of February and he may not go at all to Māyāpura. His health is not good.

•

I get stimulus to think of Kṛṣṇa (*vibhāva*?) from books, and then I write some opinion on it. On my own, I think I am this body or this mind.

You are facing yourself, you say. This is something I like to do and it is beneficial. I won't give it up prematurely.

But there is so little to face—like looking at a wall or a mirror—both are self-deceiving. By hearing Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, we don't immediately take part, but eventually it does its work. Gradual progress is made. It is continual, not that you are aiming for a final stage.

Nowadays when people write me questions like, "If we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa at the time of death, even though we are sinful, will we go back to Godhead?" I see the naivete in it. I used to automatically answer that it was possible and not think much about it. Now I know differently. I think that *for myself*, I will obviously have to come back to work toward love of God, but objectively, it doesn't seem possible that so many attached persons are going to immediately go to Vrajaloka. It should be clear that *I* will have to come back for more service-in-training. But I'm like the person who thinks, "Others have died, but I may be an exception." I don't think it out; I don't know how to face it; I don't realize that the *ācārya*-poets have written with me in mind when they say, "Now I am coming to the end of my life and I see I have not served Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Fie on me. Alas!" I looked at it as *poetry*. I *can't* think of it. Although I brag that I have a taste for being alone and reading, I am not introspective. I enjoy the quiet life, the semblance of solitary pursuits, and the atmosphere of "a life of prayer," but I don't enter. *Entering The Life of Prayer* woke me

up, but I . . . I can't say . . . I can't say what it is, except I cannot and will not make an estimation of my own spiritual life.

At least I have studied it. I can see the work ahead.

The rap music truck is back. Time for me to go in.



Listening to a tape, I was surprised by my own voice asking Mahārāja a question about Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Stava-mālā*. I asked him to explain the apparent difference in mood between *Stava-mālā* and *Vilāpa-kusumāñjali*. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī prayers as Rati-mañjarī are all for exclusive service to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. But in *Stava-mālā*, Rūpa Gosvāmī wants to equally serve both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This was especially apparent in the prayer translated as "A Vine of Hopes."

My surprise is—how could I have possibly asked a question like that, and not for curiosity's sake or for the sake of information, but out of a real desire to know the nature of a *gopī*'s service to Rādhārāṇī. It is Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja who has aroused this interest in me and allowed me a personal relationship where I feel close enough to ask.

He replied that a *gopī-mañjarī*'s service to Kṛṣṇa is also part of her service to Rādhā. He said, "Rādhā will be more pleased if anyone serves Kṛṣṇa. But yet our Gosvāmīs want to serve Rādhikā. By Her order [one will go to Kṛṣṇa], but they won't carry all orders of Rādhā. They will follow Her inner orders but not orders She gives to test a *sakhī*. Understand? If Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī orders a *gopī*, "Take this garland and go there—He is in the *kuñja*—and give it—she will not carry it out. She knows 'Oh, my Swaminī is examining me.' Then Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī will laugh."



I am still *rushing* as much as if I were in a big temple with meetings all day and management. I have no excuse, but I rush through the *gāyatrī-mantras*, and when I offer *prasādam* to Prabhupāda, I hurry through the prayers. The mind cannot settle and slow down long enough to say, "Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, please accept whatever food they have prepared. You will offer it to Kṛṣṇa and He will accept it. Then you will take the remnants. Then I may honor the *mahā-mahā-prasādam*."

If one attains devotion, then he has enough time to offer and pray. I don't lack time, but quality of mind.



4:20 P.M.



You can choose to quote from Śrīla Prabhupāda or Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as you like, but I'm trying to capture the moment.

Kowit was against "first thoughts/best thoughts." I defended the process and explained how it can be guided.

Some things ought to be kept secret. Some things will mislead. And "any old thing," drivel or bad noise, should not be allowed to come out from mouth or pen.

I don't really agree with that in all circumstances. Let it come. *We won't print it for folks to see*, but the freedom to write it will loosen me up and remove blocks in an inexplicable way. Not only that, but things that *are* important will come out in the open, things which couldn't be seen by the usual process of keeping the intellect at the forefront of the writing. That's my basic faith in the free-writing process.

Kṛṣṇa standing on the river bank. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that Dhruva Mahārāja was meditating on Him in the heart and suddenly, the same Viṣṇu was standing in front of him. He offered his inner meditation, opened his eyes, and saw Viṣṇu face to face. Śrīla Prabhupāda went on to say that we can also see Kṛṣṇa face to face, talk with Him, and play with Him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yudhiṣṭhira asked Kṛṣṇa to stay a few more days in Hastināpura. "Not only will He stay a few days," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "but He will stay with you eternally *if you love Kṛṣṇa*."

Śrīla Prabhupāda also said that rascals claim they like the Kṛṣṇa who embraces the *gopīs*, but not the Kṛṣṇa who drives the chariot across the battlefield at Kurukṣetra.

I'm listening to his lectures several times a day.

~

What is good for me spiritually? What combination of diet? As there are doctors of different schools of medicine, so transcendentalists differ. When Mahārāja Parīkṣit sat for his last seven days of life, sages offered various prescriptions: "Mahārāja, try this yoga." But he was only satisfied when young Śukadeva Gosvāmī arrived with the proposal to continuously hear about Kṛṣṇa.

Even among Prabhupāda's followers, we will hear different prescriptions of how to please guru and Kṛṣṇa best. Everyone agrees (theoretically at least) that chanting sixteen rounds of Hare Kṛṣṇa comes first, but do we mean first get the rounds out of the way, *then* we can talk about real service? Anyway, we all agree that the vows we take are the most important. Of course, follow the four rules. Then, "Preaching is the essence, books are the basis," and don't forget *varṇāśrama*—with ox power—

prasādam distribution, and don't forget the morning program—*maṅgala-ārati*, *tulasī-pūjā*, *guru-pūjā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class, *harināma* . . .

What am I getting at? Am I making fun of the plurality of voices in ISKCON and how each one values a particular science? The sun goes down like a burning cinder.

I am trying to say that Kṛṣṇa is waiting for us. Śrīla Prabhupāda told us that all we have to know is Kṛṣṇa. He is the source of everything, He *is* everything. We just have to love Him. I am trying to say that we shouldn't be complacent and think it's all right not to go back to Godhead in this life. We should understand our priorities. We should consult with our spiritual master and find out what *his* priorities are for us. Prabhupāda speaks very strongly on this point, that we shouldn't be complacent about going back to Godhead. I was surprised to hear him emphasize it so strongly because I have been thinking, "Yes, when the devotees humbly say, 'Let me be born next time in the family of devotees,' that seems to be the right estimation." No, Śrīla Prabhupāda says, quoting his *guru mahārāja*, "Finish up your business."



I do believe in the writing process enough to come out here. I delight in it.

Walking down a road, lying in your death bed (if you're lucky).

Make a last will and testament. Say, "First I'll speak in my capacity as guru, and then I'll speak as a simple disciple. Then I'll get down to reality and die."

A will? Yes I bequeath everything I own to be the property of ISKCON devotees to be managed and utilized in the best way by those who work with me. I could think of some jokes, but I'll save them. Maybe I would be more serious. Cry finally. Admit the worst, what they already know except for a few unsavory details. It would hit full force, the futility of trying to build an immortal empire by publishing books in this world. Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda appreciate it and then—off you go.

You are not the only one,
everyone has been here before.
You are not the only one,
everyone has gone through this.
You have nothing new to say,
but those who love,
love you too.

What did you expect?
Those who think they're God
all go together
in a room or if they succeed,
as particles of light.

You are not the first one.
You are not the last.
Whatever Kṛṣṇa said
in the *Bhagavad-gītā*
it all comes true—
for you too.
Your friends are true
and the Lord stands by You.

Pray to your beloved guide.
I tried, I tried,
but I couldn't give up
same lasting attachments
this time around.
Please forgive me for misleading
some people.
I hoped they would learn
from me,
but I was too blind to see
my own faults and
couldn't teach them
the example of surrender.

I hate to admit,
I have done so little,
depending so much
on my own ability.

As I enter the holy name's shelter, hearing sporadically, this time around my mind and senses defied me and could not be fully conquered. But in the future, by guru's grace, my heart will soften, doubts will all fall away, and the vision of Kṛṣṇa, the beloved of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, will appear always in my heart as the handsome lover who is loved by me with nothing in the way—my own ego smashed.

O Lord of Light who protects us from death, please do not abandon me.

•

"If I see a lady," say Mahārāja "then I feel greed. No one has to tell anything. It is like that."

I want to see *that* "Lady."

Learn how to relate what you know to others. Be responsible.

•

February 11, 2:10 A.M.

During *japa* I thought, "Don't we all come up with 'good ideas' at that time? I write some of them down on 'post-it' notes, 'to get them out of the way.'" I know it isn't the greatest. Still, I feel peaceful chanting here, even when I am thinking about other things, but chanting, on the order of my spiritual master.

So during *japa* this morning I thought of writing a commentary to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Śaraṇāgati*. It would be a very personal kind of commentary, whatever comes to mind after reading a stanza. I even thought of stopping *Returning to Pilgrimage* and working on *Śaraṇāgati*. Its main theme is repentance, and that's one of the themes of my retreat. But if I don't know repentance, how can I write on it? That's the advantage of this daily "shack" writing—it goes straight to the heart of any issue. No bluffing. If my poverty is exposed, then my poverty is exposed.

However, there is a time and place for projects like commentary on *Śaraṇāgati*. Let me finish out the promise to write here for six weeks. When you write "straight" projects, you must become the teacher. You may be a casual teacher, like a friend or guest conversing over the kitchen table, but you are teaching nevertheless. You have to take a subject or text and explain how your readers should apply it to their lives.

The subject of repentance is a big topic. It is valuable to hear what the great teachers have said about it. At best, a great teacher is a compassionate, self-realized soul. We have so many great teachers in our line: Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. Lord Caitanya advises us, *āpani ācari prabhu jivere śikhaya*, "Become perfect and then teach."

Nowadays, my tendency is to not want to teach something I don't know thoroughly. Another approach is to teach yourself along with your students. "Let's see what Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says. Let's benefit from his teachings." So teaching shouldn't be considered external.

But I don't repent my fallen state. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura does. He laments for himself and all *jīvas* in *Śaraṇāgati*. I am concerned about repentance, and aware that it is something I have to do. Mahārāja told me that repentance is the first step in chanting the holy names. One is sorry that he has been, and still is, a sinner, sorry that he doesn't love Kṛṣṇa.

To teach or write commentary on this theme keeps it alive in the mind, but one has to be aware that this isn't a substitute for feelings of the heart. In your solitude, do *you* feel *vilāpa*? Why not? Why can't you go any further?

I'll go on reading those things.

"Overcome with yearnings, and crying in the middle of Vṛndāvana forest, I shall now reveal the deep burning marks tears have made in my heart" ("*Utkalikā-vallari*," *Stava-mālā*, Volume 2, text 1). Note the word "*utkalikā*," yearnings. This is not an ordinary lament. It is elevated and intense—he is aspiring for the highest thing, direct service to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, even though he feels unqualified to attain it. He is begging for mercy to attain it. "O Vṛndāvana forest . . . I humbly beg you: please reveal in my heart the best way to attain my king and queen" ("*Utkalikā-vallari*," text 2).

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's lament in "Gopīnātha" is different. He confesses that he is a materialist at heart. He says the noose of *māyā* is tightening around his neck. He too wants the goal of *prema*, but claims he has sunk to the lowest point. "O Gopīnātha, You are my only hope . . . how will You purify me?"

So teaching, or writing as an instructor can be creative and humble as well as self-expressive. The students also expect it to be structured. The teacher must be well-behaved in his own life, of course. And he is not to dwell on his own life. He is here to teach a course (or how can he claim, "This is a course on humility. You will receive two credits if you pass the exam. There will be homework everyday.") They have come on faith that he will teach.

Now my concern is, "How to aspire to what I teach?"



I keep wanting to begin a new paragraph with Shelley's line, "O Wild West Wind, Thou Breath of Autumn's Being." I can't get it out of my head. Take it as a springboard. Get into devotion, beyond mere music for its own sake or love of self,

love of the world. Alas!—that you are more attracted to all that, and Kṛṣṇa is so far from you.

Śrīla Prabhupāda and Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja are not eclectics, not filled with lines of Shelley and Thomas Wolfe and raggedy dreams and bad karma. Not filled with vague ideas of God, but directly Vṛndāvana, preaching the *Gītā* to the ignorant, shameless “two-legged animals,” and directly following Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. I need to be transformed by them. It seems I can’t get rid of all these Western impressions, but they can fade away and dry up like old ghosts. I have to laugh, “That line from Shelley, is it still there?” “Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind.”



Don’t keep saying Kṛṣṇa is far away, I have no attraction for Him. It sounds too negative and offensive. Kṛṣṇa can hear you and see what you write, so why write, “I don’t love You”? It’s too painful; why hurt yourself and Kṛṣṇa in that way?

But I have to tell the truth. Maybe it’s better to beg for mercy, “Kṛṣṇa please help me be attached to Your lotus feet.” I want to go on hearing how You meet the *gopīs* in the *kuñja* and how You sometimes go from one to another like a bumblebee. I want to hear how You lifted Govardhana Hill and how today, Your dear devotees go to Govardhana, circumambulate the Hill, and worship the rocks. I want to reside again in Vṛndāvana, if Your Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī will allow me.

Kṛṣṇa, there is no need for me to be so negative and declare, “I don’t love You.” I *do* love You. You have proved this through the words of Śukadeva Gosvāmī. He said we all love our bodies. We do all we can to protect them. Why? Because the life, the self, is within. And who is the self? He is part and parcel of the Supreme Self. Therefore, I love myself because I love the Supreme. I love Kṛṣṇa, my Lord and Maker. I want to serve Him and hear how His best devotees serve Him with love that breaks the binds of awe and majesty and truly pleases Kṛṣṇa. I want to hear how He gives Himself in loving, intimate play to such devotees.



Reading notes

We are on Chapter 35 of the Tenth Canto, “The *Gopīs* Sing of Kṛṣṇa as He Wanders in the Forest.” Young *gopīs* talk together. The verses are gathered from different conversations between them in the various places of Vṛndāvana. The *gopīs* try to ease the pain of their separation from Kṛṣṇa. They dance with Him at night, but in the day, He goes to the forest and they have to stay at home.

Their minds run after Him and they spend the day singing of *His pastimes* (*kṛṣṇa-līlā pragayantayo*—singing loudly His *līlā* they unhappily passed the days).

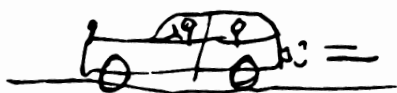
The *gopīs* discuss the wondrous effects of His flute—how it attracts the wives the demigods and incites them in body and mind. The trees bow down to make obeisances, just as a *gr̥hastha* family bows down when they see a *saṅkīrtana* party approaching. The animals stop chewing their food and cock their ears. The demigods, who are most learned in music, hear Kṛṣṇa's flute from a great distance. They are amazed by it, and although they are expert musicians, they cannot fully understand the beauty of the music. Kṛṣṇa plays on Govardhana and sometimes a cloud comes by to render personal service by showering flowers or providing shade from the sun.

Try to think like the *gopīs*. Read the book as it is supposed to be read, with empathy and devotion. See the bulls standing stunned as Kṛṣṇa walks the earth on His lotus-like feet. His feet are marked with unique, artistic symbols, and as Kṛṣṇa walks here and there, the earth feels relief. Imagine the pain the *gopīs* feel as they meditate on Kṛṣṇa's soft feet being hurt by the pebbles on the forest paths. Try in your mind's eye to submissively see the glances Kṛṣṇa throws in the direction of the *gopīs*.

The *gopīs* stand in a courtyard, or on the road with water pots on their heads, and talk about Kṛṣṇa. When an elderly person comes by, they stop their confidential talk and sing in a way they think will not allow others to guess their passionate love for Govinda. As soon as they are alone again, they speak:

Now Kṛṣṇa is standing somewhere counting His cows on a string of gems. He wears a garland of *tulasī* flowers that bear the fragrance of His beloved, and He has thrown His arm over the shoulder of an affectionate cowherd boyfriend. As Kṛṣṇa plays His flute and sings, the music attracts the black deer's wives, who approach that ocean of transcendental qualities and sit down beside Him. Just like us cowherd girls, they have given up all hope for happiness in family life.

—*Bhāg.* 10.35.18-19



Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are calling the cows. Hey *mṛdaṅga*-headed! Hey reddish ones! Hey whitish ones! He counts on His jeweled beads to make sure not a single cow is missing. Then they start home, playing the flute the whole way. Demigods like

Brahmā and Śiva meet Him on the path and detain Him with prayers while His parents and the *gopīs* wait ever-anxiously, wondering, "Why the delay?"

Sarūpa was a dear cowherd friend of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa was very pleased that he returned to Vraja-līlā after many lives in the material world. At breakfast, Kṛṣṇa was offered a sweet made by Rādhikā. Kṛṣṇa tasted it and made a face as if He didn't like it. He gave it to Sarūpa who tasted it as amazing nectar. That was Kṛṣṇa's purpose, to give it to Sarūpa. Rādhā was watching from a distance.

When Lord Śiva tried to enter the *rāsa* dance, he was prevented. He performed long austerities under the direction of Paurṇamāsī who awarded Śiva the form of a *gopī*—Gopīśvara. This new *gopī* joined the others, but they sensed that someone unqualified was in their midst. They questioned the new *gopī*, "What is your name, your family's name, your husband's name?" Paurṇamāsī had not told Gopīśvara these things. The *gopīs* then began to berate Lord Śiva as a *gopī*. Then Paurṇamāsī interceded and said, "She has performed many austerities and desires to enter the *rāsa* dance. If she is not qualified, then at least allow her to observe *rāsa-līlā* from a distance." The *gopīs* then gave Gopīśvara Mahādeva a service: protect the *rāsa* dance by not allowing any unauthorized person to enter. So that is Gopīśvara's service even today. We go to her and ask permission to enter the spiritual pastimes of Vraja.

Kṛṣṇa played His flute and the Yamunā trembled. She could not approach Him. The aborigine girls also could not come close. Lakṣmī-devī wanted to dance with Him, but She could not take the body of a *gopī*. It is very difficult. Don't take it cheaply. They are not ordinary girls.

One time Kṛṣṇa blew His flute and the *gopīs* were stunned. They didn't care for relatives or *anything*. They ran to Him. If He doesn't appear to them they say, "Kṛṣṇa, don't be a cheater. Don't break our hearts. We have given up everything for You. We can't even sleep at night. We came to You so quickly we didn't dress ourselves properly. Now don't reject us. It's not fair. You've stolen our hearts, You can't leave us aside."

❧

11:17 A.M. 

One day Mahārāja explained to us about *utkāṇṭha* (eagerness). Kṛṣṇa wants to increase His devotees' *utkāṇṭha*. One time Kṛṣṇa agreed to meet Rādhikā and Her *sakhīs* at a certain time at Rādhā-kunḍa, but when the appointed hour came, He did not appear. Rūpa-mañjarī found out that He was with Candrāvalī at Gaurī-kunḍa.

Rūpa-mañjarī went to Gaurī-kunḍa and told Kṛṣṇa that a bull demon had come and was attacking His young pet bull. Kṛṣṇa said, "I will come at once! Where is the demon?" Rūpa-mañjarī pointed toward Rādhā-kunḍa and Kṛṣṇa ran there, much to the pleasure of Rūpa-mañjarī, Rādhikā, and all Her *sakhīs*.

Mahārāja explained that Kṛṣṇa *wanted* to be with Rādhikā, otherwise He wouldn't have been "tricked" to leave Candrāvalī. Then why didn't He just go directly to Rādhā-kunḍa at the appointed hour? Because He wanted to increase their *utkāṇṭha*.

Mahārāja gave the example of Kṛṣṇa's leaving the *gopīs* during the *rāsa* dance. When He finally reunited with them, they asked Him for an explanation. They said, "We have given up everything for You, why did You leave us in this way?" Kṛṣṇa replied, "You are thinking that I am ungrateful, but I left you only to increase your *utkāṇṭha*." Mahārāja said that unless there is *utkāṇṭha*, in either the *sādhaka* or the *siddha* stage, then all *prema* is ruined. The wives of Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā do not have as much *utkāṇṭha* as the *gopīs*.

Mahārāja said if he covers something with his hand, I will be very eager to see it, more so than if it is always visible to me. He said, "So if I am always with you, there is not *utkāṇṭha* in your *prema*. Then love will be *śānta*, quiet. But I want to taste *prema* (Kṛṣṇa is saying) which has many waves and a river which has current. Without current, the river will get dirty."

The Ganges has a good current. *Prema* should also have a current and waves. If Kṛṣṇa is always present, love will be quiet. Therefore, He disappears in order to increase the devotees' affection for Him; to renew it. Kṛṣṇa said, "I was not far away from You. I was near and hearing what you said. I was tasting—and it was so tasteful!" Kṛṣṇa said He also disappeared in order to tell the whole world that there are no devotees like the *gopīs* in *vipralambha-bhāva*.

"If someone has a *cintāmaṇi* and loses it, he becomes very sorry and feels great increase in appreciation for the *cintāmaṇi* he once had."

By the time Mahārāja reached this point in the discussion, I was feeling that the story was a symbol of my own relationship with Mahārāja, which was just about to break, due to my leaving India.

He gave another example: how Kṛṣṇa increased the *utkāṇṭha* of Nārada by appearing briefly and then disappearing. The Lord said to Nārada (in Mahārāja's words): "When you cannot check your eagerness and you will be as if you are dying, that day will come." Nārada followed that order, travelling and chanting and hearing the pastimes of the Lord. When his eagerness came to that last point, death came, and Nārada put his feet upon death's head and went to *Vaikuṇṭha-dhāma*.

Mahārāja said that Kṛṣṇa gladly gives that eagerness to any *sādhaka-bhakta* as he likes. Kṛṣṇa cannot be known by reading (even *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*) or by meditation, but when Kṛṣṇa enters our name in His register of *kṛpa-pātra* as an object of His mercy, then He can be known. This comes by gradually increasing the *utkāṇṭha*. When we are *kaniṣṭha-bhakta* we are satisfied that we are worshiping Kṛṣṇa or Rāma, but when we become *madhyama-adhikārī*, worshiping the *arcā-vidyā* alone won't do. We want to hear Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and be with a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava.

•

Hearing of the *gopīs*, who all attain *prema*, and then higher stages known as *sneha māna*, *prāṇaya*, *rāga*, *anurāga*, and up to *mahā-bhāva*—it is spelled out clearly that I cannot satisfy Kṛṣṇa to the full extent. The advanced stage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness doesn't mean self-attainment for the *bhakta*—it means Kṛṣṇa can satisfy Himself with those advanced *bhaktas*. He will acknowledge and thank and repay lesser *bhaktas* (give them what they want, *ye yātha māṁ pradyante*), but they cannot satisfy Kṛṣṇa's inner desires. Kṛṣṇa is *rasa-śekhara*, the greatest taster of *rasa*. He wants to taste *rasa* infinitely. And Rādhārāṇī is *mahā-bhāva*, supremely capable of pleasing Lord Hari. Hearing this, one's pride shrinks into the ground. At best, I'm struggling to reach attainments which are on very low rungs of *bhakti*, but I have heard that Kṛṣṇa is not only *rasa-śekhara*, but *parama-karuṇa*. Out of His compassion, He wants us to taste *rasa* too. He is kind to fallen souls and lifts them up to *bhāva-rasa*.

Who will not admit their low state and beg for a drop of such mercy? I am not ashamed. What's the use in pretending? What's the use in maintaining my pride? I am searching for crumbs of *mahā-prasādam* on the floor, and drops of water used to wash the Vaiṣṇavas feet.

•

Now that I have used up Girirāja Swami's *Nectar of Devotion* lectures on tapes, I'm listening more to Prabhupāda's lectures, especially in the bathroom and while eating—good times to be attentive. This morning he described the long history of Bhīṣmadeva. I was wondering, "Why is he speaking this to the gathered young men and women in Los Angeles in 1973?" But I accept it.

Bhīṣma is serious and truthful. He is great. He didn't have to die unless he wanted to. Prabhupāda chose to speak about him for half an hour and it was a preaching mood *bhāva*. Now he is describing something else.

•

This morning I asked Śamika Ṛṣi if there was anything on his mind he wanted to talk about. He humbly said that he has so many material plans and problems on his

mind. I suggested he try to dovetail everything in service to Kṛṣṇa. Then I said, "Try to be grateful."

A few minutes later, I realized it is I who should be grateful to Śamika Ṛṣi for keeping me in his house and feeding me. Prabhupāda said that Bhīṣma, or anyone in Vedic culture, was indebted when he became a guest in someone's house. I will try to repay my debt by not allowing my *bhajana* to stop while I'm here. Then I thanked Śamika Ṛṣi and of course, he thanked me right back. He is an exemplary *grhastha*.

4:13 P.M.



A few days ago, I told Madhu I would visit the Brooklyn temple when this "retreat" (come on, let's pick a better name for it. I'm trying to go forward, not retreating. How about study period? *Bhajana* time?) is finished. So he phoned Nanda dāsa and told him we were coming to New York on February 29th. But then I changed my mind and decided to go to Boston. The Boston devotees were happy, but Nanda dāsa is disappointed. The only way I could do both would be to cut off three days from this *bhajana* time. I don't want to do it.

Then in the mail there was a letter from Steve Kowit scolding me for what he sees as my foisting my own inhibitions about sex and worldliness on the world. He doesn't like my preaching. But it's not *my* preaching; I am simply repeating the message of *śāstra*. No doubt I have my own problems, but I go on preaching.

So this isn't a mountain cave. Mail comes—letters, books, sometimes even people. The telephone's ringing, plans are being made, and Nanda dāsa wants me to know that he's very disappointed because I upset his plans.

Madhu says at this point, it's best I stick to my Boston plans.

You are best when you are in a receptive mood. Kowit says I try too hard to be humble and that is more false ego. He says I should just accept my little imperfections as part of my humanness instead of disliking myself so much for my lack of humility. All right, all right. If I listen to him, then I'll never make it to first base in attempting to enter "*Śaraṇāgati*." But he's right in the sense that I can't force contrite feelings or beat myself up for being dry and distracted in *japa*.

Kowit says I'm in a position to be influential with confused youth. He says I can either help them or do mischief. He also thinks I'm against homosexuals and

atheists and that I'm not too far from a right-wing, Christian evangelist. He thinks I slavishly agree with *everything* Prabhupāda says and that that isn't healthy. He read *My Search Through Books* in one sitting and loved the memories it evoked for him.

•

Forty degrees and dark skies. No snow tonight, probably rain though.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes: "Let the high-souled readers judge its merit carefully and devote their minds to this *rasa*." He is, of course, speaking of *mādhurya-rasa*.

Tonight we will probably finish our reading of *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*. You cannot effectively (offenselessly) read literature like that and at the same time do nonsense, or even think nonsense—or hear others' nonsense. Best to keep the atmosphere free.

We will next read a number of shorter works starting with *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta* next.

•

Received a letter from young Lalitā-maṅjarī dāśī of Vṛndāvana. She says she is "super busy" taking two VIHE courses, sewing for the Deities, etc. She enclosed a photo of Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja: "Thought you'd like it." I did, but it doesn't look that much like him. He's special and has to be seen up close; in this picture he looks like a *sādhū* standing on a balcony in Bombay, posing with his *japa-mālā*.

We continue to assemble *Prabhupāda Meditations* by using my rough drafts from last year. They are not a distraction from *bhajana*, except that the work is mostly mechanical now, tedious.

The evergreen branches are moving and clacking. When a gust of wind comes, a few dry leaves blow around. I can't help but prefer snow to what looks like coming rain.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa . . . If I'm going to feel sorry about something, it shouldn't be for not going to New York, but for not—you know what.

And that feeling sorry, which in me is a persistent thing, although not deep, is a worry that I haven't surrendered deeply. I am not a neurotic. Nor do I have an anti-sex bias or a fear of worldiness. But I am not a human being in love with the earth and his own humanness. I am not in love with *saṁsāra*. Prabhupāda has set my sights higher. I will protect myself from deviation. I have to tell the confused youth (and confused old people), "Don't try to be happy through sense gratification. It ends in suffering. It *always* ends in suffering. It doesn't satisfy the inner self. You are spirit soul, not just flesh and bones. Use human life for self-realization."

So I ask my uncomprehending self and emotions, please worship Govinda. Don't hear the materialists. Go on hearing *kṛṣṇa-kathā*.

Rādhārāṇī was troubled by a bee. A bee can be called "*madhusūdana*" in Sanskrit. Kṛṣṇa is also known as Madhusūdana. Madhumaṅgala chased the bee away from Rādhikā and said, "Now *madhusūdana* is gone. He will never return." Rādhā fainted in the shock of separation from Kṛṣṇa, even though He was with Her. So sometimes even in union, She feels separation.

Kṛṣṇa thought, "When I am present, My dear ones are anxious that I may leave. So it may be better that I go away and not cause that anxiety which comes from my presence."

❧

"My dear friends, just see the clever activities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa! He has composed nice songs about the cowherd boys and is pleasing the cows. By the movement of His eyes He is pleasing the *gopīs*, and at the same time, He is fighting with demons like Aṛiṣṭāsura. In this way, He is sitting with different living entities in different ways, and He is thoroughly enjoying the situation" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 165).

"The *mahā-mantra* (Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare) is also simply an address to the Lord and His energy. So to anyone who is constantly engaged in addressing the Lord and His energy, we can imagine how much the Supreme Lord is obliged. It is impossible for the Lord to ever forget such a devotee. It is clearly stated in this verse that anyone who addresses the Lord immediately attracts the attention of the Lord, who always remains obliged to him" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 166).

❧

For dried, cracked skin, use aloe gel. Write on this page in a way to help yourself have a better *bhajana* time tomorrow. Thoreau said a man should take care not to be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rail. That's nice. The things that threaten me to break camp prematurely are like that—Nanda's hurt feelings that I'm not coming to New York (I'll see him there anyway before I leave), and a blasting letter from Kowit. And my mind.

Don't keep trying to justify yourself. Keep turning back to the row you have to hoe with your two "oxen." Follow that plough and pay attention. Or do you want to be somewhere else? Do you love what you are doing? Do you think it is important? Yes, I think it is the best thing I can do having left Vṛndāvana while desiring to remember Vṛndāvana.

The wind is up. Lately I have been waking around 11 P.M., going back to sleep for another fifteen minutes, then waking up, then another twenty minutes sleep, repeating like that until 1 A.M. I don't want to oversleep but I'm afraid to get up too early. I might be sleepy all day.

I am listening and watching for signs of snow, but so far very little. (He thinks it may help his writing. Better take rest chanting.)

•

February 12, 2:09 A.M.

In terms of temporary time, the world always wins out over *bhajana* time, or so it seems. I interrupted my usual *japa* time this morning to sit on the floor under bright lights and sketch a big calendar on my 24"x36" pad. I charted out my remaining days with the idea of trying to squeeze in a visit to the Brooklyn temple as well as the planned visit to Boston. We leave for the Caribbean on March 6th. Of course, I can do it. It means only fourteen days more of full time *bhajana* and writing. (That will have been a total of six weeks.)

