

The
Story
of
My Life

vol. 3

also by satsvarupa dasa goswami

Srila Prabhupada Lilamrita

Handbook for Krishna Consciousness

Readings in Vedic Literature: The Tradition Speaks for Itself

Your Ever Well-Wisher

Prabhupada Nectar v. 1-5

Japa Reform Notebook

Qualities of Sri Krishna

Vaisnava Behavior/ The Twenty-Six Qualities of a Devotee

Japa Walks/Japa Talks

Japa Transformations

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The Story of My Life

vol. 3

autobiography of

satsvarupa dasa goswami

To His Divine Grace

*A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada who initiated me
and thousands of young men and women into spiritual life,
and directed us into devotional service to Lord Krishna.
Without his blessings, my life would have no meaning.*

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preface

This is the third volume of *The Story of My Life*. In Volume One, I alternated chapters of my early days in ISKCON (the International Society for Krishna Consciousness) with a chronological history of my pre-Krishna conscious life. Two-thirds through the book, my pre-Krishna conscious life ends, and it's all about my career in ISKCON. In the second volume, I introduce excerpts from the books I have written over 35 years, along with comments from the present perspective. Because writing is such an important part of my service to my spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada, to walk you through one of my books is to share my inner life, my autobiography. Volume Two also contains writing “assignments” from Natalie Goldberg’s book *The Practice of Writing Memoir*. These assignments provoke deep and spontaneous writing from both before and after my entering Krishna consciousness.

In Volume Three I continue to give excerpts and commentaries from my books. And I come up with new things: synopses from the fiction I have written, a complete private journal I kept in the year 2013, and writing assignments produced not by Natalie Goldberg but by my devotee friends. These are more personal to me, and Krishna conscious. There are other surprises in Volume Three. I hope the reader will be entertained and enlightened.

MINI ESSAYS

(Written on the front porch, late 2013)

They rolled out a red velvet carpet for me in Vancouver. For nine years the temples in my initiating zones had special *vyasanas* for my exclusive use and a separate *guru-puja* was offered. My non-initiating godbrothers sat on the floor when I lectured and came up and offered me a flower when I sat on the *vyasana*. But I was a figurehead. Each of the temple presidents ruled the devotees with an iron fist. when I visited the temple I met with them, and they told me who among my disciples was doing well and who was doing poorly. I had to go along with their decisions. If I met with the blacklisted devotees and reprimanded them, it caused a crisis of faith for them. they saw I was being manipulated by the temple president and didn't have a direct relationship with them. One woman at Gita Nagari thought she was being treated unfairly by the temple president and developed an estrangement from me that lasted many years – because I took the temple president's version of her over her own presentation of herself. The temple presidents were like dictators and did not like me trying to develop direct relationships with my disciples. It was very disheartening to me and my disciples. I was just a dancing dog, "Gurupada," officially honored but chained by the autocratic rule of the T.P.s.

In some cases I developed personal relationships with my disciples by lecturing on the importance of *sadhana* and the relationship with one's guru. But this sometimes formed a strain between the T.P. and me. I wanted them to purchase and read my books. I liked it if they could get time away from their temple and travel with me for periods. In some cases the T.P. even spoke against me to my disciples. One of them called one of my disciples into his room (he was a leading manager in the temple) and pointed out to him that I had used the word "I" five times in a paragraph of *Journal and Poems*. He said this was a

sign of false ego. The disciple replied, “I don’t know what it may be, but I don’t appreciate that you have pointed this out to me in this way.” They usually didn’t like to hear the criticisms, and the T.P.s just lost their credibility by attempting it. In one case I directly dealt with the issue and told the disciples in the temple that I didn’t appreciate the T.P.s interfering in my relationships with them. This caused a split in their loyalty, and they became less enthusiastic to serve the ISKCON temple. I was sorry for that and felt I had been dragged down into politics. We made a compromise and patched up the difference. I knew I didn’t own my disciples and that they should serve earnestly in their temples, but I felt our relationship had to be honored. It wasn’t *all* strife, and in some places it worked smoothly, and I fully supported the T.P., and he encouraged my disciples in their guru worship.

This was in the zonal *acarya* years when all the devotees in the temple would be my disciples. When the zonal policy was dropped and many gurus accepted disciples in each of the temples, the tensions lessened and there was more cooperation both from the T.P.s and from me. I was in a better position to encourage all the temple devotees to work together and serve ISKCON and trusted that they would find a way to render their temple service in relationship to me. Some of the disagreements were petty and had to do with the fact that we were new in living in the institution with disciples serving under different authorities. As we matured and understood the philosophy better, we became more tolerant and successful.

free writing ISKCON

Free writing your life as it comes to you. Chasing down pedestrians on Commonwealth Avenue, flipping the pages of *Back to Godhead* before them and asking them to take one for a donation. Singing loudly Hare Krishna mantra in the streets and parks and giving full energy for Krishna as people pass by you ignoring, but hearing, the Names. Leading an *ista-gosthi* in the temple before the assembled devotees, telling them the importance of rising for the morning program, staying together for *japa* in the temple room, not quarreling or fault-finding, showering and dressing clean, cutting down *prajalpa* and talking about Krishna instead. Living with a wife in Krishna consciousness, giving her attention but not fondling her. Visiting Prabhupada in Los Angeles, bowing down flat before him, feeling surrender in your bones. What does he want me to do? He tells you to study Los Angeles and model your Boston temple after it. You go back and copy everything you saw, even the white linoleum in the temple room and yellow walls, and taped fingers for mrdanga playing like Vishnujana Swami. Traveling by van through your southern U.S. GBC zone, teaching them to keep financial records and doing as Prabhupada said, “Encourage them.” Joining Mohanananda in Dallas where he’s starting a gurukula. At first he doesn’t welcome you, thinks you’re infringing on his turf. He clears a little space on his desk and says you can use this for your work. You say you need a desk of your own and get one. You answer

letters with a Dictaphone, and he makes fun of you, but you have to answer your mail. Cleaning the bathrooms in Dallas, welcoming the teachers from Tallahassee who arrive at in the evening in a rented van. Starting the project in the new big buildings. Students quickly enroll, sent on Prabhupada's advice. You have a disagreement with Mohanananda about how to run the school. He travels to Los Angeles to present his case to Prabhupada. Prabhupada tells him to trust Satsvarupa. Prabhupada visits *gurukula*, says the weather is hot like Bengal, installs the big Deities of Radha-Kalachandji after some initial anxiety because the devotees scraped off the paint and they had to be painted again. He performs the first arati on the stage and writes on a piece of stationery, "Radha-Kalachandji the deity of dallas". He demonstrates how to discipline the children with sticks but says, "Just show them, never use them. Discipline with love." Teachers find it hard to follow.

Traveling, lecturing as a *sannyasi*, you prepare your lectures in advance. You are a *bhagavata* speaker wherever you go. People honor you as you carry your *danda*. Prabhupada gave it to you with the words, "Preach! Preach! Preach!" This is his idea of *sannyasa*, and you are impressed with it. You don't look at women. Flying widely, from Dallas to Vancouver to Hawaii to India once every year. The GBC annual meeting, wrangling and ordeal. Taking the resolutions to Prabhupada for his approval, some he vetoes. He says, "I am a member of ISKCON too." Walk with him in Mayapura through the agricultural field, return to the temple where the devotees greet him with a *kirtana*, and he circumambulates the temple ringing the brass bell at each end. His speech in 1975 saying Bhaktivinoda Thakura's prophecy is fulfilled as Bengalis and Westerners joined to chant the names of Lord Caitanya and Krishna. Hundreds of devotees gather with him in Mayapura and then move to Vrndavana and hear his lectures there. Gain enthusiasm and go back and preach in your centers in the West. Prabhupada is at the helm, and everything is all right. Devotees join in big numbers in Russia and come to Mayapur on a chartered plane greeted by Indian

government dignitaries. Eastern European centers boom in Krishna consciousness, and devotees get visas and serve in the West. Krishna-Balarama Mandira establishes 24-hour *kirtana*, and devotees flock to chant with Aindra. Radha-Syamasundara is the favorite Deity in their hearts. Book distribution peaks for temple construction in India. The three great temples are opened.

I come to a crossroads in the autobiography. I hesitate, wondering if I have exhausted my memories of ISKCON and my personal life. But surely there must be more I can mine, if only I go about it in the right way. So many years of adventures and introspection and book writing. Why can't I dive in and find more? Is it a matter of technique? Do I have to write in a different way? Lace them together like pieces in a mosaic. You dress in the same way for over 40 years. Applied *tilaka* and shaved head and *sikha*. Give many classes on *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Meet with individual devotees and hear their situations, offer solace and counseling. Have lunch with your Godbrothers, and talk of preaching programs. Go out with devotees for *barinama sankirtana*. Take time out for retreats, three weeks at a place where no one knows where you're at, and get into deep automatic writing. It's all devotional seeking, and you keep it in storage for sharing in the future. You are way ahead of your publishers, and they have promised to bring it out. No one asked you to write over 60 volumes of *Every Day, Just Write*, but you did it, describing the valleys and hills of a mostly solitary life. They're interesting reading, but who will take the time to go through them all? You have written out your life in a plan to leave a record in perpetuity, a legacy that will live after you, a kind of attempt for immortality. Will anyone come in a hundred years to read what you have left behind? The record of a time, an era, preserved for after life. It's your way of talking from the grave, an attempt to live on after you are gone from mortal life. You won't die, your words will linger for a limited audience of devotees of Krishna and Prabhupada. The numbers of readers are limited, but it can be more important to them than Kerouac or James Joyce. Devotees of Prabhupada will come in future generations and as they read *his* books, they can read yours too as supplement. It is for the Hare Krishna movement.

We were there, we were young, and we witnessed him. We have seen the questionable data of a past life, but this is true stuff, footnote and chronicle to an era. This is truly remembered, like the recordings of Prabhupada's lectures, the voiced honest humble record of a life of service. Keep it in print and accessible, the many varied presentations of colloquial wisdom as heard from Prabhupada in sit-down, up-to-date Western tongue.

Be brave and keep on writing the autobiographical account. As long as you live, there is new material from a life in Prabhupada's mission.

HISTORY

I heard the cannons of the Civil War. I was there when Grant took Richmond, and when he accepted the surrender of Lee at Appomattox. I lived through the schisms and heresies. I was a part of them. I was the guru on a high *vyasana*. I sat in a circle and drank hot sweet milk from styrofoam cups with the devotees at 9:00 p.m. In the temple. I was there leading *samsara-davanala* at *mangala arati* and all through the morning programs. I was in sleepless anxiety when the anti-cultists rose to power, and it seemed they couldn't be stopped. I rescued a boy from kidnapping and moved him to another city in the night. I ate the Sunday feast leftovers as Monday morning breakfast. I went to a Kmart in Los Angeles and sold 50 "On Chanting" booklets in a morning outside the store and then came back to the temple sold out. I was uncovered by a professor as a Hare Krishna devotee when with the BBT Library Party, but he walked with me in the street and bought a couple of books. I was "too honest" to be an effective salesman for the standing orders for all of Prabhupada's books. That was for the sales talents of Mahabuddhi and Ghanasyama. I lived through the revolution of the grassroots movement to tear down the zonal gurus. I stepped down with grace and wrote *Guru Reform Notebook*. I resigned from GBC meetings because of throbbing migraines to the right eye. I pleased Prabhupada, and he named me as one of 11 disciples to perform initiations on his behalf. I went to

Narayana Maharaja and withdrew and saw it turn into an attack upon ISKCON. I wrote a paper for the GBC about why we shouldn't see Sridhara Maharaja, and it was considered offensive by his followers who sought me out to reprimand me. I saw the ISKCON gurus fall one after another and said it was the fault of the individuals not the system, but then they considered that it was the system itself and some said only Prabhupada was guru. The GBC resolved that Prabhupada was the preeminent *sikṣa* guru for all the devotees in ISKCON, and now they have formed a Prabhupada Succession Committee to keep his place central, now and in the future. I lived to see the GBC lose its command of the rank and file and not strictly follow its resolutions. I've seen *sannyasis* leave ISKCON and preach on their own. I underwent severe scrutiny because of my fall down, but survived in ISKCON when I cooperated with the GBC committee and wrote a transparent public letter of my wrongs. I serve at a distance from the institution but have many readers on the web, and I publish books on *sādhana* that are widely read. I live in a community where many Vaisnavas reside. There is no central temple, but a yoga studio where devotees celebrate festivals and teach yoga, and there are separate families with children and a residing *sannyasi* across the street. I live in a house with two companions where the yard has just been mulched for growing bushes and flowers. ISKCON is changing, becoming more decentralized. The changes are still continuing. It's a work in progress. It's still a movement with Prabhupada in the center and a GBC managing body. It has centers all over the world and is preaching Prabhupada's message. My own participation continues, and I hope to keep it up until the end.

living transcendental to the material world

The *Bhagavatam* states that those who identify with a community or society become entangled in karma leading to rebirth in the material world. But the International Society for Krishna Consciousness is not a designated society. It is transcendental and elevates one above the material world. The temples I lived in in different cities were actually not part of the material world. Prabhupada used to assert that his devotees did not live in London, New York, or Los Angeles, but they lived in Goloka Vrndavana, in the spiritual world. Because all our activities were engaged in Krishna's service, we were elevated to *bhakti-yoga* or transcendental loving service. I remember feeling that the temple was an oasis in the surrounding environs of Boston or Los Angeles, and our community life was not touched by what was happening in the city. Our participation in the morning program was apart from the *karmis'* commute on the highways to work, and our going into the city to preach was like being a lotus in the pond which does not touch the water. We came and went on our mission from God.

Our books and magazines were printed at a worldly printer, and we rode in Dodge vans, but these companies were spiritualized by our contact with them and we did not incur karmic reaction. Especially when Prabhupada visited our community, we were uplifted and received lasting impressions of encouragement and determination. The presence of the pure devotees recharged the atmosphere and left a lasting spiritual

warmth and inspiration. It left us with new commitment and increased ability to serve.

So Prabhupada taught us how to live in the world but not be part of it. We kept our lawn mowed and our house nicely painted, but not for the reasons our neighbors did those things. Krishna's property should be maintained because it is His place and should be kept up nicely for His pleasure.

How the devotee's body is used as service to Krishna is an open secret of devotional service. He does not use it for gratifying the senses since that is an illegitimate misuse. He uses it for Krishna's purpose and that purifies the mind. *Hrsikesa hrsikena* ... He uses the senses for the service of the Controller of the senses and that situates him in devotional service. I have been using my senses in Hrsikesa's service for over 40 years, and it is to be understood that the quality of my senses is being transformed. I no longer want to satisfy my body and so I can restrain from answering the pushing of the senses to eat, sleep, mate, and defend for my body. When my tongue wants some food, I restrain it because I have been taught to eat at certain times and only food that has been offered to Krishna. When I feel an urge to walk somewhere or to hear some sounds, I restrain the urge and go somewhere for Krishna's service and hear sounds glorifying His Name, fame, qualities, and pastimes. Thus, I live my life as a servant of Krishna and not as a slave to the dictates of my mind and senses.

LET THE FUTURE GENERATIONS REMEMBER prabhupada

The Chairman of the Prabhupada Succession Committee proposes that second generation disciples of Prabhupada should speak about him in their talks and lectures. I think it is a good idea. So far it has mostly been the privilege of those who are directly initiated with Prabhupada and who have had personal association with him, to talk of his pastimes and qualities. But a second generation devotee may have served Prabhupada in his mission for many years and have deep realizations about his relationship with the founder-*acarya*, his preeminent guru. The guru of the second generation devotee should have inspired him about the importance of Prabhupada, and he should be regularly reading Prabhupada's books and hearing his recorded lectures. He is also privy to the many detailed memoirs of Prabhupada, and although he was not personally present when they happened, he can accept them as fact and faithfully repeat them with his own breath. Prabhupada belongs to all his followers, and it is their duty to perpetuate his *lila* and meaning for future generations. Before too long, direct disciples of Prabhupada will all have passed away, and so new generations of followers should proclaim his glories with nectar stories and reminiscences.

The second and third generation devotees know Srila Prabhupada as their beloved grandfather. They came to the movement attracted by his preaching, even if they heard it primarily from their initiating guru and other senior disciples of

Prabhupada. They are qualified to speak of him and, unless they do so, memories of him will gradually quiet down, which is not a good thing. Prabhupada's pastimes before coming to America in his early years of starting the movement are particularly sweet, and they are accessible to his grand-disciples through *Srila Prabhupada-Lilamrta* and the many memoirs that are collected in a virtual library of Prabhupada literature. The video footage made by Yadubara Prabhu, combined with memories of his followers, is very inspiring and draws one close to Prabhupada and gives him information which he can churn and repeat to others. It will be a healthy sign if the young followers of Prabhupada pick up the torch and speak their realizations of their beloved *sikṣa* guru. We all need to be Prabhupada-centered. It is the chastity and loyalty of ISKCON to discuss Prabhupada's life and contribution. The senior *dikṣa* disciples of Prabhupada should lead the charge and encourage their disciples to take up Prabhupada *katha*. When the whole society is talking about him and his teachings, new unity and harmony will enter our sanga.

I am willing to hear again and again how Prabhupada labored in India to produce his *Bhagavatams* and how he undertook the difficult voyage on the *Jaladuta* and how he struggled the first year in New York with no recognition and how he moved to the Bowery and started *kirtanas* and how Michael Grant helped him to move to 26 Second Avenue when the Bowery loft became too dangerous. My personal favorite pastimes, which I took part in, were the first year at "Matchless Gifts," but I have no objection if I hear this from a junior devotee who has studied the histories and taken them to his heart. Let us all acknowledge our debt to Prabhupada and witness how fulfilling it is to work in his service and reciprocate with him.

dealing with disciples

Hari-sauri and Prabhupada traveled around the world. Hari-sauri's diary is a subjective portrait backed with many actual quotes. You can't deny it is actually Prabhupada, but the writing style is a little overbearing. Srutakirti's observations are more kind-hearted and compassionate, with intimate exchanges with

his servant. Gurudasa underlines the wit and wisdom of Prabhupada in action. My accounts show a servant in awe and reverence with some tensions over long-term menial service in close quarters. Each one sees a part of the pure devotee; no one sees him entirely.

He reciprocates with his servants as they approach him, and he is kind to all. For those who are more fully surrendered, he may show his displeasure and give them hard tasks. They know enough to wear their hard helmets before they come to him, and they endure the lashings to their false egos with endurance and faith. They have fiery natures and can take a beating. It is a relief for him to have someone to talk to when his ace leaders and pet projects fail.

His leaders of men need disciplining, and his servants sometimes need it the most. They sometimes disagree with him (for the betterment of the mission), and his lip trembles in anger as he shoots them down and impresses his will over theirs. His toughest, rebellious servants require high maintenance, but he's willing to do it to get the benefit of their advice in the debate over how to employ the men and money in Krishna's service. He doesn't prefer "yes men" who just do whatever he says. His strongly opinionated servants sometimes cross the line and have to go away, but if they are sincere they come back to him again and accept whatever service he gives them.

How taxing it must have been for him to have to assert his will against controller types who changed and did things on their own. But he finally had the last word.

He sometimes had to say, "I take away all your service," and he ordered them to simply chant 64 rounds in Mayapura or Vrndavana. Sometimes a strong-willed disciple would take some action and disturb the society, and Prabhupada would rectify him by dovetailing his nature in a positive way. This is what he did with TKG when he took away his leadership of the Radha-Damodara party and sent him on a "Mission Impossible" to communist China. His disciple accepted it and prepared himself

to dive into hell and serve in a most unfavorable situation. In a test of wills, Prabhupada always prevailed, although it sometimes took his full effort. He was like a lion tamer with his strong-minded disciples, and he finally controlled them with love. When he opened their eyes and showed them he was displeased with their activities, they came to their senses and became submissive. No sincere disciple ever crossed him. Most of his disciples were completely malleable, but to those who were stubborn he sometimes gave some area to control on his behalf. He was a true leader of men and women and knew the psychology of how to deal with everyone.

praising prabhupada

I dreamt a committee of devotees, myself included, wanted to do something wonderful for Srila Prabhupada. They were very enthusiastic and prepared to take action, but they couldn't think of what to do. Someone suggested they put on a dramatic play about Prabhupada, but they didn't do that. They were spinning their wheels, very fired up thinking what to do. Maybe I can connect that energy into writing about Prabhupada. Radhanatha Swami said that in order to present Prabhupada's teachings in books we have to know Prabhupada himself. He said it is like Jesus saying to the Pharisees that they knew the letter of the law, but they didn't know the spirit. Prabhupada wrote some strong things about females, but how did he apply it in his life? He was very compassionate and kind to all the women disciples in his movement. Similarly, he has written that if one is not a devotee of Lord Caitanya he is a demon, but he also said one could belong to any religion, and as long as he has love of God, his devotion is valid. Radhanatha Swami has *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta* and reads it aloud to the 150 devotees who gather daily to take lunch at Chowpatty, Mumbai. He feels the *Prabhupada-lilamrta* conveys the spirit of Prabhupada.

Those on the Committee who wanted to glorify Srila Prabhupada can write in their autobiographies, telling how he changed their lives. I am one of the thousands who was living in ignorance of the laws of religion and the higher science of devotional service to Krishna. He immediately engaged me in serving Krishna by *sravanam kirtanam*, hearing his lectures

about Krishna the Supreme Personality of Godhead and chanting His Holy Names. He employed me in typing his manuscripts and in giving my salary from my job as a welfare worker to his mission. I was suddenly committed and responsible. I was doing something wonderful for Prabhupada, and everything else seemed unimportant. Of course I have changed those engagements. I gave up my typing to the girls, and I took to organization of the Boston temple. Then I gave up my job at the welfare office in order to dedicate myself full time to pushing on the activities of the mission. This included organizing the ways and means of earning money above and beyond what I had contributed by my pay check.

The Committee, to do something wonderful for Prabhupada, can establish that he was the first and still greatest proponent to expose Lord Caitanya and Radha-Krishna as the head in the categories of the Personality of Godhead and His intimate expansions and reciprocators. He is my ever well-wishing friend in Goloka Vrndavana, even beyond the exchanges in awe and reverence in the Vaikuntha planets.

The Committee, to do something wonderful for Prabhupada, can gather and engage in *krishna-katha*. They can read from his books and distribute his books to those who don't know of him. They can make sure that new devotees make firm their allegiance to Prabhupada and not just to their initiating gurus. Prabhupada nectar is the life and soul of the *sanga* of devotees. That is why, in telling my life, I tell of my life in his service. The 25 years I lived before meeting Prabhupada are certainly important and formative in making me what I was. But in another sense, my activities were all a string of zeros waiting for the number one to be put in front of them to give them worth and profit. Prabhupada is my life history, and by meeting him I began my productive years. I wanted to do something wonderful for him, and I'm still thinking how to do it.

writing

I am happy that you are satisfied with the autobiography thus far, but I want to keep going and produce more subject matter. My vision for a perfect world didn't come about in ISKCON. I became attracted to the life of the Christian monks living in the desert and monasteries and practicing silence. But I was living in Los Angeles in a community of loose householders and a political BBT management. I wanted to be a simple, impartial *brahmana*, but the GBC forced me to take positions in controversies. I wanted to do process-oriented writing, but no one was interested in that. I wanted to satisfy Prabhupada, but in the last years after the library party, I didn't have a big service. After his disappearance I turned to traveling and preaching and then to accumulating disciples whom I turned over to the ISKCON temples. I turned myself over to ISKCON, but then I found a growing need to express myself. I did this in journal writing, in writing retreats and in extended self-revelatory writings in an improvised way. It was aimed at Krishna consciousness but in finding my own voice. I turned to writing poems and journals of my searching, again and again. In *Every Day, Just Write* I noted down the time of the day and began to write what was happening, who I was, what was passing through me. They turned into books that looked strange to the mainstream, but some appreciated the candid search for the authentic self. In a movement where everyone was supposed to produce preaching results, I was examining myself in my position and it appeared offbeat, although some appreciated the

honesty. I talked about *japa* and why it could be better. I performed it in earnest and gave testimony of my failure and success. Just to fill a fresh page with thoughts and confessions and creative expression became a service of itself. I spent enumerable hours doing this, removing the veil and dancing with the veil. I wrote *Write and Die* and *Under Dark Stars*, in which I pushed the envelope in free expression. This became the reason to exist, along with chanting *japa* and meeting with Vaisnavas. They all knew I wrote, and some read me while others did not.

I wrote of my coming to Prabhupada and listening to him and coming close. I wrote as much about him as I wrote of myself. I told the story of his life and read the memoirs of others. Then I went back to writing about him and writing about myself. Tell his teachings. I look at a page of my writing and find it covered with red notes of what he expected me to write and his comments on what I have written. He enters my life in dreams in this way. He is the unconscious mechanism behind my facade, the talker, the puller of my strings. Up and at them – you are a Prabhupada man listening to yourself and talking about your master. I don't like to think I'll ever leave him – and I won't. I write in rhythm, Prabhupada. And I am not ashamed to say I belong to him; he's my spiritual master. You can read this later and like me (I hope), or you can read me for the first time and be attracted to Prabhupada.

The journal continues, cutting down deep like the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon. It tells of many days in many places and regurgitates Prabhupada's writings. It attempts to tell the story of a soul. It is a mere newspaper, but sometimes a Holy Writ like the New Testament or Franz Kafka's diary or Thoreau's journal or Kierkegaard's journal. It is unassuming and intended for a devotional career.

when I was younger

I stood in line for my Sunday feast plate. I ate the savorys but favored the sweets. The *halava*, sweet rice, sweet balls and *gulabjamuns*. I was young and could digest. I got into the van and went out on *harinama*, swaying back and forth and singing loudly. I rode to college campuses and gave many lectures on Krishna consciousness without fear or hesitation. I flew on long flights to India and sat beside GBC men discussing politics and how to vote. I met in rooms with Srila Prabhupada and reported to him about my service, and he was satisfied whether I was serving in Boston or Dallas or traveling in a GBC zone with a library party. He liked to hear my reports because he was kind and lenient. I followed learned devotees on *parikrama* in the *dhamas* and heard their explanations of the *lilas* of each place. I could do it without a headache or being attracted to women. I liked Vrndavana and the three-hour circumambulation around the town on earthy ground. Later, I met Narayana Maharaja and listened closely to him for three years and wrote it down until it became a conflict to my exclusive devotion to Srila Prabhupada. I stayed long enough in Vrndavana until I became comfortable like a Hindu *sadhu* and then I returned to the West. Now I stay mostly in a house in New York State, and I am satisfied with that.

I stayed in Mayapura during Kartika the year in which there was conflict about seeing Narayana Maharaja. I went on *parikrama* with my disciples and Bhakti Caru Maharaja. I couldn't keep up because of headaches and stayed back. Later I

lectured to them every day for a week on varied subjects, including living in Vrndavana. I wrote a book called *Can You Practice Vrndavana Bhajana in the West?* and answered, “Yes.” You can do it in separation thinking of the holy *dhama* and discussing the Lord’s pastimes there.

I went to Jagannatha Puri with a select group of 11 disciples who stayed in the Birla *asrama*. We went out daily to holy places, and I read to them from the *Caitanya-caritamṛta*, *Mahāprabhu in Puri*. I wrote my poems *The Waves at Jagannatha Puri* and read it to them every day.

I traveled through Europe in a van driven by Madhumangala. We stayed overnight at gas stations and visited the temples in Belgium, Italy, France, and Scandinavia, and even went into Eastern Europe to Slovenia and Poland. It was fun lecturing, often on the early days with Srila Prabhupada, through a translator and getting all the devotees to laugh. Just by visiting there once, I picked up numbers of disciples and revisited to be with them. It was a road-traveling year with Madhu steady at the wheel and the van outfitted to live in even when we were at a temple. Repeatedly we passed through the Alps’ snow-covered mountains and a tunnel from France to Italy.

I was young enough and left Europe and returned to America, visiting all the temples where I had many disciples. Each year at Vyasa-puja we gathered a hundred strong for a day of lectures, homage and feasting. I played jazz and classical music and spoke improvised over it. And I gave showings of my paintings to the assembled devotees. I collected donations to print my books and gave out signed copies of the most recently published. The Vyasa-pujas were grand functions after which I snuck back to a life of seclusion and writing.

Every year I went to India and lived like a *sadhu* and then came back after a month or two. Increasingly, I stayed at rented houses in Europe and Ireland for writing retreats. Headaches began to hamper me, but I kept on traveling and taking retreats, finding times between the pain bouts to write free books. When

I was younger it was easier and I was stronger. As I grew older I curtailed my movements.

I had a long and friendly relationship with Tamala Krishna Gosvami. He joined later than I, but when we first met we sized each other up as worthy disciples of Srila Prabhupada and strived to have a friendship. He was highly motivated and competitive and tried to manipulate people, but he treated me with respect as a *brahmana* and did not try to use me for his interests. Especially when we became initiating gurus, we became more intimate. When we met, I would prepare a written agenda of topics that we would cover in conversation. He very much appreciated my agendas. They would contain different areas of discussion, such as personal *sadhana*, *japa*, and reading of Prabhupada's books. We would admit to our own lackings and how they could be improved. We talked about controversial GBC resolutions and saw how we liked or did not like them. He would help me to understand how to carry out devotional service even in dealing with people who were against me.

When TKG was disciplined by the GBC for being overbearing as an initiating guru, I sided with him and gave him support. I visited him in Dallas, and we traveled in his RV to his farm in Oklahoma. He bought me cowboy boots, and we put logs in the fireplace and stayed up late talking intimately as I commiserated with him in his time of exile and depression.

Years later, when he had gained repossession of his zone, I underwent a personal change. By self-examining free writing and by consulting with a devotee therapist, I decided I wanted to be more authentic, and I wanted others to accept me as I was. When I met with TKG, he didn't like the change in my behavior. I prefaced our talk by saying I wanted to be accepted as I was. He objected and said if he saw I was off in some way, he wanted to be free to correct me and put me in the right direction. I realized that in our agenda meetings I had always let him take the lead and shape our opinions, but now I was saying that I had my own self-knowledge and didn't want to be

changed by him. This became a serious obstacle to our intimacy. He said he didn't think we could be deep friends unless he could aggressively change me in ways he thought I was deviant. I remained firm, and we parted with an understanding that we would not be "soul partners" as before. We continued to meet over the years, and he was always kind and respectful to me, but things had changed. Then he went back to college and began his full-time academic career at SMU and Cambridge University. I lost touch with him. I was not relevant to his field of studies as he turned to devotees who were also involved in academic careers.