As I write this, I'm aware other people will think even six weeks is an enormous amount of time to put aside for the "luxury" of reading and writing. I'm also aware of the reply, that any working writer needs much more time than an occasional four to six weeks a few times a year to write. Once they get enough money, most artists work at it full-time like any other craftsman. But I have to decide what's best for me, for my discipleship to Prabhupāda, and so on.

This wouldn't have come up except for the telephone. I told Madhu of my first plan to go to New York. He told devotees in New York. Now I'm too soft-hearted (or whatever) to cancel it. So I'm getting roped into a full week of preaching in the cities.

One could say that since I am a *sannyāsi*, I am supposed to preach in the cities. Yes, I can perhaps pick up the spirits of a few devotees by my visit to their city, but then they will return to normal. But by taking time to write books, I can do more serious preaching.

Anyway, retreats are for getting away from opinions for awhile—even my own opinions—and existing in a different time sphere. I do love it. My retreat-loving self says, "All right, leave earlier than you promised, but make up for it by giving me time later."

To be quiet and alone with nowhere you have to be, no one you have to meet, and spend that time well—to *read* a book . . . to walk alone in the morning . . . to have scheduled writing times throughout the day when you feel free to say things to

the heart. And to be able to see works through by working with an editor on book production.

I have spent considerable time complaining that I don't go deeply into this quality time, don't chant and read well enough, and don't know introspective prayer. All that is true, but to have been able to give myself time for learning to go deeper is very satisfying to the self.

I know as soon as I hit the preaching trail, I will regret the pace of one driven instead of one contemplating and praying. But that will give me more appetite and appreciation for the next time. It is similar to what Mahārāja says about *utkāṇṭha* being increased by separation. This also makes it clearer to me—come out of the closet—that I crave the hide-away work spot. I don't know why more *sannyāsīs*, preachers, and even *gr̥hasthas* (they *could* manage some of it) don't do this. At least I intend to do it. And I want to have a good conscience about it. What's the use of arranging for time alone if you start worrying as soon as you get there, "Is this the right thing? Should I be in the cities? Did I leave the lights on in my house?"



You can attract Kṛṣṇa by service which is pleasing to the spiritual master and by no other way. *Yasya deve parā bhaktir, yathā-deve tathā gurau*. What pleases you the most, Śrīla Prabhupāda? "That you love Kṛṣṇa."

Śrīla Prabhupāda said (I heard it yesterday) "Therefore I don't talk with any rascal. . . . I only talk with my disciples." He meant they are so ignorant and stubbornly atheistic that it is useless to speak with them. Prabhupāda affirmed that, and moreover, it is the śāstric version. Although a preacher kindly mixes with the non-devotees, his actual relationship is with people who will hear him submissively. "Glorification of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is performed in the *paramparā* system; that is, it is conveyed from spiritual master to disciple" (*Bhāg.* 10.1.4). Certainly this is true of the Six Gosvāmīs' works. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "For *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, there must be a speaker and a hearer, both of whom can be interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness if they are no longer interested in material topics." He also writes, "Since merely talking about Kṛṣṇa is so pleasing, we can simply imagine how pleasing it is to render service to Kṛṣṇa" (*Bhāg.* 10.1.4 purport).



Kowit wrote, "If I was your Zen master, I'd tell you to make sure you do not, for the present, write anything about 'humility.' (Your favorite subject and the cause of your greatest self-pride.) Have the humility (this ersatz Zen teacher would say) not to insist on trying to be humble!"

I can see where striving for humility can bring self-pride, but there are practices to follow. We have our Vaiṣṇava *saṅga* and *siddhānta*. I don't need a Zen "mind-blowing" to leave me "nowhere." Reminds me of the Buddhist monk's practice of eating whatever alms a person puts into his hand, even if it is meat. They say this nondiscriminating attitude is real renunciation. We do what's favorable and avoid what is unfavorable.

Ok, I'm not so humble, not really. I am where I am, and I shouldn't "try" (in some false egoistic way) to be humble. Let me go on hearing from my teachers. Go on relishing the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in the best company; avoid the envious. Chant and go on chanting, hope against hope. If Kṛṣṇa likes, I'll become humble.

And Kowit, you too, you should have the humility to accept scripture, and admit that God exists.

•

Reading notes

The section where the *gopīs* lament that Kṛṣṇa is leaving Vraja is brief, and I read it quickly. If you want to read a more extended version of this *līlā*, see *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*. As we take pleasure in reading the direct words of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā*, so we like to hear the direct words of the *gopīs*. Their point of view is like a Vedic injunction for those who aspire to follow the best path of worshiping Kṛṣṇa. In Kṛṣṇa book Prabhupāda writes, "Hearing the news that Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were leaving for Mathurā, others who were engaged in household duties stopped working as if they had forgotten everything, like a person who is called forth to die and leave this world at once" (*Kṛṣṇa*, Volume II, "Akrūra's Return Journey," p. 18).

They cursed Providence. They left aside their shyness. They cried out, "O Govinda! O Dāmodara! O Mādhava!" Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states that the *gopīs* abandoned their secret and reasoned, " . . . even if the elders and our relatives punish us by beating us or locking us up, we can still live happily with the knowledge that Kṛṣṇa is residing in our village. Some of our girlfriends who are not imprisoned will cleverly find a way to bring us the remnants of Kṛṣṇa's food, and then we can remain alive. But if Kṛṣṇa is not stopped, we will certainly die" (*Bhāg.* 10.39.28, purport).

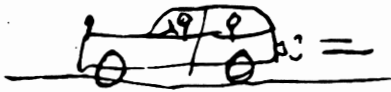
One mundane scholar of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism said that *bhaktas* enjoy hearing the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa "vicariously." What does he know if he has not done it himself? We shouldn't imagine we are there, but we feel sympathy for the plight of the *rāgātmikā-bhaktas*. The *gopīs* are the greatest philosophers of *bhakti*; therefore,

it is essential to hear from them. But there is some risk in hearing the *gopīs* speak. Maybe we too will start to experience the nonpeaceful waves in the ocean of love. We will want to give up shame and pride; we will want to give up our secret.

We can aspire to follow the *gopīs* by following our spiritual master: *nikuñja yuno rati-keli siddhai* . . . But what does that mean for us in our present stage? It means doing whatever duty the guru gives us—which may not appear to be connected to *gopī-bhāva*. And yet we should pray to live in *gopī-bhāva*. It was *gopī-bhāva* that sustained the Six Gosvāmīs in their severe renunciation. It was *gopī-bhāva* that brought ecstatic joy to their *bhajana*. Without *gopī-bhāva*, we are like Māyāvādīs and we cannot chant the *sannyāsa-mantra*.

“Sending their minds after Kṛṣṇa, the *gopīs* stood as motionless as figures in a painting. . . . The *gopīs* then turned back, without hope that Govinda would ever return to them. Full of sorrow, they began to spend their days and nights chanting about the pastimes of their beloved” (*Bhāg.* 10.39.36–37).

•



About five degrees Fahrenheit and the usual clear blue skies. The walk is best when I don’t think so much. My thinking is more like mental hovering and planning. Weighing pros and cons, rearranging schedules. I do that all the time, so if I can get away from it and just swing my arms as I walk with an exaggerated kicking gait, enjoying the physical movement and the righteousness of “getting exercise,” then I would be better off. Then when I tune back into “thinking,” it is usually refreshed.

The deeper self *hears, prays, worships*. That self is not on the mental hovering plane. I’m a little wearied after answering so much mail and now because I have been worrying whether or not I should go to New York. So while walking this morning, I decided not to answer any more mail for the next two weeks. I want to tighten up my meditation and not take on any extraneous or distracting activities.

•

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “After winning a hundred Nobel Prizes, maybe then you will be able to understand the *beginning* of Kṛṣṇa.”

The clear blue cold.

When you get back to the house, you won’t do your single-minded hearing and chanting, you’ll do some proofreading of *Prabhupāda Meditations*. I have to do some

of that. It is also spiritual work. But I want to finish Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's book and hear Mahārāja's tape and see Kṛṣṇa in the pages of *Nectar of Devotion*.

Madhu is chanting *japa* behind the steering wheel.

What did they write in their letters? Oh, an ox fell through the floor and died. Devotees are quarreling. Someone wrote a long "memo" how ISKCON should be conducted in all particulars. Someone wrote to say that if you hear I committed suicide . . . Someone and her husband are seeing two different "doctors" and their marriage is repairing. Someone complained of a lack of confidentiality in their correspondence with me. Someone whom I've never met, moved to Hawaii and wrote to tell me that when I'm ready, please initiate her. Someone wrote to say I read your book and it was okay but "it wasn't the best book in the world." Someone is sick and going into the hospital. He wonders whether he should get married and what is the reason to get married. Someone wrote and said, "In this country, if you become penniless, that's it, you're completely finished."

~

A very big rock here. Is it a boulder? No one man could possibly move it, it is so dense. They could dynamite it. Is there a spirit soul in the boulder?

You see what I mean about meditative mood? Have I lost it? What will I do when I go back? On the way back—two minutes—Madhu and I talk some business. Today there's a sensitive issue on my mind. Then walk up the stairs. I want to sleep.

~

We were pleased to hear Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja give the inner meaning of Kṛṣṇa's leaving the *gopīs* and going to Mathurā. He said Kṛṣṇa appeared to leave both to increase the happiness of the *gopīs* and to increase their *utkāṇṭha*. When Kṛṣṇa is with Rādhā, Her *mahā-bhāva* reaches such a high state that She becomes troubled that Kṛṣṇa might leave. But when He is in Mathurā, Her madness of separation reaches such a state that She embraces a *tamāla* tree and feels fully that Kṛṣṇa is present with Her. The union is more complete in separation.

Mahārāja explained this and then turned to us, "If you will always be here," he said, "no eagerness will come. When you will go to South Africa or America, eagerness will come more. And [if you stay] here, 'Oh, he is always available.'" Obviously, this referred to our meetings with Mahārāja. Then he spoke of our Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Now you are realizing the value of your *gurudeva*. Not at that time, [but] after his departure. Sometimes by being far away, it realizes the value of that thing."

Mathurā—*vīra-prema* is the best thing—when Kṛṣṇa is in Mathurā, He fully realizes the value of the *gopīs*, and they fully realize the value of Kṛṣṇa, even more than when He is with them in Vṛndāvana.

11:12 A.M. 

As we read, we are attracted to particular passages. This often has to do with our present preoccupations.

In *Nectar of Devotion* under Kṛṣṇa's quality "Pure," this struck me: "If one simply chants the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, this holy name will rise within one's heart like the powerful sun and will immediately dissipate all the darkness of ignorance" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 169).

The definition of "steadfast" also struck me: "A person who continues to work until his desired goal is achieved is called steadfast" (p.170). This reminded me of my attempt to have a full *bhajana* retreat and not get drawn out early by distractions. The example of Kṛṣṇa's steadfastness is that He sought out Jāmbavān in the forest and fought with him for many days in order to win back the Syamantaka jewel.

Kṛṣṇa is also grave: "Another instance of Kṛṣṇa's gravity is found in connection with His love affairs with Rādhārāṇī. Kṛṣṇa was always silent about His love affairs with Rādhārāṇī, so much so that Baladeva, Kṛṣṇa's elder brother and constant companion, could not understand the transformations of Kṛṣṇa on account of His gravity" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p.171). This reminds me of the need to be grave about my own transformations in Vṛndāvana and Mathurā.

Three hats, two pair of gloves, how many layers of clothes, eight, nine? Kerosene-burning hand-warmer and two chemical pads creating heat inside my gloves. Note it down for a warm future (or a colder one).

What do you mean you were deeper a week ago? I thought you were the same guy you are now. What's the difference?

Maybe more hope.

Oh, you mean innocence?

I mean deeper into the books.

Well, I don't see the difference.

I'm still trying.

I'm not going to open any more mail for the next two weeks. I won't even see the envelopes. Now if I could only stop the complaints. Let me come out on my own.

I want to hang onto these days and nights where my only occupation is chanting and hearing.

I would like to tell Mahārāja the essence of it, not the externals of where I stayed, for how long, and so on. That's my own affair. Tell how I'm trying to keep alive the Mathurā-*vīra*.

•

Prabhupāda is not far away. I'm used to thinking he's with me wherever I am. One reason I can think like that is because I have been trying to serve him wherever I am for so many years. Also, one is used to thinking of Prabhupāda being present in Western cities like Boston, New York, Dallas, Los Angeles. (Maybe that's another reason I ought to stop in New York, because he was there.)

Ink smeared off the page onto my chest. At least it's not freezing in the pen, but it may do that unless you keep it flowing. Write or freeze.

Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā, Kṛṣṇa in Vaikuṇṭha, Kṛṣṇa as Rāma, God in Christ, God in Mohammed, smoke in the chimney, oil truck in the driveway, truck-sounds from the highway—none of this is as good as Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana.

Within Vṛndāvana, the twelve forests are very dear to Him. Better than the forests is Govardhana Hill, and best of all is Rādhā-kuṇḍa, which is at the base of Govardhana.

Stop for a finger warm-up, what time is it? Twenty minutes to go. Chest chills. Now speak . . . Both fountain pens stopped working.

Remember the auto rickshaw or Hanumān's van stopping at the Gaudiya Math in Mathurā. Get out with your friends. One of them had been away six months. He said, "You take it for granted that you will come back here." (He meant, we may take things for granted, but who's to say whether we will continue to live and get the fortune of associating with a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava?) Then we go up the cement stairs, turn to the right, then the left. Then you're on the second floor. Right away you glance to Mahārāja's little room, with its closed wooden shutters. The sign says meetings, "no more than five minutes." Are his shoes there? Where is Navina? Can we see him? If I go alone I'm more timid. Also, it is more of an adventure. Be ready in any case for whatever happens. He may not see you. If he is in, he will usually see you for at least a little while. He is "so soft," a brother said.

Kṛṣṇa shifted to Mathurā for many reasons. When the gate keeper of Vṛndāvana announced that Kṛṣṇa would be leaving the next day, the *gopīs* fainted and started crying and protesting.

~

The editing of *Prabhupāda Meditations* is going okay. The big thing is to see if the ones I did in India will work. It will take me a few days to reach them. I know I was distracted and hasty, but I turned to "Prabhupāda Recall" in the evenings for at least a few minutes. Maybe it produced a sincere suggestion for how busy people can do that at the end of the day, how they can recall the day just passed and remember—*feel*—how they were with Prabhupāda.

~

More from Nectar of Devotion

I like the description of "self-satisfied." Even in the presence of a serious cause for distress, a self-satisfied person is not agitated. This is because he has an inner self. He is in touch with a source that keeps him peaceful and he is not hankering for confirmation from his peers.

Kṛṣṇa wasn't perturbed when Śiśupāla began calling Him ill names. He gave Bhīma credit for killing Jarāsandha—He doesn't care for fame. For us, the inner peace is to know we are the eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa. I cannot grasp this usually. I follow a collection of spiritual practices, but not as much as I really want to—do I feel the friendship of the Lord? I have a tangible connection with gurus, and some devotee friends. I do want to increase my friendship with Kṛṣṇa and Rādhikā's followers. But I am way down here in *vaidhī-bhakti* land. Better to accept it and not delude myself.

I have a tangible connection with the holy name.

~

4:17 P.M.



Talking with Baladeva on my way out here. I told him the ink froze in my pen this morning. "Why does he go out there anyway? Now we know he's crazy."

Why do anything? Because of *ānanda*. Mahārāja distinguishes between *sukha* and *ānanda*. *Sukha* is personal happiness, *ānanda* means pleasing Kṛṣṇa. *Ānanda* is the greatest happiness for the *bhakta*.

A moment: when I returned from the shack this morning and I was indoors, I thought, "This *bhajana* routine is wonderful and I don't want to give up a single day of it by leaving before I have to." But that passed.

Kṛṣṇa is playing in the green fields of Vṛndāvana, always thinking of His beloved Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

Her *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs* are always helping Her and always thinking of Her happiness. They like to see Kṛṣṇa serving Rādhā. They are unhappy when She is unhappy.

•

As soon as I go to Boston and New York, there will be very little time for writing. When I do turn to a spiral notebook, I will be millions of miles away. But I'll scratch down something "for later." I'll desire to be in a place like this and think of the books I can read. Yet here I am, and somehow I'm not doing that much.

To write honestly is a consolation, for sure. And it brings some kind of improvement. As someone stated at the end of a long letter of troubles to me, "I feel better now that I have said this."

Oh Kṛṣṇa, how can we expect to join Your eternal entourage *at this* rate? I know this past Kārttika was a big transformation for me, but I need many more of them! That was the beginning. I think it was so much, but . . .

•

Prabhupāda says *sahajiyās* think that hearing about Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* is good, but hearing about Kṛṣṇa fighting on the battlefield is not good. These rascals don't know that Kṛṣṇa's "loving activities and bellicose acts" are equally transcendental. Then Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes that we should read of Kṛṣṇa's killing the demons (which instructs us how to remove *anarthas*) up until we get a taste for *mādhurya-rasa*. There is no contradiction in these two instructions. It is a matter of timing and qualification and receiving the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas that determines when one may take interest in *rasika* books. But we should never give up preaching based on all the cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

My coming out of "retreat" means teaching Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* and *upadeśa* outside *mādhurya*. I have to learn more how to lead a double life. But I think it was good to first give attention to the new bud of interest. Feel the greed.

That's what I fear in the last day or two—have I lost the taste for Vraja-*līlā* as something intense and exclusive? Did I forget the subtle purity? Am I an outsider again? Some of these questions are foolish and presumptuous, but the anxiety is good: "*I must not lose it.*"

Ink smearing then freezing. I am not . . . I am . . . Kṛṣṇa is . . .

The dance.

The words taken from other writers. The cut of truth. The desire to be true to the Vaiṣṇava *paramparā* and also true to myself, whatever that means.

Stream of frosty breath from my nose, out of the body-machine.

Kṛṣṇa I pray to You.

May I be a better devotee.

May You bless me

to serve Your devotees and

give up my false attachments.

I am waiting

this retreat means that.

•

Go in and tell Madhu, "I have decided to go to both New York and Boston before we go to the Caribbean. So that leaves me thirteen more days." Then bear down in those remaining days. But how? It is a quiet time, always moving forward in small, steady steps, not a time for grinding teeth but relaxing them, and always keeping busy . . . but I don't see much how I can bear down, or turn a corner . . . I'll keep it up, though, thirteen sweet days and nights not to forget.

I can celebrate it in the shack by writing as much as possible, whatever little would come out. I wanted to write something deep, my way to pray, my way to worship—though I don't claim it is the *bhāva-sevā* Mahārāja recommended I take up when he discouraged me from worshipping Govardhana-śilā. Is it going in the right direction?

Ah, that's it! I almost forgot, I want to enter *bhāva-sevā*. My Godbrother prayed to Vṛndā-devī at Kamyavan that I could attain it. I keep forgetting, the way a new-comer forgets to chant sixteen rounds.

•

7:00 P.M.

Madhu and I finished reading *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* and have gone on to *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta*. We are feeling less afraid now. At the same time, we know our "*siddha-praṇālī*" is to become lower than a blade of grass. Mahārāja has explained that greed overrules scriptural injunctions. Someone may show us a passage that says we should not read *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta* because we are not liberated, but if there is greed . . .

Sometimes a dark shadow passes over our minds when we hear of Rādhā's play with Kṛṣṇa—we are visited by our abominable past. But those clouds get chased away. Hearing from the *ācāryas* and in good company, pronouncing the words aloud and hearing them carefully—we are starting to appreciate the pure playfulness and pleasing nature of *vilāsa-līlā*.

I like the tone of Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura's prayers. They are very personal. He wishes that the vision of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet may always be in his heart and he blesses us to share it. "Let my words express even a tiny particle of a particle of the luscious beauty of Murāri, whose artless, adolescent figure enraptures me, and whose moon-face is worshiped by the soft melodies of His flute" (verse 7).

"May the Lord of our life, that young boy Kṛṣṇa, shine incessantly within our hearts. His eyes full of love for Rādhā, are the abode of infinite beauty. Every day they appear newer and newer, at every step they increase their charm and elegance, and at every moment they sparkle more and more brilliantly" (verse 13).

"All glories to Kṛṣṇa, the life of my words!" (verse 8).

❧

February 13, 2:13 A.M.

Consider the purpose of this *bhajana* period. In India, I underwent a change. I have been trying to ground myself in that change. ("Ground" may not be the right word here. The dictionary defines it as, "A basis for belief, action, or argument.") I have been trying to set up practices that I can continue when I am back into the "normal" pace of life in ISKCON, traveling to temples and preaching. I have tried to establish a private, daily, out-loud reading with a friend in *rasika-śāstra*. I have also listened every day to part of a tape by Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. And I have tried to give full-time to remembering, assimilating, seeing how the change fits into my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda, and how it sits with me. This I have attempted through writing and just by trying to linger in the Vṛndāvana mood in my mind.

I realized even when in Vṛndāvana that *japa* would be an important part of my new life. In other words, the *japa* ought to undergo a change. But I have faced the fact that it hasn't changed. Still, I *face* my *japa* more crucially now. I realize it is a primary testing ground. If there is no *bhāva* (or more accurately, shadow-greed, shadow-*rati*) in *japa*, then how can I claim a change? How can I mix the *japa* practice with a desire to serve Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in Vṛndāvana? All I have succeeded in doing differently is giving it the first hour of my day on rising.

All my statements that I want to preserve the desire for *rāgānugā-bhakti* have to be tested under actual, stressful conditions, under those same "normal" conditions of life in ISKCON. If nothing else, I have enjoyed the intensification and the opportunity to assimilate a little of what I learned in Vṛndāvana last year. I haven't found it to be a conception I should give up, even after so many weeks of thought and study. I will want to return to giving more full attention to it again in periods

like this one, in between my regular travels. All this by way of a brief report-with-thirteen-days-left.



When I open a book and read of Kṛṣṇa's play in Vraja with His beloved devotees, especially the *gopīs*, something good happens. But when I close the book, I leave it far behind. I'm not like a *gopī* whose mind runs always to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, I try and find more time to be with the open book, hearing *rasa* from those who taste it. In the West, without an open Kṛṣṇa conscious book, we are bombarded by the most alien non-Kṛṣṇa modes of living. The reality of Vraja fades. And as the *ācāryas* take pains to explain, that which is the highest and most chaste in the spiritual world (*parakīya-rasa*) is the most sinful contamination in the material world (adulterous, illicit sex). That immoral sex permeates the ether and affects one's attempt to worship and savor the *amorousness* of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*. Therefore, it is a fight for spiritual survival.



I plan to chant the mantras of the Tenth Canto "*Gītās*" like a shield against all enemies. And although I complain of inability in *japa*, I know this too is my shelter. When book-words seem too intellectual or distant, I may turn to chanting for shelter. Although I plead in *japa*, and bounce off the hard resistance of my inattention, still, I know the holy name is absolute Kṛṣṇa (*suddho puṇo nitya mukta*).

We have been battling the forces of *māyā* all along, but in a general way, looking for shelter *somewhere* within the realm of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We pray to Prabhupāda—he has given us very specific instructions—but we misunderstand those specifics and take them in a general way. Prabhupāda says, "Surrender to Kṛṣṇa" or tells us we are "eternal servants of God." We think, "Yes, an eternal servant of God, let me surrender to God." But now we understand specifically who God is. By his grace, we now have an internal universe to turn to, a whole world of love to come to understand in Kṛṣṇa's manifestation in Vṛndāvana. Vṛndāvana-Kṛṣṇa is so far from material reality that there can be no more mistake. We protect our interest in Vṛndāvana by continuing the staunch practices of "following the four rules, chanting sixteen rounds," and building on that.



I read at the conclusion of *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, some statements about the place of dreams in pure devotional service. The dream of the Vraja-jana "is practically the same as wakefulness." Their dreams are filled with yearnings of love. Rādhā dreams She is embracing Kṛṣṇa.

Rādhārāṇī says to Lalitā: “On the pretext of appearing in My dreams, He regularly comes to this land of Vṛndāvana and brings Me great delight” (Chapter 16, p. 120). Rādhā told another *gopī*: “After my repeated attempts over a long time, Govinda firmly appeared before Me in a dream, but alas, no sooner had He entered the courtyard of My eyes, when Akrūra, the cruel messenger of King Kāṁsa, appeared on a chariot to take Him away again.”

This is called *gauna-sambhoga*, wherein the lover appears in a veiled form, and as it takes place in wakefulness, so it takes place in dreams. Rūpa Gosvāmī writes, “Sometimes that *gauna-sambhoga* in a dream may continue unchecked for some time, as in the pastime of Uṣā and Aniruddha. In the supremely wonderful dream of the perfectly liberated devotees, many very auspicious things may be seen, just as if the seer were awake” (Ch. 16, p.121). He also says it is not possible for the *gopīs* to experience a dream that is a product of the material mode of passion. So in Vraja, dreams are a kind of “pretext” for more variety of *līlās*. “It is the charming, playful nature of love of Kṛṣṇa that brings one into contact with Him on the pretext of seeing Him in a dream” (p. 121).

This makes it clearer to me that the quality of one’s dreams is an indication of one’s Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If our minds were pure, if we lived in the fifth dimension of transcendence, then how could we constantly dream of magic phantasmagoria? For a long time I have seen my dreams as a humbling phenomenon. Now when I hear how the *gopīs* dream, I am unable to claim that I am anything “like them.”

For example, last night I dreamt I was in a tense situation trying to catch an international flight which was threatened by terrorism in India. While waiting with other passengers, I spoke with a very wealthy patron of ISKCON who boasted how much money he had donated and how he was better than other patrons. We hoped by the powerful influence of this benefactor that we might get seats aboard the plane and that the danger could be averted for our flight. In such a “nightmare,” there is only a trace of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in an external sense. I was not fervently chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, which would have been the appropriate thing to do.

So much time is spent in dreams at night and in a nap during the daytime. I have been trying to write down some of these dreams, to find clues to the unconscious drives of the self and thus overcome my own illusions and fears. But when I woke this morning, I was so dissatisfied with the minimum amount of Kṛṣṇa-awareness in my dream that I considered it a waste of time to write it down. I thought of the *gopīs*’ dreams of *gauna-sambhoga*. Maybe instead of trying to solve the riddles of my

present dreams, I should pray to Kṛṣṇa to purify my dreams. Pray for protection from passionate, tamasic fear of disaster. A psychologist says, "A dream is a condensed reflection of our existence."

Reading notes

Chapter 46, "Uddhava Visits Vṛndāvana." Kṛṣṇa sent Uddhava to pacify the residents of Vṛndāvana and also to learn of their glorious position. "Indeed, the love the cowherd men and *gopīs* felt for Kṛṣṇa was far beyond anything the Lord's other devotees had ever experienced, and by hearing about that love all the Lord's devotees would increase their faith and devotion" (*Bhāg.* 10.46.1, purport).

Kṛṣṇa explains to Uddhava that the *gopīs* have "given up everything for Me." Śrīla Prabhupāda further explains in *Kṛṣṇa* book that Kṛṣṇa never left Vṛndāvana. In His expanded form as Vāsudeva, He went to Mathurā. "The real Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were in Vṛndāvana in Their *bhāva* manifestation" (*Kṛṣṇa*, Volume II, "Uddhava Visits Vṛndāvana," p. 56). Kṛṣṇa told Uddhava how the *gopīs* were immersed in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa. The *gopīs* loved Kṛṣṇa so intensely that they could think of nothing else. " . . . Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the most dear of all, even dearer than one's own self. The *gopīs* had realized this fact, and thus they were stunned in separation from the Lord because of their intense love for Him" (*Bhāg.* 10.46.5, purport).

Uddhava reached Nanda Mahārāja's pastures just as the sun was setting. He saw beautiful white and colored cows, bulls, and calves everywhere, and by the dust raised from their hooves, his chariot entered Vraja unnoticed. He went to the home of Nanda and Yaśodā where he was affectionately received by Nanda. Uddhava was an intimate representative of Kṛṣṇa and resembled Him.

Nanda began praising Kṛṣṇa's wonderful acts. He asked, "Does Kṛṣṇa remember us? . . . Will Govinda return even once to see His family? If He ever does, we may then glance upon His beautiful face, with its beautiful eyes, nose and smile" (*Bhāg.* 10.46. 18-19).

As Nanda spoke, he gradually became choked up with emotion and could no longer speak. As for Mother Yaśodā, "she could not recognize or treat Uddhava with parental affection, ask him any questions or give him any message for her son. She was simply overwhelmed with love for Kṛṣṇa" (*Bhāg.* 10.46.28, purport).

We read this passage in our *Kṛṣṇa* book class. It is full of visual scenes and *bhāva*. The devotees talked about it among themselves. This is the essence of *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhakti*: to talk about the *rāgātmikā* devotees of Vraja and develop attraction for them. O devotees, please spare time for this! Have your lives become so stolen

away that you do not do this? Who has stolen your wealth in this way? Why don't you claim it back? You can do it, starting with even fifteen minutes a day. If you have lost the taste, it can be regained. Begin at once, with a friend or alone.

It is nice to remember the mother and father of Kṛṣṇa. Even the *gopīs* worship them. They are the eternal caretakers of their boy's body. They feed Him and dress Him and pray to God for His welfare.

The intense grief of this scene cannot be understood by me. When Mahārāja explained Mathurā-*vīra* to us, we could understand that the *gopīs* were actually happiest in *vipralambha*. When they thought of Kṛṣṇa in Mathurā, they attained union with Him.

I inquired, "But then why do we hear descriptions that they were lying on the ground withered and almost dead with grief?" Mahārāja said that I couldn't understand it. They are happy, but that happiness is not within our experience. We can pronounce the words, "All spiritual emotions are transcendental bliss," but we have not yet realized it. Still, we worship by hearing. We regard that person as magnanimous who reads to us, encourages us to read, who likes to hear these pastimes, and who encourages us to taste the *rasa*. "O thoughtful men, relish *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* tasted by Śukadeva, and be free of material tribulations."

•



The poet Don Marquis is known to his readers through the fictional character named Archy. Archy is a roach who comes out at night and manages, with great difficulty, to type poems on his host's typewriter. The first line in his first poem is, "Self-expression is the craving of my soul?" Archy tells us he was a free-verse poet in his last incarnation. This makes me think, "Is self-expression the main craving of my soul? A pure devotee's main drive is to please Kṛṣṇa, unconditionally. But if one is "born to dance," then what can be done? What good will repression accomplish? Dance (write) for Kṛṣṇa. The Vaiṣṇava poet, Jayadeva Gosvāmī, has also stated his strong desire to be a poet—and to use it for the glorification of Govinda. So that's the course for me. I don't want to come back as a roach.

•

Blue skies, coming along/nothing but blue skies all day long. Prabhupāda's spiritual master wrote to him in a letter: "Turn yourself into an English-speaking preacher." Prabhupāda did it, by Lord Caitanya's mercy.

Kṛṣṇa in the heart,
car in the park.
Ink in the pen,
when oh when
will that day be mine?

Holy name at 1 A.M.,
sitting in the dark,
it is never easy before the mind
turns it into—
 trains of thought,
 snatches of song,
Auld Lang Syne.
Samsāra dāvā . . .
Remember when?

Holy name, I cheat myself,
but you are ever-kind.
Please grant my wish,
my true *svarūpa* doesn't
want this rambling *aparādha*,
please enter *once*
and change me forever with
mad hankering for
śuddha-nāma.
Car in freezing cold
I pray to catch a hold
on the humble-courage
of the Vaiṣṇava heart.
O hear me Kāna,
I borrow words,
I do what I have seen the
gurus do; I'm meant for You,
so please pick me up and
place me as an atom
at Your lotus feet.