His academic career began after Prabhupada's disappearance. In the last year of Prabhupada's life when TKG was his intimate secretary, I again became close to him and visited several times to be close to Prabhupada in his last year.

When he passed away in a tragic car accident just at the point of finishing his Ph.D. thesis, I cried tears of grief over the loss of a true friend and great devotee. I spoke homages of praise before his disciples in Houston and tried to encourage them to worship their guru by carrying out his instructions.

ghanasyama

Ghanasyama came to join me in Dallas, Texas, when he was still John Favors. He later said I was like a *siksa-guru* to him and gave him a firm foundation in Krishna consciousness at a time when it counted the most. We became close friends, and he served with me for many years. He went out with me on a *brahmacari* magazine distributing *sankirtana* party and later joined with me, and was the leading distributor on, the BBT Library Party to the colleges throughout the U.S. We traveled and lived close together all over the country, and I guided his success and leadership with a tender hand. When the colleges were closed, we lived in college towns and did *harinama* and tried making devotees by a series of lectures and meetings. As an Afro-American, he once had an idea that he wanted to go to Africa to preach, but I convinced him to remain with me in the U.S.A.

Then came the year Ghanasyama asked to take *sannyasa*. He asked me to become his *sannyasa* guru and recommend him to the GBC. For two reasons I thought he wasn't ready. One was his tendency for extreme renunciation. He would go on extended fasts until he lost a lot of weight and would reduce his sleep so much that he was drowsy during his waking hours and almost had automobile accidents falling asleep at the wheel. Another reason I didn't recommend him is that he indulged in bogus mysticism, aligning himself with a *sannyasi* who claimed to have spoken to ancient persons outside of the pyramids in Egypt. Ghanasyama was so disappointed that I didn't recommend him that he went to Kirtanananda Maharaja and asked

him for a recommendation. Kirtanananda Maharaja approved, and he was initiated and given the name Bhakti Tirtha Swami.

This caused a break in our warm relationship. Bhakti Tirtha Swami went to Africa and met with great success. He gradually became an initiating guru and started a preaching center in Washington, D.C., where he used an ecumenical approach and gained followers by radio programs and lectures. He presented Krishna consciousness in an indirect way so that people, at first, did not know that it was the Hare Krishna movement. His tactic was successful, and he began to travel widely and write books. He became a tribal chief in one of the countries in Africa. He began wearing African hats and sometimes dressing in African tribal dress, and his books stirred a controversy in the GBC, of which he was a member. Then he had a crisis in his life. After a certain lecture program, he felt himself incapable of changing people's lives. He prayed to Krishna to remove all his latent karma, and he prayed to take the karma of all the sinful persons of the world. Shortly after this he was struck with cancer, which he took as a direct sign from God. His body began to waste away, and he had to have his leg amputated. The doctors said he had a limited time to live. He began writing letters on the internet preaching to people to surrender to Krishna and telling of his medical condition as coming directly from the Lord. Many people became attracted to him, and he continued to perform initiations. I went to meet him in Washington, D.C. In addition to his amputation, he now had a broken collarbone and had to pass urine frequently. He told me his sufferings were acute but that he felt very close to Prabhupada and Krishna. I reconciled with him and spoke of why I didn't give him *sannyasa* when he asked me. He forgave me, and we bonded like in the old days when we served together. He spoke as a man who has received his death notice but has transcended it and lived in higher consciousness. After meeting with him, I began phoning him once a week. He had gone to Gita-nagari to die there. We spoke intimately, and he shared his realizations with me, including his conviction that he would enter a *rasa* with Krishna

as a cowherd boy when he left the world. His condition got so bad that he stopped receiving visitors and phone calls. But he made one exception – my phone calls to him. He told me that he felt so much pain that he just wanted to be released, but he was dependent on Krishna’s mercy and kept trying to do good while he remained alive. He asked me to write a public letter about him after he passed away. He left his body peacefully and was cremated, with his ashes sent to Mayapura and his flowers preserved at Gita-nagari where they built a small *samadhi mandira*. I wrote my letter expressing faith in his decisions and final actions, and it was well received. I was happy to have reunited with him at the end and shared a friendship down until the last days.

disciplining students

I just remembered three high school teachers and their methods of discipline and their personalities. One was Mr. Sheffield, an English instructor; one was Mr. Speranza, a history teacher, and one was Mr. Katz, another history teacher. Mr. Sheffield was blond and mild-mannered and had difficulty controlling the rebels in his class. Once he was walking throughout the classroom observing each student at his desk. When he came to me I was outlining with my finger a picture of an abstract sculpture in our book. He asked me what I was doing. I said I thought the sculpture was very beautiful. Mr. Sheffield appreciated my sensitivity, and he said something. But I was only faking. I was outlining the sculpture just to impress him.

Mr. Speranza was a veteran of World War II. He told us war stories, especially about the time he was holed up in a house in Italy and was exchanging machine gun fire with the Nazis. They finally chased the Nazis away. Mr. Speranza was able to keep discipline in his class by his down-to-earth mannerisms and his expectancy of fair play from his students.

Mr. Katz was also a veteran of World War II. He was a strong, athletic man. Once he brought into the class a big army knife from the war. On taking it out of the case, he cut his finger and drew blood. He had a stern method of keeping discipline. If anyone did something really bad, Mr. Katz made a note of it on that student's attendance card. He said this mark would be a permanent one and would follow you throughout

your entire life. One time a girl answered a question to Mr. Katz's satisfaction, and he was very pleased with her. I made a sound of lips kissing to indicate that the girl was kissing the teacher's behind. Mr. Katz caught me and took out his attendance book and said he was going to give me the indelible mark of misbehavior. I had made the sound to gain favor with the rebel students in the class, but I was mortified to receive the permanent bad mark on my record. I imagined it would affect my grade in his class and that it would even follow me after high school and be part of my permanent resume, even if I tried to get a job. Now I realize that my fears were exaggerated. I received a good grade in his class, and the mark didn't enter my permanent personal records. He really scared me though.

The wild students were always ready to cut up in class and make sounds as I had done, and if the teacher couldn't control it, the students would get out of hand and try to create chaos. A science teacher, Mr. Hanson, was also a farmer and had big hands. He once slapped a boy in the face in his class, and there was a big controversy over that as some people said he had gone too far. At worst, a teacher would lose control and all the students would start shouting and making noise in class.

Prabhupada never had to discipline his students for rebellious behavior. Sometimes he would catch a disciple falling asleep during his lecture, and he would tersely say, "Stop sleeping!" and maybe expand on it with a few sentences about what bad behavior that was. Once he caught students talking to each other during his lecture and he spoke out, "That corner is a whole talking disruption." Falling asleep was a major offense, and he would sometimes go on a several minute digression about it, questioning whether the students got enough sleep at night and reprimanding them for the insult of sleeping while *kerishna-katha* was in progress. Once, in the beginning, a not serious follower of Prabhupada, Don, had a blanket over his head while Srila Prabhupada was lecturing. Prabhupada told him to take it off, and Don replied that he had been "meditating." He chastised his students for jiggling their legs – "Stop that

movement!” or for sitting slouched or bent over – “Sit properly!” He demanded demeanor from his students and sometimes asked a student to repeat what he had said just to test if they were listening. He did not tolerate inattention to his talks and kept a lookout to see if anyone was deviating.

The good things that happened to me in my pre-Krishna conscious life

I was raised in a stable family situation so I had no emotional scars from my childhood. When I went to college I grew estranged from my parents in a generation gap, so I was detached from them and ready to join a commune. In my boyhood I developed devotion to Jesus Christ and knew that religious sentiment could be sweet. I developed an introverted personality and was not committed to a social network of friends. I was somewhat of a loner, and this proved advantageous in breaking out of my life pattern and joining the Swami. I became a dedicated diarist and writer starting at age 17, and this provided me an occasional service in Krishna consciousness. At the time I read the little sign in the window of “Matchless Gifts,” I was living isolated from tight friendships and socializing and ready for a totally new experience. By providence, my residence was in the neighborhood of 26 Second Avenue on the Lower East Side, and I saw the little piece of paper on my walk home from lunch. It was convenient for me to attend the meetings at the temple. I had read *Bhagavad-gita* and was interested in the atma, although I didn’t understand it yet. I had experimented with LSD and was convinced in the capacity of expanded consciousness and was willing to pioneer in an experience like chanting to get high. I was fond of spiritual literature from the East and was ripe for Prabhupada’s *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I had survived a fall from a third story window and was still alive! I had had a love affair which had petered out, and

so I was ready for a life of celibacy without thinking that I had not experienced sex life. I was trying to break the habit of masturbation and welcomed the power of Krishna consciousness to transcend it. I had no intention of stopping marijuana, but stopped it starting from my first attendance at the Swami's meeting. I considered myself fortunate to be free from marijuana. I had been seeking for something to worship, but didn't know what it was. I was old enough and living by myself so I didn't need parental consent, which I never would have received. I had dropped out of Navy officer training, so was free of the Navy after only two years as an enlisted man. If I had become an officer, I would have had to have served for two more years and may not have made it to living on the Lower East Side just at the right time. I was living like an urban hermit, and my mornings and evenings were free of all commitment. Everything I had done up to meeting the Swami, even the bad things, seemed providential because it all led me to walking into his storefront and immediately being attracted to attending all his meetings. So I am grateful for my pre-Krishna conscious life because I preserved myself, despite all the hesitations and risks which I had survived, and I was ready for the complete change of life in *bhakti-yoga*.

My 11 years of association with Prabhupada was very positive. By the time he passed away in 1977, I was firmly bonded to him as his disciple. During the 11 years he was with us, I received a lot of his association, but more often served in separation, supported by many letters and periodic visits. So I know about the reality of serving by *vani*, by following the spiritual master's instructions. It became a different thing when we had only *vani* with no *vapu* (physical association). Then we had to depend more on cooperating with Godbrothers in their mission, serving on the GBC, and being an initiating guru. I turned to his books and lectures and to worship of his *murti* for personal association. A new freedom entered after his disappearance. While he was with us, we always served on a short leash. He knew what our service was, and we were accountable to him and gave him regular reports. We didn't change our service without his permission. Serving in ISKCON under the GBC also kept you on a leash, but over the years you grew freer to decide on your own portfolio and how you spent your day. For example, I turned more toward writing, and then writing in my own personal voice which I had not done in Prabhupada's presence. Initiating and guiding disciples was done as a duty to Prabhupada, but it forced you to be a spiritual personality on your own. I used to describe my independent literary works as being offered to Prabhupada "in fear and trembling" because I could not be absolutely certain that they were pleasing to him. You followed your conscience and your new liberty and did the best you could to be faithful to him. When other devotees approved your work it gave you assurance, and you took courage from the sense of self-satisfaction. As stated in the *Bhagavatam*, devotional service is *yenatma suprasidati*, pleasing to the self.

Now, serving Prabhupada in separation becomes more a sense of self-confidence where you are doing your best according to your capacity to remain faithful to your spiritual

master. You follow the four rules, you chant 16 rounds, you preach and you associate with devotees. You are aware that you could be doing better, but you live with yourself and accept yourself. You make direct writings of praise and prayer to Prabhupada, and you contribute to his mission. As you grow older, you serve from your own convictions and not according to what others think you should do for Prabhupada. You are set in your ways, but you remain his man. You tell of his glories and follow him chastely as your only mentor. You do less in your variety of services than you did when you were younger. You stay close in *japa* and hearing and writing. You hope that he forgives you and accepts you, and you get ready to be with him in death, and somehow, in the next life. You are serving his *vani*.

late bloomer

Srila Prabhupada spent a lifetime in preparation for his major preaching which began in his 71st year in America. But he laid solid foundations during his years in India. He studied the philosophy in the Gaudiya Matha books, on his own and with his Godbrother, Sridhara Maharaja. He began writing a periodical, *Back to Godhead*, in newspaper form, and he practiced writing articles on political topics in the news. He wrote letters to big politicians, teaching them the message of *Bhagavad-gita* and asking their help in starting a society of devotees. He did not get any substantial response from these letters, but he wrote them wholeheartedly and with great ambition. He founded a League of Devotees, with a blueprint for monastery living and book writing with international distribution. It didn't amount to much, but it was a model for the later International Society for Krishna Consciousness. He finally accepted the *sannyasa* order of life and lived in Vrndavana, imbibing the mood of deep Vrndavana *bhajana*. He began writing *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and worked at it intensely. He begged donations, and within a few years, printed three volumes of the First Canto. The books contained many grammatical and printing errors, but they were a powerful presentation to convince the modern man of the supremacy of *bhakti* and Krishna as the Supreme Person.

Prabhupada finally got the opportunity to go to America, and he secured free passage on the steamship *Jaladuta*. He observed his 70th birthday shortly after beginning the three-month journey. He suffered two heart attacks at sea and thought he

would die, but Krishna appeared to him, assuring him, and he endured the arduous crossing. On his arrival in New York City, he transferred to his sponsor's house in Butler, Pennsylvania, and stayed there several weeks. Then he went to New York City with no money and was put up in a yoga studio by his acquaintance, Dr. Mishra. He spent the first years in New York City without making much impact. When he secured a storefront downtown at 26 Second Avenue, he began to attract serious followers and the movement caught hold. He was a man of many years when he began to successfully establish himself with a small group of disciples on the Lower East Side. In January of 1967, he flew to San Francisco where a disciple had opened a storefront temple for him in the midst of the hippie population at Haight Ashbury. He duplicated his success in New York and initiated a group of disciples in San Francisco.

It is remarkable that he began and expanded his missionary activities at such an old age. He suffered a stroke in New York City in May of 1967 and had to go back to Vrndavana, India, either to die or recover. He regained his health and came back to America in 1968, after which he began traveling and opening numerous centers. He went on with his writing and published the *Bhagavad-gita* with Macmillan Press and started printing other books in Japan, such as *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, the *Krishna* book, and further cantos of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Krishna gave Prabhupada tolerable health and strength to live nine more years during which he became a world traveler and opened temples all over the world. In his later years he concentrated on constructing three grand temples in India: in Vrndavana, Mayapura, and Mumbai. He expressed a desire to retire from management, but was unable to do so as his disciples proved themselves incapable of managing and cooperating without his direct involvement. His burdens of management and traveling duties may have shortened his life as he became sick in 1976 and passed away in November of 1977 at the age of 81. He was recently featured in *Time* magazine in a short list of outstanding "late bloomers" or persons who achieved remarkable success in

old age. Prabhupada is still very much present as the pre-eminent *siksa-guru* for all his generations of followers in ISKCON. As he said of his spiritual master, it is true of him: “He lives forever by his divine instructions, and his followers live with him.”

devotees in my life

I continue to come up with reminiscences of my life and Prabhupada's life and thus continue writing *The Story of My Life*. Without making plans, I sit each morning at my writing place and wait for inspiration, and it usually comes. I hope I shall be able to continue compiling, for years if possible. There are so many times, places and persons to write about if I am willing to let myself go and tell the truth.