O Prabhupāda,
I play my part,
an actor on the stage,
in the start of old age,
please touch me again
tell me when.
Let me be your son
as I am, happy serving you
in a way that makes you
smile,
and claim me as a worker
for your cause.

~

I'm hearing the tape that Madhu made of my private "farewell" meeting with Mahārāja on December 21, 1991. I have partially written this into *Pilgrimage*, but since *Returning from Pilgrimage* is intended as assimilation of what I learned in Vṛndāvana, I will repeat some of it here.

I wanted to cover a number of points in that meeting, so I wrote them down as an outline. Madhu held the outline in his hand in case I needed a cue. Here's what I wrote:

Points for personal meeting with NM:

1. Say I want to develop my relationship with you, so I want to tell you something about myself and my activities.
2. Show him a map and trace route from India to USA. In Northeast USA I visit temples where I have disciples, and sometimes I visit people's homes and give lectures (as NM did in New Delhi).
3. Sometimes I stop somewhere just to be alone for a week. That is when I write or study. I told you two years ago that I like solitude sometimes and you approved, as long as I don't do it all the time.
4. Now when I take time to study, I have your cassettes and the books you have recommended.
5. Then to the Caribbean. Disciples are there. Hindus. (Say I have to rest after travels and cannot see so many people during the day because I get headaches.)
6. Then to Europe. I have a small van there (smaller than Hanumān's van).
7. I plan to return after seven months, mainly to associate with you.

8. I want to express my gratitude. (Be indirect here.)

a) When I first came to India this year I didn't know that I would become so attracted to your teachings.

b) But now I think my Prabhupāda wants me to approach you as a *śikṣa-guru*.

c) I thought I could go no further than *vaidhī-bhakti* and my understanding of the importance of Kṛṣṇa's *parakīya-rasa* was very limited.

d) Now I feel a new life. I realize at least the necessity of developing greed for remembering and serving Kṛṣṇa in Vraja.

9) Now I need a period to assimilate what you have given. I hope this separation will increase my *utkāṇṭha*.

10) Ask Madhu to speak what he likes to Mahārāja.

11) Can I write you letters?

11:18 A.M.



Upon seeing the pitiable condition of Bhīṣma, Kṛṣṇa began speaking with tears in His eyes. Not only was He shedding tears, but He also forgot Himself in His compassion. Therefore, instead of offering obeisances to Kṛṣṇa directly, devotees offer obeisances to His compassionate nature. Actually, because Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, it is very difficult to approach Him. But the devotees, taking advantage of His compassionate nature, which is represented by Rādhārāṇī, always pray to Rādhārāṇī for Kṛṣṇa's compassion.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 176

Lately I have been thinking, "What if I am less attracted to sections of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* where Kṛṣṇa is described somewhere other than Vṛndāvana?" So I was reading along, and I was struck by Kṛṣṇa's tears of compassion for Bhīṣmadeva. Then I was pleased to hear the connection of Kṛṣṇa's tears to Rādhikā, "His compassionate nature." I bet there are even deeper pastimes involved here, and they could be explained by a *rasika* devotee like Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. But this sudden entrance of Rādhā into the pastime of Kṛṣṇa at Kurukṣetra made me think it is not wrong, even as a tiny *sādhaka*, to always look for the mention of Her name. Mahārāja said that if a prayer (or *līlā*) has not even a scent of Rādhārāṇī in it, then it is not so pleasing to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Next in *Nectar of Devotion* I was struck by this statement under the quality of "Liberal": Kṛṣṇa doesn't take into consideration the offenses of a devotee, "He simply considers the service that is rendered by His devotee." We always harken to the mention of special mercy clauses.

I was also struck by the definition of "Happy": "Any person who is always joyful and untouched by any distress is called happy" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p.177).

Not even a slight distress can touch Kṛṣṇa. Once some of the *gopīs* went to the place where the *brāhmaṇas* were performing sacrifices and said, "Dear wives of the *brāhmaṇas*, you must know that not even a slight smell of distress can touch Kṛṣṇa. He knows no loss, He knows no defamation, He has no fear, He has no anxiety, and He does not know calamity. He is simply encircled by the dancers of Vraja and is enjoying their company in the *rāsa* dance."

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 178

I was impressed by this because I have been trying to remove myself from distress during this *bhajana* period. Today I heard from Śamika Ṛṣi how some impending legal complications in his business are causing him trouble. My first impulse was to say, "I don't want to hear about it. It will spoil my meditation." But a guest ought to be sympathetic to his host—and I am. So I started to discuss his business entanglement. I didn't inquire into the details, but imagined and allowed a feeling of anxiety to enter my mood. So here is Kṛṣṇa, "not even a slight smell of distress can touch Kṛṣṇa." I would like to be with Him and be like that too. But first I have to qualify, going through ordeals of self-purification and enduring the miseries of the miserable world.

I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda describing misery. He gave himself as an example. He said (from a lecture in Los Angeles, May 1973), "I am your spiritual master and you are taking care of me very nicely, but still I have a cough. And even if there is not cough," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "then a letter comes and there is something in it that causes me distress in the mind. So the miseries come, *adhyātmic*, *adhibhautic* and *adhidaivic*."

In the same lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda was pointing out basic flaws in modern civilization. We are proud of our cars and highways, yet we have arranged things that one has to drive thirty miles to see a doctor or a friend. And there is always the danger of an accident. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that Kṛṣṇa consciousness can solve all

the problems of society, yet the government sees Kṛṣṇa consciousness as “something sentimental.” But politicians who are drunkards and women-mongers, they are considered very good. As Prabhupāda spoke, I realized what he wanted to do—how much influence he sought for devotees in the world—how he confronted the world, whereas *sādhus* usually turn away from it.



I haven’t been sitting out here quietly as I did in the summer. I seem to be in a happy rush—write an article for *BTG*, edit a *Prabhupāda Meditations*, pack a shoulder bag and head out to the shack. Keep an eye on the watch. No time to sit back.

I know it’s good to do that sometimes. Just assess where you are and let Kṛṣṇa approach you. Let Him know what He already knows. Twitch your nose like a rabbit does. Let the cold encroach on your body for a few moments. But you can’t do it for long, so the busy-for-Kṛṣṇa mode is also good.

My *BTG* essay was an ordinary defense of Kṛṣṇa against some atheistic claims, but “ordinary” means simple *paramparā* with a strong thrust. It makes you feel as if you have accomplished something; you swell with a preacher’s pride. I think how the essay may strengthen the faith especially of Indian members, since it is in reply to the doubts of an Indian science student. Kṛṣṇa lets us do these things and feel good about them. In *Nectar of Devotion*, under “Controlled by Love,” Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Kṛṣṇa becomes obliged to the loving spirit of the devotee and not exactly to the service rendered.” Kṛṣṇa is complete and doesn’t need anyone’s service. “It is the devotee’s attitude of love and affection for Kṛṣṇa that makes Him obliged” (*Nectar of Devotion*, p.178–9).

Oh, excellent, excellent chance
to serve our spiritual master!
Excellent day for that,
perfect skies and weather,
—so thank You, Lord and
Gurudeva . . .
Please accept the little offering
which I attempted
on your behalf.



Days rolling on . . . 12 left, then it will be 11, 10, and before you know it, you will be in New York. The king tried to stop the tide but no one can stop tide or time.

Everything is controlled by God—and He is controlled by the love of His devotees. They are under the *yoga-māyā* of loving Him as their child or friend or lover. They do this in the place where there is no anxiety—only the spiritual anxiety caused by loving Kṛṣṇa who causes waves in the ocean to increase their *utkāṇṭha*.

~

So the days are rolling but I won't be afraid. I'll grab onto my beads and the *mahā-mantra*. Do as much as I can in my service and then realize, Kṛṣṇa says, "that's all for now." Go where He wants you to go, but insist, "I want to follow my gurus. No liberation, please. No *Vaikuṇṭha-rasa*. I don't know anything except that I want to hold out for service in Vraja."

~

4:15 P.M.



At that farewell meeting, Mahārāja also said to me, "I have given a line. When you will come [again, after seven months], then you will feel more"—I suppld the next word—"hungry."

He quoted the verse that Śukadeva knows, and Lord Śiva knows the meaning of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and Vyāsa may or may not know . . . He said that even reading the *ṭīkā*s of the authorized commentators will not reveal the inner meaning of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*." So many things are hidden. . . . If we have *śraddhā* and are following a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava, and if he is giving a line, an outline, then the *ṭīkā*s will be opened. Pray to *ṭīkā*s and to *rasika* Vaiṣṇavas so we may enter into the explanation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. . . . Theoretical knowledge is not knowledge."

~

It is twenty-five degrees and the sky got very dark. They let the lower grade school kids off early, but it is not snowing, just very dark and gray.

I'm starting to do a clerical clean-up of my two rooms—filing papers, getting ready to leave in twelve days. But there is still time to learn something, to feel something.

Too much pausing between sentences here. Are you waiting for some "*rasika*" inspiration? Where am I? Dreams are authentic but almost always weird; not what I want. World of shadow that fades and disperses again and again as I wake, like bubbles in the sea. If I were Kṛṣṇa consciousness . . .

The angels of mercy.

My friends here helping me.

My confidence that Kṛṣṇa consciousness can flow even through me—I'm a conduit. We are linked on the big pipeline.

In the quiet little forest patch on a dark Thursday, the house is warm and light, and the children are chattering, typewriter going full speed in the basement. . . . My rooms are quiet, removed from the rest.

Little movements; I stand in the hallway on my way out to the shack. Baladeva tucks a heat pad into each hand under my gloves, and he hands me the metal hand warmer in its red pouch. I put on my boots and hats. I have told him not to converse with me when I'm on my way out here, so we stand silently, maybe a few words about whether it will snow and how my heating method is working outdoors. When I come back in, I can relax a bit with him.

Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, I am after Kṛṣṇa. I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda on a "knock out" morning walk. He blasted the Christians and the scientists. For any of us to talk exactly as he does would be outrageous, but he can do it.

He was saying how they waste semen, which is actually blood. Forty drops of blood in a drop of semen. "Do you like to do something by which you lose so much blood? Can you call that pleasure?"

"No."

Prabhupāda: "And yet you are doing it every night!"

Devotee: "I'm doing it, Prabhupāda?"

Prabhupāda: "Not you . . ."

Just to be near him, you are liable to get thrown into the category of fools and rascals. Oh, how he blasted them for not following the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." He said he met so many priests and none of them could answer that question, "Why do you kill against Christ's order?" He said that that question, and another, "If you agree God is unlimited, why do you say He has only one son?"—he asked and they could not answer. I used to cringe sometimes hearing these tapes, but I don't anymore.

"As for the scientists, they are not even gentlemen. They say they will do it—create life from matter—in the future . . ."

•

Hare Kṛṣṇa. Keep the mail away. I saw one commercial envelope with the blurb, "There are miracles out there and they are yours for the asking!" And another one, promising some relief—I threw them away.

Under Kṛṣṇa's quality of "All famous" Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, ". . . if Kṛṣṇa consciousness is preached all over the world, the darkness of ignorance and the anxiety of material existence will turn into the whiteness of purity, peacefulness and prosperity" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 180).

First responses: What am I doing to preach? And disbelief—how can such an auspicious change come about just by the spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness? How is it possible that such an esoteric, India-based movement could sweep the world? You let that idea sink in. Anything is possible for God, and anything is possible in this stifling, whimsical world. I may not live to see it, but let me not go down as a disbeliever. What am I doing to preach?

“Upon hearing the chanting of Kṛṣṇa’s name, Lord Balarāma saw that His dress had become white. . . . And the cowherd girls saw all of the water of the Yamunā River turn into milk, so they began to churn it into butter. In other words, by the spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or the glories of Kṛṣṇa, everything became white and pure” (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 180).

Śrīla Prabhupāda sees *kṛṣṇa-līlā* in terms of preaching. This beautiful, happy thing should be shared very widely.



I think of one of the devotees at Gītā-nāgarī. She reads my books. I wonder whether she will like them. Then I think of Turiya in his little cabin. It’s not much bigger than this shack, although much warmer. He wrote me a letter. So I have to stop thinking of them. Be alone. Merton says, “Be alone *for* people, not as an escape from them.” I think I know what he means.

I’ll keep reading the Tenth Canto “Gītās” again and again, “thousands of times.” Without this, and an understanding of it (from Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura especially), then I cannot develop taste for more confidential books like *Vilāpa-kusumāñjali*. I am coming to the last chapter, “*Brahmara-gītā*,” and then I will go back to chapter 21, “*Veṇu-gītā*.” I’ll be singing my halting Sanskrit in the early mornings wherever I may be.

Looking forward to writing my “on the road” diary for “Among Friends.” When I think of it, I’m filled with gratitude. I savor choosing which notebook to take with me, and I await the events—see them through the eyes of the scriptures—and write down what happens.

Bland, golden *purīs* for lunch—we usually have *capātīs*. I thought, “Śrīla Prabhupāda said he always had *purīs* throughout his childhood. Only when he was twenty-one years old did he first eat *capātīs*.” Some memories of him stay like that. It will soon be time to build momentum for the course I will teach at the VIHE in Vṛndāvana, “The Life and Teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

Now it is time to go in. Sorry I didn’t change into a new body or suddenly lose my ego out here. It’s getting darker and darker. I am happy to be myself. I am part of

Kṛṣṇa; that feeling isn't wrong—but learn who you are—I love Him, know Him, serve Him in this world and forever in the next.

•

7:00 P.M.

While we were reading to the conclusion of *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta*, my mind was distracted. I was worried about the legal problems one of my disciples is having—it produced a general anxiety in my mind. After the reading, I admitted this to Madhu. He replied that there was nothing I could do in the way of legal advice to help my disciple. He said he very much liked seeing me in Vṛndāvana associating with a person like Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, and he thought, “This is what my Guru Mahārāja ought to do.”

Madhu said that when I come to the West and enter the lives of my disciples, I may take on their language and their material concerns—but that won't help them. Neither am I expert at worldly dealings. He said the best thing I can do for my disciples is to absorb myself in reading and crying out to Kṛṣṇa. Whatever is going to happen in the world is going to happen. Let me serve the devotees by turning more to the spiritual world. One problem follows another in full, living color in this world. Who knows what will happen next? Better do what I am meant to do, that which is my *sannyāsa-dharma*—renounce and think of Kṛṣṇa.

“O Kṛṣṇa, because of their connection with You, the following things have achieved the fruit of their transient existences: the wives of the cowherd men have become restless, their shyness destroyed, and they have been humbled out of love for You; their songs have become swollen with passion; Your excess frivolity has become very sweet; and my fully elated words scatter sweetness by stringing a garland of verses about You” (*Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta*, verse 101).

“O Lord, let our words be empowered to sweetly describe Your beauty, and let our thoughts swell with eagerness when dwelling on Your childhood.” (*Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta*, verse 105).

My tendency is to shy away from the miseries of the world and feast on the vision of adolescent Kṛṣṇa, even though I am not able to do it. There is a precedent in the ideal *sannyāsa* behavior of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He said He felt harassed when His disciples asked Him to intervene to save His follower Gopinātha Paṭṭanāyaka from capital punishment by the King. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, “As a beggar *sannyāsī*, a mendicant, I wish to live alone in a solitary place, but these people come to tell Me about their unhappiness and disturb Me. . . . There is no need for Me to stay here and be disturbed in that way” (C.c., *Antya* 9.64, 66).

All right, stay here and pray that everyone can remember Kṛṣṇa, starting with yourself.



February 14, 2:07 A.M.

With my brother in Vṛndāvana we discussed how to make *japa* more *rasika*. Some pick up a book like *Padyāvalī* and read a verse now and then while chanting. I don't seem to be able to do that. I stay "down" on the simple platform of trying to hear, trying to hear. They may say, "Yes, but it will help you if you remind yourself *whose* name you are trying to hear, if you can become attracted to His pastimes and Rādhā's pastimes." They are right, but I rarely do it. I glance at the pictures on my altar, especially at the feet of the Pañca-tattva, and to Rādhā-Śyāmasundara.

O holy name, You know my situation. Is there relief ahead for me? Am I too afraid to accept full shelter at Your lotus feet? Am I too mentally distracted? Are You therefore going to drag me to Your lotus feet by some calamity?

I turn faithfully to the practice of *nāma-japa*. I think of a devotee friend who chants his sixteen-round quota before *maṅgala-ārati*. I think of the good examples of others.

"A *brahmacārī* hears only words concerning Kṛṣṇa consciousness; hearing is the basic principle for understanding, and therefore the pure *brahmacārī* engages fully in *harer nāmānukīrtanam*—chanting and hearing the glories of the Lord. He restrains himself from the vibrations of material sounds, and his hearing is engaged in the transcendental sound vibration of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa" (Bg. 4.26, purport).



I very much like the tone of *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta*, how Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura kept yearning to see handsome young Kṛṣṇa's form, then how he *does* behold Him, "Here comes my very life, Kṛṣṇa! This is He, my Lord Kṛṣṇa playing on His flute! This is He . . ." He describes the Lord's feet and dress and arms and face and eyes and peacock feather, and especially the low vibration of His flute. "He is the object of my words, which though mad, are fortunate to be describing Him."

That tone—Kṛṣṇa is my life, I thirst to see Him and describe Him—that is the most desirable. One removes one's interest from this world and its non-Kṛṣṇa news. Yes, Kṛṣṇa is present in the *jagat* when the matter is permeated by His energy. But to think specifically of Kṛṣṇa's internal energy is the qualification of the *mahātmā*. Why not strive to be a *mahātmā* who is always chanting Kṛṣṇa's glories, bowing down before Him, and worshipping Him?



When I came into the dark room at 1 A.M., I could see the snow outside. Usually the windows only reflect what's in the room at that time, but this morning I saw the snowfall, just as I desired.

What does this have to do with Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana? It is some idea you have that snow will help you create your inner world. Somehow or other, that's the point: become strong and capable to live in an inner world. Living in an inner world means being able to remember Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana at all times, even while competently carrying out external duties. The dual personality is the sign of a person who is practicing *rāgānugā-bhakti*:

There are two processes by which one may execute this *rāgānugā-bhakti*—external and internal. When self-realized, the advanced devotee externally remains like a neophyte and executes all the śāstric injunctions, especially hearing and chanting. However, within his mind, in his original purified self-realized position, he serves Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana in his particular way. He serves Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours, all day and night.

—C.c., *Madhya* 22.156–7

I am not *imagining* I am a cowherd boy or *gopī* in Vraja. My inner world is simply to remember, "The Six Gosvāmīs have given books. Go to them. Hear about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Turn to that life, remember your new purpose, chant the holy name. It is right to think of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in Vṛndāvana, of what they are doing and how Their devotees serve Them." For me, I have to affirm the very existence of Vraja-consciousness within me, or else it will be swept away by external life.

"As for the hearing, chanting, remembering, etc., which are the various *aṅgas* (parts) of *vaidhī-bhakti* and which have previously been described, the wise should know them to be useful in *rāgānugā-bhakti* as well" (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 1.2.296).

•

"Cram my purports. Read or else how can you preach? Whenever you get time, as much as possible, read my books."

It is said that this age of Kali is three-fourths devoid of religious principles. Hardly one-fourth of the principles of religion are still observed in this age. But by the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa, this vacancy of Kali-yuga has not only been completely filled, but the religious process has been

made so easy that simply by rendering transcendental loving service unto Lord Kṛṣṇa by chanting His holy names, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, one can achieve the highest result of religion, namely, being transferred to the highest planet within the spiritual world, Goloka Vṛndāvana.

—Kṛṣṇa, Vol. III, p. 245

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Is that a cliché only, “Praise Kṛṣṇa”? How do you do it? Is it just a matter of saying “Haribol”? No, praise is a quality of appreciating God’s greatness—either His majesty or His *karuṇa* (mercy) or His beauty—whatever quality that attracts you. It must be sincere to actually be praise. So often all we can do is ask for help, “God, please fix my life.” Praise starts after that point. (It *should* come in the beginning, middle, and end.) In all the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Purāṇas* and their supplements, either directly or indirectly, Lord Hari is praised by devotees who know the purpose of life.

I pray that He who *is* life, who grants intelligence, memory and sincerity, will allow me to praise Him. Lord Kṛṣṇa, You are the greatest. You are giving us the very rare opportunity to hear of Your intimate pastimes. You are giving us a chance to serve Lord Caitanya’s *saṅkīrtana* movement in ISKCON. You are allowing me to praise You. Please allow me to do it sincerely.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, “A first class Vaiṣṇava is he whose very presence makes others chant the holy names of Kṛṣṇa.”

“My dear child, continue dancing, chanting and performing *saṅkīrtana* in association with devotees. Furthermore, go out and preach the value of chanting *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, for by this process You will be able to deliver all fallen souls” (C.c., Ādi 7.92).

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Reading notes

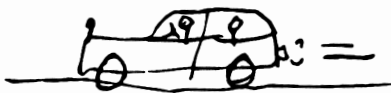
Uddhava began speaking to pacify Nanda-bābā and Mother Yaśodā. He praised their sons, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma as the primeval Supreme, as the Supersoul, and as Nārāyaṇa. He delivered Kṛṣṇa’s message to them that He would return to them soon. Uddhava reminded Mother Yaśodā and Nanda that Kṛṣṇa was present in everyone’s heart. He said, “He has no mother, no father . . . no work . . . Yet to enjoy His pastimes and deliver saintly devotees, He manifests Himself” (*Bhāg.* 10.46.38–39). Uddhava also said, “The Supreme Lord Hari is certainly not your son alone. Rather, being the Lord, He is the son, Soul, father and mother of everyone” (*Bhāg.*

10.46.42). In this way, Uddhava was “relieving the distress of Nanda and Yaśodā by bringing them to a more philosophical plane” (*Bhāg.* 10.46.43, purport).

We can’t help but think Śrī Uddhava’s philosophical talk was in a different mood than that of Nanda and Yaśodā. Did they want to hear that they were not the only parents of Kṛṣṇa, and that He actually had no mother or father? They might think in that way on occasion, as when hearing from a philosophical devotee, but their normal mood was to see Kṛṣṇa as their darling son whom they loved more than life itself. Uddhava, however, sincerely offered solace by way of realizing Kṛṣṇa’s independent and inconceivable greatness—and the fact that He was always with them. Thus Nanda Mahārāja was absorbed in hearing all night about the glories of His wonderful son.

There is a nice picture of Vraja’s village life in the *Bhāgavatam*’s narration. When very early morning comes, the *gopīs* rise from their beds and “lighting lamps, they worshiped their household Deities and began churning the yogurt into butter.” So very early in the morning, these girls had serious work to do. As they pulled on the churning ropes, they loudly sang the glories of lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa. This was their “morning program,” working and chanting.

The *gopīs* were very happy to see Kṛṣṇa’s servant, Uddhava, and they crowded around him without embarrassment. “He is wearing Kṛṣṇa’s clothes and ornaments!” The *gopīs* humbly and shyly honored Uddhava with pleasing words and brought him to a quiet place. Because He was so closely connected to Kṛṣṇa, the *gopīs* wanted to hear from him.



You got your snow. Two inches at least of powdery snow. Animal tracks across the road. Walk as usual, gray overhead may send down more. I’m happy because I’m writing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The day ahead is gains
for going inside where
I tell you, it is for sale
if you’ve got the price
it is something very nice
as the Swami told us twice,
“It is such a nice thing.”

What is the nice thing?
It is Kṛṣṇa Himself,
and He wants to be with you,
but you have to be fit
—in His company are only those
who love Him and don't spoil
His play with any tinge of
the envies and hurts of ego
as we know it in this world.

I believe He's calling me.
If I can stop fooling around.
Seize hold,
and yet let go.
Follow your gurus and
give all you can through your
favorite way serving out of
nine *bhakti* ways.

I'm a person and
a preacher
a soul and yet a teacher.
"Become a guru" Mahāprabhu said
"and tell everyone you meet,
the Kṛṣṇa *upadeśa* and *līlā*—
do it and I will be with you,
always."

In the car, spinning child-like rhymes, nevermind. The tracks of the car cut into the snow. There are bad men, destructive plans being hatched. People don't have enough to eat or warm places to live in the winter. Lord Caitanya said it is a very bad age and the only remedy is direct, topmost, spiritual—chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.

In other words, there is no time for social welfare, political reform, or *varṇāśrama*. He gave them *harināma* in the most direct way. Nowadays it may be different, but the final remedy is the same—arrange your life so you can devote maximum time

to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If you can't do it, at least give yourself *some* time for it, and work for it, for yourself and for others.

He wanted snow to fall
and looked out all day.
Overnight it came, in the
morning all white.
Out he went to play, the
first to make tracks
(after the deer and fox)
singing *saṁsāra-dāvā*,

and aware it is not the snow
that is so wonderful
as in any way useful,
but Kṛṣṇa the mystic potency,
who makes all things happen—
even dangerous and sad events
are for our betterment
if we learn to surrender
to Kṛṣṇa's sweet way—
chanting His Names
as best you can
(kept trying)
and hearing a poem where
Śrī Kṛṣṇa appears as the
beloved of His passionate
devotee.

ॐ

11:17 A.M.



Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja tells us of the *līlā* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. You can find much of what he says in Viśvanātha Cakravartī's books and in the *līlā-granthas*. But it has to be *told* also—told by him and heard from him.

We go to him and hear. He knows much more than we do both in terms of "science" of *rasa*, and his taste and realization which far surpass ours. We don't

know anyone like him who is so *rasika*, so exactly lined up in *paramparā* from Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—and at the same time so respectful and affectionate toward our Śrīla Prabhupāda. A unique combination in one person. And although he is busy with his own Mathurā congregation, he likes to guide us.

I wanted to express something of what it is like to go and sit with him, but perhaps I can't do it. I can continue to give excerpts. At least let me say I am aware that hearing the tapes is a life-saver, but it is not a replacement for sitting with him—for *watching* him speak—and for having him notice you and speak to you.

Mahārāja is talking about what it is like when Kṛṣṇa eats at Nandagram surrounded by His friends and parents. Madhumaṅgala tells Yaśodā-mātā, "O Mother, Kṛṣṇa has a stomach *rogha* (disease). He cannot digest. So don't give Him. Give me."

Sometimes Mother Yaśodā gives Madhumaṅgala so much on his plate that Madhumaṅgala says, "Oh! A crow has come out!" He points to the window and when everyone looks in for the crow, Madhumaṅgala puts his *prasādam* on Kṛṣṇa's plate and says, "I have taken all that you have given. So again give me."

After the feast, when all go to wash their hands, Kṛṣṇa very silently puts His remnants in the hand of Daniṣṭhā. Mother Yaśodā knows the *sakhīs* get Kṛṣṇa's remnants, so she sometimes gives them remnants herself. Kṛṣṇa says, "Those are not good things, so give them to Rādhikā and tell Her She cannot prepare very delicious food. Tell Her She should give it to the *sakhīs*."

Rati-mañjarī is praying that Daniṣṭhā has received Kṛṣṇa's remnants, so will I then take them from her and give them to You, Śrīmatī? Rādhikā will ask, "Oh Rati-mañjarī, Tulasī-mañjarī, when Kṛṣṇa was taking all this food, were you present at that time?"

Rati-mañjarī says, "I was there, but far away." (Because Kṛṣṇa's father and all were there, so due to shame I could not go there.)

Rādhā: "How Kṛṣṇa tasted it?"

Rati-mañjarī: "He tasted it so much."

Rādhā: "How you know that He tasted very well?"

Rati-mañjarī: "Kṛṣṇa saw toward me and by eyes, He told me how delicious it was!"

Rādhā: "How do you know if Kṛṣṇa's stomach was filled and He was satisfied?"

Rati-mañjarī: "I know."

Rādhā: "How did you know?" Then Śrīmatī looked into the eyes of Rati-mañjarī and saw Kṛṣṇa there. Because Tulasī- (Rati-) mañjarī was so cheerful from seeing

Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā could glimpse Kṛṣṇa in the eyes of the *mañjarī*. This made Rādhā very pleased, with hairs standing on end, tears in Her eyes, and choked in voice.

❧

Everywhere snow is dripping and occasionally thumping to the roof. The sunshine is here; the evergreens are glistening wet—beads of jewel-like water in rainbow colors. Am I so far away from Vṛndāvana? The blue jays cry their warning. I will take shelter in these transcendental sources—Mahārāja's voice, Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, his voice, the *mahā-mantra* which I utter and pray. I will not allow myself to be dragged down the rapids of material anxiety. I belong to a different sphere.

❧

"Although Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and is therefore not partial to anyone, it is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* that He has special attraction for a devotee who worships His name in love and affection" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p.181).

Śrīla Prabhupāda is referring to the *Gītā* verse *samo 'haṁ sarva-bhūteṣu, na me dveṣyo . . .* But that verse doesn't mention *harināma* specifically. It speaks of friendship with Kṛṣṇa. Yet in *Nectar of Devotion*, Śrīla Prabhupāda specifies that worship of His name with love is the way to draw Kṛṣṇa to us. Prabhupāda, you have always told us to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and therefore I will never give up trying. It is the way to come closer to Kṛṣṇa, the easiest and most direct way. But we have to do it nicely, feeling regret for our inability. We have to call on Him with devotion. Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.

Fill this page before you go into the mire of clerical work, putting books in one box, papers in another—this is for the Caribbean, this goes directly to Rome, this goes to Gītā-nāgarī, this stays in Stroudsburg. And a planning talk with Baladeva.

❧

1:15 P.M.

Prabhupāda is teaching what we need. I'm hearing him and feeling enlivened. I'm one of the bunch. On a tape from Los Angeles in '73, I hear Śrīla Prabhupāda say, "I can sing if you will sing the chorus." Devotees cheer and he starts singing "*Jaya rādhā-mādhava kuñjabihārī*." A big chorus—maybe two or three hundred devotees—responds. This is thrilling stuff, even to hear twenty years later.

Then he starts lecturing. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse is the statement by Arjuna that after Kṛṣṇa's departure, he was defeated by a gang of infidel cowherd men. Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks the facts, that Arjuna was taking care of Kṛṣṇa's 16,108 wives, but

they were plundered by some cowherd men and Arjuna couldn't stop them. Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "This is the instance that we may be very powerful so long as Kṛṣṇa keeps us powerful. We are not independently powerful." I hear this while I'm drying off in the shower, and putting on *tilaka*. I am excited by what he says; I drink it in; learn it. How nice to be back in that group again! How important and true are his words! I'm also glad that today, people can pick up this potency even from the tapes. They can also glimpse how it must have been especially sweet when such a loving chorus of devotees sang with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

ra

4:09 P.M.



Under Kṛṣṇa's quality of "All-opulent," Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "When Kṛṣṇa was present in Dvārakā, His family, which is known as the Yadu dynasty, consisted of 560 million members. . . . There were more than 900,000 big palatial buildings there to house all these people . . ." (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 182).

When we hear these statistics, we are sometimes doubtful. How could there be so many? We compare it to how things are today, but even in Kṛṣṇa's time, these were no ordinary feats. "Devotees were astonished to see the opulence of Kṛṣṇa." Śrīla Prabhupāda writes that every day, Kṛṣṇa used to give in charity 13,054 ornamented cows from each palace, or 13,054 multiplied by 16,108.

I remember a few initiated disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda came to him and unsubmitively challenged him on figures like these. One remark was, "Where did they get enough toilets? What about the plumbing?" Śrīla Prabhupāda finally told the so-called disciples that they didn't need a spiritual master. He also told them that they were outsiders due to their mentality, so they shouldn't concern themselves with the internal affairs of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. He shut them out from his mercy. They shut themselves out.

I don't doubt these astounding figures. Sadāputa Prabhu also offers explanations about how these things occur in supernatural dimensions and how they don't tally with our limited experience. In other words, the *Bhāgavatam* is not asking us to force 13,054 times 16,108 cows into a two-acre field.

But for the sake of newcomers and those attached to limited physics and things as we see them every day, one sometimes feels restless when "the impossible" is blithely reported in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. It takes some explaining, that's all. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī says that unless one accepts the principle of inconceivable potency, he cannot begin to understand God—the God who ate dirt and showed His mother that

all the universes were in His mouth. Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura states, "Therefore Your opulence is just like an ocean that no one can measure" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p.182).



Under the quality "Supreme Controller," Śrīla Prabhupāda (following Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī) states that Kṛṣṇa showed greater favor to the serpent Kāliya than to Lord Brahmā. "This contradictory treatment by Kṛṣṇa is just befitting His position, because in all the Vedic literature He is described as the complete independent" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p.183).

What does it mean that Kṛṣṇa is "*svarāt*," completely independent? It means He doesn't depend on any source outside Himself. He doesn't need a mother or father to give Him milk, or a teacher to give Him knowledge. He appears to be dependent on Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, but She is an expansion of His own internal pleasure potency (*hlādinī-śakti*). Kṛṣṇa also doesn't need to conform to anyone's judgement of morality. He is all-good in His own way.

Somehow I like the fact that Kṛṣṇa is independent. I realize this also means He is not obliged to do as I might want Him to do from my limited perspective. (When we prayed to Kṛṣṇa, "Please cure Śrīla Prabhupāda," Kṛṣṇa responded by taking Prabhupāda away.) Pure devotees like the *gopīs* accuse Kṛṣṇa of being a cheater, but "He remains my worshipable Lord unconditionally." This means they accept that Kṛṣṇa is independent.

We love a completely independent Lord. He submits to *prema*, but that doesn't compromise his independence. My guides advise me to pray to Kṛṣṇa and ask for His mercy. I wait on His sweet will and trust that He is always acting as my well-wisher, arranging for me to come back to Him if only I could give up my own petty independence and surrender.



I could go on "forever" commenting on sections from Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and I think I will.



Mahārāja describes how the *sakhīs* distributed the remnants of Kṛṣṇa's *prasādam*. Śrīmatī Rādhikā gives it to Tulasī-maṅjarī to distribute to all.

Rati-maṅjarī prays to be able to give the *prasādam* to Rādhikā Herself. She knows that Rādhā has not eaten all day because She has been waiting for Kṛṣṇa's remnants.

When Mahārāja spoke about these things, our group listened attentively, with deep appreciation. This could be observed when interruptions occurred. Suddenly one of Mahārāja's *māṭha* members would come to the door and open it and say that

we were too shut in, or a congregational *gr̥hastha* would stop at the door and begin conversing in Hindi with Mahārāja. At moments like that, we felt torn away from the most precious thing. I would think, “Don’t they realize what they are interrupting? Will he return now and continue it?”

For Mahārāja, these interruptions seemed normal and did not cause him any anxiety. By and by, he returned his attention to us.

Sometimes he wouldn’t resume from the same place but say, “Now, next *śloka*.”

“Rati-mañjarī gave *kṛṣṇa-prasādam* to the *sakhīs*. Kṛṣṇa had taken many kinds of *prasādam*, in four kinds, those that are drunk, chewed, swallowed, and licked. Within each kind are many varieties. Many drinks; mango juice, *lassi*, chutneys, so many varieties.” Mahārāja said he could not describe all the foods in English. He said simply, “So many things.”

Then he began to tell again, the effects of Lord Caitanya’s tasting the *mahā-prasādam* of Lord Jagannātha.



Days running out, that’s what’s happening, that’s the ominous thing. I just have to face it. Live now in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by hearing and chanting. This is the way to cheat death. With full *śraddhā*, let us go on preparing our books and doing our other duties cheerfully. We are not in illusion. We know this life cannot last forever. We don’t even know how the present moment is existing. Only God can know and sustain life, keep the planets in orbit . . . create these machines called bodies in which the spirit-self lives for awhile.

Being productive in life does not mean we can avoid death. (Producing by-products is one of the six symptoms of life—but so is duration, dwindling, and death.) We can, however, avoid the ordinary death of sinful or impious persons. We can think of Kṛṣṇa and aspire for His eternal service. Then our next life will be a better one.

So death is the ominous thing. Reversals and sufferings that occur during life—which are sometimes so severe that people wish death would come—are also connected to death. All is temporary. This is philosophy. Philosophy is real life, real truth. Truth leads us to Kṛṣṇa.



Snow only in patches now; the enchanting decoration of the trees is gone. Gone also is the midday sunshine and warmth, the dripping and melting of snow. The day is closing. Madhu has gone to the city to purchase plane tickets, and if he gets back on time, we’ll have our reading.

Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa . . . I didn't said my *gāyatrī* well. I didn't open my heart. Independent Kṛṣṇa lets me come just so far. I need to be more sincere, more willing to pay the high price.

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7:10 P.M.

Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke directly to Americans in one 1973 lecture in Los Angeles. He said that we have a tremendous facility of wealth. Even an ordinary person in America makes more than a high court judge in India. "You are beautiful," he said, "you have everything. Now use it gratefully, aware that it comes from God or 'again you will become a mouse, *punar mūṣiko bhava*.'"

In this connection, he often asked, "You are proud that you are now an American (or an Indian), but how long will you remain in this body? How long will you be an American?" Similarly, how long will I be able to enjoy my freedom?

~

February 15, 2:05 A.M.

" . . . although I commit offenses when I think of You, still, O King and Queen, the shadow of whose holy name delivers one from a host of sins, please be kind to this person who sometimes chants Your holy name" (Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Stava-mālā*, Volume 2, "A List of Requests," text 16).

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Eleven days left. Hare Kṛṣṇa. Its a longer haul than usual, trying to sustain it now by solid entries of Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Nectar of Devotion* excerpts and my straight comments on them, and trying to give out nectar from the talks of Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. The interposing of Prabhupāda's books and Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja's talks is also a way to assimilate and interrelate the two teachers in my life. Thus, I can see more clearly how the two are harmonious influences in my life and how I can give both to others. I have talked about it before and warned myself about it, but now I'm demonstrating that it works without conflict.

I don't expect a final conclusion to this retreat, but I do expect to experience dedication to my process. So much more has to come and I have to actively seek it. I do know what to do to reach "the first stage" in *japa* prayer—the lament of Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura's "Gopīnātha." I have to seek an advanced stage and also patiently wait as I go on with my *bhajana*.

~

Crossing out words, trying to make it right and clear. But sometimes I can only write down what it is, although it may be mistaken. I want to appear right and some

of that can be achieved by editing, but no amount of cosmetic work can exchange or add what's not really there. The worst of it we can drop out. But if I have faith in this process, I will have to go on with no holds barred.

•

I am in the house because it's so cold outside. We are trying to hold out against *māyā's* various harassments, all the devotees in this house. They look to me, some of them, to set an example. I look to the example of my gurus. Prabhupāda tells me to read and chant and (as Īśvara Purī ordered Lord Caitanya) "go out and preach the value of chanting *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, for by this process, You will be able to deliver all fallen souls" (and I will be able to please Śrīla Prabhupāda). Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja also tells me to never abandon *guru-sevā* and preaching on my *gurudeva's* order. Mahārāja never abandons his guru's order, and even sacrifices his personal practices of writing and *harināma-bhajana*.

But Mahārāja also warns us ISKCON activists not to simply run hither and thither and miss the inner teachings of the Six Gosvāmīs. It takes meditation on the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in a thoughtful mood, and that takes time alone or time with *rasika*-inclined devotees. So he warns us that *saṅkīrtana* must be more than wide plane travels, money collection, and manipulation.

"Some behave very well but do not preach the cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, whereas others preach but do not behave properly. You simultaneously perform both duties in relation to the holy name by your personal behavior and by your preaching" (C.c., *Antya* 4.102-3).

•

Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say, especially at the time of a public arrival or departure address, "I have nothing new to say." But he had heart for repeating the message we needed to hear. And new lights did come out. I also have nothing new, nothing that hasn't been said much better by writers before me. But I am meeting new discoveries; for me it is new. So many things I am hearing for the first time. And some teachings which I have heard many time before, I am finally learning.

•

Don't *try* to be so humble, my old college friend says. Then what shall I try for, to be arrogant? Shall I not try at all? Await some good luck? Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes: "The point is that one must anxiously strive to develop this kind of attachment to Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotional service, never becoming complacent and thinking, 'If luck favors me, it will automatically happen.' As one performs the practices of *bhakti-yoga* in the association of pure devotees, one's inner spiritual

strength gradually manifests itself more and more, and the results of fruitive activities begins to dissipate" (*Śrī Manaḥ-śikṣā*, verse 1, purport, p.4).

If I write about humility, let it not be to advertise myself as humble. Let me not think I can achieve humility by my own endeavor. The actual quality descends from Kṛṣṇa to the *bhakta*, by His grace. But I should go on doing what is favorable and avoiding what is unfavorable.

Very well—Satsvarūpa's special humility might be the greatest source of his self-pride. Kowit speaks of accepting "the human commonality of the ego." I'm no better than other devotees, or even nondevotees. I am not superior because of my refined humility. Accept it. I am not superior now and I will not become superior later "when I really attain humility." But Kṛṣṇa is great and sweet, and His lotus feet are truth. He is truth personified. I must anxiously strive to serve so that Kṛṣṇa will accept my service. I must go on chanting, serving, and in *that* sense, cultivate humility. Cultivate it without claiming to attain it.

But what is the "human commonality of ego"? Does it mean wallowing in vices? Does it mean that we understand we are all commonly bound by sloth and sinful desires? The Vaiṣṇava gurus tell us to break the shackles of commonality (*māyā*) and take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They encourage us to free ourselves and then to help others become unshackled. They tell us to work humbly, because we are *all* commonly bound.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes about the subtleties of humility when discussing the behavior of Mādhavendra Purī, "When a person, out of humility, does not desire fame, people generally think him quite humble and consequently give him all kinds of fame. . . . Sometimes a *sahajiyā* presents himself as being void of desires for reputation (*pratiṣṭhā*) in order to become famous as a humble man." (C.c., *Madhya* 4.147, purport).

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Reading notes, *Brahmarā-gītā* ("The Song of the Bee"), Chapter 47

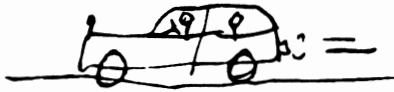
Rādhārāṇī displays the ecstasy known as *divyonmāda*, bewilderment manifested in the form of *citra-jalpa* or mad speech. When Rādhārāṇī speaks to the bee, She exhibits ten kinds of *citra-jalpa*. Prabhupāda explains how the bee came and tried to touch Her lotus feet. This was going on while Uddhava was speaking to the *gopīs*. They were all listening to Uddhava, but Rādhā stood apart and began Her "mad talking," which is actually pure transcendental knowledge.

Rādhā told the bee, “Don’t touch Me!” We read it now and hope a little drop of Her love for Kṛṣṇa will enter our hearts. That love may be expressed in sarcastic insults against the Personality of Godhead, but it is more pleasing to Him than the most pious and exalted prayers of the demigods. It is a lover’s quarrel. Rādhā gave everything to Kṛṣṇa and He appears to have whimsically left Her for other lovers. He may forget Her, but She cannot forget Him.

After awhile, the bee flies away and Rādhā imagines that it has gone to Kṛṣṇa and told Him of Her angry words. She begins to regret Her words. When the bee reappears She speaks to it respectfully, “But why have you come back here, to take us to Him whose conjugal love is so difficult to give up?” Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura interprets Rādhā’s feelings and says that She actually hopes Kṛṣṇa is not satisfied with the women of Mathurā. He must be telling them that they are not as expert in pleasing Him as the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana who play musical instruments, are very beautiful, and who are especially expert in pastimes of meeting the lover, playing questions and answers, and showing jealous anger. “Surely Kṛṣṇa must know this. Therefore He will probably tell the women of Mathurā, ‘My dear women of the Yadu clan, please go back to your families. I no longer desire to associate with you. In fact, I am going back to Vraja early tomorrow morning’” (*Bhāg.* 10.47.21, purport). Rādhā hopes Kṛṣṇa will return and say, “O beloveds of My heart, I swear to you that I will never abandon you again and go elsewhere. Indeed, I have been unable to find anyone in the three worlds with even a trace of your good qualities.”

If I appreciate Rādhā’s speech and devotion as topmost simply because the scriptures and *ācāryas* say that She is the best worshiper, then my appreciation is *vaidhī-bhakti*—I accept Rādhā as best because the scriptures say so. But *rāgānugā-bhakti* is not governed by śāstric injunctions. It is governed by spontaneous feelings. One wants to hear *about* Rādhā as well Her words, out of greed. I am reading these pastimes aloud with a hope of increasing my own greed. I pray for the mercy of the expert spiritual masters who have awakened my interest. Until I heard from them, I had no interest in Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa or anything resembling pure love of God. By the power of the dust from their feet, I may go on reading Rādhā’s mad talking and hope to be touched by Her mercy.





If I'm left to my own devices, without anything to write or chant or read, my thoughts float on a low level, chewing the chewed and meandering. Time goes by not well spent. So "engagement" is necessary. We sometimes berate the too-busy mentality, but if you have something absorbing to occupy your body and mind in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then you're doing well.

No more snow, but cold . . .

~

Gray sky Saturday. Fresh tire tracks where a car parked last night. They threw their garbage out the window. I'm getting ready and even eager to re-enter the temple-visiting world. Finish here with a good week if possible, not petering out, but rising like a full moon tide. Tomorrow is Lord Nityānanda's Appearance Day and I don't feel prepared. At least I can fast. And beggars that we are, we all put out our bony hands and tin plates and cry, "Nityānanda! Nityānanda! Please give us mercy!"

We hardly know Him (we've heard He is Lord Balarāma), yet we pray to our *gurudeva* for Nityānanda's blessings. Without the mercy of Lord Nityānanda, no one can make any advancement in approaching Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. Therefore, Raghunātha Gosvāmī received the Avadhuta's blessings starting from his boyhood.

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11:20 A.M.



A few degrees above freezing and it is raining. I hear a radio pop song, unusual for this spot. I much prefer the rain and even the highway hum. Came out here to clear my mind from cobwebs, past sins, and lethargy. Look at *Nectar of Devotion*.

Under Kṛṣṇa's quality of "Changeless," Śrīla Prabhupāda states that Kṛṣṇa is not affected by the modes of nature. "The practical example of this is that devotees who are under the protection of the Lord are also not affected by material nature" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 184).

Does this refer to us little devotees or just to *mahā-bhāgavatas*? I think Prabhupāda preached that this refers to his own disciples. He would give examples, such as our freedom from habits like smoking and drinking and illicit sex. That doesn't mean we are *completely* unaffected, but we are in the process. Changeless ultimately means no more changing bodies. At least we have our fixed decision, a shadow of *sthāyī-bhāva* by which we will never leave Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.

I can't claim to be unaffected by the radio waves or by a memory of something illicit that I read a few years ago. But we are in the boat of liberation in pure devotional service.



Under Kṛṣṇa's quality of "Ever-Fresh": "Kṛṣṇa is always remembered, and His name is always chanted by millions of devotees, but the devotees never become saturated. Instead of becoming disinterested in thinking of Kṛṣṇa and in chanting His holy name, the devotees get newer and newer impetus to continue the process. Therefore Kṛṣṇa is ever-fresh" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 185).

At least I can say I'm always ready and eager to try again. *Māyā* (or my mind, the *japa* gremlin) knocks me down frequently, so *japa* is like a fight. But I'm always ready to go another round. Come on, let's chant another round. The earlier ones were groggy? Okay, that's more reason to concentrate and make up for them. I'll get some good licks in before this day is over. I'm scrappy, because the holy name is ever-fresh.



I promised I would tell about the bread I didn't eat, so here goes, briefly. I had indigestion at breakfast and was determined to eat only fruit, which is my usual fare. But today is the day after *ekādaśī*, so they gave me some fresh baked bread with butter. He said, "We have a new machine for baking bread." When I heard about the new machine I knew I would have to eat a few pieces of bread to satisfy them. Also, they looked good. So I took an empty cup, filled it with a few pieces of the bread, and hid it in the closet. After breakfast I gave the cup to Madhu. He looked at me disapprovingly. "Now they'll give you even *more*. They'll think you liked it and ate it all. It will never stop."

"But I couldn't refuse," I said.

Madhu didn't approve. He thinks I should just firmly say, "No, I won't eat this. I have poor digestion. Sorry." Be a man and speak the truth.

After this, I was getting ready to take a nap. It occurred to me that all these are loving exchanges; no one is right or wrong.



Under Kṛṣṇa's quality of "*Sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*": "It is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* that one has to become full of joyfulness; this is not exactly joyfulness, but a sense of freedom from all anxieties" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 186).

Even that *brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā* is a very advanced stage for a human being, *na śocati na kāṅkṣati*. But full joyfulness is when one is serving the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.

Again, what about us? We are not yet joyful, even in the way a perfect, Brahman-realized saint is joyful. We are still subject to bad news or body aches, and rumors about ourselves or others still makes us lose our equilibrium. Our advantage is that we know the real goal of joyfulness. Even if we were offered the impersonal joy of oneness, we know better than to accept it. Real joy is in serving Kṛṣṇa with the whole self. Still, a real devotee is not morose at any time, although he experiences the waves of pure love of God. I have read this, and I have seen it in Śrīla Prabhupāda.

It is another rainy Saturday. The body doesn't feel quite right, but the soul can serve and savor.

•

In the last group meeting with Mahārāja before I returned to America, he spoke of the *prasādam* pastimes of Lord Caitanya and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Since Lord Caitanya is in the *bhāva* of Rādhā, when He tastes *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*, He thinks deeply of Rādhārāṇī's offering to Kṛṣṇa, and Her honoring His remnants with Her *sakhīs*.

Lord Caitanya said the *prasādam* of Kṛṣṇa is just like seeing Him, talking with Him, and touching Him. It increases the *utkāṇṭha* to meet Kṛṣṇa. All anxieties will go away by tasting *mahā-prasādam*. By tasting *mahā-prasādam*, all material concerns—eating, sleeping, dressing, and so on—go away. (There are obstacles to meeting Kṛṣṇa. If one is *too* patient, the obstacles will be too difficult to overcome. The *gopīs* think, "How should I go? All will see that I am going. What will they tell?" By this, "shame" comes. But by taking *prasādam*, the way is clear and the *gopīs* overcome their shame. The *gopīs* don't care whether it is day or night.

Similarly, we must be not afraid to go and see Mahārāja. Neither should we be afraid to read *rasika* books. Of course, discretion is important; better to pursue our love without disturbing others. But don't hamper yourself. Don't create obstacles by too much patience! Or shame! Or shyness! Or modesty! As Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says at the end of *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*:

O *rāgānugā* Vaiṣṇava! Don't be worried! Don't be afraid! Go on with your practices of *rāgānugā-bhajana*! After this death you will go to where Kṛṣṇa is! He will attract you. Don't be worried! Kṛṣṇa is always waiting for you. Go on practicing this *rāgānugā bhajana*!

—*Rāga-vartma-candrikā*, p. 19

Chapter Eight

Following the Six Gosvāmīs

... so we can imagine the potency of advanced devotional service, especially when devotees sit together and engage in talking of the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Those devotees express their feelings in such a way that they automatically melt with ecstasy, and many transcendental symptoms become manifested in their bodies. Anyone desiring advancement in devotional service *must follow in the footsteps of such devotees.*

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 204, emphasis added

February 16, 2:10 A.M.

When I was in India, a Godbrother was telling me about the previous year when they had taken a walk on Juhu Beach with Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. They had walked for a distance and then started back toward the temple. Mahārāja said, “We are now in—and he gave the name of a specific spot beside Govardhana Hill where there are *kuṇḍas* and very old trees. This spot occurs near the end of the Govardhana *parikrama*. So even while walking in a worldly place like Juhu Beach, Mahārāja was thinking of Vṛndāvana *parikrama*.

My Godbrother then added, “When Prabhupāda walked on Juhu Beach, he thought of conquering the world for Kṛṣṇa.” So both are nice meditations. I don’t want to make a comparison and say one is better than the other. Both are inspiring. Mahārāja’s remark gives us a glimpse into the eternal meditation of a pure devotee merged in Kṛṣṇa’s eternal pastimes. The brother’s comment about Prabhupāda helps us to appreciate the tremendous drive Prabhupāda had to expand Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Śrīla Prabhupāda was empowered by Lord Caitanya. He not only popularized Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but kept the integrity of its inner life. He taught and established the method of living in ISKCON which could be exported to all cultures and all nations.

How can a person who is living in this world develop inner *bhāva*? We often give the answer Kṛṣṇa gave to Arjuna when we are asked this question: "Remember Me and fight." Sometimes, though, it seems like you have to choose one or the other—fight for survival in the world, or retire from the world and remember Kṛṣṇa's names and pastimes. If you want to remember *kṛṣṇa-līlā* but you feel you are forced to perform worldly duties, then how can you keep the Vṛndāvana *bhajana* mood? I don't think there's an easy answer.

With faith, we can hear Prabhupāda's purport to Kṛṣṇa's answer. Prabhupāda writes, "He does not advise Arjuna simply to remember Him and give up his occupation. No, the Lord never suggests anything impractical. In this material world, in order to maintain the body one has to work. . . . but while engaged in his occupation he should remember Kṛṣṇa (*māṁ anusmara*). If he doesn't practice remembering Kṛṣṇa while he is struggling for existence, then it will not be possible for him to remember Kṛṣṇa at the time of death" (*Bg.*, Introduction, pp. 27–28).

This is practical advice because most devotees cannot live as I do, moving from place to place as a *sannyāsī*. I have no obligation to a family or job, no rent to pay, but my preaching is supported by patrons. Even if I achieve some means of continual *smaraṇam* while living in seclusion, how is it possible for me to teach this to others by my example? Others may be inspired by such an example, but they probably won't be able to emulate it.

Then what is the actual method? We point them to what Prabhupāda said, but they want a more detailed understanding.

When we look again at what Prabhupāda wrote, we see another hint: Prabhupāda himself asks the question, "How is this possible?" Then he gives the same example given by the *ācāryas* of a married woman who is attached to another man:

The wife who is thinking of her lover is always thinking of meeting him, even while she is carrying out her household chores. In fact, she carries out her household work even more carefully so that her husband will not suspect her attachment. Similarly, we should always remember the supreme lover, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and at the same time perform our material duties very nicely. A strong sense of love is required here . . . But we have to develop that sense of love.

—*Bg.*, Introduction, p. 28

As for me setting an example, the only I thing I can suggest is that I continue to develop my own attraction to the holy name. I may choose to do this in solitude, as is the prerogative of a *sannyāsī*, or I may travel from temple to temple and give lectures. But it is my responsibility to encourage everyone, “Don’t be morose. You are not a poor man. Dig a little on the eastern side and you will find the treasure your father has left you.” My solitude allows me to dig for the treasure myself. In this way, solitude can be a social, responsible act.

Not everyone can practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They are entangled in the world in a chain of their own karmic desires and reactions from Nature. But if one can develop a strong desire, he or she can break the bonds of illusory nature. The person who teaches them to break free has to be free himself. The teacher who says, “You have to develop a higher taste,” should have a higher taste himself; otherwise, he may become hypocritical.

Prabhupāda has given us what he calls, “the art and . . . also the secret of *Bhagavad-gītā*: total absorption in the thought of Śrī Kṛṣṇa” (*Bg.*, Introduction, p. 30). He says if we can work with our intelligence and mind engaged in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa, then our bodily sense will also be engaged in *bhakti-yoga*. We may still be working at our office jobs, but our consciousness will change. One has to learn the art of working for Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda emphasizes that the fruit of labor should be offered to the Lord, that the worker should chant Hare Kṛṣṇa as often as possible, and that he should associate with devotees.

It is not advisable for a *sannyāsī* who wants to help others, to become just like them. If he renounces his *sannyāsa* dress, puts on pants and shirt and gets a job alongside his disciples—how will that help anyone? A *sannyāsī* should remain simple, renounced from sense gratification, and always be engaged in chanting and hearing the glories of Kṛṣṇa. He should be available to give relevant instructions from *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. He is not to be the pet of his disciples. His duty is not to simply condone their activities as a family priest, and assure them that he blesses them (in return for gifts). God save us from that.



Reading notes

Uddhava tried to pacify the *gopīs*. He praised them. They didn’t much care to hear this, but Uddhava’s praise is helpful for aspiring *bhaktas*. The *gopīs* dedicated everything to Kṛṣṇa—heart, soul, and life-strength. “ . . . the *gopīs* brought to this world a standard of pure love of God that was previously unknown on the earth” (*Bhāg.* 10.47.25, purport). Uddhava says, “Indeed, by exhibiting your love for Kṛṣṇa

in separation from Him, you have shown me great mercy" (*Bhāg.* 10.47.27). The *gopīs* showed not only Uddhava but the whole world the joy of love of Godhead.

Uddhava read the message of his master, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, to the expectant *gopīs*. It is a philosophical message and in that sense, not very satisfying to the *gopīs*. Still, we who are forgetful of Kṛṣṇa in this world, always gain by hearing Kṛṣṇa's words. He told them that He is never separate from anyone because He is in everyone's heart and He is all-pervading. If we think in this way, it will bring us closer to God who is in all things.

As Uddhava read it, Kṛṣṇa's message became more personal:

But the actual reason why I, the beloved object of your sight, have stayed far away from you is that I wanted to intensify your meditation upon Me and thus draw your minds closer to Me. When her lover is far away, a woman thinks of him more than when he is present before her. Because your minds are totally absorbed in Me and free from all other engagement, you remember Me always, and so you will very soon have Me again in your presence.

—*Bhāg.* 10.47.34–36

The *gopīs* then spoke to Uddhava. They asked if Kṛṣṇa was now surrounded by city women in Mathurā. Did He think of them sometimes—if only in passing during His intimate affairs with His new girlfriends? The *gopīs* asked Uddhava, "Does He recall those nights in the Vṛndāvana forest, lovely with lotus, jasmine and the bright moon?" (*Bhāg.* 10.47.43).

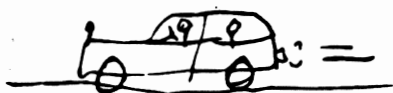
According to Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, the *gopīs* were distraught to think that Lord Kṛṣṇa was bereft of Vṛndāvana and of their service. "They simply could not imagine Kṛṣṇa enjoying anywhere else as He did in Vṛndāvana in their company."

Once again we are reminded of the spiritual wholesomeness of the *gopīs*. They are free of all lust; they have no selfish desires. As yet, I have only small hankerings for Kṛṣṇa's love, but when I examine even those hankerings, are they free from selfishness? Do I want to serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa with pure desire? The *gopīs'* pangs of separation from Kṛṣṇa have to be rightly understood. They were disappointed that they could not give Kṛṣṇa happiness in Vṛndāvana in their company because they knew He was most happy with them.

By reading these chapters I get a glimpse that in conjugal love for Kṛṣṇa, a sweet unequal *rāsa* is manifested . . . I must make all effort to disassociate myself from the material perversion of this. Otherwise, I won't be able to hear and aspire for intimate service. This is the right activity, to hear of Kṛṣṇa's love for the *gopīs* in Vṛndāvana, to hear from *rasika* Vaiṣṇavas.

A person who, in the company of the devotees, again and again hears the stories of the pure love in the *rāsa* dance pastimes will attain Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is dark as a monsoon cloud. A person averse to hearing these pastimes will never attain perfection. I refuse to hear the name of such an offender.

—*Prema-bhakti-candrikā*, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Song 9, verse 9



I began a new project today I'm calling *Letters From a Sannyāsī*. It's Kṛṣṇa's mercy. I dictated the first letter to the holy names while walking in "The Woods."

Being true to this big creek (if I may call it that)—the creek of *Returning from Pilgrimage*. I hope it will swell with melting snow and run strongly for the last week. Although I am unable nowadays to live beside the Tuscarora Creek, I have joined the swift current of writing as Kṛṣṇa conscious *bhajana*. Surely it will carry me one last week with worthwhile offerings.

It is foggy, warmer. Madhu is saying *gāyatrī* in the driver's seat. I fasted twenty-four hours and got benefit from it, including alertness to do extra, intensive editing.

We live in this world blindly, Śrīla Prabhupāda said. He said we think that because we are Americans, everything is "settled up." We have our "own skyscrapers" but we don't know that we can't stay here. We have to leave, and therefore all we have gained and enjoyed—he mentioned good food and dress—will be gone. What happens next life?

Prabhupāda chastised the atheists. "They see God in the form of death." Such strong words of transcendental knowledge. We can hear them anytime we turn on the tape recorder and give our submissive aural reception. Prabhupāda is forming me by his teachings. I have an aging body like anyone else, but my mode of dress looks outlandish to the the people of Stroudsburg. But more than these outer differences, I am different than them *because of what I hear, what I take in.*

I want to try this week to take some more stabs at expressing what I'm trying for on this "retreat." We are incoherent, silent, perplexed. Attempting to speak may help. To be able to say what you mean. If it is *māyā*, we can correct you from the *śāstra*, but be free enough to first explain what you are after, what you understand, and what you don't understand. They say, "The body doesn't lie." So tell us what hurts. What do you like? What is your fondest dream?

I want to become a *bhajanānandī* who preaches. Someone told me Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura said, "The best *goṣṭhyānandī* is a *bhajanānandī* who preaches." I want to be fixed in chanting and form a deep attachment to the holy name, and then I want to tell others to try chanting. I want to gain momentum (greed!) for continuing a practice of reading the *rasika* books of the Six Gosvāmīs and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. I want so many rare things that are not attainable even for great demigods like Brahmā and Śiva. Am I kidding myself? No, I want this. I am praying for it and writing about it.

I want to dissolve my false ego through writing practice and keep on writing, praising, describing, preaching in Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the satisfaction of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I want to return to Vṛndāvana and get the blessing of hearing and serving Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and touching his feet. I want to reside in the *dhāma* and see the *tīrthas* (like Govardhana). I want to grow. I want to be honest and go through the required renunciation.

ra.

10:15 A.M.

Śrīla Prabhupāda and Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja are exactly the same in their complete acceptance of the reality of Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I don't know much about Mahārāja's early life, but I assume that like Śrīla Prabhupāda, he believed in Kṛṣṇa from his childhood and that he was born into a family of Kṛṣṇa conscious parents. Do Prabhupāda and Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja know the gap we suffer from our ruined childhoods in the West? One brother (who was raised like me in Greater New York City) recently remarked, "The first twenty years of my life were a disaster." And that's common. The family is dysfunctional as is the culture we were born into. This nation was (and is) suffering from a mania of epidemic proportions. We were picked up and saved by Prabhupāda. We may have had some past pious activities, but actually, we were picked up like a mother cat saves her wet kitten from drowning. Now we are hanging on like the baby monkey holds onto its mother.