Seth Spellman III was a young Afro-American who came to join my party when I was a *sannyasi*, and he was uninitiated. He was a *brahmacari* who joined the traveling library party, and I recommended him for initiation by Prabhupada, and he became Sesa dasa. He was trained in a military school and was always a reserved and modest gentleman. He was ready to volunteer to do menial service. Once a man arrived late at the airport to join our party, and Sesa volunteered to go pick him up. He was not one of the outstanding book distributors like Ghanasyama or Mahabuddhi, but he worked steadily and sincerely. After the library party broke up he decided to stay and serve with me in my GBC zone. I placed him as temple president in Washington, D.C., and then in Philadelphia. He would sometimes get frustrated with extricating voluntary service from the community of devotees, but he tolerated it and stuck to his post. At his request, I asked a lovely, qualified Indian girl, Madhumati dasi, to marry him, and she agreed. They have had a successful marriage for many years and have raised two daughters.

Sesa assisted me in compiling the *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. He would arrange files of documentary material on Prabhupada's life in chronological order, and I would use this to weave the narration of the biography. He was a trusted confidant and secretary, even after I took on the duties of initiating guru. Sesa went back to school and earned an attorney's certificate and began to practice legal services, mostly for ISKCON members. He moved to Alachua, Florida, and became the GBC there. Over the years we have lost contact, but we have a dormant friendship which could be taken up again if one of us would make the move to contact again.

Prithu Prabhu is a German disciple of Prabhupada's who was trained by Hamsadutta in Germany. I met him when he had moved to Ireland and had created a band of followers who were preaching and collecting enthusiastically in a cult spirit. Prithu approached me and asked me to become the initiating guru of Ireland in the years when there were zonal gurus. I had a sentimental attachment for Ireland because my mother's side of the family were from Ireland, so I agreed to initiate there. I visited several times and initiated all the devotees. After awhile some tension developed between us. Prithu was so much in control of the devotees' lives that he did not want me to develop much of a personal relationship with them. When I asked the treasurer, Madhumangala, to send me financial reports, Prithu objected. He didn't keep strict financial records, but just kept the money in a suitcase and spent it considerably at his whim. He bought Land Rover vehicles for his *sankirtana* parties, and he collected a lot of money, while sending very little to the BBT. He bought an island in Northern Ireland and, for awhile, other country property in Ireland in Glengarriff. He began to interfere in my relationships with my disciples. He called one devotee into his room and showed him a copy of my *Journal and Poems* to prove to him that I was egotistical for using the word "I" so many times. He did this sort of thing with a number of my disciples. He kept so much cultish control over the lives of the devotees in Ireland that they rebelled and sent a

letter to the GBC saying they didn't want him as their leader. The GBC sent an investigating committee. As a result, they asked Prithu to leave Ireland. This produced bitter feelings between us. I continued to visit and then lived continually for five years in Ireland, but Prithu was never seen again. As I had a fall down, he had one too, as exposed by his wife. He recovered, and I hear he is now preaching in Russia and making disciples there. He is a powerful preacher and can bring people to Krishna consciousness. But I have to offer my obeisances to him from a distance. I will continue to make little sketches of other devotees whose lives have touched mine in the close family of ISKCON.

milestones

I spin the roulette wheel on remembrances from my life and watch what number the ball stops at. I consider the milestones in my spiritual life and my fortune in that Prabhupada personally attended me in each case. At my first initiation I was lucky to be one of the first ones to receive the honor. It was Radhastami of 1966, and just a small group were gathered by Prabhupada in his worship room at 26 Second Avenue. He had me recite his pranama mantras after him and when I came to the word “*bhakti*” in Bhaktivedanta, I felt myself diving down deeply into space. I took the initiation seriously and felt personally bound to the Swami. Two years later he performed the first *brahminical* initiation in ISKCON at our Boston storefront on Glenville Avenue. I was so proud of the fact that he was doing it in Boston, and it was intimate, with him giving each of us the *Gayatri* mantras during the fire sacrifice. The Boston *brahmanas* were the first, and Swamiji personally handed us the piece of paper with the *Gayatri* mantras and another mantra by the Avanti *brahmana* in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and he looped the *Gayatri* thread around our torsos. In 1972, on Nrsimhadeva’s Appearance Day, another milestone took place as Prabhupada gave four of us *sannyasa* initiation in the Los Angeles temple. We had private meetings with him where we asked questions about *sannyasa* and when he handed me my *danda* he said, “Preach, preach, preach.” In December of 1973, Prabhupada treated me again in a very special way. Out of all his disciples he called me to join him and become his personal servant and secretary, to

replace Srutakirti, who had just become married. I was thrilled at his request and rushed to join him in Los Angeles, where I took on my duties of cooking, massage, and answering his mail. I was overworked, but I did my best. In 1977, he picked 11 disciples to initiate on his behalf because he was too ill, and my name was one of the first he mentioned. There is a commercial for Delta Airlines that says, “When you go to the trouble to pick an airline for your travels, is that airline obliged to reciprocate? It should. Because loyalty is not a one-way street.” Similarly, for all the special personalized treatment I have received from Prabhupada, I am obliged to serve him in full surrender. He has been so kind as to train me personally in the beginning of my Krishna consciousness, and I owe him the guru-daksina, which can never be fully repaid. If one thinks he can repay the debt he owes his guru, he is a joker. It is a gift beyond repayment. But I owe it to him to stay loyal and keep preaching on his behalf as a token of my full appreciation and debt. I will never give up being Prabhupada’s *cela* (servant) and will stay faithful in my vows to him.

MORE DEVOTEES

I will remember some more devotees with whom I lived closely in ISKCON. Madhumangala was my personal servant for a number of years. He was an Irish devotee and part of Prithu Prabhu's band, but when he had a falling out with Prithu, Prithu gave him to me to be my servant. He had an ideal serving attitude and became my close friend. He cooked breakfast for me, and I used to discuss my intimate plans with him. His predominant service was to drive me around in a van. We used few different vans over the years, and with carpentry skills he outfitted the back of them with living compartments with me in the rear. He would drive long hours at high speeds, always passing cars and trucks, and he would arrive at international borders looking unshaven and red-eyed, which often caused us to be questioned by border guards. He was an Irish Republican and was a member of the IRA as a youth, resisting the British occupancy of Northern Ireland. He still held these allegiances under his skin and kept a photo of an IRA martyr on his wall. Madhu had been in a punk rock band, and he loved Irish music. During the later years of his service to me, he purchased a small accordion and a stringed instrument called a bouzouki. He played them well and wrote a number of lovely tunes which he sang at devotee gatherings. He was also into health diets and health regimens. He craved sweets and would alternate his dieting with bouts of sweets-eating. Once we spent a month together at a health treatment center in south India, and we lost many pounds and came out looking very tanned and skinny.

Madhu shared with me when I went through an intense period of interest in Catholic mysticism. At first he objected because he saw the Catholic church as a corrupt political entity, but after he read Thérèse of Lisieux's *Autobiography of a Soul*, he became won over and followed me in my prayer retreats and readings of St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, Brother Lawrence, the anonymous monk who wrote the book on the Jesus prayer, and Thomas Merton. When I came out of the phase, he also exited. He found and rented cottages and farmhouses in Ireland and Europe where I stopped for weeks to take writing retreats. He was serious about his *japa* and tried to pray on his beads. As a duo we traveled throughout Europe, living in perfect harmony, sleeping overnight in rest areas and gas stations. We talked a lot about devotee relationships and our dislike of ISKCON politics. He went with me when I went through my *rasika* relationship with Narayana Maharaja and left with me when I ceased to be his *siksa* disciple. He took increasingly to his music in the later years and saw no harm in it. But abruptly he became romantically involved with another man's wife and left my service to live with her and her children. It was a shocking departure of my dear friend, and I cried tears when he left. I have lost contact with him, but the last I heard he was still living with his new wife, attending Catholic mass but retaining an interest in Krishna consciousness.

Baladeva Vidyabhusana has been with me since 1978 and is one of the most dedicated and hard-working of my disciples. The first substantial service he took was to travel and gain interviews for use in *Srila Prabhupada-Lilamrita*. He went around the world with a tape recorder and patiently cornered anyone connected with Srila Prabhupada and gathered many hours of interviews which were turned into transcripts that I used in the biography. Then he became my secretary and lived with me. During the worst period of my migraine attacks, I turned over much of my communication with the GBC to Baladeva. He did very well, but in the end my senior Godbrothers objected to him assuming so much managerial responsibility, and they

requested that I have him resign. This was a hard blow for Baladeva, and he went into a long total fast to get his spiritual bearings. Eventually he joined me again, but then he married and for a few years lived apart from me doing business. Again he joined me. People became envious of him and accused me of being dependent and manipulated by him. We have certainly been very close, and sometimes my Godbrothers have exiled him from my company. When that happened he very happily took refuge in living for long periods in Vrndavana, a place which he loves and where he is much respected for his hospice work.

At the BBT's request, I had to condense the seven-volume *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta* into one volume for book distribution. Baladeva did the actual condensation of the book, and it became one of the all-time, bestselling books of the International BBT in many languages. He also worked with me on some of my books, helping me to do memory work for my *Prabhupada Meditation* series and brainstorming with me to come up with ideas for other books.

Baladeva is an excellent cook, and it is one of his great loves to cook for the devotees. He is currently living with me on a short leash, and in my old age, he is my main companion, along with Narayana-kavaca who sometimes travels. Baladeva has a wonderful sense of humor, and he always makes me laugh. He has health issues and sometimes mental troubles, but I am more at home with him than anyone else in the world. He's got my back.

MORE DEVOTEES

I will write of more devotees I have known. Kirtanananda was one of the first persons to join the Swami at 26 Second Avenue. He was the first to ask Swamiji if he could become a disciple, and Prabhupada taught him how to cook. I befriended him just as I became friends with all the early devotees. I remember on the night of my initiation I experienced some doubt to Keith about how Krishna could be the Supreme Person. He replied by quoting from the *Bhagavad-gita* where Krishna says that all the worlds depend on Him like pearls strung on a thread. That encouraged me. He was the son of a Baptist minister and preached with references to the Bible. He was considered an advanced devotee. He went to the welfare office in his shaved head, sikha and *brahmacari* dhoti and asked for financial aid. The welfare people sent him to Bellevue Hospital, the mental institution. He was held there against his will as a crazy person. Through Allen Ginsberg's help, a lawyer was secured, and Kirtanananda was released. He was unemployed and would stay all day at 26 Second Avenue and cook lunch for the Swami and the dozen boys who gathered at noon. He accompanied Swamiji back to India after his stroke and accepted *sannyasa* in Vrndavana. When he returned to the West, Prabhupada asked him to stop in London, but Kirtanananda disobeyed and went straight to New York. He then began preaching deviously, and Prabhupada wrote a letter to the devotees telling them not to listen to him. After about a year he secured country property in West Virginia and came back to Prabhupada's shelter.

Prabhupada was pleased with his development of a farm with cow protection and visited New Vrindaban in 1968. I became friendly with Kirtanananda Swami and used to visit him at his farm where he always received me respectfully. The devotees there looked up to him as a *siksa-guru*, and he used to sit in the midst of his intimate followers while they discussed *krishna-katha*. They built many buildings, bought adjoining property and collected much money by aggressive collecting parties. In later years a person attacked Kirtanananda and hit him on the head with an iron bar. He went into a prolonged coma and was never the same after that. He began making strange improvisations. They built Prabhupada palace but dressed the *murti* of Prabhupada in king's clothes with a crown on his head. This provoked a controversy with the GBC. Later he Christianized New Vrindaban and had all the devotees wear brown Franciscan robes while he wore white robes like the Pope. They changed the Sanskrit songs into English lyrics. This was all after the disappearance of Srila Prabhupada. Kirtanananda deviated so much that he was excommunicated from ISKCON. Finally, he was exposed as being involved in illicit activities, and the devotees asked him to leave New Vrindaban. He continued conducting himself as a guru with some followers both in New York and India. He lived in Rishikesh, India, with a few devotees. I stopped associating with him when he was expelled from ISKCON and had no further contact with him. He passed away on October 24, 2011.

Hayagriva was another early disciple of Srila Prabhupada. He met the Swami walking on the street and asked him, "Are you from India?" and the Swami took him to his storefront and asked him to attend the classes. He was an English instructor at Ohio State University. He was a tall big man with a beard like Allen Ginsberg. He became the first editor of the Swami's *Srimad-Bhagavatam* manuscripts and a co-editor of *Back to Godhead* magazine. I also worked on the magazine and used to work with Hayagriva in putting together the issues. He wrote many nice essays, including a series on American authors like

Walt Whitman, Emerson, Thoreau and Emily Dickinson, and he related them to Krishna consciousness. He spoke in a loud voice with well-articulated English, like a professor. He joined with Kirtanananda in 1967 when Kirtanananda came back from India and left ISKCON. Then he rejoined with Prabhupada and lived for years at New Vrindaban. He wrote two good books: *The Hare Krishna Explosion* and *Vrindaban Days*. Later he took to recreational drugs and dropped out of ISKCON, but years later he returned. He edited several small books of Prabhupada's lectures into prose. I was always on friendly terms with him, but never got very close. He differed with Kirtanananda about the deviant changes he made at New Vrindaban. Hayagriva contracted a terminal illness and retired to bed in New Vrindaban. His consciousness became purified, and he spoke highly and intensely about Prabhupada and Krishna. People who met him were impressed by his sanctity. He wrote me a letter asking me to visit him, but New Vrindaban was then cast out of ISKCON, and I thought it wasn't politically correct to go there since Kirtanananda was still living there. Hayagriva wrote a book in his last days, *The Death of Death*, which was never published. He died in a van while being rushed to the hospital in an emergency condition. Kirtanananda had Hayagriva's body dressed in *sannyasa* clothes, and he initiated him as a swami after death.

prabhupada and deviating disciples

When I wrote of Godbrothers who deviated, I think of how Prabhupada reacted to this. He sometimes said he cried when a disciple left him and prayed that he would come back. When some returned and asked forgiveness, he always accepted them back and offered them service. I was with him in Vrndavana in 1977 when two deviating disciples, Madhudvisa and Gaura-sundara, came to visit him, and I saw how tenderly he received them and welcomed them into his company. Karandhara was Prabhupada's leading manager in Los Angeles, but he had a fall down with a woman other than his wife and left the Society. Years later, he rejoined Prabhupada in Paris. I shaved his head. Prabhupada appointed him the GBC for Bombay and sent him to India. In a purport in the Eighth Canto about the elephant Gajendra, Prabhupada writes of his compassionate point of view. Gajendra was caught by a crocodile in the water and was weakening because he was fighting out of his natural element in the water. Prabhupada writes that a man may be situated as a *sannyasi*, but feel a need for a woman. If that is the case, he should get married and live as a *grhastha*. From that position it is natural for him to fight against *maya*. Prabhupada was willing to take back a fallen *sannyasi* and engage him in a service more conducive to that devotee's proclivity.