Our background is taking on a new meaning to us now as we feel undermined in our whole approach to *rāgānugā-bhājana*. We were faithless for so many years, and then we were uprooted from that faithlessness and thrown into a whirlwind of Kṛṣṇa conscious mercy. I'm not complaining—I'm happy I survived—but I realize more how much I am hampered by the past.

For example, I can pick up *Nectar of Devotion* and hear about the amazing qualities of Kṛṣṇa's flute. I just picked the book up without any forethought and started reading in that section. Then I caught myself not understanding any of it and a voice (like a wise guy New Yorker in a Hollywood film) saying, "Do you *believe* this? God plays a *flute*? A simple flute and it turns the whole universe upside down? Who are these demigods anyway? Who do you know who has even heard this flute?"

Hmmm. I turn off the New Yorker and pencil in a note in the margin of that page: "It is amazing that a simple flute can do all this. And are we ready to doubt the whole Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy because of this?"

This is what I have to contend with. Śrīla Prabhupāda and Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja are both transcendental to this; both are dragging me away from my doubts. Śrīla Prabhupāda knows me better because he saw me when I was a nondevotee. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja only knows me as a senior ISKCON *prabhu*. But he too can see my lack of culture. I mention this because the differences between these two gurus is not the point to consider as much as that they are both above the platform of doubt. Both of them can pull me out. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja requires that basic doubts have been mastered before he will teach *rāgānugā*. Śrīla Prabhupāda continues to smash my doubts, continues to make me strong enough for something more. I am certainly *nija jati, nija saṅgha, patita adhama* . . .

10:35 A.M.



Dogs yapping. It is Lord Nityānanda's Appearance Day. The heavy rain last night has splashed into the shack and the desk is all in puddles. We are fasting until noon and *prasādam* will be served then, so I had to come out here early. The fasting is giving me some superficial "spiritual" energy. More like nervous excitement.

How will I read without a desk? I'll have to adjust. Once we leave here, I will have to do without many amenities.

Under Kṛṣṇa's quality as "Performer of Wonderful Activities" (which is quality number sixty-one, and one of the four qualities which only Kṛṣṇa in His original form possess):

One devotee said, "I know about Nārāyaṇa, the husband of the goddess of fortune, and I also know about many other incarnations of the Lord. Certainly all the pastimes of such incarnations are exciting to my mind, but still the pastimes of the *rāsa-līlā* performed by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself are wonderfully increasing my transcendental pleasure" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p.191).

I picked this out because it is an endorsement of the *rāsa* dance. This speaker is saying that of *all* Kṛṣṇa's activities, in *all* His various incarnations, the *rāsa-līlā* surpasses everything. Why shouldn't we know about it? The *ācāryas* says that we have to hear about the *rāsa* dance properly. At the time when natural greed is awakened, we will understand this verse from *Nectar of Devotion*. We won't have to convince ourselves that it is permissible to hear about the *rāsa* dance, or need to remind ourselves of its supreme position among Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

•

I turn on a tape continuing the last talk Mahārāja gave to our group last December. Coincidentally, he is talking about Kṛṣṇa's flute (a coincidence because I just saw the flute as a symbol of my doubtful tendencies). Mahārāja is telling us that as Rādhā gives out remnants of Kṛṣṇa's *prasādam*, She talks about the flute. She says the flute is male and is a material object, yet it is taking the *adharāmṛta* from Kṛṣṇa's mouth. That *adharāmṛta* is meant for us, Rādhā says, "because we are *svajātiya* to Kṛṣṇa."

Here Mahārāja pauses and asks us, "Do you understand?" Two brothers reply "Yes." I also understand: the *gopīs* are Kṛṣṇa's lovers and are used to kissing Him. Therefore they say the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's lips really belongs to them. I understand at least the literal meaning of what he says. Besides that, I love to hear him tell us these pastimes. When I am with him, I have no doubt. Even now, I have no doubt per se, but my acceptance of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a kind of *vaidhī* vow to accept whatever the scriptures and guru gives as true. What do I actually *understand* of Kṛṣṇa's *adāmṛta*. Almost nothing. You go mad when you know what it is.

Mahārāja quoted Rādhikā: "This flute is merely bamboo, but he is drinking and telling us, 'Get away from here. I am taking first. This is Yours, but I am taking it. What can you do?'"

"Śrīmatī Rādhikā is telling—'Being a male, how bold the flute is! He is so naughty. He is looting in front of us.'"

(And being a pure devotee, how kind Mahārāja is to share this with us, not only as theology but as *rasa*. How kind to bring us into the conversation of Rādhā and Her *sakhīs*.)

“While praising the *mahā-prasādam* remnants, Śrīmatī is giving to all. Tulasī-mañjarī has brought all the *prasādam*, so Rādhā asks her, ‘You were very near Kṛṣṇa at that time, so which thing did he like the most?’

“Tulasī-mañjarī says, ‘Whatever You prepared, Kṛṣṇa tasted everything very well and after taking, He kept the remnants Himself and told me by His eyes to give it to You.’

“Bilvamaṅgala tells us everything of Kṛṣṇa is not less than Kṛṣṇa. Lord Caitanya was eager to give everyone *kṛṣṇa-prema* . . . He gave Kṛṣṇa to everyone He met in the form of *prema*. And *mahā-prasādam* also gives us *kṛṣṇa-prema*. *Prasādam* remnants also gives us. . . .”



Absorb yourself daily in the nectar of Prabhupāda’s teachings and Mahārāja’s talks. Leave the world behind for awhile, and when you come back to it, you will retain some direct *śakti* by associating with Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is of the spiritual world—how alien we are here. Kṛṣṇa, please give us the breath and nectar by which we can live spiritually, even while in this world of death, disease, and old age. Please allow us who are tasting it (we are naughty and bold like the flute, to take what is not ours)—to become dedicated to giving—offering at least—Kṛṣṇa consciousness to whomever we meet.



Ten more minutes. Wind blowing through the summer screening. Glad to be alive. Glad of my physical existence. What does that mean?

For me, it means the continued opportunity to continue my advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The fresh air invigorates me and I breathe deeply. I love to think of the mystery of nature, the mystery of the wind swaying the bare tree tops twenty-five feet above my head. I love the beauty of a white-gray winter sky. But these are not just “physical” manifestations for me. Kṛṣṇa permeates everything. His *rasa* pastimes are connected to this natural world, the world of beauty.



If I could chant, if I could honor *prasādam*, if I could offer it to Prabhupāda and the Lord, then I could come out of this dark tunnel of my mind with a Syamantaka jewel.

I am going in to observe the feast offered to Lord Nityānanda. I worked alone and did not take part in specific prayers or readings to Lord Nityānanda, but I know He is the Lord of *guru-tattva*, and He must give permission before I can receive Lord Caitanya's mercy. Did He not give His blessings to Raghunātha? Only then did Raghunātha become free to join Lord Caitanya. Oh Avadhuta, please capture me too.

4:10 P.M.



The new project, *Letters from a Sannyāsī* appears promising.

When I do let go and write more freely, I for one, find it interesting.

I like to hear about the ambulance siren wailing away on the highway, and of the rumbling trucks. And someone pounding with a hammer. It's not the sounds themselves, but it's the "be-here-now" call to attention that appeals to me. It helps me turn from those sounds and enter Kṛṣṇa conscious thought. They make me feel impelled to seek shelter, to escape the world of planes and truck engines and hammering neighbors.

Ink stains on my book bag. I left my pen uncapped again.

Under the quality "Kṛṣṇa's Exquisite Beauty," the transcendental qualities of Kṛṣṇa are compared to the ocean: no one can estimate the length and breadth of the ocean. But by tasting one drop you get some understanding. Lord Brahmā says, "If one even tries to imagine, 'Kṛṣṇa may be like this,' that is also impossible" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 193).

I used to like to find statements like this in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books when I was studying the Christian mystics. It confirmed for me that we also see God as inconceivable but always a person, and the Christian "*via negativa*" needn't be seen as impersonalism. I'm no longer looking there, but it caught my attention. Don't think that Kṛṣṇa is a human adolescent going from one girl to another. He does what He does in the *ādi-rasa*, but you cannot say "He is like this." His bliss and the nature of the *gopīs'* bliss is inconceivable to us. Understand that if we are very fortunate, we will be allowed to taste a tiny drop of it. Don't be an impersonalist, but don't be a cheap personalist either.

Kṛṣṇa also has apparently contradictory traits in His character. He is sometimes *dhīrodātta*, sometimes *dhīra-lalita*, sometimes *dhīra-prasānta*, and sometimes *dhīro-ddhatta*. He employs all His traits as He likes in His varied pastimes.

In Chapter 25 of *Nectar of Devotion*, the devotees of Kṛṣṇa are described. Yamarāja is afraid to go near a pure devotee:

. . . so we can imagine the potency of advanced devotional service, especially when devotees sit together and engage in talking of the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Those devotees express their feelings in such a way that they automatically melt with ecstasy, and many transcendental symptoms become manifested in their bodies. Anyone desiring advancement in devotional service *must follow in the footsteps of such devotees*.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 204, emphasis added

Ah, that's nice. They sit together like in the place at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple in Sevā-kuñja where we are told the Six Gosvāmīs sat for *prasādam*. They talk of Kṛṣṇa and melt in ecstasy; we must follow in their footsteps. It is an easy thing to do. The research has already been done. We don't have to stand on our heads or "push your nose" (Prabhupāda's funny way of referring to *prāṇāyama*). Just hear from the Six Gosvāmīs through the medium of your spiritual master and in the company of like-minded devotees—*satām prasāṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido*.



I'm listening to Mahārāja's tape. Can't find a place to write something down. He's explaining that Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu tasted *all bhāvas* in all kinds of relationships with Kṛṣṇa. He came in the mood of Rādhā and She knows how to please Kṛṣṇa in ways that no other devotee knows—whatever Kṛṣṇa desires. Since Lord Caitanya is in that *bhāva*, He too tastes all the possible relationships with Kṛṣṇa—even the relationship between Kṛṣṇa and an ordinary *bhakta*.

"Śrīmatī Rādhikā takes *only* remnants of Kṛṣṇa." Mahārāja said that, and then, "Bās, today." Then he asked for questions. I asked my question: "If, as you say, the residents of Vṛndāvana are actually with Kṛṣṇa even when He is away, why do they appear so unhappy?" Mahārāja replied that *sometimes* they feel Kṛṣṇa is present, but at all times, they remember His pastimes with them. "For a *sādhaka-jīva*," he said, "it is so *anukūla*, so favorable, to remember these things. . . . We have no . . . " (I can't catch it all from the tape, too much Sanskrit). But he said, "It is only for *gopīs*, not for any *sādhaka-jīva*. What really happens there we cannot see. . . . We are not tasting this [unhappiness they experience]. Otherwise, it would be so much painful for us. Now we are laughing and taking food and doing everything. And we are hearing

these pastimes also. But no real effect. Because our heart is not on the same standard as the *gopīs*. If there is even a very little . . . we can realize this.

“Do your bhajana and after some time, you may realize this gradually.”

~

Sunday is over. I am already starting to remove myself from this *sādhana* of the last month. Maybe I should start packing my bags early and thinking ahead so there will be less of an emotional tearing away when the time comes to leave. I have enjoyed this stay and I became lost in it (in a good sense). Now I see daylight at the other end of the meditative tunnel. It is inevitable that my attitude will change.

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7:45 P.M.

Madhu and I began reading a short work by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura called *Uj्ज्वाला-nīlamaṇi-karaṇa*. This is one of the five small books by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura which Mahārāja wants to translate into Hindi. “These books are precious,” he says. We already have a compilation from his talks on Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s *Rāga-vartma-candrikā* which is extremely valuable for a devotee who is just beginning to consider *rāgānugā-bhakti*—“ . . . for the fortunate who possess greed but know not the means to enter. This *candrikā* [fine rays of moonlight] shall award them vision.”

As with all these books, the important thing is to read submissively, openly, in a prayerful way. I had been practicing the *lectio divina* method of treating *śāstra* as a personal meeting with Kṛṣṇa. One prays to Him to reveal the meaning of the text and to help apply it to one’s life. Then one praises and prays and goes on reading. This is certainly applicable to *rasika* books. The aloud sessions with very trusted friends are also conducive to understanding and relishing the confidential *līlā-granthas*.

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February 17, 2:25 A.M.

“O merciful Lord, how great is my misfortune that I feel no appreciation for Your holy name! In such a lamentable state, how will I be freed from committing the ten offenses to the holy name?” (Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, “*Śaraṇāgati*”).

It is right that I enter verses like these into my book. They speak exactly of my condition—except I lack the lamentation. We say, “The *ācāryas* are liberated, but they write like this for the benefit of the conditioned souls. Plus, in humility, they actually feel like this.” Then what is the benefit for us if Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura or Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu *lament* that they cannot appreciate the holy name? Their

words are meant to awaken us from our dullness. We have to first regret our inability to chant, and then we have to embrace the shelter of the holy name.

I write the verse down as both student and preacher. Of course, I am first preaching to myself. How great is *my* misfortune. I tend to think, "It's commendable to be concerned about improving *japa*. But if you think realistically, don't you imagine that your chanting is 'pretty good' compared to other ISKCON devotees? I mean, you rise early for *japa*, you aren't sleepy. Who can expect to control the mind? And anyway, when your thoughts go off, you're usually thinking of devotional service. In this age, in the active mission Śrīla Prabhupāda has given us, we can't expect to be so attentive to *japa*. We're not living as *bhajanānandīs*. The chanting is not the only form of *bhakti* we are practicing. So the fact that you are enthusiastic and intent for your other Kṛṣṇa conscious duties and can't wait to tend to them—and that makes you rush through your *japa*—it *isn't so bad*."

I lack regret. Now, how to reform?

I can start by noticing the problem. I can start by dragging the mind back to the feet of the holy name. I can start by not accepting any idea that inattentive *japa* is all right because I'm thinking of devotional service. I can hear from the *ācāryas*, the humble, realized *ācāryas* who are intent on saving me by their statements.

I like to record some of these verses so I can look at them often. The verse I just quoted is an unmitigated lament. It offers no solution—that is not its purpose. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has given plenty of recommendations on how to improve, but unless one *wants* to improve, unless one admits he needs improvement, and unless one feels sorry about poor chanting, then the recommendations will be of no help. Therefore, statements of assurance and the more elevated statements of yearning, as well as descriptions of the intoxicating nature of pure chanting—these all become useful when one is actually trying to improve. Otherwise, they sound like flowery poetry, and one's collection of verses on index cards just becomes a hobby.

So first comes regret: *hari hari! bifale janama goñāinu*. Why are we so afraid to feel regret? And of course, we don't want to be artificial about it and beat our breasts with no real feeling. Certainly the nondevotees will deride us. They will compare us to medieval flagellants who beat themselves out of guilt. Body-punishing ascetics, self-accusers, sufferers from low self-esteem—all negative, they say. But we should not concern ourselves with what the nondevotees think.

The real danger for us is not excessive lamentation, but falling into the pit of complacency. At least we can hear the words of the *ācāryas* like Bhaktivinoda

Ṭhākura and Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura and take inspiration in our own steps to improve.

"The treasure of divine love in Goloka Vṛndāvana has descended as the congregational chanting of Lord Hari's holy names. Why did my attraction for that chanting never come about?" ("*Iṣṭa-deve-Vijñapti*," Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, *Vaiṣṇava Songbook*, p. 63).

"'This is humbleness,' Prabhupāda said. ' . . . If you go on thinking, 'Oh, I did not perform this duty nicely, I should have done it this way,' then you will improve. Our love for Kṛṣṇa keeps growing as long as we think we are not doing the most for Kṛṣṇa and that we must do more. . . .'" (*Prabhupāda-līlā*, p. 10).

"When one fails to achieve the desired goal of life and repents for all his offenses, there is a state of regret called *viṣāda*" (*Cc. Madhya* 2.35, purport).

" . . . without *tapa* or inner repentance, the soul cannot live as a Vaiṣṇava" (*Pancha Samskara*, by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, printed in *ISKCON Journal*).

Inner repentance. I don't have to show it to anyone, or even prove it to myself. The state called *viṣāda* is a transcendental ecstatic symptom characterized as follows: "One hankers to revive his original condition and inquires how to do so. There are also deep thoughts, heavy breathing, crying, and lamentation, as well as changing of bodily color and drying up of the tongue" (*C.c., Madhya* 2.35, purport).

I'm not going to imitate those ecstasies, but keep a flame burning within. It is not right that I chant with offenses. And I *do* chant with offenses or else I would be in ecstasy uttering the holy names. I want to enter the stage of greed for hearing of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *līlā* in Vṛndāvana, but how can I do it if my foundation in *harināma* is weak? So tend to this. Think how to improve. Take measures. Don't shirk the work or think, "It can't be done by endeavor. If Kṛṣṇa wants to be merciful to me, He can."

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says, "If I sing Your holy name every day, by Your mercy, the ten offenses will gradually disappear. A taste for Your holy name will grow within me and then I will taste the intoxicating spirit of the name" ("*Śaraṇāgati*")



Other things you might do to improve *japa*:

(1) Give time—a week or two—just for that. Don't do any extensive literary production, and even reduce reading if necessary. Chant thirty-two rounds. I have done it before (in Ireland, while drinking only carrot juice for ten days). It didn't seem to produce any lasting effect. It is a humbling act. You could try it again. Maybe now you are more ready for it.

(2) Keep up the practice you developed in these weeks of doing *japa* the very first thing on rising, for an hour. It doesn't produce some immediate effect, but it gives priority to your weak *bhajana*. Let writing come after this.

(3) Think of your visits to Vṛndāvana as a way to improve chanting.

(4) Speak about it in classes, in a non-hypocritical way. Write about it sincerely.

(5) Can you pray for it? Before you chant, say prayers. Even in this *bhajana* retreat you thought you didn't have time for even ten or twenty minutes of prayer before *japa*. But it could help you so that when you start chanting, you are in a more sanctified state of mind.

(6) There are other little tricks and things like writing *japa* and my short-lived notebook of writing down what the *japa*-gremlin says to disrupt me so that I can notice him and separate him from my *japa*-yearning self. But these all take time and it seems to me what I have to do is simply say the mantras.

(7) Discuss it with friends who are in a position to help you.



I'm editing what I have written. An author has to be responsible to prepare his work for others. I felt that kind of thing intruded on the spirit of these weeks, but I'm feeling more open to it now. Beside, I have given up the attempt to be totally immersed in *rāgānugā*! I have to divide my time between various duties, and in a week, my whole *bhajana* program will be torn down. I'm going to have to face the demands of other people and their schedules and the heavy pace of *sannyāsa* travels.



Reading notes

This morning I read a short and very potent section, Uddhava's song of praise of the *gopīs*, which he sang every day while living in Vṛndāvana. He used to wander around Vṛndāvana and remind Vṛndāvana's residents of Kṛṣṇa by asking them questions about the pastimes Kṛṣṇa performed in the Yamunā, at Govardhana, in all the forest and pasturing grounds. "Thus Uddhava himself enjoyed great transcendental bliss in their association" (*Bhāg.* 10.47.56, purport).

Uddhava saw the *gopīs* in a "disturbed" state because of their separation. But as an expert *bhakta*, he knew that the pain of their *vipralambha* was the highest spiritual state of ecstasy and that the *gopīs* were in union with Kṛṣṇa. Uddhava praised the *gopīs* as the only ones who have achieved the fullest expression of unalloyed *bhāva*. "Their pure love is hankered after by those who fear material existence, by great sages, and by ourselves as well" (*Bhāg.* 10.47.58).

By reading these verses, one feels such appreciation for the *gopīs*. Uddhava's song is an ideal accompaniment to a reading of *līlā-granthas*. It clears our minds of any remaining tendency to think the *gopīs* are acting improperly. Uddhava says that the *gopīs* seem to be acting wrongly by abandoning their husbands, but actually their behavior is commended by the wise—because they attained the highest stage of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. They did not leave their husbands to go to another ordinary man, but for the satisfaction of Govinda. The favors bestowed upon them by Śrī Kṛṣṇa who danced with them and embraced them in the *rāsa* dance, were never given to the goddess of fortune or His other consorts in the spiritual world.

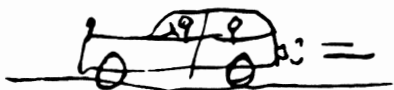
Uddhava wanted to take the *gopīs*' foot dust on his head, but he was afraid that if he asked, they would refuse out of shyness and modesty. So he prayed, "Oh, let me be fortunate enough to be one of the bushes, creepers or herbs in Vṛndāvana, because the *gopīs* trample them and bless them with the dust of their lotus feet" (*Bhāg.* 10.47.61).

Sometimes we hear that Uddhava acted like the *śikṣa-guru* of the *gopīs* during this time, but actually he worshiped them and saw himself as just a tiny, beginning student in their school of *prema-bhakti*.

After a few months, Uddhava prepared to leave Vṛndāvana. With affection, Nanda and the other residents saw him off and gave him gifts. He then returned to Kṛṣṇa in Mathurā and told Him of the immense devotion of the residents of Vraja.

Am I able to pray to become grass in Vṛndāvana? I think, "That is too lowly. Shouldn't I desire to become a *gopī-mañjarī* as soon as possible? But what do I know? Best I just go on hearing and become attracted to the *gopīs*' pure devotion and to Uddhava's pure prayer. When one is an outsider to Vraja, his desires are a material imposition. One wants to go there to pick the fruits from the desire trees for one's own satisfaction, or one wants to go there to achieve *mukti* or to become one with God. One wants to gain opulence for oneself, get a liberated, four-armed form, etc.

Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndāvana, you cannot be attained by one afflicted with *viṣaya* and *avidyā*. Please grant me the chance to go on hearing with faith. Let me serve the devotees who know Vṛndāvana *bhajana* and service to Vrajabihārī.



Theme: I *want* to write of Kṛṣṇa and friends in Vṛndāvana, as the Gosvāmīs do, but honestly I do not live there, or relish it yet. So I write of where I'm at. But I hope the day will come . . .

I write mostly about writing. I wish I could write instead about life. And better than that, I wish I could go directly to the heart—to love of Kṛṣṇa. And if I am not qualified, then direct to regret, and in an imperfect expression, talk of Kṛṣṇa.

Another day of a *sādhaka*. He practices *bhakti*, but also practices material life. He is maintaining a dwindling body. The eyes are starting to close.

You and the beaten-down pebbles
of the road, the letter from your
friend . . . the dynamited rock . . .
A jay is calling—
Spring, Spring he wants to know when,
but death could come
at any minute.

A lady's glove "one size fits
all sizes" good for wearing
while writing.
In duck brown overalls,
you belong to the army of
poets exiled from Vraja.
We are writing "about" the *dhāma*,
we are far away in spirit,
because our service takes us here.

Dry brown oak leaves in gutter,
a fading yellow "highlight" pen.
The world of objects and names,
Kṛṣṇa's service,
book distribution
in Belfast.
I'm writing what comes.

When you get back to the house you can hear Mahārāja on tape.

I tell them it is all right if you like a *guru* like Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja more than me. I anticipated this might happen. It is all right, but I wouldn't want to be the cause of

many people demanding to see him or the cause of scrutiny by conservative members of the GBC.

Turn the heater off, please. It's only twenty-five degrees outside and I need to stay awake. That's a crow, not a blue jay. I look up from this writing and the gravel road is still there. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

~

At the end of our meetings with Mahārāja, he would have to tell us to go about three or four times before we would actually leave his room. Then some of us would leave and the women would stay back for a few more words, maybe to give him a "bribe" in the form of some raisins or something, some excuse.

The parting would begin when he closed the book, *Vilāpa-kusumāñjali*, with a little slam of the pages. He would say, "Bās today." Then some questions and answers. Navina has an alarm clock that rings in case we stay too long. If the clock went off and we were still there, which inevitably we were, Navina would come in and speak sternly to Mahārāja, although it was meant for us. On some days, Hanumān brought sweets from His Govardhana-śilā, delicious milksweets. Mahārāja distributed them and we lingered some more. "Bās, stop for today." Some more small talk, more lingering.

Finally he would say, "Now you are welcome to go." We all laugh. "You can go to Girirāja."

During my last group meeting with him, he said to me, "Then we will meet after three or four months?"

"Not so soon."

Mahārāja: "Ha?"

"More like six."

Mahārāja: "Six months."

"Yeah."

(But as our present plans go, we are not due to return to India until seven and a half months have passed.)

~

11:00 A.M.

We write for communication, write a book, but we ought to be able to express ourselves just for ourselves.

I heard Mahārāja talking to devotees on *parikrama* in Navadvīpa. He was telling a pastime of a king named Samudra Sen who gained the *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa in this place. The king stole the challenge horse that was sent there by Bhīmasena. The king

thought, "If I do this, then Bhīma will come to fight with me. If I can bring him into difficulty, he will pray to Kṛṣṇa and I will be able to see Kṛṣṇa. So when Samudra Sen fought Bhīma, Bhīma was almost defeated and he prayed to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa appeared but was visible only to Samudra Sen. He appeared as Lord Kṛṣṇa and then as Lord Caitanya, the combined form of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Mahārāja explained why Samudra Sen could see Kṛṣṇa and Bhīmasena could not. Although Samudra Sen was only a *sādhaka* and Bhīma was a *siddha-bhakta* of Kṛṣṇa, Samudra Sen had the eternal seed of a *mādhurya-bhakta*—and thus he could see Lord Caitanya.

As I heard this I began to think of these mysterious topics—eternal seed, greed to attain the Lord . . . I wondered how to increase my own greed. I wondered if my writing is a hindrance. I thought how Kṛṣṇa fulfills the desires of a *bhakta*, but if the desires are inferior, then the devotee gets something other than eternal service to Kṛṣṇa.

Mahārāja said that only one whose seed is *gopī-bhāva* can see Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa together as a couple. Devotees in *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, and *vātsalya* cannot see Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa together. I thought, "But I want to see Them."

Mahārāja referred to *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* where both Uddhava and Nārada estimated that Gopa-kumāra was an eternal *gopa* in Vraja, and therefore higher than them. The Pāṇḍavas wanted to take part somehow in *gopī-bhāva* and have incarnated as five trees on the bank of Rādhā-kunḍa, but after thousands of years, it is not known (Mahārāja said) whether they have entered *gopī-bhāva*.

Is it attainable? What do I have to do? I have been transformed by meeting Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and hearing of these pastimes and of the specialty of our *sampradāya*. I have heard that our Śrīla Prabhupāda is definitely in *gopī-bhāva*, as were all the main *ācāryas* coming down from Lord Caitanya. What am I to make of this? What will happen next? *This* is the most important thing in my spiritual life, and yet there doesn't seem to be something direct I can do, like take a plane to India, or *not* taking a plane to Santo Domingo.

Go on with your *guru-sevā*, your preaching. Go on with your *vaidhī-bhakti*. Go on hearing *rasika* books. Go on praying.

❧

11:20 A.M.



In *Nectar of Devotion*, Chapter 25, under "Eternal Perfection," Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Persons who have achieved eternal, blissful life exactly on the level of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and who are able to attract Lord Kṛṣṇa by their transcendental loving service, are called eternally perfect" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p.205).

I do not attract Kṛṣṇa. My service is conditional and tepid, not filled with the passion of love of God. Why doesn't this humble me? (Old friend Kowit might say, "There you go again, hankering for humility, and not accepting your actual not-so-humble place.")

There is such a great difference between myself and those who are exuberant and happy in their service. They are happy because they have attracted Kṛṣṇa. In the *Padma Purāṇa*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa describes His dearest devotees like this: "Because of their transcendental qualities, they are very, very dear to Me, as I am very, very dear to them." Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Anyone who becomes exhilarated by hearing the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa when He was present on this earth with His associates, is to be understood as *nitya-siddha*, eternally perfect" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p.205).

"How wonderful are the fortunate residents of Vṛndāvana, such as Nanda and the other cowherd men. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Supreme Brahman, has actually become their intimate friend!" (*Bhāg.* 10.14.32, quoted in *Nectar of Devotion*).

I don't feel envious of the *vrajajana*. I wish to hear about them. I feel that I am an undernourished patient and I am now at last taking a nutritious diet. But something is missing and my cure is slow. The Vaiṣṇava physicians diagnose it as *aparādha*—the reason why one doesn't advance quickly even after taking to the process of *bhakti-yoga*.

•

My day, my stomach, my hours, my loneliness, my thoughts—direct them to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Hear sublime teachings and consider them quietly within yourself. Eternal seed . . . fallen nature . . .

•

It is forty degrees out, a sunny day, and in between eating and sleeping and moving about, I try to spend a few moments hearing Mahārāja explain the inner meaning of *prajojana*. I try to fit it into my life. I also try to share it as soon as possible.

Mahārāja said his *sannyāsi* Godbrother lectured, “Kṛṣṇa-prema is our *prayojana* . . . Kṛṣṇa’s service is our utmost goal.” But when Mahārāja lectured he said, “It can never be.” He said in Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa serves the *gopīs* and Śrīmatī Rādhikā. And we want that Kṛṣṇa should serve Śrīmatī Rādhikā. That is our *prayojana*.”

•

Gnash your teeth and look around. Relax. It is a blue sky. You don’t have to do anything immediately. You have ten minutes to spend as you like, but that yapping dog . . .

A dead tree is broken off and stands about twenty-five feet tall. Beside it, a young living tree, very skinny, about fifteen feet tall, is filled with scrunched-up dead leaves on all its branches. Funny they didn’t fall.

You can’t go on fasting all the time just to avoid the heaviness of lunch. How lightly can you eat? I’m just saying, midday isn’t as good as early morning on an empty stomach in the quiet upstairs.

Yes, but we can go on like this for the whole life and for many lifetimes and still not attain the goal (*prayojana*). The Pāṇḍavas are immensely fortunate, liberated devotees of Kṛṣṇa, yet they have been trying for thousands of years to enter *gopī-bhāva* at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. You don’t know your eternal seed and you are not *that* concerned about it. You go on writing, as if you’ll find out that way.

At least try to acknowledge you are lower than a blade of grass; be as tolerant as tree. Pick up your beads.

•

I have practiced spontaneity and sometimes attained it. But in itself, that is not *rāgānugā-bhakti*. *Rāgānugā* is spontaneity in the specific context of greed for serving the *vraja-jana*, greed for *gopī-bhāva*. I have heard this, but how will I attain it? I know what it is like to feel a rush of self-discovery, or the sudden desire for expressing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I do not yet know—I am barely acquainted with—the joy of serving Rādhā’s *dāsīs*, although I like to hear about it. Seems like it is going to take a long time of intensive *bhajana* to get to know, to get the taste. It can be given in a moment or withheld for many lifetimes.

•

4:15 P.M.



Prabhupāda was blasting the scientists on his morning walk. He was so angry at their cheating. He goes to such basic, profound issues and exposes the rascals. He says, “They have not done *anything* and yet they claim ‘We are scientists.’ They should admit, ‘We are fools.’” They have no cure for all diseases, no way to prevent

death, old age, rebirth. They have put these aside but these are the real problems. He derides them because they deride the Supreme Creator and Maintainer, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

"The scientists say life was created by chemicals, by chance."

"Then I kick on your face with boots!"