After Prabhupada's disappearance many of his leaders deviated. They had been given great responsibilities and had taken up positions as initiating gurus. Some persons questioned why Prabhupada picked leaders who later fell down. But

Prabhupada was not omniscient. When the devotees were serving Prabhupada they were sincere and hardworking, but later their ulterior motives came out, and they were bewildered by *maya*. It was not Prabhupada's fault. He saw that he was conducting his mission under emergency wartime conditions. When someone came forward and showed willingness and talent to serve in a big capacity, Prabhupada would deputize him, just as in a time of crisis a government leader might deputize people to take leadership. Prabhupada took the view that they might fall in battle and, in the meantime, he extricated years of valuable service from them. There was always the possibility that after fall down, they could repent and rejoin him in a humble way. Prabhupada is there for all his disciples, and he remembers the service they rendered. As Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gita*, devotional service never suffers from diminution or loss, and a little service can save one from the greatest danger at death. The devotees who served Srila Prabhupada and later deviated can return to him, at least in their last hours, and be taken by him under his protection.

MORE DEVOTEES

I will write of two more devotees who are close to my life. Jayadvaita Swami is my closest peer Godbrother friend. We've worked together for many years in ISKCON. He joined in New York City at the age of 19 in 1967, while Prabhupada was in India recovering from his stroke. His first service was to assemble Prabhupada's letters to his disciples, and he heard devotees like Brahmananda speak emotionally about their attachment to their spiritual master. I did him an early favor in his career and asked him to come to Boston to be Prabhupada's servant during his visit of May 1968. For many years we were co-workers on *Back to Godhead* magazine. We would sit together and go over the submitted articles and decide on which to use in each issue and how to create feature photo articles. Jayadvaita Brahmachari was Prabhupada's personal editor for the BBT, and he edited *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. He worked with Prabhupada's existing manuscripts and made changes in the first editions, bringing them back more faithfully to Prabhupada's original writing and correcting the mistakes of the first, inexperienced typist. Prabhupada was aware of his editing changes and approved them. Jayadvaita had many exchanges in his editing capacity and developed firm faith in his spiritual master. He was independent-minded and sometimes disagreed with his authorities. He always presented his case with logical arguments and evidence from the scriptures and was loyal to ISKCON. When Bali Mardana became corrupted by his wife, who fraudulently claimed to be a Toyota heiress, Jayadvaita

also came under the influence of Bali Mardana. Prabhupada wrote to him that he had become a little contaminated by bad association, and he sincerely repented.

After Prabhupada's disappearance, Jayadvaita wanted to take *sannyasa*, and he asked me to become his *sannyasa* guru. At the initiation ceremony I spoke about his service as Prabhupada's editor. I gave an example of a disciple who sees his guru sitting for a photo and notices that his guru's *kurta* is unbuttoned. He approaches his guru and informs him, and the *kurta* is corrected. In a similar way, Jayadvaita had the humble service of correcting Prabhupada's grammar so it would be more presentable to scholars and general readers. After taking *sannyasa*, and after Prabhupada's disappearance, Jayadvaita Swami disengaged himself from full-time editing for the BBT and started to travel and preach. For many years now he has traveled around the world lecturing in temples and giving seminars on various subjects. He is known for his witty repartee and sarcastic lampooning of non-sampradaya views. He has taken the position of a social activist in ISKCON and campaigned against things he sees as wrong in the system and activities of the society. He was one of the leaders of the grassroots movement to reform the guru zonal *acarya* system, and he spoke out for reform in the GBC. To this day he keeps himself distant from the GBC and thinks they are acting in wrong ways. But his dissent is seen as loyal, and he is widely respected in ISKCON. When I had my fall down and some committee members wanted to strip me of my *sannyasa* standing, he helped me craft a letter defending my right to remain a *sannyasi*. He coached me in how to deal with the GBC committee and not let them bully me. My case came out successful. Jayadvaita is ten years younger than I am, and he says that I am ten years ahead of him. But I do not consider myself more spiritually advanced than he is. I used to put philosophical questions to him to clear up my own understanding. Over the years he has made a point of visiting me once a year wherever I live in the world. He is truly my friend and well-wisher.

I was the first devotee to talk to Narayana-kavaca when he made his initial visit to the Hare Krishna temple in Texas. He got me to lecture in his class at college and eventually moved into the Dallas temple. I initiated him as a disciple, and he soon became a leader in *sankirtana*, distributing books and paraphernalia. Aside from doing it himself, he soon began to train others and lead traveling *sankirtana* parties. I appointed him *sankirtana* leader for my GBC zone, but called him “*sankirtana* servant” rather than “*sankirtana* leader.” Later he accused me of not acknowledging or appreciating all the service he did on my behalf, and perhaps this was true because he was always traveling and not living with me personally. But when he mentioned this to me I realized how indebted I was to him and assured him he was very dear to me. He has always been one of the most loyal and hardworking of my representatives. He passed up many offers by ISKCON leaders to go and join them and take up responsibilities in their zones. He worked with Gitanagari Press and set up sales tables at big festivals in India and organized the sales of thousands of my books. He also arranged for their printing. Narayana has always felt that he and his second generation of disciples not initiated by Prabhupada have been held back and not given full recognition. His home base is to live with me in upstate New York and be my caretaker along with Baladeva. Narayana is a poet and writes regularly, although he keeps it to himself, yet he promises one day to collect some of his poems and publish them in a book. I am very attached to his loving, protective presence in my life and like it best when he is not traveling, but staying in the *asrama* with me and available to talk with on a daily basis.

I dip into my memories at different periods in my long career in ISKCON. I remember serving single-mindedly in Boston as temple president. I was guided by many encouraging letters from Prabhupada, which he wrote in response to my inquiries and reports. I was always taxed, especially when I had a full-time job at the welfare office and then later when there were 60 devotees living in the temple with ISKCON Press. ISKCON Press workers always wanted to keep an independent schedule, and I tried to coax them to participate in temple functions and *sankirtana* and be harmonious with Boston ISKCON.

I remember the freedom of traveling with the Library Party. We were financed by the BBT and traveled throughout the country in several Dodge vans. We were all *brahmacharis* and lived to distribute Prabhupada's books. We went each day to the colleges in suits and wigs and had great success in getting standing orders for all Prabhupada's books and favorable reviews by professors. It was great to be young and always traveling, each day a new campus and each afternoon traveling while talking on our way to our next location.

My years as a zonal acarya were challenging and heady. I received much honor wherever I went. I lectured from the *vyasasana* and spoke with disciples in my room. I felt the strain of being a figurehead where the temple presidents had the real control over my disciples' lives. In formality, we accepted too much worship and relegated our godbrothers to an inferior position, but behind the scenes they retained the power. I did it for Prabhupada, but I was possessive of disciples and the right to sit on the high seat, and it had to be abandoned.

I suffered severely from migraine attacks. They would strike me with piercing pain in the right eye, and all I could do was lie down in bed in a dark room. They would sometimes last 24 hours. For ten years I endured them without allopathic medicine while I practiced alternative regimens like naturopathy, Ayur-

veda, acupuncture, hypnosis, and homeopathy. Finally, I took to allopathic pills and for a little while got some relief until rebound headaches set in. I continued to work with meds and have got my daily headaches somewhat under control, but I think they will never go away.

I remember my yearly visits to India. Mostly they were consumed with the ordeal of the GBC meetings, but I experienced sweet weeks of living like a *sadhu* in Vrndavana, staying in the ISKCON guesthouse and meeting with my disciples, or living in Baladeva's house. And then, I had three years of hearing from Narayana Maharaja. Now Vrndavana has become so busy and congested. In Mayapura, too, I feel the pressure to attend the temple morning program which is not to my liking. I've lost my attraction to India, though I can't imagine boycotting it my whole life.

My years of writing retreats were writer-ly intense. I would spend several hour-long sessions a day journal writing, free writing, and book writing in rented houses in Europe and Ireland. Finally, I settled in Ireland for five years and lived alone and with my disciples. I took to painting feverishly and painted many wild canvases in a Krishna conscious spirit.

Living in Delaware, I began writing for a website on the internet. I wrote a daily journal and accumulated material for a number of books I published on prayer and *japa*. I've been in my New York house close to a year, and I think this will be my final residence. I hope to keep writing the autobiography as long as it lasts.

MORE DEVOTEES

Raya Rama was the first devotee I met when I entered the storefront. He broke the ice and was friendly to me. Later, when I announced to the devotees that they could use my apartment for bathing, Raya Rama moved in with me and became my roommate. We became friends, and I looked up to him as a more advanced devotee. When I was hesitant to take first initiation, he encouraged me to look upon it as a gamble and go ahead and take the chance. He quickly grasped the philosophy from the Swami's talks and books and became a leading voice in *ista-gosthis* and philosophical talks among devotees. When the Swami left for San Francisco, Raya Rama took over the duty of giving the evening lectures on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday nights. He was brilliant and confident in his delivery and warded off the skeptical challenges from the Lower East Side audience. One of the devotees wrote to Swamiji in San Francisco saying that Raya Rama was roaring like a lion cub in his lectures and the Swami wrote back with his pleasure. One thing about Raya Rama was that he didn't shave his beard, and he didn't like to wear the dhoti. He said he was sure there was a spiritual planet where they wore pants. Raya Rama was appointed the editor in chief of *Back to Godhead*, and he absorbed himself in producing and writing for the magazine. He wrote articles on topical subjects like Darwin's theory of evolution and produced striking, original covers for the issue. Prabhupada expressed his pleasure with Raya Rama's work. When I moved to Boston, Raya Rama rented a little office space in New York. He wrote to

the Swami that it was cold in the winter and warm in the summer, but he was satisfied to be working on Back to Godhead. Then Raya Rama produced an issue, which had some contents that Prabhupada objected to. Prabhupada came back to the east coast and met privately with him in New Vrindaban. When Prabhupada strongly reprimanded Raya Rama, he had a crisis of faith and couldn't take the criticism. In a subsequent meeting with Prabhupada in New York, Raya Rama was unsubmissive and challenging to his spiritual master. The situation became so aggravated that Raya Rama left the movement. Everyone, including me, was shocked that such a stalwart devotee had rebelled and quit. But life went on without him, and I gradually took on the editorship of Back to Godhead. A few years later Raya Rama attempted to come back, but Prabhupada could tell from his letter that he wasn't prepared to surrender and live as a regular devotee. He wrote to Raya Rama that if he wasn't willing to change his ways he wasn't welcome, and Raya Rama left for good. He was later seen in San Francisco flaunting the homosexual lifestyle. When we approached him for an interview for *Srila Prabhupada-Lilamrta*, he flatly refused to discuss anything about Prabhupada. His wonderful early effulgence was missed, but the loss was his, not ISKCON's.

Jadurani was the first and only girl to join in New York during Prabhupada's first year at 26 Second Avenue. She used to travel by subway from her parents' home in the Bronx early in the morning to attend the Swami's class. She was an art student, although she said she was the poorest student in her class. She took up painting Krishna conscious pictures right away under the Swami's direction. She would use a grid process and divide a canvas into little squares and then copy a painting of Krishna or Vishnu or Lord Caitanya or Prabhupada from an existing photo or painting. Her first paintings were primitive, but Prabhupada accepted them and hung them in the temple. They had a sweet devotional quality to them. Prabhupada treated her very kindly and let her paint in his apartment. When he went to San Francisco, he wrote to her saying how nice she was to be always

painting and chanting Hare Krishna. When I moved to Boston, she was soon sent to join me along with a male devotee. For a year in Boston there were only three devotees, and I lived closely with her as a Godsister. She knew the philosophy well and had memorized sizable portions of Prabhupada's books. I used to let her give lectures at the universities. Sometimes she would just regurgitate what Prabhupada had written with no attempt to tailor it to the audience. In September of 1968 when we visited Prabhupada in New York, he asked to speak to Jadurani and me, and he asked us to get married. At first we disagreed, but he insisted. She proved to be an unsubmissive wife and would not obey me. All she cared about was painting, and later, going out to sell magazines. She neglected her health and became very ill. Prabhupada restricted her from painting and put her on a special diet. She would stay in her room and chant a hundred rounds a day. When the temple moved to a big house and many devotees joined, she was in charge of the ISKCON Press art department. She became more cantankerous. She would accuse me of not giving her any more attention than I gave all the other devotees. She would throw things at me, punch me, and rip up my files. She climbed out on the roof and threatened to jump off. Once she ran away and tried to hitchhike to New York, but she got picked up by boys who tried to sexually attack her. She screamed and fought, and they threw her out of the car in Connecticut. She phoned the temple late at night, and I had to go and pick her up. There was not much love or harmony between us. When ISKCON Press left the Boston temple and moved to New York, Jadurani went with them. I wanted her to stay, but she and the Press workers said she needed to associate with the other artists. From that point on, we lived apart. I eventually moved to Dallas to start the gurukula and that increased our separation. Finally, in 1972, Prabhupada invited me to take *sannyasa*, and I jumped at the chance. Jadurani wore white and lived with the devotees in New York and then in Los Angeles. After Prabhupada's disappearance, she joined with a schism that was preaching against the ISKCON gurus and saying the Prabhupada was the

only guru. After awhile she gave that up and joined the ranks of ISKCON again. In the 1990s when devotees started seeing Narayana Maharaja, she met with him and was deeply impressed. She gradually became one of his leading followers, becoming very conversant in his teachings. She painted *rasika* pictures for him. By then, her painting was very much improved. Narayana Maharaja changed her name to Shyamarani, and she dedicated her life to preaching for him and trying to get ISKCON devotees to go to him. Since Maharaja's disappearance, she has remained a leader in his sanga.

MY ROUTINE

I am leading a quiet life in our upstate New York house. Today I am going to Kaulini Mataji's house for lunch cooked by a householder couple from South Africa. Tomorrow, we are having Dhanurdhara Swami at our house for lunch. Thus, we socialize with the Vaisnavas in our community. I rise by 11:30 p.m. and begin my *japa* by midnight. I chant my 16 rounds in solitude. Then I write a poem to be printed on this day on my website. Then I take selections from the books I have written over the last 35 years and dictate them onto a digital Dictaphone to be typed for my day's website. I offer incense to my Deities, Radha-Govinda and Hanuman. When Narayana is here, he comes up to wake my Deities and change Their water. He inquires about my well-being. Now that Narayana has traveled to Trinidad, Baladeva takes over those duties. I tell Baladeva what I want for lunch today, and he takes my Dictaphone for downloading to Gurudasa, who types it for the website. I then take a nap before breakfast. At 7:30 a.m., Sacisuta comes up with my breakfast, and he reads to me from *Krishna* book while I honor *prasadam*. When breakfast is over I attempt to write a two- or three-page installment for the autobiography. Lately, I have been writing about the devotees whose lives have entered mine. When I finish writing I go down and put on my jacket and sit on the porch before the open window for fresh air. There I attempt a second biographical episode. When I am finished, it is usually after 10:00 a.m. I go upstairs, and I relax in my chair until 12:30 p.m. lunch. I may read a book or watch TV. I would like to start a habit of listening to Prabhupada's lectures. Around 12:30 p.m., Baladeva tells me lunch is ready, and I go down and sit at the kitchen dining table with him. He reads *Srimad-Bhagavatam* while I eat and then he eats. I usually stay at the table and converse with him for about half an hour. Then I go upstairs and take a post-lunch nap. At 4:00 p.m., I go out with Baladeva, and we walk two laps in Sacisuta's back yard. I usually work up a sweat. I come back to the house and drink a glass of

lemonade. Then I read my day's writing or study until 6:00 p.m. when I take a glass of warm milk while Baladeva reads to me from *Caitanya-caritamṛta*. After that, I wind down by writing my journal for half an hour. Then I am ready to go to sleep for the night. On Monday I do yoga with 'TJ at 9:00 a.m. and on Thursday he gives me a yoga Thai massage. I try to pray to Prabhupada and Krishna and dedicate my activities to them. I am not bored or restless in this routine but find it challenging and enjoyable. We occasionally have visitors, and I talk with them. I also answer letters with a Dictaphone. I have no plans for travel. I'm hoping for long life and tolerable health, but I am writing on Krishna's will.

MORE DEVOTEES

Kirtana-rasa came to Krishna consciousness under the influence of his older brother Aksobhya. Aksobhya was a compiler of indexes for Prabhupada's books and an advanced devotee in the philosophy of *bhakti*. Aksobhya met a tragic death in defending the life of a devotee who was kidnapped from the movement by his family. Aksobhya went to rescue him back and was stabbed by the devotee's brother and bled to death on the way to the hospital. The police never apprehended the murderer, and the loss of his older brother had a traumatic effect on Kirtana-rasa's life. He became my initiated disciple and married a girl named Subhadra in an ISKCON arranged marriage. They produced one son, but their marriage was tumultuous, and they got divorced. Kirtana-rasa met a girl outside of Krishna consciousness, Beth, and married her. Over the years Beth has been a supportive wife and has become a devotee and a yoga instructor. They have conceived two boys and a girl. Kirtana-rasa has supported himself by coloring for comic books. He went to law school and obtained his status as an attorney. He's a criminal lawyer and has a successful private practice in Saratoga, New York. He practices martial arts and carries a gun as part of his attorney profession. He is very family centered. I heard Dhanurdhara Swami preaching to a man that family *dharma* is not the same as pure devotional service, but I thought it was a little unrealistic of him to speak that way as a *sannyasi* with no family duties. I encourage Kirtana-rasa to be whole-heartedly devoted to his wife and children, but to practice personal *sadhana* and to try to raise his family in a Krishna conscious atmosphere.

He is very loyal and supportive of me and, as we live an hour and a half apart, he visits me every week. He donates \$100 a week to my maintenance and buys me things for my service. He donates to the school for poor Vrajavasi children in India and supports cow protection. He is influenced by astrology and has a private astrologer who he consults to make important

decisions in his life. Under his persuasion, I have taken to measures to protect my longevity by prayers to Hanuman and wearing a blue sapphire stone.

While I was living in the first Boston storefront in 1967, I received a small murti of Hanuman. I spontaneously began to worship him for protection against the teenage hoodlums who threw rocks at our temple, taunted us in the street, and challenged us to come out and fight with them. I sang songs to Hanuman that I made up, as I did not know the “Hanuman Chalisa,” and I chanted his name. I developed an affectionate relationship with my Hanuman deity. Many years later in 2011 when this astrologer recommended I worship Hanuman to counteract the malefic planet Ketu, which was threatening my longevity, I revived my original worship of Hanuman and read the “Hanuman Chalisa”: “Evil spirits dare not approach a person on hearing the name of Mahavira [Hanuman] (the great warrior) being repeated.”

Kirtanarasa has written up my will, and I have appointed him to carry out certain duties after my disappearance. I feel very safe under his protective care.

Acyutananda was one of the first persons to join the Swami at 26 Second Avenue. His name was Chuck, and he had long curly hair and played a wooden flute. He had a brilliant mind and quickly grasped the philosophy and was able to speak on it eloquently. He was a humorist and made many jokes among the devotees. He went to India in 1967 to join the Swami and escaped the military draft in the U.S.A.. He stayed on in India after the Swami returned to America and became an Indianized *sadhu*. He associated with Prabhupada’s Godbrothers, including Sridhara Maharaja. He learned to play the mrdanga expertly and learned many Bengali *bhajan*s, singing in the Indian style. His recordings were circulated in the temples in the West, and devotees copied his singing. He lectured and lived in the Gaudiya Mathas. He studied Vaisnava books and became learned in Gaudiya Vaisnavism. When devotees visited him in India, they found he was the same old Acyutananda with his

loose, joking manner. He gradually became obese. When Prabhupada went back to India with a group of western disciples, Acyutananda, who had taken *sannyasa* and was then Acyutananda Swami, joined him for the pandal programs and led the *kirtana* with singing and drumming. Prabhupada sometimes urged him to do more practical service for ISKCON in India, but Acyutananda lived as a free spirit. After some years he returned to the West and lived in the New York temple. He gave good interviews for the *Srila Prabhupada-Lilamrta* telling valuable information of Prabhupada's life in India. I was never close to him, although he was always friendly. He eventually withdrew from ISKCON and gave up *sannyasa* and took to driving a taxi in New York. After many years away, he returned to live in the Alachua community where he attends the morning program. He has written a memoir, *Blazing Sadbus*.

yoga

The practice of yoga has become increasingly popular in the West, and many ISKCON devotees have become yoga teachers. They do this by undergoing training at recognized yoga schools and getting certified as yoga instructors. They then teach, either in other peoples' yoga studios or in their own studios in private practice. They earn a living in this way, and according to their capacity, they introduce *bhakti-yoga* into their lessons of hatha-yoga sitting postures. Some of the devotees include Hare Krishna *kirtana* in their sessions, and some teach *Bhagavad-gita* philosophy. The yoga world is open and receptive to hearing Krishna consciousness along with their *asanas*, and the devotee yoga instructors associate with and are accepted by the regular yoga teachers. In places like Woodstock, New York, there is a *kirtana* held almost every night in one of the many yoga groups. Programs such as "Ecstatic Chant" and "Bhakti Fest" are organized outside ISKCON and are attended by people who pay high fees, but at these programs the Hare Krishna mantra is chanted along with *bhajan*s to Siva and other gods. The *New York Times* referred to the area of New York State that we live in as "The Bhajan Belt." Sacisuta's record business, Equal Vision, has a special branch called Mantralogy which records independent *bhajana* groups and distributes their CDs. An ISKCON devotee named Gauravani is a prominent, charismatic *kirtana* leader who frequently performs in yoga studios and special *bhajana* events. Raghunatha dasa, the former leader of the hardcore band, Shelter, is a yoga teacher who teaches in many

elite yoga schools in Manhattan and elsewhere. My disciple, Gopi-manjari dasi, is an accomplished yogi who unabashedly teaches deep therapy sessions in her yoga classes where she teaches open presentations of Krishna consciousness. She has repeatedly taken groups of yoga students on retreats to India and introduces them to Vrndavana. I personally take yoga lessons from a devotee named TJ for a much needed limbering process to my aging, sedentary body. Prabhupada spoke against *hattha-yoga* as a spiritual process, saying it was not practical in this age. He saw the various yoga groups as teaching no more than physical fitness and said they should be avoided. But when one of his *sannyasis* was teaching the Shah of Iran's family yoga, he encouraged it as an infiltrative means to introduce Krishna consciousness. The Hare Krishna devotees gaining access and acceptance in the wider yoga world is a healthy thing and an influential way to bring people to Krishna consciousness. I am happy to be living in a community where so much yoga and *kirtana* is going on, and I see people being introduced to all the facets of Krishna consciousness, including *prasadam*, Deity worship, philosophy and chanting.

FICTION

I'm going to talk about some of the fiction books I have written over the years. There's a precedent for writing fiction in Gaudiya Vaisnavism. Bhaktivinoda Thakura wrote *Jaiva-dharma* as a novel, inventing characters who went to see their spiritual master and received their eternal identities from him and practiced *raganuga-bhakti* under his direction. And there are questions and answers throughout the book that covers all of the range of Vaisnava philosophy but in an obviously veiled fictional way. So one is invited to do fiction based on the fiction we have been given by the *acaryas*. My first fiction was a children's book, *Nimai and the Mouse*. I wrote it for children, and children have read it and liked it and continue to like it. But it's also written for adults at the same time. Nimai is a kind of underdog devotee who's got his weaknesses and conditionings and attachments, but he's a devotee living in the temple. And one day he sees a mouse in his room and the mouse speaks to him, and Nimai is astonished that the mouse can speak, and they have a little conversation and they become friends. Nimai teaches the mouse about self-realization, and he tells his spiritual master that he has met a mouse who speaks. The mouse is called Chota dasa, and Nimai has different adventures. He's thinking of getting married to a young girl and . . . he shows her the mouse, but it doesn't go well.

I got quite involved in writing the story. I wrote it on a visit to Puerto Rico. I was staying in a house outside of the temple, and

I worked quickly on it during the day and night. I plotted out my plot and worked on it.

In the story, the mouse, Chota, has two brothers, and they also come to live with Nimai, so he has three mice and needs to go out on traveling *sankirtana*. Nimai is not up to doing the book distribution himself, but he does the backup services like driving and cooking for the devotees, and the devotees know that he has the mice in a little cage and they tolerate it. They tell *sankirtana* stories at the end of their day, and the mice hear it and are enlivened by it. In this way, his life's secret of cultivating the mice in Krishna consciousness goes on.

In the story, the mice of Nimai want to go preach to other mice, and so they go off by themselves and preach to mice in the house where they're staying. They have some dangerous encounters, some success, and they come back to Nimai and feast. He is very pleased with them.

The story ends with Nimai going down to the Caribbean to seek a wife, and he has different misadventures, being stopped from entry into Trinidad, because he gives a bad interview at immigration. But he continues to talk to the mice, and the mice continue to meet other mice down there, and finally he leaves them in the Caribbean to preach to mice. There's a tearful parting of the man and the mice. It says, "The mice began to cry in the grief of separation from their teacher and long-time protector. After a desolate silence, Chota took the lead. 'All right, Prabhus,' he squeaked, 'Let's go out on *sankirtana*.' And that's how the book ends: that the mice separate themselves from Nimai, so there are quite a few adventures and exchanges between Nimai and the mice in the fable, which is the first book that I wrote. I didn't know at the time that I would write more, but I felt that there was more to be written, so I wrote three more books. And the next one was called *Nimai's Detour*.

Nimai's Detour is a story which is quite different from *Nimai and the Mouse*. The mice aren't featured in it at all, although Nimai writes a letter to them. In the beginning of the book,

Nimai meets a devotee who is living outside of ISKCON and is disillusioned. He's going to India, and he has a ticket for Nimai, and Nimai decides to go with him. We must remember that Nimai is a very gullible devotee, prone to being misguided. He goes with this devotee to India, and he gets into all different kinds of jams there. He meets a *prakṛta-sahajīya* and gets influenced by him, and then he gets sick and goes to a bogus Ayurvedic doctor who has him lie down in front of a deity and tries to cure him. Finally, he gets into trouble with the police in South India and gets arrested, and his *gurudeva* comes there and rescues him. It's an interesting adventure of Nimai in India and all of the things that can go wrong for a gullible Westerner. At the end of the story, Gurudeva talks with his disciple Nimai and talks about the mice and makes a suggestion that Nimai might write some fables about them and write some stories in general to dovetail his creative propensity. Then, I include some stories Nimai has written at the end of the book. And as the book ends, Nimai's spiritual master asks him to stay with him and be his personal servant, and that's how the third book opens, *Gurudeva and Nimai: Struggling for Survival*. It opens with Nimai being situated as the servant of his spiritual master.

In *Gurudeva and Nimai*, the third volume, there's a lot of information about the spiritual master and the disciple, and through this book I was able to speak to my disciples. One of my Godbrothers was staying at the cabin at Gita-nagari and read this book and he said to me, "Oh, I thought this book was for children, but I got very interested in it and I realized it was for adults." The book is composed of two diaries, one diary kept by Nimai and one kept by Gurudeva. In Gurudeva's diary, he writes about becoming too familiar with his female secretary and that causing a problem for him in controlling his mind toward attraction to women. My Godbrother said that when he read that, it touched him. He realized he was becoming too familiar with a female helper of his, and he felt himself chastened by my book. It wasn't just for children; it was being written out of personal experiences and was written to help adult devotees

also. The story begins with Nimai and his guru being in Canada and taking a plane trip with the pilot to go to an ISKCON retreat center. But the plane crashes in the wilderness and the pilot disappears, and Gurudeva and Nimai are left to struggle for survival in the wilderness. They find a cabin and they find a cache of food in another cabin, and they live off that for a while. Nimai is very afraid of bears and abominable snowmen, and he actually sees some bears while he's out chopping wood. He gets very frightened, but he asks questions of his spiritual master. This was written at a time when the ISKCON gurus were trying to establish themselves as bona-fide spiritual masters, and there was some criticism of them and doubts about them. This is brought out through Nimai, having heard some of these doubts about spiritual masters, and he asks his spiritual master about his relationship with Prabhupada and how that is developed in relationship to his relationship with his *gurudeva*. In the course of living with his spiritual master in the wilderness, he builds his faith in him and realizes he has a relationship with Prabhupada, but it goes through his relationship with his ISKCON guru.

I wrote it while living in this center of Saranagati in British Columbia, and I practiced some behavior that would be like living alone and surviving without full amenities. I lived without my servant, Baladeva, and I just had a stock of some basic food supplies in the house, and I would go once a day to a designated spot, a bus, and exchange notes with Baladeva about my writing and about my situation. But I was living in solitude and that helped me to get into the mood of thinking myself a survivor in the north country. I drew the pictures for this book, and I drew the mountain that you could see from my window in the house where we were staying, and the trees, and the different animals, birds, rocks, spiders, moose, trees, evening sun, and juniper. They were all described as persons, places, and things I met in the mountains by Gurudeva, who's also known as Gauracandra dasa Swami, and there were drawings in that appendix done by Nimai dasa. At one point, Nimai runs away from the camp and gets lost and finally finds his way back to the cabin where his

spiritual master is, and finally they're rescued when a Piper plane flies overhead. Nimai waves to him and then lies down on the ground and flaps his arms. The pilot in the plane flaps his wings and lands in the area and picks the two of them up and takes them back to civilization. They go to the Vancouver temple, and they're treated like celebrities.

Chota's Way is my favorite book of *The Nimai Series*. I like all of them, but this one is the most autobiographical. The themes that Chota is dealing with are themes that I deal with in my own life. I will give a synopsis with excerpts of the book for use in *The Story of My Life*.

chapter one

At the edge of a palm tree jungle, in a large open tent, 300 mice and a few crows sat together to honor Chota dasa on the occasion of his fourth birthday. They had erected a temporary altar with pictures of Srila Prabhupada, Lord Caitanya, Lord Nityananda, and Radha-Krishna. Chota sat at the left of the altar facing the audience, while a young field mouse stood making a speech.

“... And after quickly assimilating the rudiments of Vaisnava philosophy from Prabhu Nimai, our Chota Prabhu became – I think it is safe to say – the first pure devotee of the Gaudiya sampradaya to appear in the mice species!”

“... Not a pure devotee,” said Chota, but the mice were cheering and didn't hear his mild protest.

Digression. This book Chota's Way has illustrations by Kesisudana dasa, a very talented artist. The other books were not illustrated as well as this one. The first picture shows Chota sitting on a low *vyasasana* with a mouse approaching him with a garland and another mouse waving a peacock fan at the altar pictures.