•

What will they say to me in each place, in Boston and Trinidad and New York? Can you hear someone speaking, respond sincerely, and yet be thinking of something else at the same time? You will want to come back to a place where you can read directly from Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī about the different kinds of *gopīs*, how some are partial to Kṛṣṇa (Vṛndā, Dhaniṣṭhā), how some are neutral (Bhadrā, Citrā), how some are partial to Rādhikā (Lalitā, Viśākhā, Rūpa-mañjarī, etc.). Will I be able to go on culturing this? Yes, why not? Don't let it be taken from you.

I will want to hear the abundant waves of poetry in the form of Rūpa Gosvāmī's examples and incidents. "Once, a *gopī* said to Vṛndā-devī . . ." How he keeps them coming one after another. He was a *siddha-puruṣa*. He wrote his book under the dictation of Lord Govinda. You will want to come back to him as you travel around. Carry some of his books and be with a like-minded friend. Otherwise, how can I just keep hearing about quarrels and everyone's lives?

Tentative statements are made by a tentative being—spirit in a material form. "I don't know, but . . ." "Will I be able to . . ." *Sādhaka* trying to grow his devotional creeper by watering the *bhakti-latā* and trimming away the weeds. One prays to one day, in future lives, follow a young girl leader in a spiritual body—and not desire union with Kṛṣṇa, but desire that Kṛṣṇa serve Rādhā and you can serve Her. As Rati-mañjarī prays, "O Devī, may I serve You in this way?"

I will have to give up my name and title. A *mañjarī* is not a male author of books. She does not write for a press. She only thinks in terms of Rādhā's service under the direction of Rūpa-mañjarī. She is expert at making garlands or arranging for meetings, delivering messages, and all the things related to the decoration and care of her Swamiṇī. She goes through emotional ups and downs according to the moods of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. She is not a *sānta-bhakta* hermit or a guru holding "*darśana*." Can I aspire for that?

•

Just now, the black dog from next door came right up to the shack and began barking at me. I turned from my writing and looked at him, and he became more convinced than ever that I was an intruder, a madman in my Carhartt overwear.

His master shouts his name (I missed it) and, "Get over here!" Yes, they should bring him back. That black scoundrel is disturbing my meditation all day.

I'm used to the squirrels and they are oblivious to me, but if this black dog is going to make a big thing out of his discovery that a man sits out in the shack, then where will it end? His stupid "woof!"

The carpet of faded brown leaves is crisp. It covers the forest floor. Under this year's carpet lies last year's quietly turning to earth.



Don't forget (and don't underestimate) the power a place can have on one's Kṛṣṇa consciousness. To live in Vṛndāvana-dhama is supportive of the *rāgānugā* mood. To see Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *arcā-vigraha*, to be able to speak a few words with a Godbrother, these are all favorable.

Who can you find who will understand, "Our *gurudeva* used to say that when we see Rādhikā weeping for Kṛṣṇa, we become very sorry; and when we see Kṛṣṇa weeping for Rādhikā, we become very happy."

So you have drawn apart to study and hear yourself think without so much influence from others. But if you are not within the influence of Vṛndāvana-dhāma?

By my inner life, I can be more in Vṛndāvana-dhāma than when I lived at the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandira. It is in the heart that I will yearn for the service of Vṛndāvana, and I may even hear with more clarity the words spoken by Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and the exchanges he has with my Godbrothers. I can be in Vraja in my mind. I will be visiting there again in August.



7:00 P.M.

Madhu and I are reading a more broad-based work by Jīva Gosvāmī called *Saṅkalpa-kalpa-drumaḥ*. It focuses on Kṛṣṇa much more than Rādhā. But we figured Rādhā and the *gopīs* would like to hear Kṛṣṇa's praises. Jīva Gosvāmī is worshipable by us and we are safe as long as we read aloud. I'm not quite sure why we stop reading after only an hour.

I just read a statement by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura that *vaidhī-bhakti*, although not motivated by love, is considered within the realm of love of God because it leads to that goal. This is comparable to the activity of gathering ingredients like wood and ghee for a sacrifice. *Sādhana-bhakti* does not itself produce *bhāva-bhakti*, just as Vasudeva was not the cause for Kṛṣṇa's appearing as his son.

Madhu told me of his practice to pray to each of the members of our disciplic succession, going back, lingering on each one with a formal prayer and an informal prayer-thought to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, to Gaura-kiśora dāsa Bābāji, and back through the *ācāryas*, asking them for blessings to perform our *bhajana*. I used to do that, but I haven't been doing it lately.

Tomorrow on the walk I'll write another letter to whoever comes to mind. It is another way to speak *kṛṣṇa-kathā* . . . linking one activity to another.

One last thing: when you rise tomorrow, think of the holy name and try to chant in your mind as you go from one room to another. Try to *really* chant—discover yourself, as a pleasant surprise, to be chanting in the heart all day long—even while reading, even while waiting for the typewriter carriage to return from right to left.

❧

February 18, 2:10 A.M.

Śrī-caitanya-mano -'bhīṣṭhaṁ . . .

Some of my co-workers like me to free-write. I like to do it too. Madhu reminds me not to forget that the main point is becoming humble, not writing books. I have to be unafraid to face what comes.

Report from a *sādhaka*: I have attachments, but I can break most of them.

❧

This morning I rose and said *praṇāma* prayers to the spiritual masters. I also thought about Lord Caitanya's manifested pastimes and tried to think about Viśvanātha Cakravartī's statement that one cannot approach the *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa without approaching Lord Caitanya. Then I thought of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's love. How could I have forgotten and neglected this practice? It is like forgetting to put on *tilaka*. Actually, it's more important because I have been neglecting this form of inner remembrance. In *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura writes as follows: "The principal feature of *rāgānugā-bhakti* is remembrance. This remembrance must necessarily be in relation to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His dearest ones. . . . " In another place he writes, "The *sādhaka* engages his mind always in remembrance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Kṛṣṇa's near and dear ones in Vraja, devoting his tongue and ears to hearing and chanting about Them and himself physically resides in Vraja-dhāma. . . . those who cannot [reside in Vṛndāvana] should contemplate mentally that they are residing there" (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu*, p. 7).

How could I forget or neglect to remember that this is my purpose? It is sweet and essential to remember. I went to Vṛndāvana for this. Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda showed

it to me there. They brought me to hear it from Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, and I left Vṛndāvana determined to remember and practice this *sādhana* of remembrance!

As the Six Gosvāmīs do—chanting, living in Vṛndāvana, and inquiring in the same mood of separation experienced by the *gopīs*: “Where are you all now? O Queen of Vṛndāvana, Rādhārāṇī! O Lalitā! O Son of Nanda Mahārāja!” What are they doing? Are they on Govardhana Hill picking flowers, or engaged in a witty debate? May we hear about it in the prayers and poems of the Six Gosvāmīs? Are they engaged in the pretense of sun-god worship as a means for Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā to meet (with Kṛṣṇa disguised as the *brāhmaṇa* priest)? Are Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa playing a musical duet on the bank of the Yamunā? Is Madhumaṅgala cracking a joke at the expense of the *gopīs* while Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā gamble at the dice board?

Where is Mahārāja now? Is he alone in his room in Mathurā chanting *harināma*, or writing translations of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s books with his pen? Or is his door open to the devotees who come to see him? Will I get the chance to hear what he is saying?

Where is Śrīla Prabhupāda? Where is his *nitya-līlā*? Will I learn this one day? Will I ever qualify to join him? And before that time, will he more and more guide me as I pray to him, my beloved *gurudeva*?

This remembrance—and much more—will all be possible as long as I live. I desire to remember all these spiritual persons as I chant *harināma*. With a flood of such sweet remembrances—mentally living in Vraja—the recollection of sinful life and phantasmagoria will be swept away. I cannot chant in a void. There is no void in God’s creation. So may the remembrance of Kṛṣṇa’s Vraja-līlā and my desire for it come to mind again and again as the main feature of my *harināma-japa*.

I don’t want “*japa-bhajana*” to be just a battle with demons and ghosts. Please, holy name, just once give me a taste of Your nectar so that I can chant with a proper service mood to You. I am giving You my time, why should it be spent in such an inferior way?

•

Although I make newer and newer resolves to chant with attention, I continue to slip and fall. I can bring to mind Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes by reading a *rasika* text and by glancing at the pictures of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Hear the names: Hare (O Rādhā), Kṛṣṇa (O Son of Mahārāja Nanda, Gopikā-kānta, Rādhā-kānta), Rāma (O Enjoyer of bliss, O lover of Rādhārāṇī)—please engage me in Your service. Floating and swimming in the early morning hours behind a locked door, I am struggling to enter the *līlā* of the holy name.

Regarding greed, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states as follows:

When, after hearing of the sweet moods and sentiments of the Vraja-vāsīs (specifically those in *śṛṅgāra-rasa*), one desires that, "If only I might also be able to experience these kinds of feelings toward Śrī Kṛṣṇa," then, once this covetousness (*lobha*) has been aroused, there is no longer any dependence on the arguments or reason of the scriptures. If such dependence exists, then the perfection of covetousness or eager longing is not possible. The philosophical arguments of the scriptures have not been seen to engender this eager longing within anyone.

—*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu*, p. 8

This doesn't mean we don't need scripture, but it means we go to that scripture which will enhance our greed. We want to hear of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and we want to know how to obtain the specific mood which is found in Vraja. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura writes, "Only in the *śāstra*, however, has it been described how to attain this particular mood or sentiment. The scripture which is found to accomplish such devotion is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*."

I want to go through Śrīla Prabhupāda's books with this in mind. There are special sections where you will find his discussion of *mādhurya-rasa*, such as *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-līlā* Chapter 4 and *Madhya-līlā* Chapter 8; Lord Caitanya at Ratha-yātrā, and Lord Caitanya's "divine madness" as described in the *Antya-līlā*; *Nectar of Devotion*, *Kṛṣṇa* book, and so on. But Prabhupāda tells us not to avoid *any* sections of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. So I want to learn how to find *mādhurya-rasa* in the First Canto also, not in a specific, direct *līlā*, but in the essence of pure devotion and greed to serve the Lord. If you look, you will find the deeper meanings revealed. And Mahārāja has said that the indirect revelation of Rādhā's beauty and Her love for Kṛṣṇa is even more wonderful than the direct description of it.

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So I have my plans and Kṛṣṇa has His plans. I don't know what He will do with me. I am playing on the shore of the ocean and trusting in Him to either bring me into the ocean, or leave me stranded for awhile on the shore, or drown me, or whatever. But I am praying to fix my resolve to remember His pastimes wherever I go.

Dear Lord, even if after this lifetime, after death, I have to undergo a period of forgetfulness in my next life, please let it be revived specifically and as soon as

possible. Let me keep up my meditations on Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as given by the Six Gosvāmīs—bring me to You as soon as possible in each lifetime. What good is this life if these memories will be taken away at death? No, it is not so, it will not be.

Please guarantee this. As You have said, “Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me and offer Your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are My very dear friend” (Bg. 18.65).



I pray to stay in elevated consciousness. When I speak and write, let me not be dragged down. I can best help people if I remember Kṛṣṇa, tell them something He said or did. If I get dispersed or dragged down, then what help can I give? Even if I listen and spend time with them, I will only make myself anxious and my suggestions to them will be relative psychological stabs in the dark.



My train of thought is derailed one way or another. It may crash into some worldly demand, or it may go off into thin air like a phantom train. So I have to humbly return to the source and board a new train, a third-class passenger on a first-class train.



You can take it for granted that when Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura or our Śrīla Prabhupāda were preaching from the *Upaniṣads* or chastising scientists (*mūḍhās, mayāpāharita-jñāna*) or dealing with money or temple construction, they were always thinking within of service to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. That is why Prabhupāda was very dear to Kṛṣṇa on this earth. And that is why Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is praised as “favored by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and who is the ocean of transcendental mercy and the deliverer of the science of Kṛṣṇa.”

The struggle should be (for we who still have to struggle) to constantly uplift ourselves. Come out of the modes of nature, “become transcendental to these three modes. Be free from all dualities and from all anxieties for gain and safety, and be established in the self” (Bg. 2.45). When we “come down,” then regroup, remember the instructions Kṛṣṇa imparted to Arjuna, and free yourself from mental and bodily delusions.



Reading notes

Finished a second reading of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu*. It is a review of Rūpa Gosvāmī’s work and filled with many definitions. Only gradually and slowly do I begin to memorize the definitions. It is like starting Kṛṣṇa conscious learning from

the beginning. I hear again and again about *vibhāva* and *uddipana*, *ālabhana* and the *vyabhicārīs*, but I don't quite master the terms. I can recite how when *prema* intensifies, it becomes *praṇaya*, *sneha*, *rāga*, and *anurāga*, and I can give a brief definition of each of them, but I don't really know what they are. And this is all theoretical, not experienced. But gradually . . .

This is the subject matter for Kṛṣṇa conscious graduate studies. By learning it, we will be better able to savor the pastimes, they say. For example, when Rādhā starts talking to the bumblebee, if we can understand that this is *divyonmāda*, and more specifically *citra-jalpa*, moving from *prajalpa* to *parijalpa* to *vijjalpa*, etc., then we are becoming *rasika* scholars. Of course, analysis of love is not the same as love.

We should never deride the scholarship of *bhakti-rasa* which worshipable teachers like Rūpa Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura were expert in. In their case, their knowledge enhanced their ability to taste mellows. It also enabled them to teach the science, so that pretenders like the *prākṛta-sahajiyās* could be exposed as *unbona fide*.

Therefore, we sometimes read the "*jñāna*" of *śṛṅgāra* and sometimes we taste it, according to our limited capacity, by reading direct *līlā-grantha*. Mahārāja definitely uses the technical terms, and if we are to follow him, we have to comprehend the language. The more we mature, the more we find the terminology useful.



As I walked down the pebble road talking aloud, I heard a crash in the woods and saw the silver flashes of white-tailed deer running away from me. There are no deep woods around here, so they didn't disappear at once.

It was a good morning for me up until 5:30 A.M. Then I couldn't concentrate without feeling sleepy. Before that, I wrote straight *śāstra* stuff—it kept coming during the time I save for personal writing. I didn't stop to say what noises I heard or even something subjective, but just more information about *rāgānugā-bhakti*. It was personal because I was personally involved. I really cared about what I was saying—nothing was more important. To be honest meant to find references from the Six Gosvāmīs and to savor the *rasa* of Vṛndāvana. There was no need to talk about my ordinary self in the material body. A nice experience. One might live like that all the time, I suppose, and only come up occasionally for air, like the porpoises in the Ganges at Navadvīpa.

But now I'm back down, and honesty means reporting this moment, sitting in the car while Madhu paces outside chanting his *japa*. My hand runs along the page gripping the Pilot pen. What's he always writing about? Different things, but his single desire is to achieve Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And to convey it—a simultaneous act of going for one's own Kṛṣṇa consciousness and then sharing it.

•

The trees are the hairs on His body, the mountain ranges are His bones. He is the sound in ether (even when it comes as a big flatbed trailer rattling behind a diesel-run truck cab on the highway—or a winter bird chirping at first light of dawn). Kṛṣṇa is all. And we are seeking Him in His original home on the slopes of Govardhana, and in His happy pastimes with the *gopīs*.

•

10:32 A.M.

It is gray outside and too warm for snow. I desire within myself to be an alert and faithful devotee, always eager to hear the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. But my body and mind do not always cooperate with that proposal. Even while reading about the ecstatic symptoms of devotees in love with Kṛṣṇa, my eyes grow heavy and slowly close. My mind finds the reading odd; I can't taste the nectar. I know I have good intentions, but time is being wasted.

Right this minute, the GBC men are gathering in a big hall to discuss and evaluate the development of ISKCON and the challenges raised by the many impediments.

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11:19 A.M.



I came out here for a sacred function. It is my outdoor chapel. Just give me this little space, I pray. Let me turn to Kṛṣṇa. I want to do that at all times and in all places. Therefore, the best temple or monk's cell is the body wherein the soul dwells.

But someday I want to go beyond that imagery too—myself as praying penitent—and see within the delightful pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. I don't want to imagine it, but behold in adoration and with deep taste and yearning, the mood of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, "O Devī, may I serve You in this way and thus release the poison in my heart caused by the snake bite of separation from You."

For now I can only pray to increase my taste and yearning. My greed is lean and thin. As Mahārāja says, surveying our condition, "No greed at all. Nothing. . . . Yet there is *something*."

That means beggar.

Dacoiter.

Borrower.

❧

I turned on a tape of Mahārāja speaking with the devotees on Navadvīpa *parikrama*. I was hoping to hear his nectarean speech, but mostly all I heard is the sounds of the car's springs as it bumps over the road and a few disjointed remarks. My batteries are also running low, so that distorted the sound even further.

Instead, I turn to *Nectar of Devotion*. Under "Trembling": "When Kṛṣṇa was trying to capture the demon Śaṅkha, Rādhārāṇī began trembling out of fearfulness."

I read that beautiful girls like the *gopīs* are naturally fearful. This is favorable for *mādhurya-rasa* because when they are afraid, they turn to Kṛṣṇa who immediately protects them and embraces them. If Rādhārāṇī is feeling jealous anger toward Kṛṣṇa, it can be broken if there is a thunderbolt—She will run at once into Kṛṣṇa's arms.

"Trembling of the body was also exhibited by Rādhārāṇī out of tribulation. Rādhārāṇī trembled as She told one of the *gopīs*, 'Don't joke with this disappointing boy! Please ask Him not to approach Me, because He is always the cause of all grief for us'" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 227). Whatever the mood, Rādhā is always in love with Kṛṣṇa. She is never forgetful of Him, never merely neutral. She is always on a big wave of *kṛṣṇa-prema* in the ocean of love. So this trembling "out of tribulation" sounds like some "*māna*," some anger, as evidenced by Her sharp words rejecting Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa loves Rādhārāṇī's angry words more than the praises of the *Vedas* and all other devotional offerings by the various *bhaktas*. Let us aspire to serve Rādhā, and in that way serve Kṛṣṇa.

❧

Big drops of rain with loud plops on the plastic roof and on the ground leaves. Gray, cold rain, no wind. I came out here unprepared.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare . . .

❧

I have an appointment when I go inside to speak to Baladeva on the phone. He is traveling for his business, maybe in Canada. I wanted to tell him my future work plans. I have a plan for something I could write in a couple of months from now. Just to think of it fills me with satisfaction. Kṛṣṇa kindly reciprocates with these desires of mine to write "diaries while reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*" and things like

that. I know before *too* long, He will tell me time is up. I hope He doesn't say "Time was wasted." To prevent that, I will dovetail my propensities with some form of chanting and hearing *kṛṣṇa-kathā*.



I heard that Rādhārāṇī thought She was going to die. She expressed a last wish to Her friends that they take care of Her favorite jasmine bush. She also asked that when She died, they place Her arms around the dark *tamāla* tree. The *gopīs* led by Vṛndā-devī are very fond of Vraja's flowers and trees. They are always involving these trees in their pastimes with Kṛṣṇa. Many sacred and *rasika* trees; we cannot say that they are merely in *śānta-rasa*.

When Kṛṣṇa left Vṛndāvana for Mathurā, the *gopīs* stayed behind. They wanted to be with Kṛṣṇa in the *kuñjas*, not in the big palaces of the city. Even today, there is that special atmosphere in Vṛndāvana. Whatever appears to be nasty there—the hogs, the open sewers, the monkeys—is just that, only *apparent*. But underneath . . . Remember chanting under the reddening Vṛndāvana sky?



3:30 P.M.

While on *parikrama* in Navadvīpa, Mahārāja told a story of Jayadeva Gosvāmī. In the Ninth Century, Jayadeva was living in a *campaka* grove in Navadvīpa. (In Dvāpāra-yuga, the *gopī* Campakalatā resided there and made *campaka* garlands for Lord Kṛṣṇa.) Jayadeva was composing *Gītā-Govinda* and the pastimes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa were revealed in his heart. Thus he saw that Rādhā had developed a *māna* (jealous anger) toward Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa put His head at Her feet and asked for forgiveness. Jayadeva wanted to write this *līlā*, yet he did not dare. He knew that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Bhagavān and that Śrīmatī Rādhikā is His servant, so how could it be? The truth was that Śrīmatī Rādhikā's love controls Kṛṣṇa, but Jayadeva's heart could not admit this.

Jayadeva's intelligence and mind were at war. So he left his writing in the care of his associate, Padma, and he went to the Ganges to bathe. Meanwhile, Kṛṣṇa took the form of Jayadeva and came to Padma. He said, "Give me that book. I have something I want to write." He then wrote: "*devī pada pallavam* . . . Kṛṣṇa places His head at the feet of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Kṛṣṇa was burning in the fire of separation from Rādhā and for relief, He placed His head at Her feet. Kṛṣṇa asked Rādhārāṇī to laugh and forgive Him. If She did not, He would be destroyed in fire and She would weep. 'Your feet is a decoration for my head.'" After writing this, "Jayadeva" said He was returning to the Ganges to bathe.

Five minutes later, the real Jayadeva returned. Padma was surprised to see him back so fast, since he had just left again for the Ganges. So Padma showed him the book where in a clear and golden handwriting He had finished the page. Jayadeva began to weep and fell at the feet of Padma saying, "You are so lucky that you got to see Kṛṣṇa. I could not."

Jayadeva later received the *darśana* of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who assured him that He would appear in the future and would take pleasure in hearing *Gītā-Govinda* with His associates in Jagannātha Puri.

He told more stories of the enchanting power of *Gītā-Govinda*, how Lord Jagannātha left His *mandira* at night to go and hear a woman who was singing it. *That is writing! That is poetry! That is bhajana!*

•

4:17 P.M.



The Jayadeva Gosvāmī story brings to mind similar incidents in the lives of liberated Vaiṣṇava *kavis*. They are inspiring to hear. I like to hear writers glorified. I don't dare to dream that Kṛṣṇa will come and write a page for me or confirm that my writing is respectable, but I have dared to desire to write some day, merged in the pastimes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and the lives of devotees who are Their beloved servants. Nowadays I write what comes to mind, recalling what I have heard from Prabhu-pāda or Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. Or I draw a comical picture of myself sitting in a rain-soaked shack in America. I nurture dreams of future Kṛṣṇa conscious writing, but I also feel grateful for the present. At least I have been saved from the fate of writing without mention of the holy names and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa. I am a servant of the Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta* and a servant of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who told me to write.

•

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says that tears pour from devotees' eyes when they are experiencing ecstasy. If the tears are cold, it is due to jubilation, and if they are hot, it is due to anger. Rukmiṇī cried in jubilation, but did not like the tears because they blocked her vision of Kṛṣṇa. Satyabhāmā shed tears of affection for Kṛṣṇa. Bhīma shed hot, angry tears because he wanted to kill Śiśupāla but was restrained by Kṛṣṇa.

Among devotees I know, my peers, some may be wet-eyed and some less inclined to cry. I read that devotees' different natures is due to individuality. Some have natures so deep and grave that no one can read their minds. Others have natures that are like small ponds, easily upset and easily perceived. But of these two natures, there is no sāstric statement preferring one over the other. So those who cry easily

may do so under the influence of a shadow of *rati*. But even that lukewarm feeling is a great fortune. I know of one person who doesn't cry simply because his heart is not softened by love for Kṛṣṇa. Surely if one contemplates the compassion of Śrīla Prabhupāda, he will cry. Prabhupāda cried thinking of his own *guru mahārāja*, "He pulled me out!" He said he did not want to come to spiritual life, but his spiritual master pulled him out.

We have seen too many false, wet-eyed scenes. We don't know what to trust. We say the main thing is detached, steady service. It is service in devotion that softens the heart and allows us to cry in love.

O Lord Kṛṣṇa, You who came to write the verses that Jayadeva hesitated to write about Your surrender to Rādhikā, You who so much liked to hear *Gītā-Govinda* that You ran out of the temple at night in Your *arcā* form as Lord Jagannātha—You who give permission to all devotees who try to write on the order of the *paramparā*, please fix me as an atom at Your lotus feet. Please deliver me once and for all from the ocean of birth and death.

~

Rain is like the earth's tears. She feels sorrow at the sinfulness of Kali-yuga. Prabhupāda's movement is meant to offer shelter. The earth cries.

~

Sometimes pure devotees suffer *pralaya*, devastation. The *gopīs* experienced this. Once, Rādhā was searching for Kṛṣṇa. When He suddenly appeared out of the bushes, She and the other *gopīs* became stunned. "In this state the *gopīs* appeared very beautiful. This is an example of *pralaya*, or devastation, in happiness" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 228).

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7:00 P.M.

Madhu and I are reading aloud Jīva Gosvāmī's *Saṅkalpa-kalpa-drumaḥ*. He establishes conclusive truths about Kṛṣṇa and Vraja: the *gopīs* are the eternal wives of Kṛṣṇa; Kṛṣṇa promised to return to Vṛndāvana and He did, the *gopīs* are at the head of all exalted devotees. Nanda and Yaśodā are the eternal mother and father of Kṛṣṇa—and many other important truths. Jīva Gosvāmī examines the verses of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and tells us what Kṛṣṇa means when He says: "My *gopīs*" and when they say, "My Kṛṣṇa" to describe the Supreme.

We keep reading, although there are no purports; because we have received a line of thought from Śrīla Prabhupāda and Mahārāja, we can grasp some of the meaning of Jīva Gosvāmī's words. We feel a little inclined for more direct pastimes of Śrīmatī

Rādhikā, but we are patient and aware that Jīva Gosvāmī is making us strong and fit for hearing the *gopīs'* pastimes.

"A person [a *jīva*] gradually growing old in Vṛndāvana tells his mind: Fool, now you are close to death. Drink this nectar I give you.

"O Mind, as you drink this nectar, think of yourself being in Goloka and think of the loving service you wish to give the Lord.

"May the *gopa* prince, Kṛṣṇa, who makes the devotees blossom with happiness, and who is the auspiciousness of all the worlds and the *gopīs'* beloved, protect us" (*Saṅkalpa-kalpa-drumaḥ*, verses 4–6).

February 19, 2:11 A.M.

"Rādhā taught Her caged parrot to recite the words of Your letter. She turned Your letter into a song She sings to the accompaniment of flute and *vīṇā*" (*Padyāvalī*, text 191).

What do you want to say, that I aspire to love the verses of *Padyāvalī* and to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra with Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in mind? And to do it intensely and leave this world behind never to return? I don't want to be like the Russian cosmonauts who, while flying in outer space, kept looking down to see "where is Moscow?" I don't want to be like the librarian who was intrigued by the title, *Easy Journey to Other Planets* and who said to the author, "Oh, we shall go to other planets and return?"—but when Prabhupāda told him, "We shall not return," he lost all interest in the book.

Pure *sādhakas* have reached their destination even while they are in the midst of travel. I am dependent on their guidance.

I paused in my *japa* to read that verse about Rādhā teaching Her parrot to recite Kṛṣṇa's letter. Then I went back to the *japa*. For some moments the thought remained, of Rādhā's all-consuming love for Kṛṣṇa. She loves Him in all moods, and always "excessively," better than anyone else. All should worship Her supremacy.

"Say something to the splendidly smiling, infallible Personality of Godhead who stands before You. . . ." (*Padyāvalī*, verse 198). Can we direct our service to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī? Pray to Her by praying through Her *dāsīs*? Why not? Kṛṣṇa will be pleased if we can actually join Her camp. Yet I pray to Bhagavān to show me. I pray to Balarāma for strength.

Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, Please allow me to become a devotee of Rādhārāṇī, as Prabhupāda is. Let me follow him on this path.

Prabhupāda is there now. He taught all his life, and now he has gone to join Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*. We say we don't know where he has gone, but where could he go except to Lord Caitanya's *līlā* which is the way to Lord Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*? Śrīla Prabhupāda lived the modern day continuation of Caitanya-*līlā* by forming and investing ISKCON with the Gaura-*śakti* given to him. He left this world from his Vṛndāvana home and went back to Godhead.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura advises us, "By understanding the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu one can understand the truth of Kṛṣṇa . . . Those who are practicing the path of *rāgānugā-bhajana* are herein advised to relish the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa by approaching them through the medium of the pastimes of Śrī Gaurasundara" (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu*, p. 7). We relish these pastimes by following Rūpa Gosvāmī in his *ācārya* form, and Śrīla Prabhupāda too—whatever they have taught. After all, we are certainly *sādhakas*, not *sādhya-rūpena*. By ardent hearing of the generous writings of the *ācāryas*, we also glimpse the inner life of Rūpa Gosvāmī as Rūpa-maṇjarī, and of Śrīla Prabhupāda in a similar way.

Please lift us up. Give us that one inch of courage we are lacking which prevents us from embracing the *rasika* verses. Don't allow us to sink back thinking, "I'm not worthy."

"Say something to the splendidly smiling, infallible Personality of Godhead who stands before You filled with amorous desire. O fawn-eyed girl, sprinkle Him with the flooding nectar of Your amorous glance" (*Padyāvalī*, verse 198).

May we worship Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and those *gopīs* (*parama-preṣṭha-sakhīs*) who urge Her to go forward to please Govinda. May we worship, even from a distance, the service they render Her and make this service the object of our meditation. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura sings: "The lotus feet of Śrī Rūpa-maṇjarī are my treasure, my devotional service, and my object of worship. . . . They are the meaning of all my fasts and penances and my silent utterings of my mantras. They are the basis of religion and activities" (*"Śrī Rūpa-maṇjarī-pada,"* Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, verses 1, 4-5, *Vaiṣṇava Songbook*, p. 81).

❧

"My dear friend, You have already sold Yourself and all Your beauty to Govinda. Now You should not be bashful. Please look upon Him cheerfully. One who has sold an elephant to another person should not make a miserly quarrel about selling the goad which controls the elephant" (*Padyāvalī*, verse 199).

The principal *sakhīs* are so exalted that they give Śrīmatī Rādhikā advice like this. They also give duties to the *mañjarīs*. Lalitā-devī is the leader of all the *sakhīs*. Our *ācāryas*, in their perfect spiritual form, serve Lalitā by serving Rūpa-mañjarī. This is a secret, and yet it is written clearly in many places. No one unqualified should hear it or concoct some cheap method of entering these mysteries, but the fact is, the *gopīs* and their assistant maidservants are the most exalted members of the kingdom of God. As Śrī Uddhava said: “*vande nanda-vraja-strīṇāṁ pāda-reṇum abhīkṣṇaśaḥ*, I repeatedly offer my respects to the dust from the feet of the women of Nanda Mahārāja’s cowherd village. When these *gopīs* loudly chant the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the vibration purifies the three worlds” (*Bhāg.* 10.47.63).

Please accept me into this meditation and service. Allow me to render my outer service by thinking within of service rendered by the Six Gosvāmīs in both their *sādhaka* and *sādhya* forms. Unless I can know this taste of *rāgānugā*, I may fall down entirely. I cannot be sustained by mechanical “*bhajana*” or weak-hearted service performed only out of obedience. Māyā’s lures and punishments are too heavy for me to withstand forever unless I have the shelter of spiritual reality.

Mahārāja has encouraged me, “You must go forward or you will fall down like those others [he named names].” And Śrīla Prabhupāda has prepared me all along for this. I’m praying to him and sensing his encouragement. He doesn’t want me to be dull. “Do something wonderful, but don’t make a scandal or farce.” What you have to do is very simple and private. Go on serving by preaching *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*’s spotless message of pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Establish Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And in your heart, worship Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. You are not the first devotee to make these transformations. It is a safe and proven ground, but has to be trod carefully, with guidance.