"Chota's devotional talents are unlimited, so I will only speak to the extent I am able." The speaker was a lady mouse who was one of the main organizers of the children's schools. "... He has opened many temples and has been the prime mover in organizing a Vaisnava movement among my species, just like the worldwide movement of human Vaisnavas. Chota has continued to do astounding things, even in recent months. I refer to his breakthrough in learning how to read Prabhupada's books. Whereas previously we were limited to learning by hearing whatever Chota had learned and passed on from Nimai Prabhu. Now it is possible that the whole world of Srila Prabhupada's books may be open to us!"

The mice rose to their feet, raised their arms and began cheering, "*Jaya* Chota Prabhu! Haribol! All glories to Srila Prabhupada's books!" ...

Chota felt uneasy hearing the praise, but his feeling was more than the usual humility; something had been building within him for months. He hadn't thought that he could tell them, but now when he heard the expectations of him, he decided at least to hint indirectly of what was on his mind.

Chota addressed the crowd, "My dear friends and devotees ..." (he remembered what Nimai had told him of how *acaryas* responded when they were praised.) "Whatever kind things you have said describing a Vaisnava are not true of me. I am a fallen soul in a mouse body. But like all of you, I have been fortunate to come in contact with the teachings of the pure devotee His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Prabhupada, as passed down by his human followers and contained in his books. And thus, we have all been engaged in chanting the Hare Krishna *mantra*.” Chota thought, Tell them that if they really love me they should allow me time to chant and read.

“If there is any worth in my activities,” said Chota, “it comes from the enlightened *parampara* teachings and loving guidance I have received from our beloved preceptor, Nimai Prabhu. He was so patient and considerate that he was able to impart Krishna consciousness even to a subhuman species who are not usually able to receive higher learning. . . .”

Chota told himself, *Go ahead, tell them what's on your mind*. “I have one personal request,” said Chota. “If I am actually to serve you and other living beings, then I have to be a fit devotee. But at present I am not fit. I do not have a taste for the most basic practices of chanting and hearing. So I humbly request you to please allow me to pursue the basic *sadhana* of Vaisnavism, of which so far I have not realized, not even a drop. Without this higher taste, all my activities are actually trivial and farcical. Please give me your mercy in this very tangible and practical way so that one day I can actually become a genuine chanter and reader of Prabhu–pada’s books. Only then can I convince others to do the same.”

Chota ended his speech there, and everyone was pleased with him. They asked him to be the lead singer for the *maha-kirtana*.

DIGRESSION.

Chota's Way was published in 1990. I resigned from GBC in 1986 due to my migraine headaches, but I continued to be a traveling *sannyasi* lecturer. It wasn't until 1997 in Ireland that I took to the life of mostly staying alone and reading and writing and giving a weekly lecture. The desire to spend more time in reading and chanting, as expressed in Chota's Way, was in a formative stage in my mind at that time. I had not yet carried out the conclusions of Chota's Way in my own life.

The book then describes a rousing *kirtana* of the mice which is well illustrated. They chanted for an hour and then a devotee approached Chota and said that the feast was ready and it was hot.

“Chota then stood up and announced, ‘As Srila Prabhupada used to say, «Chant Hare Krishna and when you get tired – take *prasadam!*»”

They sat in rows, and the eating began in earnest. There was so much food that all the plates were heaped and spilling over. The preparations are described, and it’s like a regular Sunday feast that the humans would have.

chapter two

When Chota returned to his room, his cousin, Yamala dasa, was waiting for him.

“Did you take the feast?” asked Chota.

“Ya, but I could hardly enjoy it. I’m in such anxiety.”

. . . Yamala wore a team jacket with the letters “Lord Caitanya’s Army” printed on the back. He had been recruited along with Chota and Chota’s kid brother, Arjuna, three years ago when all three of them lived as ordinary mice in the Radha-Damodara temple in Pennsylvania at Gita-nagari. They had been trained together in Krishna consciousness by Nimai and brought by him to Guyana where they were still the only

American-born mice. They had each grown in different ways. Chota remained as spiritual leader while Yamala had blossomed into a dedicated and able manager, although less inclined to reading and chanting. He was respected among the mice devotees but was seen as rough and impetuous.

There is a drawing of Chota sitting with his hand in his bead bag sitting behind a low table and Yamala pacing nervously back and forth in the room.

“Your brother, Arjuna, has gone nuts,” said Yamala staring at Chota. “He’s blaspheming you and the whole movement. We have to stop him!”

“What’s he doing?” asked Chota.

Yamala blurted, “He’s gone around to all six of our temples preaching blasphemy and directly attacking you. He’s become a demon. He says that Nimai Prabhu is a flakey devotee, and so our movement is bogus because it’s based on him as our Founder-*Acarya*.”

Yamala tells Chota that he has to do something right away to stop Arjuna’s preaching. He wants him to go on a tour of the temples to personally confront Arjuna and put out the fire at all the other places.

Chota suddenly wanted to tell Yamala what he had been thinking, that he wanted to take time to improve his *sadhana*. Arjuna’s criticisms seemed to confirm for Chota that the most important thing he could do would be to somehow gain attraction for chanting and hearing. He hesitated to express it to Yamala, knowing that he wouldn’t see the logical connection. . .

“I’ll do the needful,” said Chota, “But listen Yamala, here’s what I think. Our response to these criticisms should be to improve our spiritual lives. I want to take more time for chanting and reading. This is the leadership which is required,

not just making counter-propaganda. I would like to work full time on my chanting and my study of Prabhupada's books."

"What?!" Yamala's mouth fell open in disbelief. "This is not the time for weakness, Prabhu."

"You call the desire to chant and hear a weakness?"

"Yes. Remember the *Bhagavad-gita* when Arjuna wanted to retire from the battle. What did Krishna do? He chastised him."

Chota became quiet and listened.

"Chanting and reading is *babaji* stuff," said Yamala. "We're preachers and you're the leader. You can't retire. We've got to confront this menace. Call meetings. Make a tour. Go to Arjuna and tell him he has to stop or else. . . ."

"I agree," said Chota in a subdued voice. "But there has to be a time —"

"This isn't a time for chanting and hearing," said Yamala. "Listen, I'd like to take time for that myself. I'm about a hundred rounds behind on my quota, and I haven't read a page in weeks. I'm not proud of that. But I know I have to fight so that our spiritual movement can be protected. . . ."

"Okay," said Chota. "I'll take action. I'll write to the temples against Arjuna's propaganda. And I'll take a tour of all the temples."

Digression. Autobiographically speaking, I had not been personally attacked. As a GBC member I had taken part in missions to put out attacks against our movement. I was seen as an impartial *sadhu* and was used by the GBC to go and take action against deviants. Once, I was on a committee that raced from Mayapura to London to head off the split that Jayatirtha had created by going to Sridhara Maharaja. I went with a small group of devotees, and we preached to the devotees at Bhakti—

vedanta Manor. Some of Jayatirtha's disciples had holed themselves up in another building and were against ISKCON.

Another time I went on a futile mission to Columbia, South America, where Alalanatha had broken away from ISKCON and the "Justice Committee" of the GBC went down to try to "rescue" the temple back from Alalanatha and his followers. Alalanatha Maharaja did not allow us to attend the temple, and we stayed at a hotel and spoke to a few disgruntled devotees and then left the next day. It was a waste of money and time and had no good results.

I also made a visit by myself to New Vrindaban to confront Kirtanananda Swami about his deviations. I was ordered to do this by the GBC. Kirtanananda had our interview videoed, and he had his devotees watch it. He completely brickwalled me and didn't listen to what I had to say. Later, the devotees watched the video and laughed. They said, "Bhaktipada really had Satsvarupa sweating." I also was the scribe for a GBC letter written minimizing Sridhara Maharaja and criticizing him for his interference in ISKCON. I didn't actually write this letter from my own voice; it had the input of the entire GBC, especially the most outspoken members like Ramesvara Maharaja and others. But I was blamed as the writer of it. I was visited in Mayapura by two of Sridhara Maharaja's disciples who had left ISKCON. They considered me an offender. I didn't know what to tell them, although I told them I was only the scribe. I was tired of being used by the managers to make counter-propaganda.

Chota woke at 2:00 a.m. the next morning. Although he usually arose from bed at 3:00 a.m., he felt impelled to get up and read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* before the rush of events began. He had no strict reading program and so he decided that any book by Prabhupada would do. Prabhupada himself had said that the books were just like sweetballs, they would taste sweet no matter where you bit into them. Chota selected the *Krishna* book and

began reading “Akrura’s Arrival in Vrindavan.” It was such a nice meditation, Akrura traveling to Vrindavana and anticipating seeing Lord Krishna. . . .

Chota paused and looked up thoughtfully from the page. Unless one regularly hears these narrations, how would it be possible to remember the form and activities of the Supreme Lord? And without remembering Krishna, how was it possible to be a devotee? It was not enough just to “belong” to a movement or to wear a team jacket, as Akrura had said, “All sins are destroyed and all good fortune created by the Supreme Lord’s qualities, activities, appearances, and words that describe these. Words bereft of His glories are like the decorations on a corpse.”

Chota recalled how he had been given the gift of reading less than a year ago. Yes, it had been a gift from the Lord. Chota bowed down and placed his head at the base of the book. He prayed, “I thank You Lord, for speaking to us through scripture. Despite my sinful body, which is no better than a poisonous snake like Kaliya, You have nevertheless allowed me to at least glimpse Your form and teachings through *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. But now that You have given me the ability to read, please make it complete and reveal Your actual presence through the words.”

Chota allowed his greed for reading Prabhupada’s books to fill him without guilt. He felt the conviction that Prabhupada was pleased with him and that he should not squelch his growing desires. Chota thought, “Hearing about Krishna is the most important thing. Unfortunately, although the mice devotees are enthusiastic, they do not know yet the importance of reading.”

chapter three

As requested by Yamala, Chota started at once on a tour of the country to counteract the propaganda of Arjuna. Chota held meetings in temples and visited people's homes, preaching Krishna consciousness and answering challenges and doubts. . .

Most of the devotees who heard Chota assured him that they supported him and that he had turned the tide in his favor by his visit, but it was tiring going from place to place, sometimes hitching a ride on a train or walking or taking a boat from village to village. Yamala dasa had formed a "Committee to Counteract Blasphemy," and they had given Chota his itinerary. He had to keep in touch with the CCB by phone calls and letters and sometimes they assigned him new places to visit. Chota felt a sense of accomplishment in carrying out the duty, but sometimes it seemed futile to him. It was like superficial patchwork rather than an actual remedy. Chota had his idea of a deeper rectification both for himself and the movement, but whenever he had brought it up no one seemed interested.

After spending a week in Crabwood Creek, Chota had to wait for the car while the car went in for repairs. As soon as he heard of the delay he decided to visit an old devotee friend who lived in that town, so he started out with no assistant to the house of Padma dasa who was a crow. . . .

Chota and Padma had worked together lecturing at animal schools which had also led to Chota's interest in learning to read. In fact, it was Padma dasa's encouragement that bolstered Chota in his first difficult attempt to gain literacy. Padma was considered a serious and honorable devotee, but unfortunately he had begun to backslide. His wife said that he sometimes smoked an intoxicant the locals called "weed." His health was not good, and he became very absorbed in taking health cures and reading books on psychology with the aim of self

improvement. He seemed less interested in bhakti-yoga. Chota never deliberately abandoned his friend, but their ways began to part. Chota was interested in serving the purposes of the movement, and Padma began avoiding the association of devotees.

Digression. Then he meets Padma and asks how he's doing, and Padma says okay. He asks, "Would you like wheatgrass or carrot juice?" He says, "I will just take some water." Padma says he's on a new diet taking just wheatgrass enemas. "I recommend it to you, too." Padma was married and had a young daughter, and his wife and daughter said hello but then allowed the two friends to talk in private. They reminisced together about their better days. Then finally:

Chota confides to his friend, "Yes, I am being so-called blasphemed, but what they say is really true, or even if the details aren't true, it's true that I'm not a qualified spiritual leader. The good thing about this criticism is that it makes me want to really improve myself. I am hopeful that I could just spend some time chanting and hearing. I could make real progress."

"Sounds good," said Padma.

"But they won't let me do it."

"They?"

"Yamala and the devotees. They say my attempt to increase my *sadhana* means that I just want to be a *babaji*."

"But what do you say?"

"I think the desire to increase *sadhana* is auspicious," said Chota. "In my case I think I crucially need it at this particular point in my life; otherwise, the more people praise me and sometimes criticize me and the more leadership I assume, the more it becomes a farce. Even the greatest active preachers sometimes took considerable time out for self-cultivation."

DIGRESSION

The need for more concentrated *sādhana* of hearing and chanting was never brought up at the GBC meetings when I attended. Everything was concerned with the controversies, the dividing of the zones, the management, etc. Bhurijana Prabhu felt that the leaders should read more, but he was a lone voice.

As an example of how unbrahminical the mood was, my book, *Japa Reform Notebook*, was banned in two GBC zones. They thought it was inappropriate for a guru to admit that he was struggling with his *japa*.

I had personally written to Prabhupada and told him that I was reading two or three hours a day and was that all right. He wrote back encouraging me saying, “Unless you read, how can you preach? Whenever you get time, read my books.” He conceived of the GBC as functioning to maintain the spiritual standards of the movement, not just to management and money.

“Speaking of solitude,” said Padma, “have you ever met the turtle who lives in the jungle? They say he’s an accomplished hermit and mystic. Maybe he could tell you something about it firsthand. Anyway, if you feel so convinced, why don’t you just spend more time reading and chanting?”

“Maybe I will,” said Chota and he began thinking out loud. “Maybe right now I’ll take a three-day retreat. I’m supposed to be on this whirlwind tour to counteract propaganda, but I don’t think anyone would notice if I just disappeared for a few days.”

There’s a picture of Chota and Padma with a book lying on a mat opened on the floor, and they are reading together and they both feel enlivened.

DIGRESSION

Chota takes a three-day spiritual retreat at a house that a friend lets them use. He doesn't feel he's up to staying alone, so he takes a person named Eddie with him, although he's a little skeptical whether Eddie will respect the solitude that he was seeking. It turns out that this retreat isn't successful because Eddie is immature. He can't take to the chanting and he asks Chota a lot of questions.

But while he is on that retreat he does a little reading, and he notices this quote in Prabhupada's books:

"Those who are in the most exalted position of devotional service and ecstasy can live with Krishna always by remembering His pastimes. Any book of *krishna-lila*, even this book, *Krishna*, and our *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* is actually solace for devotees who are feeling the separation of Krishna."

We've got another confirming quote in his favor.

"Not only the *gopis* but all living entities are always inseparably connected with Krishna in all circumstances."

Later in the chapter, Prabhupada confirmed it even more:

"The effect of taking up Krishna consciousness is just like that of drinking nectar. With or without one's knowledge it will act. The active principle of Krishna consciousness will manifest itself everywhere; it does not matter how or where one has taken his birth. Krishna will bestow His benediction upon anyone who takes to Krishna consciousness without any doubt."

Chota goes to a mouse temple, and there he's bombarded with messages and confronted with people who want to see him.

Most urgent was a phone call from Yamala dasa who had been trying to reach him for two days.

"Don't ever again go off to where there's no phone," said Yamala.