❧

Don’t look back. Move on through these most important early morning hours. But what about the first rounds I chanted and their imperfection? They were also good in some respects, weren’t they? Yes, whatever they are, now you must tend to the present—the present rounds, and the present reading. Bow down, mister. Take the dust on your head. Move along.

I don’t need right now to write about my external surroundings. The Gosvāmīs didn’t put that into their poetry. And what were their surroundings? They lived at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Ter Kadamba, or Sevā-kuñja. Raghunātha Gosvāmī’s eyes were always filled with tears; either he “suffered” in separation, or he entered the actual pastimes as Rati-mañjarī.

My case is different. I get overpowered by mundane externals or at least I mention them. Sometimes I see Kṛṣṇa in these external events, to the degree that He is manifest to me in highway sounds or regulative practices. Kṛṣṇa is also revealed in the effort (*tapasya*) to overcome the modes. So I pray to Him loudly sometimes, "Kṛṣṇa, this trouble has come again to my mind. I am tempted by illusion. Please save me. Please save me."

Report what you must, but I give special thanks today that the Lord is allowing me to leave the externals aside and discuss the inner world. I don't want to do it presumptuously and that's one reason I keep mentioning that my feet are on the ground in Stroudsburg. But if Kṛṣṇa invites you with His flute, you can immediately leave all that behind. That includes your false ego. Come and describe Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the dance.



Reading notes

In *Jaiva Dharma*, the guru helps his disciples discover their original *rasa* with Kṛṣṇa. One disciple is told that he has a *sakhya* relationship with Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd boy, and the other disciple is in the *rasa* of a *gopī* and follows Lalitā. If I go further into this, I have to explain that Mahārāja made it clear by his answers . . . Strange that I am stopping short in regards to speaking of Mahārāja. I am regularly telling the readers that I am listening to his tapes, so why am I holding back now?

His *Jaiva Dharma* talks cover many subjects. One result of hearing from Mahārāja is that devotees' greed is increased. The other effect is that Mahārāja tempers the devotees' greed: "Anyhow, we should not try for this thing. By the grace of guru, Gaurāṅga, or *rasika-bhakta*, if that association comes and our greed also comes, then we should go forward. Otherwise, we should go on in our *vaidhī-bhakti*." From the viewpoint of the *sahajiyā*, Mahārāja is very conservative, a typical follower of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Mahārāja. The *sahajiyās* want to freely give out so-called *siddha-praṇālī*, but our line is strongly opposed to that.

All in all, it is a unique opportunity to read or hear what Mahārāja has to say. I say "unique" because who else has such affection and loyalty toward Prabhupāda and Prabhupāda's followers? And who else can give them a safe, stimulating entry into *rāgānugā* topics?





Using morning walk to dictate letters for "Letters from a *Sannyāsī*." By Kṛṣṇa's grace, a new project begins as this one nears its end.

I'm cold enough to stay awake in the gray fog. "I am a happy man," I just spoke in my letter.

Entering, daring to enter, the discussion of ultimate destinations. Mahārāja said it was all right for me to write about whatever he had said, which he called *siddhānta*. This means I can discuss *prayojana*, *gopī-bhāva*, and the principles involved. I can also repeat some pastimes I have heard. But it is too sacred (and I'm too unqualified—as are most audiences) for very intimate, detailed *vilāsa-līlā*.

I'm happy, yes. It is not the happiness of a *gopī* or a *mukta-puruṣa* devotee, but neither is it the happiness of the impersonalist sage. Happiness is to be with Kṛṣṇa. I just wish I had the time and facility to move along quickly and reach the goal. If I don't do it in this lifetime, I can continue in the next. I just want to get as much momentum going as possible so I can "hit the ground running" in my next life.

Mahārāja told us the pastimes of Lord Śiva wanting to be part of the *rāsa* dance. He performed long austerities to achieve it. Paurṇamāsī-devī (Yoga-māyā) appeared to him and asked, "What do you want?"

He replied, "To join Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa* dance."

"That will be very *durlabha* (difficult) for you." Lord Śiva was a male. To join the *rāsa* dance, you have to be born with a *gopī* form in Vraja, have a husband, and so on. You have to be a real cowherd girl. Mahādeva Śiva began to weep and touched the lotus feet of Paurṇamāsī-devī, asking for a benediction. She then made him the object of her mercy and he was able to take the form of a *gopī*.

Still, Lord Śiva wasn't able to fully participate in the *rāsa* dance but was allowed, as the *gopī* named Gopīśvara, to watch *rāsa-līlā* from a distance while guarding the area against unauthorized persons.

I mention it here to remember how rare and difficult it is to enter *gopī-bhāva*. Lord Śiva performed thousands of years of austerity, but still he was not allowed to enter. By the mercy of a *rāgātmikā-bhakta* one can take birth in Vraja. Give up the male concept, the false ego.

I'm quick to admit I'm "fallen" and "very, very far away from *rāgānugā*," but I'm not so willing to see what I am doing to hold up my own progress. My desire to attain *rāgānugā-bhajana* is so small. I have a dilettante's complacency with these topics. Lakṣmī-devī was unwilling or unable to change her way of life, to give up

her opulent, *aiśvarya* worship of Nārāyaṇa to become a simple-hearted *gopī* in Vraja. Am I willing to give up my male-ness? What is Kṛṣṇa asking of me? What exactly should I use in His service and what should I give up? I hope it will all become clear over time.

11:10 A.M.



The expressions of ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa described in *Nectar of Devotion* are usually excessive conditions. We try to avoid most of these in material life. "Keep cool," we are advised. "Don't make pressure, man." "No problem, no sweat." Moreover, these often disturbing results of *bhāva* are due to our *attachment* to another person, Kṛṣṇa. In the material world, it is not "cool" to be so attached to another person that you cry tears or turn color—or become stunned and devastated—if that person gives you a crooked look or goes away for a day or two. Anyone who has suffered due to attachment in love tries not to get so emotionally involved in future encounters. There may be reasons we hold back in reaching devotion to Kṛṣṇa. It is so heavy! The waves in the ocean are so rough! Are we ready for such things?

Mahārāja said that one of the first stages in prayerful *harināma* will be regret that we do not love Kṛṣṇa, that we are fallen. In a theoretical way, I have often been attracted to reading about lamentation, although I am too dry and unfortunate to get pulled into the actual undertow of such spiritual emotions.

In *Nectar of Devotion* there are examples of pure love for Kṛṣṇa expressed in lamentation:

One aged devotee of Kṛṣṇa addressed Him in this way: "My dear Kṛṣṇa, O killer of the demon Agha, my body is now invalid due to old age. I cannot speak very fluently, my voice is faltering, my mind is not strong, and I am often attacked by forgetfulness. But, my dear Lord, You are just like the moonlight, and my only real regret is that for want of any taste for Your pleasant shining I did not advance myself in Kṛṣṇa consciousness." This statement is an instance of lamentation due to one's being unable to achieve his desired goal.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 235

I can relate to that one. It is what I am afraid will happen to me. These laments are serious cases of regret, not just little spurts of tears. "My only regret is that" I failed to

taste, I failed to advance. He is an "aged devotee," so where is the scope for rejuvenation? But lamentation is purifying. Better late than never. You must be very proud if you don't regret your failure to love Kṛṣṇa. You must be like a dead stone.

Think it over, why can't I be like the devotees who love Kṛṣṇa and become anxious for His welfare? Why can't I be involved, why can't I *give* myself in a relationship? Why do I feel so dry and weak in feeling? My devotional service seems to take place all in the head.

One devotee said, "This night I was dreaming of collecting various flowers from the garden, and I was thinking of making a garland to offer to Kṛṣṇa. But I am so unfortunate that all of a sudden my dream was over, and I could not achieve my desired goal!" This statement is an instance of lamentation resulting from nonfulfillment of one's duties.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 235

This is an advanced devotee. Even Lord Caitanya had "dreams" like that and they were sometimes broken by His bewildered devotees chanting loudly to bring Him to external consciousness. Consider your own dreams. Oh, I don't want to even think of them. They are a crazy mish-mash of all things undesirable for a person who wants to be a devotee. They come from my irrational, violence-obsessed, lusty, fearful false ego. Why don't I dream I am picking flowers for Kṛṣṇa's garland and become disappointed when I am awakened before I could fulfill that ambition?

When Nanda Mahārāja laments, it is never about a reverse he has suffered, like the "aged devotee" whose only regret is that he didn't advance himself. Nanda-bābā cares only for Kṛṣṇa's welfare, so he laments that he didn't keep Kṛṣṇa at home, bolted in a room. "Unfortunately, I have brought Him to Mathurā, and now I see that He is embarrassed by this giant elephant . . ."

Lord Brahmā lamented his offenses to Lord Kṛṣṇa. He was thoroughly honest about it, confessing and regretting his impudence for trying to steal Kṛṣṇa's friends and cows.

❧

Stay in the world of devotion. Tolerate the outside disturbances. Let things spring-board you back into contemplation. There was an annoying sound in the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma guest house that used to do that for me. Was it some kind of paging

device (an electric buzzer)? It used to make me think, "Hurry up, remember Kṛṣṇa. You have forgotten."

A bird is chirping, I don't know its name, but it surprised me. It is more like a spring sound than a wet, drizzly, winter day sound. Where is the springboard? It seems I have to go straight into the pages of the holy scriptures. Or deeper into myself.

•

So, you wrote about lamentation and your lack of it, your unwillingness to give into emotions in *bhakti*. However, I don't recall being on the edge of emotions and then holding back. It's more a character lack, a set pattern of behavior in non-surrender. This keeps emotions from welling up in me. Perhaps I mix material emotions with spiritual emotions.

What are some emotions I can identify? I feel *apprehension* if there is a threat to my *sannyāsa* standing, my strict following of the four rules. I take this emotion as a healthy warning system, a signal like the first two symptoms of *śaraṇāgati* (do what is favorable and avoid what is unfavorable to Kṛṣṇa consciousness). I *fear* any attachment or sexual attraction. I know the psychologists would have a "field day" with that admission (as might my old friend, Steve Kowit), but I don't think they understand. I'm not afraid of sex per se, but of sexual relations in my own life. My life is meant for total dedication to Kṛṣṇa. Even if I cannot experience the *anubhāvas*—tears, devastation, etc.—at least I can save my heart for Kṛṣṇa. I want to be chaste and ready for Him. There is no question of nicely hearing the *gopī-mañjarīs'* prayers for service to Rādhā if I am still dwelling on lust for a woman in this world. So that fear of sex attraction has to be understood as a threat from the lower nature to one with a long-cherished desire to enter pure, "lusty" feeling of love of God.

Other emotions? Well, which kind, material or spiritual? I get *worried* over material things going wrong. (If I lose my passport again, how can I get to India? What do my peers think of me?)

When many meetings are imposed on me, I get *agitated* and crave the freedom to be alone and on my own.

I have *happy* feelings while accomplishing work, like reading sublime literature and writing. I am also happy (materially or spiritually?) when I can honor *prasādam* (honor means *eat*). I *love* some friends. I also have a long-term, stretched out, subtle feeling of *separation* from Śrīla Prabhupāda. I don't know how it will be consummated, but it is always with me. I have a new emotion for going to hear *rasika* topics

from Mahārāja. That relationship is very new; on the personal level it is still in the stage of acquaintanceship.

Do I feel joyful when I see Vaiṣṇavas? You mean the devotees in ISKCON? I feel joyed to see some, not all. I should appreciate them all because they are all very special in this world.

Okay, so I do have emotions, although they are nothing like the advanced states of devotion described in *Nectar of Devotion*. I don't faint when I see a peacock feather. I acknowledge this with a sober kind of humiliation. I aspire, wish, daydream about—work toward—attaining a blazing, or at least flaming, or at least smoky life of ecstatic emotion in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

"Sometimes, while participating in ceremonies celebrating Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, or in the society of devotees, there is dancing ecstasy. Such sentiments are called blazing" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 229).

"When Kṛṣṇa returned from the forest to Vṛndāvana, Mother Yaśodā was so emotional from seeing her son that milk began to flow from her breasts" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 241).

4:00 P.M.



In a 1973 lecture in Los Angeles, Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned *bhāva*. He said it is the stage just before full perfection. How to attain it? He began describing Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's verse beginning *ādaḥ śraddhā tataḥ sādhu-saṅga*. Prabhupāda said, "Do you believe that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead? Unless you do firmly, you cannot even reach the first stage."

It stuck—all our talk about *prema*, *mahā-bhāva*, *siddha-svarūpa*, and so on, but what about firm and simple faith that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead? Is there any doubt at all? If so, you cannot even go to first base. He said this faith is the definition of *śraddhā*, according to Kṛṣṇādāsa Kavirāja.

Śrīla Prabhupāda then said that *sādhu-saṅga* is very important. We don't learn about Kṛṣṇa directly, but in *paramparā*. Thus we should learn *Bhagavad-gītā* from Arjuna. And Kṛṣṇādāsa Kavirāja states at the end of each chapter of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* that he, "Kṛṣṇādāsa", takes the feet of Rūpa and Raghunātha Gosvāmīs on his head; he is their servant. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura also prays, "*ei chay gosāir jār—mui tār dās tā-sabāra pada-reṇu mora pañca-grās*, I accept as my master he who is a follower of the Six Gosvāmīs."

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he formed the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement as the “Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness,” not just “Kṛṣṇa Consciousness.” Even if you have faith that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but you practice alone, no, that won’t do. There must be a society of devotees.

Śrīla Prabhupāda described each of the stages of Rūpa Gosvāmī’s verse in a simple but profound way. He gave examples that the devotees could relate to. In explaining *ruci* he said, “Why would all these boys and girls, ladies and gentlemen, come and spend their time hearing and serving in Kṛṣṇa consciousness unless they had some taste, *ruci*?” He said he speaks the same message—surrender to Kṛṣṇa—but it is not hackneyed because there is *ruci*. Śrīla Prabhupāda didn’t explain these things with emphasis on the Sanskrit roots and affixes and prefixes. Neither did he get into detail as to when a devotee may ascertain if he has gone from one stage to another. He also implied that there were signs of advanced stages such as *ruci*, even in his young disciples. His talk is filled with potency and encouragement and based on solid *siddhānta*. Just what we need.



Lord Caitanya taught that humility was a prerequisite for chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. “One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street . . . in such a humble state of mind, one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.” But the definition of “Humility” given as an ecstatic symptom in *Nectar of Devotion* seems not so virtuous:

A sense of weakness caused by distress, fear or offensiveness is called humility. In such a humble condition one becomes talkative, small in heart, dirty in mind, full of anxiety, and inactive.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 235

What kind of humility is this? I can’t quite comprehend what it actually is as an expression of love for Kṛṣṇa. The devotees seem to be in reduced states and they are forced to surrender to Kṛṣṇa. It is almost as if one wouldn’t normally express love to Kṛṣṇa, but one is forced to because of the humiliating condition. Or in the case of Kṛṣṇa’s eternal associates, they always love Him, but certain difficult situations reduce them or drive them to seek His shelter without their pride, coyness, or hesitation. Thus, both Mucukunda as a fearful prisoner and Uttarā when attacked by Aśvattāmā, humbly turned to the Lord for protection. Lord Brahmā was humbled by

awareness of his *aparādha* toward the Lord. When Kṛṣṇa stole the clothes of the *gopīs* while they were bathing in the Yamunā, He put them in a very embarrassing condition. At first they tried to scare Him with angry talk, but when they saw He was determined, they begged Him not to be unfair to them: "This humility was due to their shyness from being naked before Kṛṣṇa" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 236).

So humility comes when we feel pinched by fear or some distress or acute awareness of our *aparādhas*. Our sense of helpless dependence on Kṛṣṇa is brought to an intense point by some condition that is forced on us. We are humbled, humiliated, and at last we give up our stubborn pride. Kṛṣṇa may force us to do this so that we can achieve our heart's desire, free-flowing expressions of love for Him. We will love it when it happens, when our hearts are softened and our tears are falling. We will turn to Him—but who has the courage to do that before we are forced?

Do you ever feel ashamed in public to be a devotee of Kṛṣṇa? Did your family members ever make you feel guilty because you are a devotee and intimidate you so much that it became difficult to worship the Lord in their presence? Don't feel bad. It might be the shadow of an ecstatic expression of love. In the perfect stage of *prema*, even Rādhārāṇī sometimes feels like this:

One day Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī was churning yogurt for Kṛṣṇa. At that time the jeweled bangles on Her hands were circling around, and She was also chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. All of a sudden She thought, "I am chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, and My superiors—My mother-in-law and My sister-in-law—may hear Me!" By this thought Rādhārāṇī became overanxious. This is an instance of feeling guilty because of devotion to Kṛṣṇa.

One day the beautiful-eyed Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī entered into the forest to collect some flowers to prepare a garland for Kṛṣṇa. While collecting the flowers, She became afraid that someone might see Her, and She felt some fatigue and weakness. This an instance of guilty feelings caused by labor for Kṛṣṇa.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 237

❧

I admitted that I am a dry stick with no emotions for Kṛṣṇa flowing from my heart, mind, and senses. I know there is a waterfall inside me, but it is still covered. I also acknowledged that although most of my emotions are material, I *do* feel some spiritual emotions. (Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "These ladies and gentlemen must have

some *ruci*, or why would they waste their time?") I also considered the emotions I do have and wondered how they can be transformed into Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I am also aware that the intense emotions described as ecstasies in *Nectar of Devotion* cannot be imitated. But *rāgānugā* will awaken when I desire to hear the emotional activities of the *vraja-jana* in their dynamic service to Kṛṣṇa.

The wives of the *brāhmaṇas* were always anxious to get an opportunity to see Kṛṣṇa. "Because of this, when they heard that Kṛṣṇa was nearby, they became very anxious to see Him and immediately left their homes" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p.241).

(I may say they were lucky, because Kṛṣṇa happened to live nearby them, but He is in my heart. Who could come closer?)

In Vṛndāvana if two trees crashed down, it was caused by Kṛṣṇa, so the emotions you would feel on hearing those trees would be Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When there is a forest fire, naturally you feel emotion, and for the *vraja-vāsīs* it meant that they turned to Kṛṣṇa for protection.

I just heard an explosion; now I hear dogs barking—these cause certain emotions. Let them be impetuses to turn to Kṛṣṇa. Even the subtle, melancholic emotion caused by hearing the continual highway hum, can turn me to Kṛṣṇa, the only source of relief from modern civilization.

But you have to love Kṛṣṇa for this to work. When there was a downpour of rain, this caused an emotion for the residents of Vṛndāvana. What kind of feeling? Listen—"Kṛṣṇa, don't You move now! . . . You are just a little boy. So please stay still!" This is an instance of emotion caused by heavy hailing" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 242).

"Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī is trying to prove by the above examples that in relationship with Kṛṣṇa, there is no question of impersonalism. All personal activities are there in relationship with Kṛṣṇa" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 243).



Another emotion is to get out of this material world, forgetting what clothes you are wearing or where you are sitting, forgetting at least for awhile, the time of day and everything else. Śrīla Prabhupāda said it is similar to the experience of a drunk man who doesn't know if he is dressed or not. I come to the shack for this. Shut the door, sit in open view of the forest—and leave it all behind.

The essential ingredient is to read Kṛṣṇa conscious books and to write. I can do that even where there is no shack or backyard forest. I pray that Kṛṣṇa will make me addicted to it. Then I will no longer write to create books, but for no motive at all other than *bhajana*.

Thank you, dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, for teaching me what I came to learn on this “retreat”: I can find You quickly by looking in one of the books by Śrīla Prabhupāda or the *ācāryas*, and by writing what comes to mind. What comes to mind? What I have just read. It comes through my pores. It purifies my mind. It creates spiritual aspirations. Maybe one day I will have spiritual emotions, expressions of love for Kṛṣṇa.

~

7:30 P.M.

Just a few days left in this mode of living, then I’ll break out of it, or let us say, the world will break in. When I live like this, I reach a simple way of preferred life. I do only a few things and I concentrate on them throughout the day. Everything contributes to the simple focus. I keep out other influences.

In the “normal” way of life, you pick up one duty after another, you switch from one thing after another. You think you are getting many things done . . . It is passionate and multifaceted. You lose a sacred sense of meditation. I am already writing this from outside the experience. Better stop trying to describe it. You sound like a school term paper on “meditation.”

~

Sometimes I feel there is a conflict between the desire to do only what is best for Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the desire to maintain writing practice. But the conflict will dissolve as I write more devotionally. It is expressed in the phrase “writing as *bhajana*.” Don’t look back in pride at what you think you have already accomplished in writing. Just keep striving for *that bhajana* quality, that honesty, that attempt to help yourself—and break through to *writing in unmotivated, uninterrupted Kṛṣṇa consciousness*.

~

February 20, 2:10 A.M.

“Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self” (*Bhāg.* 1.2.6).

Pure loving service to Kṛṣṇa. He is the fountainhead of pleasure. Is He the source of miseries? No, we are the source of our own miseries. Śrīla Prabhupāda lamented—and angrily protested—the degradation of human society wherein human beings are cruel to other human beings and all other living entities. This cruelty and resultant misery is due to a lack of God consciousness. ISKCON is meant to change the direction of society. We don’t have to wait until we are perfect before

we help others, but we have to at least remove the basic pillars of sinfulness from our lives.

•

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī tells Kṛṣṇa that all Her relatives are watching Her every move. "What is the use of those sidelong glances? I cannot go to You."

Kṛṣṇa eats a "light breakfast," starting with sweet rice seasoned with sugar, camphor, and pepper. Enjoying as He eats, Kṛṣṇa praises every bite. I read it last night in Jīva Gosvāmī's *Saṅkalpa-kalpa-drumaḥ*. He has given us wonderful pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and he tells us that he has not concocted them; they are all true.

"O heart, look at these pastimes of Kṛṣṇa happily eating lunch and playing in the forest! Do you see them? These pastimes make great sages speak words that are the sweetest poetry" (*Saṅkalpa-kalpa-drumaḥ*).

"Who are the great sages? The great sages are they who are at every moment enchanted by hearing about Kṛṣṇa, who is Himself charmed by the virtues of Śrī Rādhā" (*Saṅkalpa-kalpa drumāḥ*).

Kṛṣṇa's mother, Yaśodā, said to Kṛṣṇa, "Why can't I go to the forest with You? I can cook there and serve You Your meal nice and hot. One day I can go and Rohiṇī can stay at home to do the household duties, and the next day She can go to the forest and I can stay home. I won't be afraid or embarrassed to go with You." Balarāma smiled and shed a tear when He heard this. He told Mother Yaśodā that He sometimes had to kill demons in the forest. Then Balarāma said, "O Mother, please know that herding the cows is only the pretext we use to go to the forest. The truth is that we boys go to the forest to play" (*Saṅkalpa-kalpa-drumaḥ*). This was all narrated to Śrī Rādhā by one of the guards from Her house.

"As these pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa entered their ears, Rādhā and the *gopīs* could hear the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute. Again and again they heard that music" (*Saṅkalpa-kalpa-drumaḥ*).

Walking back and forth in the darkened, candlelit room, you cannot attain your heart's desire in *japa-yajña*, but still the effort is sublime, the shadow of *harināma* is giving you hope (*āśā-bandha*). O holy name, it is as if You are teasing me. And yet I know it is no joke. I have created my own hindrances and cannot do anything to immediately remove them. I shouldn't even speak words like, "I can't taste the nectar of *harināma*." It sounds offensive. But I must tell the truth of my condition and what is on my mind.

You have made me a "poet" of frustrated desires. I have to speak of unfulfillment. But I shall triumph. The holy name shall be victorious and storm into my

heart, driving out the demons of distraction. I am waiting and chanting—plotting my counterattack.

~

When are you going to answer your mail? Why are you holding off other duties to immerse yourself in thinking of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and writing? How many more days before you become a normal, harried citizen of the world? We are waiting to pounce on you again.

There goes the 3 A.M. small-engined plane through the sky.

~

I have been keeping a dream journal and giving my dreams titles: "Hiding out from people chasing you;" "A woman 'rescues' you." "Devotees become brutal fighters to capture thieves. Is it necessary?" One was simply, "Mundane Phantasmagoria." Sound interesting? It's just the spinning of the mind. I did have a few dreams of desiring to worship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. And in the midst of some of the dreams, I uttered Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.

~

Reading notes

Another feature of ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa is "Confusion." Once Rādhārāṇī went to the bank of the Yamunā with some of Her friends. "There Rādhārāṇī saw a cottage wherein She and Kṛṣṇa had experienced many loving pleasures and by remembering these incidents, She immediately became overcome with dizziness" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 247).

Prabhupāda mentioned that you cannot practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness alone. Or if you do, your progress will be very slow. Cāṇakya Paṇḍita also said that when you study, there should be two. Of course, sometimes we read a book on our own. But to savor the activities of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī in Her confusion, you need the association of a *rasika* devotee. You could read about Her emotions for many years without making much progress. She loves Kṛṣṇa so much. No one equals Rādhā. Only She can experience *mahā-bhāva*.

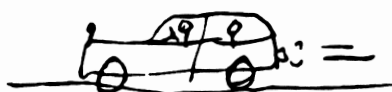
But even after associating with the *rasika* devotee, you still aren't clear. There are things in the way—your conception of maleness, your attachment to dirty things in the mind—these prevent you from entering the pastimes. You stay with the *Nectar of Devotion* passages which Prabhupāda has kindly given. Great and renounced souls like Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Prabhupāda want us to read this regardless of our condition.

Rādhā was afflicted by Her separation from Kṛṣṇa. She went walking with Her friends. The sight of the *kuñja* brought back memories of pleasurable times with Kṛṣṇa. She became dizzy. All right, that's all you're going to get out of it right now. Honor that much. Take it respectfully to your heart.

Here is something you should listen to and understand: even death can be considered a feature of ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa's friends almost fainted when they saw Him enter into the mouth of Bakāsura. Prabhupāda writes, "Even if devotees are illusioned by some ghastly scene or by any accidental occurrence, they never forget Kṛṣṇa." Even at death, they may be overwhelmed when the body's functions become disjointed, but "the devotee can remember Kṛṣṇa in his innermost consciousness, and this saves him from falling down into material existence" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 247, emphasis added).

As with the passage on Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, I could not enter deeply into this section on death as an ecstatic symptom because of my impurities. I cannot meditate about death as an ecstasy because I am not an advanced devotee. But I noted it. I filed away the information. These things are going to help me later. That is why the *ācāryas* gave them to us. They are going to come back to me when I will appreciate them, even if now I didn't read it very well.

"In this connection there is a statement about persons who died at Mathurā: 'These persons had a slight breathing exhilaration, their eyes were wide open, the colors of their bodies were changed, and they began to utter the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. In this condition they gave up their material bodies.' These symptoms are prior manifestations of death" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 248).



He wrote a letter to Jīva Gosvāmī Prabhupāda,
asserting his right
to address a 6-Gosvāmī
in affection and filial worship.
Is that okay?
Such a startling almost-full moon
high above, at the end of the road
big white, a beachball
of light all night in darkness.

Why not write a letter to that moon?
I could!
But I wrote to Jiva Gosvāmī,
thanks for writing *Saṅkalpa-kalpa-drumaḥ*.

•

Last night I couldn't fall asleep for awhile. I traced my insomnia back to the fact that some mail arrived with some very different items in it. The letters were reverberating in my mind along with the refrain to the song, "Bow Down, Mister." I tried substituting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra for the sleep that wouldn't come.

O Lord of the Universe, we have heard the secret about Your loving pastimes in Vṛndāvana. I don't think You want to keep it a secret. You come to this world just to attract us to those "down home" pastimes, but You keep it covered from *mūḍhās*. I am trying to learn how to worship You, when to speak, and when to keep it covered. Please don't kick me away as an outsider.

I have decided on my *sthāyī-bhāva*, my *bhāva-māyī*—my constitutional nature. Of course, I am the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa—there is no choice involved there. But I choose to serve Him in love. And may I choose to follow my eternal nature as Śrīla Prabhupāda teaches me? May I join Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana? But Śrīla Prabhupāda would say, "Don't jump over." Serve the guru. Get rid of your *anarthas* first, then we can talk about your *rasa*. You are not qualified yet. You don't even fully know the first step, *śraddhā*. Keep trying.

I hear geese and see a V-formation in the gray-white sky. This world is beautiful but strange and full of suffering. I wish to be responsible, as my spiritual master requests of us, and stay away from *asat-saṅga*.

•

11:04 A.M.



If I use my time well, then any place is good. Mahārāja said it may be better not to live in Vṛndāvana because many people go there and don't use their time well, don't get authorized *rasika* association, don't do *bhajana*, etc. So I take it that if one can find a place that's conducive to Vṛndāvana-*bhajana*, then he can feel separation from Vṛndāvana. Even while outside India, he can pursue studies, chanting, prayer. We who cannot always reside in Vṛndāvana must compensate in this way.

I have been listening to a tape of Mahārāja going to some of the places around Navadvīpa with some of my Godbrothers. It was a year ago and they were all hearing from him faithfully. At Vidyanagara he explained that all knowledge comes

from here. All the *ācāryas*—Rāmānuja, Mādhava, and so on—came here to learn. Even Lord Brahmā received the *Vedas* here. Both *paravidyā* and *aparavidyā* are taught in Vidyānagara.

“What should be prayed for here?” A Godbrother asked.

Mahārāja replied that we should pray to become a *dāsī* of Rādhārāṇī. The devotees laughed, “The same prayer everywhere.” “We are fixed in this desire,” said Mahārāja, “so wherever we go, we pray the same.”

This made me think of how I have written so much from my own point of view. Why not from Rādhārāṇī’s point of view? Why not give the straight teachings, faithfully reciting the *līlās* again and again at each *parikrama* spot as Mahārāja does each year? I have my answers to this. I always make the same defense. If I am meant to shake this off, then I don’t know how. If using myself as an instrument or test case has its merit, then I am doing it without making a big mistake. But I will have to be humble to write this way. I cannot be indirectly trying to establish myself as the most lovable person. I have to be telling the truth through what seems to me to be the inevitable personae of self, the one who sees, smells, and hears—the one who is in illusion and who seeks to surrender to the *rasika* Vaiṣṇava. It is “me,” but it may also be taken as the universal, conditioned self, “Mr. Sādhaka” with whom readers can easily identify. He says, “I mean no harm. I am telling what I know, what I have heard. Please don’t mind. Take *prasādam*. It has been offered to Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.”

Another brother said to Mahārāja, “When we are at a *tīrtha*, should we also pray that the *līlā* of this place be manifested in our hearts?”

“Yes.” Mahārāja then told how Jīva Gosvāmī asked Lord Nityānanda, “If Navadvīpa is the same as Vṛndāvana, and if Lord Caitanya is in His *audarya* (magnanimous) form in Navadvīpa, then why should anyone go to Vṛndāvana?”

Before answering that, Mahārāja began describing the *audarya* nature of the holy name. Rādhikā faints when She hears the name of Kṛṣṇa. When a devotee chants *śuddha-nāma*, Kṛṣṇa comes and touches that devotee, “Oh? By hearing My name you have become senseless?” By Kṛṣṇa touching that devotee very softly and gently, the devotee becomes senseless. He see Kṛṣṇa is so beautiful with yellow garments and flute, and again he becomes senseless.” So as Kṛṣṇa appears before the devotee first as name, then as form, then as fragrance—or anything of Kṛṣṇa, he becomes senseless.”

In reply to Jīva Gosvāmī’s question, Lord Nityānanda said that offenders should not go to Vṛndāvana. Vṛndāvana is the place of *rasa* and is approached by going to

Navadvīpa. “Kṛṣṇa is *rasika* and Lord Caitanya teaches how to be *rasika*. Navadvīpa-dhāma teaches this. A man can worship Caitanya Mahāprabhu in *dāsyā-bhāva* only. A woman cannot touch Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s feet; He will be angry. Lord Caitanya cannot be worshiped in *vātsalya* or *mādhurya-bhāva*. Rāmānanda Rāya was Viśākhā, and Svarūpa-Dāmodara is Lalitā, but in male form and as servant of Lord Caitanya, they cannot worship Him in *mādhurya*.”

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Śrīla Prabhupāda said that we each have to fly our own plane at the time of death. We are trained on the ground by able instructors, but when we are in the air, we are on our own and no one else can help us. As we do not want to fear death and our solo flight into death—and as we want to learn how to think of our guru’s *vāñī* when we are alone at death—so we should not be afraid to face ourselves throughout life and practice for the end.

But one should not become so enamored by solitary *bhajana* that he loses fondness for being with Vaiṣṇavas. That is the way of *śānta-rasa* meditation. No waves.

Especially in our conditioned stage, mixing with devotees brings out the false ego. There is nothing else to do but endure it. As we have to learn to be alone, we also have to learn to serve others face to face—or how will we be able to join the *sakhīs* and take direction from Rūpa-maṅjari? Learn this from the devotees, “not accepting any honor, but offering all respects to others.”

Mahārāja said that Lord Caitanya cannot be worshiped as a friend or parent or as the object of *mādhurya-rasa* as in *parakīya-rasa*. “But in Kṛṣṇa you can do all these things. By worshiping Lord Caitanya in *dāsyā-rasa*, then when it is right and we are *siddha* . . . we will see Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Lord Caitanya. By practicing *bhakti* in Navadvīpa, then we will reach Vṛndāvana. Navadvīpa gives the way to reach the *rāsa-sṭhali* (place of *rāsa* dance) in Vṛndāvana.”

Then—if one can see Vṛndāvana in Navadvīpa, why go physically to Vṛndāvana? Mahārāja replied, “Because Govardhana is not apparent, Yamunā is not apparent, *tamāla* tree is not here. When he will go there he will see all these things with these eyes, not with the eyes of meditation. So it will be more easy to go in Vṛndāvana.”

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Fingers are cold. The blue jay is crying all the way from my childhood. A stiff neck from concentrating to write that wondrous confidential knowledge which Mahārāja gave. The trucks, the dog . . . your friends’ voices on the tape, and you exactly where you want to be, alone in a cold shack hearing Vraja-līlā.

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Around this time, as it nears Gaura-Pūrṇimā, many ISKCON devotees are making the pilgrimage to Navadvīpa and Vṛndāvana. They will do *parikrama* in Navadvīpa, hundreds of them together. The GBC will meet. Prabhupāda will preside as the *mahant* of Māyāpura Chandrodayā Mandira and as the founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON. Many authorized speakers will speak on how to do the nitty-gritty work of steering ISKCON clear of internal and external dangers. Together, they will purge out whatever is non-ISKCON from the society. Rādhā-Mādhava will preside.

And with a little twinge of feeling left out, but mostly with satisfaction, I will face my destiny and go to ISKCON Trinidad for Gaura-Pūrṇimā. (O you of your own destiny! Don't give us your self-romance. Or so my mental critics say, and we all laugh together at my expense.)

4:01 P.M.



How little we knew when Śrīla Prabhupāda first poured the nectar of *Kṛṣṇa* book and *Nectar of Devotion* in our ears in 1969. And still, how little we know!

Under the heading, "Concealment": "It has been stated, 'Although Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī developed a deep loving affection for Kṛṣṇa, She hid Her attitude in the core of Her heart so that others could not detect Her actual condition.' This is an instance of concealment caused by gentleness" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 251).

Sometimes at Nandagram when Rādhā is there, She appears to be one of many *gopīs* and many dear devotees. Many *gopīs* look fondly at Kṛṣṇa from a distance and She hides among them. But even at Nandagram She is very special to Mother Yaśodā.

We are also pursuing *rāgānugā* hearing in concealment. You don't tell where you are going or what you are reading. In lectures you speak indirectly. Is Kṛṣṇa doing this on purpose, making us conceal our new love? Is He testing us? When can we be more open?

Under "Remembrance":

"... one friend of Kṛṣṇa informed Him, 'My dear Mukunda, just after observing a bluish cloud in the sky, the lotus-eyed Rādhārāṇī immediately began to remember You. And simply by observing this cloud She became lusty for Your association'" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 251).

The bluish hue of the cloud resembles Kṛṣṇa's bodily complexion. When I notice it, I become happy.

"One devotee said that even when he was not very attentive he would sometimes, seemingly out of madness, remember the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa within his heart. This is an instance of remembrance resulting from constant practice. In other words, devotees who are constantly thinking of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, even if they are momentarily inattentive, will see the figure of Lord Kṛṣṇa appearing within their hearts" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 252).

Śrīla Prabhupāda wished us well. He encouraged us that we were among those who were constantly thinking of Kṛṣṇa. Or we *could* be if we would simply discharge our regular duties in ISKCON. What is the difficulty? See the Deity of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Work in Kṛṣṇa's kitchen, edit Kṛṣṇa's books, go on the *saṅkīrtana* party and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa—in this way, twenty-four hours a day you are simply thinking of Kṛṣṇa. What is the difficulty? There is no difficulty. But the rascals will not do it.

Yes, Prabhupāda, it is easy; there is no difficulty. At least there was no difficulty when you were here telling us this. And today if we read and chant and are faithful to you, you sweep us along.

Under "Endurance": the devotee is *dhṛti*, fixed. No matter what happens, no loss perturbs him; he doesn't feel any lacking. We should achieve this—where you are convinced you have the best thing in the world and nothing can take it from you. Like Nanda Mahārāja you can exclaim, "I am feeling so satisfied!" Śrīla Prabhupāda has aptly translated the term as "mental endurance."

I'm not sure I know exactly what it means, but I know what Śrīla Prabhupāda means by "fixed." He expects us to endure. It is a sign of our sincerity. He is always with us and Kṛṣṇa is with us. Śrīla Prabhupāda has given us the very best thing, so he expects us to embrace it. As a result, we will endure. Yamarāja won't claim us. Nothing can disturb a sincere devotee. Or even if he appears disturbed, he will endure; he will endure by grasping at the lotus feet of guru and Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda will see us through the necessary work.

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My strong and loyal words may be partly rhetorical. They will carry more weight when I become a better person. Still, I hoist up the victory flag for Kṛṣṇa's party. All glories to the side of the Pāṇḍavas! *Param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana!* Wherever there is Kṛṣṇa, there is victory.

For myself, I pray not to abandon my place in the phalanx. "This is an instance of remembrance resulting from constant practice."

Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa. Only a few days left. Any mail I receive goes into a pouch for later.

Are there some things I can't force? Have I said everything I want to say? Some things always get left unsaid.



Haughtiness, resulting in dishonorable words, envy, impudence, all things occur as features of ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa. Some *gopīs* of the rival camp are envious of Rādhā. We will not side with them.

Let us hear true nectar. See the fun. "If Balarāma's party remains victorious, then who in the world can be weaker than ourselves?"



Tonight we will read the *dāna-keli* pastimes told by Raghunātha Gosvāmī. That's if our hearts hold out. We feel complacent and lazy, and I don't think I can claim, like Subala, that it is an instance of ecstatic love in laziness. ("Subala is feeling too fatigued from mock fighting with Me. So please do not disturb him anymore by inviting him to fight" [*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 248].)

How can we experience love of God when we don't surrender? You expect to walk back into the house and find *kṛṣṇa-prema* like a priority mail package addressed to you sitting on your desk? Not so easy, my friend. Mentally endure.



When I went on *parikrama* with Mahārāja I was exposed as a fool. Then I lamented that he didn't give me attention. I have told about that before. I was recalling it again today, and this time relishing the fact that at least I had an intense emotional experience in Vṛndāvana. I thought of it because we are reading of the ecstasies of emotion. I felt so much pain in Bhandiravāna and Vamśivāṭa, over nothing, apparently. The pain of the false ego. It is good to go through that pain if the ego will let go. Become a simple journalist, become a simple poet. Become a devotee of the devotees. Go through pain for that.

Maybe in your next life you can carry someone's water pot, serve them, and not get agitated, "I want to lead my own party."



"When Rādhārāṇī was first introduced to Kṛṣṇa, She felt very bashful."

Thank you Śrīla Prabhupāda, for giving us the *Nectar of Devotion* when we were still your little babies. If we asked you something about Rādhā's love you explained it simply enough. But you warned us that it was very advanced subject matter. You are still warning us. You are still telling us to stay in the society of devotees, even if we "feel some inconvenience." You told us that if we went outside the society of devotees, we would surely fall down.

"Kṛṣṇa was once addressed by His friend thus: 'My dear Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa], due to their being separated from You, the cowherd boys are standing just like neglected deities in the house of a professional *brāhmaṇa*'" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 249).

Anywhere you open *Nectar of Devotion*, there is an ocean of *rasa*. Savor one drop and save yourself.



Sirens on the highway. Another car accident. Remember Kṛṣṇa way inside yourself no matter what happens. Do it by chanting. This is an example of attaining ecstatic love by constant practice.



7:10 P.M.

End of a day. Better not to look back on it and praise yourself or denigrate your work, or think too much of your self. What is the profit in meditating on your mortality? Or memories of old scenes? Quiet down for rest so you can rise as early as possible and chant Lord Hari's and Rādhā's names.

Make the day-end a prayer of thanks. Kṛṣṇa is protecting you. He let you hear so much nectar tonight in *Dāna-keli-cintāmaṇi*. During the day He let you write down the words of Prabhupāda in *Nectar of Devotion* and of Mahārāja on *parikrama* in Navadvīpa.

Just another day. "I produced, I produced," you think, "in my young old age I am producing heaps of pages." But none of it can actually capture Kṛṣṇa's attention or Kṛṣṇa's beauty—unless there is a spark of sincere desire in your heart. I think there must be such a spark because I am part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda has trained me. But how much is coming through?

I don't want to be like Śatrājit who kept the Syamantaka jewel to himself because it produced gold every day. I want to remain a poor *brāhmaṇa* and write of Kṛṣṇa's glories. I cannot do it as directly as Raghunātha Gosvāmī who tells us confidentially what the *gopī* Śuśumukhī said to Kuṇḍalatā about Kṛṣṇa's joking words to Rādhā, but I can glean some of it.



Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa. Creaking sound in heaters on baseboards . . . take rest, friend. I bow down to the lotus feet of the Pañca-tattva. Please allow me to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa better than I ever have before. Please let it happen. I'm willing to pay the price—if You will let me.



February 21, 2:10 A.M.

I just woke from a dream about preaching. I was with a few other devotees preaching to a crowd of people. We were broken up into small groups and I was preaching to a young couple who were like drifters. At one point, they became disinterested and began to walk away. I followed them, trying not to either intimidate them or to be intimidated by their obvious lack of interest. I asked, "Are you going to get something to eat?"

"Yeah, we're going to get lunch."

Then I started telling them about offering their food to God. "You might think it's silly, but actually it's a way to sanctify the food. This will really help you if you do it." They listened to what I had to say and then I awoke.

For some reason, this dream shook me up in my thoughts about *rāgānugā-bhajana* and voluminous writing. Should I be on the street stopping people as they go by? Am I really preaching? Anyway, I reconciled it. Even if we do get people to stop and learn a "technique" for offering their food to God, and if they take one of Prabhupāda's books, then a rare few of them will become serious to practice. All the practical obstacles will arise for them and the practical and philosophical teachings will have to be given. Devotees need to be trained. My preaching role, especially at my age and physical condition, is to go to temples and see practicing devotees, congregations, and guests. It is also to write letters and enter entangling realities in the lives of people in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In other words, I shouldn't create an impasse between *bhajana* and preaching or writing and preaching. Still, the dream reminds one of the front lines, raw encounters with people who have no initial knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. No *rāgānugā* there, no *parikrama*, no Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. When I do go to the temples, I must honor and serve those who do preach that way.

The dream and its doubtful aftermath also reminded me that some Godbrothers think my writing is not preaching. So I have to tolerate that. Go on doing what you can do; assist in the worldwide *saṅkīrtana* movement.

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We read of Kṛṣṇa setting up an improvised toll booth in the jungle and stopping Rādhā and Her *sakhīs* who are carrying milk products to a *yajña*. Kṛṣṇa demands they pay a toll. On this pretext, He praises the beauty of Rādhārāṇī and provides a meditation for *bhaktas*. Now Rādhā, Lalitā, and Viśākhā are talking back. They are pretending to be angry (*kila-kiñcita* ecstasies) but are very pleased at heart with the blissful pastime created by Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

To make anything Kṛṣṇa conscious, it needs to have a solid, spiritual reference point. Kṛṣṇa is the original reference point. If someone asks, "What is Kṛṣṇa's source?" we say, "He has no cause or source besides Himself." As Prabhupāda said, "If God has to have a cause like you and I, then how is God different than an ordinary person?" He is *sarva-karaṇa-karaṇam*, the cause of all causes, but He is *svarāṭ*, the independent, eternal Supreme. Therefore we bow down and worship Him.

I too must go to that source. Then my musings and "struggles" can have value. A man who claims, "I'm all alone," like the atheist existentialists, is not going to help someone who wants the spiritual path. "Spiritual" doesn't mean trying to figure things out by your own experience and patching together what suits you from the history of recorded wisdom. You can do that if you like, with yourself as the ultimate criteria for judging, but it won't be Kṛṣṇa conscious. We have to follow the path given by the Six Gosvāmīs.



Under "Eagerness" in *Nectar of Devotion*: "In his book *Stavāvalī*, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has prayed for the mercy of Rādhārāṇī, who was so captivated by the flute vibrations of Kṛṣṇa that She immediately asked information of His whereabouts from residents in the Vṛndāvana forest. Upon first seeing Kṛṣṇa, She was filled with such ecstatic love and pleasure that She began to scratch Her ears" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 255).

Eagerness: "... they still gave up everything [the young ladies of Indraprastha] and immediately went into the street to see Kṛṣṇa." To rise early for *japa*. "This is the best opportunity." Despite signs of lack of progress, despite evidence that you have a long, long way to go and your *anarthas* are deeply rooted—still, we pray for that eagerness to perform chanting and hearing.

To write in note pads despite all your flaws and criticisms; to preach the message of *Bhāgavatam*; to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda's lectures (I cannot do without them); to hear what Mahārāja has been telling the devotees, which I missed because I was on my own tangents and detours; to be eager to make up lost time. Eager to go to temples, although I know there are so many inconveniences and "realities" that make it difficult. Eager to know more, to go back to India, to read, to get my work done. Eager to hear from devotees on the *bhakti-mārga* and to hear from them about true eagerness. And eager to experience what I must go through to ride the waves of *utkāṇṭha*.



"When Kṛṣṇa was fighting with the Kālīya snake by dancing on his heads, Kālīya bit Kṛṣṇa on the leg." Garuḍa became infuriated and wanted to attack the serpent. "' . . . I wish to devour him immediately, but I cannot do so in the presence of my Lord, because He may become angry with me.' This is an instance of eagerness to act in ecstatic love as a result of dishonor to Kṛṣṇa" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 256).

We saw this in Śrīla Prabhupāda. He wanted to expose the rascal commentators on *Bhagavad-gītā* and the scientists and politicians. He wanted us to do it too. "A preacher must have life; a dead man cannot preach."

At the Rājasūya sacrifice, Sahadeva said, "A person who cannot tolerate the worship of Kṛṣṇa is my enemy and is possessed of a demoniac nature. Therefore I wish to strike my left foot upon his broad head, just to punish him more strongly than the wand of Yamarāja!" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 256).

Even violence can be used in the service of Kṛṣṇa, by those who are authorized.

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Kowit challenged me, "Is there a single opinion of Prabhupāda's that you are willing to disagree with?" Why should I disagree? They are not his opinions. Do you disagree with God? Why disagree with His representative? And why try to check me if I am willing to agree? Why do you insist? Why do *you* favor Walt Whitman's saying, "I teach straying from me"? In his case, better he teach to stray from him. It is a wise modesty on his part, because he cannot save us from death.

But as for being a person different in some ways from my spiritual master, that is a delicate issue which cannot be worked out with a nondevotee who doesn't even accept God or the guru. I can work out the intimate details of my spiritual life with like-minded friends. Kowit, your challenge is unfriendly. It is a gauntlet thrown down before me, a slap in the face, an invitation to fight. "Why do you follow your guru?" What do you expect me to say?

I follow my guru because I do not know the way. He is showing me.

My challenger added that he thinks I am similar to the fanatics who supported the inquisition's burning of heretics. He thinks I would be one to support absolute dictatorship. "God save us from it!" he says. And why does he think this? Because he thinks I am blindly following my guru.

Devotees painstakingly figure out how to serve the guru's order throughout their lives. As I write this, the GBC is meeting in Māyāpura. Each GBC member has his own opinion about what is the best way to follow Prabhupāda's order. Together, they will come to some sort of consensus. They are not bound by some church dogma, but by the desire to please their spiritual master. Prabhupāda *wanted* us to

use our intelligence in serving Kṛṣṇa. The bottom line of our allegiance to his "opinions" is that we have to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and follow the four rules; we have to help in his mission of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the world and ourselves develop love of God. Yes, God save us.

❧

Reading notes

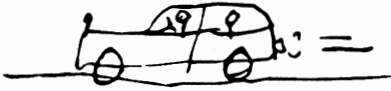
We try to relate to the features of ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa. Can we claim our present feelings are a sort of ecstasy? One feature is "Impudence": "When Rukmiṇī was going to be married to Śiśupāla by the choice of her elder brother, she wrote the above letter to Kṛṣṇa requesting Him to kidnap her. This is an instance of impudence in ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 258).

Do we dare? If the pure devotee is impudent, Kṛṣṇa is pleased. Otherwise, impudence might be offensive. And yet Kṛṣṇa is more pleased with the impudence of a lover than the pious prayers of a distant worshiper. Anyway, it will take place in us naturally. We don't have to *plan* to be impudent (or full of ecstatic love).

When one is working hard for the *saṅkīrtana* movement and experiences some dizziness upon rising in the morning, we can say that that is not a material symptom. We can also sleep for Kṛṣṇa with the simple understanding that we need to become refreshed in order to do more service. But who can talk in their sleep like Lord Baladeva: "O lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa, Your childhood adventures are manifest simply according to Your own will. Therefore, please immediately dispose of the stubborn pride of this Kāliya serpent" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 259).

There is also an ecstatic feature called "Alertness": "At that stage, when in contact with any reaction of material elements, such as sound, smell, touch or taste, the devotee realizes the transcendental presence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead" (p. 259). This is far beyond the alertness of Zen masters. They are awake to "something," the unnameable reality or whatever they like to call it (or not to call it). But we want to be so alert that we instantly think of Kṛṣṇa and always see opportunities for serving Him. "When Lalitā, Her constant companion, whispered into Her ear the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, Rādhārāṇī immediately opened Her eyes wide."

❧



I just read a verse praising Śrīla Prabhupāda. It said that he preaches in the most populous cities and doesn't hide in the countryside for his personal benefit. Another verse praised him as the inspiration for preachers, and another said Prabhupāda is the life of those who quietly practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He is for all of us; we have to please him.

Just see that sentence, "We have to please him." It becomes a truism. Or it sounds devoid of joy or spontaneity. I don't mean it that way, although I use that phrase often. Writers often expect others to know what they intend by their sometimes repetitive phrases. Unfortunately, whatever dullness I have comes through in my writing. *We have to please him.* I wouldn't want that to be taken as those phony announcements made after *maṅgala-ārati*, like the pledge of allegiance to the United States. Am I perpetrating some of the same, Prabhupāda allegiance truisms?

Actually, sometimes I am tired, not in spirit because the spirit doesn't get tired, but somewhere beyond the body. It is the tiredness of a so-called *sādhaka* whose practice slips down into the modes of nature. I once called this "H.D." disease—half-dead disease.

Life is what characterizes the *gopīs'* love for Kṛṣṇa—intense life. You have to be vulnerable to Kṛṣṇa's hurting you or neglecting you. You have to love Him. Did you ever love anyone? Are you too bound up to love even God, Kṛṣṇa?

The *gopīs* are willing to be hurt. They give themselves completely. Rūpa Gosvāmī warns us, "If you are not prepared to lose all taste and standing in material happiness, then do not go to see Govinda at Vamśivāṭa." I state it here, afflicted by H.D., but desiring the cure. This is *not* a material disease like headaches or constipation. It is much worse.

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It was snowing and I dictated a letter to devotees in Vṛndāvana. Now we're in the car. I don't know what Madhu is thinking. I'm filling up a page. I want to keep busy in writing practice for two more days.

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The devotees asked Mahārāja if patience (*dhairya*) could be reconciled with greed. He replied by saying that *gopī-bhāva* is a very valuable thing and one cannot expect to have it in five or ten years. He told a story of an old, meditating lady-saint whom Arjuna met on the bank of the Ganges. He asked her who she was and she explained that she was going to perform austerities for a lifetime of Brahmā with the desire to

attain *gopī-bhāva*. Arjuna told Lord Kṛṣṇa about her and He granted her *gopī-bhāva* in her next life.

Mahārāja said we should go on with our Vaiṣṇava services and be *dhairya*. Don't be impatient and think, "I have tried this and no fruit has come, so let me take to karma." At the same time, we should have *utsahā*, enthusiasm, to attain attraction to *gopī-bhāva* in our lifetime. Rest assured that Kṛṣṇa is giving us opportunities. It cannot be achieved on our own. Mahārāja gave the example that we Westerners had no chance in our own culture to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, but Prabhupāda came and gave us spiritual life. Now we can come to Māyāpura and Vṛndāvana and get further association. It is Kṛṣṇa's arrangement.

Entering *gopī-bhāva* may not happen soon, but Kṛṣṇa will enliven us by giving us the taste and attraction to continue. As we realize what a rare and beautiful thing *kṛṣṇa-prema* is, we will continue to patiently strive for it. We will never lose our enthusiasm. Mahārāja gave the example of a thief who tries to take gold from a house but is caught and put in jail. When he is released, he again goes to steal gold, knowing well that he may be put in jail again. He cannot help himself because of greed. So if a thief can have such greed for ordinary gold, why can't we have a similar greed to attain something which is so much more valuable (*gopī-bhāva*)?

That makes it clearer.

11:04 A.M.

That makes it clearer. No greed yet. Lean and thin, and yet . . . By association with a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava . . . (Mahārāja asked me, "Do you think I am a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava?" Yes, I do). It is due to your *niṣṭhā*. Everything depends on continued faith in and service to Śrīla Prabhupāda. It is like two lives, inner and outer.

It can slip away. What little we have of it needs to be regularly nourished. I am doing it—reading *rasika* books, thinking of a *rasika* guru, and planning when to be with him again. I'm doing it—regularly reading Prabhupāda's books and hearing his tapes and living to help his mission (my mission to assist). I am doing it—being *dhairya*. The main thing is to desire eventual entrance into Vraja. Or to desire attraction to Vraja.

I was going to write some more just now from the tape of Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, but the subject is esoteric, Gaura-Gadādhara worship.

Last days out here.

This is separation. He is explaining Gaura-Gadādhara worship. I will be able to explain it to others. But more than that is needed.

When I'm out here, they clean my rooms. I'm feeling the end of this sojourn. What's the conclusion?

It has already been stated: *Keep this valuable thing inside you and now go out and preach to people.* The wind in the pines is saying it; the twinge in your head is saying it. The breeze comes through reminding me of the same message.

Tufted-head titmouse on the branch. Nature all around me, and inside, deliberations on Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

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"One day, in a joking mood, Kṛṣṇa informed Rādhārāṇī, 'My dear Rādhārāṇī, I am going to give up Your company.'" Rādhā fainted. But on the ground She smelled "the flavor of the flowers. She awoke in ecstasy and got up. This is an instance of transcendental alertness caused by smelling" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 260).

I think what I realize most right now is that the residents of Vṛndāvana are *always* thinking of Kṛṣṇa, and I am meant to do that too. The opportunity is always there if one is alert to the opportunity. Don't let people or things block the way. What I call "pursuit of *rāgānugā*" (it is not *rāgānugā* yet, but I call it that. Greed, shadow greed)—is actually Kṛṣṇa consciousness itself. It is the same thing I have been practicing and trying to understand for twenty-five years. It is what I asked Swamiji about during the first private *darśana* I ever had with him, "Is there a spiritual advancement you can make from which you won't fall back?" "Yes," he said; he still says yes. It is the same Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but now it is more focused. It is what Śrīla Prabhupāda wants from me, what he expects me to do.

"One of the *gopīs* informed Kṛṣṇa, 'My dear Kṛṣṇa, when You disappeared from the arena of the *rāsa* dance, our most dear friend, Rādhārāṇī, immediately fell on the ground and lost consciousness. But after this, when I offered Her some of Your chewed betel nut remnants, She immediately returned to consciousness with jubilant symptoms in Her body.' This is an instance of alertness caused by tasting" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 260).

Keep hearing what Śrīla Prabhupāda writes (from Rūpa Gosvāmī) about the intense ecstasy of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Be alert in your own service. Control the pushing urges (*vāco vegaṁ manasaḥ krodha-vegaṁ*). *Gopī-bhāva* starts with the first verse of *Upadeśāmṛta*—controlling the pushing agents. Be alert not to be carried away by *māyā* in the form of sense enjoyment. Be patient. The day will come when your

alertness will pay off in other ways. Be alert for what is favorable and what is unfavorable.

Rādhārāṇī spoke to Kṛṣṇa in a dream. She told Him to stop playing jokes. Don't touch My garments. Then She awoke and saw some of Her superiors before Her. She became ashamed and lowered Her head. (Again the hiding and cheating and concealment in *parakīya-rasa*). This is an instance of alertness caused after awakening from sleep. These symptoms are all known as *vyabhicārīs*.

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Writing with pretense. Writing with audience. Writing for effect. The purpose is not low-minded. It is Kṛṣṇa conscious instruction. Nonetheless it produces a false poetic strain. Sometimes I get beyond it—when I forget what I'm doing or when a sincere urge comes to write down what's in my heart, gut, chest.

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There is no conflict in purpose between what Śrīla Prabhupāda is teaching me and what Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja is teaching. Also, there is no conflict in my relationships with them. So I will continue to write from both of these sources at the same time.

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Blue-bright sky, clean white clouds, stick branches on the tops of trees. The neighbor yelling in that nasty tone, "Come on! Get *over* here!"—to both his son and the dogs.

Brown leaves. A soft yet cold wind.

I'll go in and hear those subtle points about Gaura-Gadādhara and the necessity to get Lord Nityānanda's mercy in order to enter Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-sevā. Then at lunch, I will hear Śrīla Prabhupāda in Los Angeles, December 1973 lectures—a wonderful series—where he began each lecture singing, "*Jaya rādhā-mādhava kuṅjabhihārī*."

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4:05 P.M.

I heard Mahārāja giving his judgement about certain commentators of the *Sat-sandarbhās*. One he said was very good and the other was not so satisfactory. This got me thinking that Vaiṣṇava literature has traditionally been in Sanskrit and is composed of prescribed forms of poetry, philosophy, and drama. Is there room for me?

My affirmation is that before Śrīla Prabhupāda, there was no Western expression of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now we have it. For example, we have ecumenical Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Vaiṣṇavas meeting Christians and other denominational religions. We have Vaiṣṇavas employing Western technology based on Rūpa Gosvāmī's prin-

ciple of *yukta-vairāgya*. Śrīla Prabhupāda approved of Western music for singing Vaiṣṇava songs. So why not diaries?

I asked Mahārāja about this point and received a good reply. But I know I have to just do it, fill the pages with Kṛṣṇa conscious reflections, with the words of the *ācāryas*, and with captured moments. Similarly, I have put the question before Śrīla Prabhupāda since I was writing *Journal and Poems* in 1985. I believe that he is accepting the sincerity of my offering, despite its unorthodoxy in Vaiṣṇava tradition.

I also like to solace myself with the fact that no matter how extreme I seem to be in my experimentation with poetry and diary, I am bound on all sides with my own conservativeness and faithfulness in Prabhupāda and the *paramparā*.

How does one finish a book? I guess I could just stop writing. I have said what I wanted to say. I have built up momentum for my inner life. I can put my pen down for now. And I can think of what to write next.

7:00 P.M.

Tonight when we finished our reading of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's *Śrī Dāna-keli-cintāmaṇi*, Madhu began to praise the way Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī ended his book:

Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are like two blue and golden jewels in the nectar ocean of the *dāna-keli* pastime, and They delight the hearts of Rādhā's playful *gopī* friends. Although I am greedy for material things and although I am spiritually blind, I nevertheless yearn someday to see Them face to face.

A blind person found this *cintāmaṇi* jewel of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava's *dāna-keli* pastimes at the base of Govardhana Hill. That blind man prays that the dear followers of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī become pleased by gazing at this jewel.

Taking a blade of grass between my teeth, I repeatedly beg that birth after birth, I may obtain the dust of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's lotus feet.

I thought, "How different is my ending of *Returning from Pilgrimage*. I sound as if my book is a willful endeavor by me alone. 'I am the doer.' Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has written a Sanskrit-perfect, liberated version of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's brilliant pastimes, but he humbly says he has "found" it at the base of Govardhana Hill. He

aspires to obtain the dust of Rūpa Gosvāmī's feet life after life. But I say, "Let me think of what to write next."

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*February 22, 2:15 A.M., Appearance day of
Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura*

A heavy load of correspondence has arrived and I must answer it. Time to get on with my "regular" life.

I could not escape my mind on this retreat. It followed me into my *japa* and intruded on my concentration on the holy names.

Every morning I offer *praṇāmas* to the spiritual masters in disciplic succession, looking at their pictures and thinking of their qualities as described in their *praṇāma-mantras*—His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, His Holiness Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Gaura-kīśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. I think of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, the Six Gosvāmīs. I think of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the combined form of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, His associates, and I look upon the forms of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and think briefly of Their *mādhurya* pastimes. I think of the *sannyāsa-mantra*, with its aspiration to become a seed in the sacrificial fire of *mañjarī-bhāva*. After these prayers, I begin the *japa* of Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra as given to me by Śrīla Prabhupāda. These practices are the essence of *bhajana*—to place the dust of the lotus feet of all these great devotees and the Supreme Lord on my head and to attempt to serve with loving devotion in this world and the next.

Let me close in the spirit of the mentor of all writers in the Caitanya *sampradāya*, Śrīla Kṛṣṇa dāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī. He says, "I now worship the lotus feet of all my readers, for by the mercy of their lotus feet there is all good fortune" (C.c., *Antya* 20.150). I pray to my spiritual masters, and to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*he kṛṣṇa karuṇā-sindho dīna-bandho jagat-pate, gopeśa gopikā-kānta rādhā-kānta namo 'stu te*)—that I may give pleasure to gentle Vaiṣṇava readers with more writings in the future; or let me happily serve them in any way You desire.

tādera caraṇa-sebi-bhakta-sane-bas janame janame hoy ei abhilāṣ