He tells Chota that he has to:

“...personally go to see Arjuna and tell him to leave the country or else. No one can do this but you. Do you agree?”

Chota agreed to see Arjuna. He traveled to the town where Arjuna lived and called at his house. As soon as they saw one another, the two brothers embraced.

“I’ve heard so many rumors,” said Chota, “tell me Arj, what is your actual complaint?”

Arjuna gave Chota a cup of water and gestured for him to sit on a wicker chair.

“My complaint,” said Arjuna, “is that we shouldn’t have left our home and our responsibilities to mom and dad.”

“What?” said Chota. “Then why didn’t you say so? Why the big smokescreen about Nimai and how animals can’t become Krishna conscious?”

“Because you’re so fanatical you wouldn’t listen.”

“No, I can listen. But maybe I am fanatical. Please forgive me. Anyway, if you feel that way about leaving mom and dad and everything, why don’t you go back?”

“Do you think I should?”

“Yes,” said Chota, “I think that would be best. And you could also apologize to them for me. But don’t go with this idea that I forced you to leave home. You left them by your own free will.”

So that fire is put out, but:

...the next day a big scandal is uncovered within the movement, and Chota was asked to rectify it. Two mice devotees who lived in the far south of the country came to Crabwood Creek and reported it. One of the few male mice living in the southern temple had complained to her father that a male mouse living in the temple had seduced her into illicit sex. The father of this girl was a judge, and he became very disturbed. The accused male mouse was one of the managers of

the temple, and the rumor was that he had illicit dealings with a number of lady mice in that town all under the pretense of engaging them in devotional service.

Chota travels to the south to see the judge, but before he gets to see the judge he stops to visit the turtle that Padma asked him to see. He goes to the pond where he lives and cries out,

“Turtle, O Turtle,” he called but the turtle didn’t respond. The field mouse ambled over to Chota and looked him up and down. “Looking for the hermit turtle, eh?”

“Yes, can you help me?”

“It’s not so easy,” said the field mouse, brushing bits of underbrush from his shaggy coat. “He just doesn’t come up and talk to anyone. He’s very particular. They say he’s over 130 years old. He’s meditating, you know. . . .”

Then Chota calls out and says,

“The kurma is compared to the *yogi*. One who is able to withdraw his senses from sense objects as the turtle draws his limbs within the shell. He is firmly fixed in perfect consciousness.”

At these words the turtle lifted his head – it was a slimy head covered with algae resembling a *yogi*’s matted locks – and looked noncommittally in Chota’s direction.

Chota continued, “There is also a verse in Vedic literature that states ‘by meditating only, the turtle maintains his offspring and so do I, or Padmaja. I really wish you would come over and let me speak to you for a few minutes, dear turtle.’”

With a swift movement the turtle submerged and reappeared perched on a rock in the water just a few feet from Chota. The turtle was three times Chota’s size. His massive shell was covered with slime and chipped in a few places. Its legs were

scarred and it emanated a rotten odor, but Chota sensed that he was face-to-face with a genuine hermit.

“What do you want to know?” asked the turtle. “Anyway, there’s nothing that I can put into words.”

“I’ve become interested in solitude,” said Chota. “For us devotees, that means chanting Hare Krishna and reading the Vedic scriptures. I heard that you have been practicing solitude for a long time. So – how did you decide that you wanted to live alone and practice meditation?”

The turtle blinked. “You have to be called to it,” he said. Chota waited for him to say more but he was silent. Chota sensed that this was going to be a short interview, and so he had better be as direct as possible.

“How do you know if you are called?”

“Some know it from their earliest youth,” the turtle said, “they find their way by instinct to the place where they belong. But some reach solitude the hard way, through suffering and disillusion.”

“I don’t understand,” said Chota. “How do you get invited or as you say, called?”

“Look,” the turtle said, “if you can’t firmly decide for yourself, then you aren’t called. Solitude can choose you but you don’t belong to her until you accept. Do you understand?”

Chota decided to keep asking questions and to think it over later.

“What was your main motive in becoming a hermit? Were you feeling that you just wanted to get away from it all?”

“That’s not it,” said the turtle. “Although God knows a turtle’s life is full of suffering. Our mother’s eggs are always being destroyed by humans or eaten by animals. But solitude isn’t separation from life. If you try to go alone merely to get away from people you don’t like, you won’t find either peace or solitude. I go alone not to escape everyone but in order to find

everything and everyone in God. In solitude I find love for others and communion with them that I can't find when I'm just doing things the turtle crowd does. So for me it's not running from the world, it's my place in the world."

DIGRESSION

I modeled the turtle after the writings of the Cistercian monk, Thomas Merton. These are some of the things he said about solitude.

Chota's investigation threw him into a whirlpool of events for the next four days. He first went to see the judge whose daughter claimed she had been seduced. The judge was not unreasonable, but it took a long evening of sitting with him and answering many questions on the philosophy, practice, and organization of the mouse movement in Guyana. Chota assured the judge that there would be a thorough investigation, and if the culprit was found guilty, he would be punished. But the culprit denied his guilt, and so did the other women whom some said were in an illicit connection with him. Finally, after two days of almost constant interviews with women, one of them confessed to having an illicit relationship with the so-called counselor for ladies. Chota gathered painstaking overwhelming evidence, and the accused male finally admitted some of his guilt. He spoke remorsefully and asked to be given another chance. . . . After four full days, Chota thought he had done all that was possible, and he told the devotees that he would leave the next day for the return north. . . .

Throughout the hectic activities Chota had also been thinking, at least unconsciously, of his meeting with the meditating turtle. It had influenced him in a significant way, but his main conclusion was that only a senior Krishna conscious devotee could help him.

CHAPTER SIX

Chota decided to take a sabbatical, so he wrote a note and mailed it to Yamala:

“I am going to take a sabbatical for increasing chanting and hearing. I will do it for a year. I will keep in touch. Please don’t be angry with me. I am trying to improve myself to be a better servant. I am sure you will all be able to handle things in my absence.”

. . . Carrying a small suitcase, Chota hopped on to a fishing boat and went to the nearby Caribbean Island of Tobago.

He went to the beach. There, he saw banana and mango trees and coconut palms, as well as nut-bearing trees and fresh ponds. Combing the hot beach for a few days, Chota came upon abandoned bamboo shacks in the rooms of a few small stone houses. He selected a shack located in a palm tree grove within sight and sound of the ocean surf. There, he spread out his straw mat, fashioned a primitive bookstand from pieces of wood covered with a cloth, and decided to make the place his home. . . .

All he had was the *Krishna* book. He could get more books later, but he wanted to be satisfied with this one book, which was good enough for a great devotee like Maharaja Parikṣit. Chota plans time for chanting and reading as well as time for foraging for food and making efforts to locate Nimai by letter. His only other long-term plan was to keep in touch with the boat agent, so that if and when he learned of Nimai’s whereabouts, he could go there without a long delay.

He settles in there and starts his reading and chanting.

Chota was not inclined to go anywhere, but he had to make a trip to town on business. He posted his letter to Nimai and rented a mailbox without any difficulty, but when he went to the harbor he inquired into voyages and a seafaring rat tried to discourage him.

“You, a mouse, go aboard a ship,” the rat laughed, “can you climb across a mooring rope?”

Chota assured him that he could, and he walked halfway up the hawser to prove his point. Chota found a boat agent and was put on the list for departures to distant places. . . .

Chota realized (at least in a theoretical way) that he needed to call on Krishna constantly. He tried not to limit his prayers to demands and blessings, but to listen to what the Lord wanted. If he could learn the order of prayer, he knew that he would not be so indecisive or dependent on others.

chapter seven

Chota’s appearance had changed. White hairs had begun to appear on his head. His fruit diet had made him noticeably thinner, and his fur was usually flecked with sand. To ward off the sunshine, he sometimes wore a piece of straw he had found in the shack. . . .

Chota prayed while walking to the ocean, collecting fruit, or sitting alone in his hut. It enlivened him, and he noticed that it improved his *japa*. He no longer felt that *sadhana* was merely a chore. And he no longer felt that he was all alone.

One day while sitting and reading, Chota suddenly jumped up at the sight of his cousin, Yamala, entering the shack.

“The jig is up, Chota,” said Yamala in a loud voice. “I’ve come to bring you back to your duties.”

Yamala was wearing his team jacket and sweating.

He has another mouse with him to provide quotes to argue against Chota's staying alone.

They sat down as Pandita read aloud. "This is from Prabhupada's purport in the *Caitanya-caritamrita*. He says:

'At the present moment we find some of the members of ISKCON are intending to leave their preaching activities in order to sit down in a solitary place. This is not a very good sign. It is a fact that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura has condemned this process for neophytes. The neophyte devotee must act and work very laboriously under the direction of the spiritual master, and he must preach the cult of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Only after maturing in devotion can he sit down in a solitary place to chant the Hare Krishna mantra as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu Himself did.'

"There are other quotes also," said Chota. "For – "

"It's no good Chota," said Yamala. . . .

And then he has his man read other quotes.

Chota became softened. "I appreciate what you are saying," he said, "but maybe you've got the wrong impression. I never said that I wouldn't go back to my duties. I'm just taking a sabbatical for a year, and I'm doing it in order to become fit to serve. As for the scriptures, Lord Krishna has said that when a person practices self-realization he lives in a solitary place. Lord Caitanya Himself used to avoid large crowds. For example, when He went to Vrndavana, He chanted the Holy Name at Imlitala by Himself."

"Are you Lord Caitanya?" asked Yamala. "Our quotes are heavier than yours, Prabhu. Give him another, Pandita." . . .

Then, Chota says,

"It's because I do want to set a good example that I've been feeling like a hypocrite when I'm not really chanting or reading. I think that our whole movement needs more examples of devotees who go back to the basics. We are too much caught up

in solving problems and worrying about money and public relations. At least *I* was too caught up. If you give me time to practice my *sadhana*, I wouldn't have had to act in this extreme way to get what you should have given me gladly."

Chota agrees to come back in a week.

. . . The next morning before dawn Yamala came by himself to the beach shack. He bowed down before Chota who immediately returned obeisances.

"Please forgive me," said Yamala, "for acting roughly yesterday."

Chota was relieved to hear it, although he expected this might be another tactic.

"I had a dream last night," said Yamala in a softer voice. "Before I took rest I thought of what you said about how a devotee shouldn't be a hypocrite. Then I had a nightmare that the messengers of death were after me. I woke up scared and with a strong impression that I should come to you and make a confession, but you must keep it confidential. A few times last year I was very agitated for sex and . . . went . . . to a prostitute. And sometimes I practice self-abuse."

Chota's mind said, "I told you so." But you listen respectfully and try to think of the best advice.

"I suppose you should get married," said Chota, "that is the Vedic solution. Also, if you can make your *sadhana* strong, you can fight *maya* from any position."

Chota agrees to write a letter and come back in a week.

"Okay," says Yamala. "We'll take your letter and read it to all the devotees. I admit that I have been bad mouthing you to others. Please forgive me. Now I'll tell them that what you're doing is actually glorious. But I just think that your own spiritual advancement is a luxury at this stage. I'll tell the devotees you're coming back in a week."

After Yamala leaves, Chota is a little shaken, but he gradually gets back into his routine of chanting and reading.

Soon after, Chota had another visitor. It was Padma, the crow who had flown from Guyana.

“Haribol, Chota!”

“Padma! What a surprise!”

Padma looked different from all the vicious crows who fought on the beach. He was an enlightened soul – but today he looked very sad.

“Why have you come?” asked Chota. Padma began to speak but tears welled from his eyes and rolled down his wan, black cheeks. He broke down sobbing. When he calmed himself and Chota had given him a seat and a cup of coconut water, Padma managed to tell his tale of grief.

“My wife left me for another male crow,” he said. “I never knew before what it meant before to be ‘broken-hearted,’ but now I feel an actual pain and emptiness in this region.” He pointed to his chest with his right wing. “How could she have done this to me? What did I ever do to deserve this ultimate transgression?” He began crying again.

They talk it over, and they take a walk together and Chota commiserates with him. Then, Chota tells Padma that Yamala convinced him to go back.

“Do you think it’s right?”

“It’s not enough time,” said Chota. “I wanted to establish strong chanting and reading as a part of my life so that when I go back I can keep it up. If I go now just because he said so, it will be the same thing.”

“Your ulcer may get worse,” said Padma.

Chota laughed, “Yamala says the movement will collapse without me.”

"It's true that your presence is important," said Padma. "But you can keep in touch by writing letters for now and maybe you can invite some of the mice out here on Ekadasis so they can see you."

"Yamala will be afraid," said Chota, "that if they come out, some of them might not go back."

"Maybe you worry too much what he thinks," said Padma. "Yamala, Yamala, Caw, caw."

"I'm not sure about myself yet," said Chota. "That's why I want to go and see Nimai Prabhu, but talking with you also helps. I don't think I'll go back. Not just now. I'm only at the barest beginning. I'm just a baby in spiritual life in terms of learning how to chant and read and pray."

They read together, and Padma leaves, a little pacified from his grief.

CHAPTER NINE

The boat agent came to Chota's shack to inform him of a rare opportunity. The ship was leaving for New York, and Chota could go as part of a group tour.

"But the person I'm looking for," said Chota, "may not be in New York. He could be anywhere."

"From New York you can find out where he is, that's for sure," said the boat agent. He wanted to sign Chota up on the spot.

Chota's breast fluttered with emotion. He was happy on the beach, and yet he wanted to see Nimai. If he stayed where he was, there would probably be another confrontation with Yamala.

"All right I'll go," he said decisively. The agent began filling out the ticket.

"But there's one condition," said the agent. "You have to travel incognito and not reveal to the other passengers that you are a Hare Krishna mouse."

"Why?"

"Because my boss is afraid it might hurt business. You know, some people regard you all as a cult. Not *me!* I say, 'to each his own.' But the boss is afraid because this is a high-class human ship, and we mice have to be very careful."

When Chota gets on the boat he notices that Arjuna is there, and he is very happy to see him. The tour leader says, "Do you two know each other?" and they say, "Yes, we went to school together." When they sit down for dinner, Chota says he is a vegetarian, and Arjuna says he is also, and another mouse at the end of the table says that he is a vegetarian, too. The other mice scoff at this, but these three mice are vegetarians.

Chota and Arjuna manage to get reassigned to the same room, and the other vegetarian mouse was put in with them. As soon as Chota and Arjuna were left alone, they hugged each other with joy.

And they talk intimately together. They talk about Chota's plans and Krishna consciousness; then they are interrupted when the roommate comes in.

The two brothers sat down and made friends with their fellow mouse. He said his name was Bob, and he was a language teacher. "I also write poetry," he said. The three spoke more of vegetarianism.

"They take it lightly," said Bob, "but meat is murder. Of course, for a carnivore, it's hard to stop. But some ancient texts tell us there used to be a time when even humans and animals got along amicably." Bob sat back in a chair and crossed his legs. He was a chubby, curly-headed rodent and seemed at ease in his discussion.

The talk leans towards God consciousness, and Bob says he doesn't believe in God and you don't have to believe in God to be spiritual. "Many of the Eastern teachers and many poets were certainly spiritual, but they didn't believe in God." So he reads a little poetry to them, and they give him some *prasadam* and then he guesses that they are Krishna devotees. They no longer try to hide. They wore their japa-mala beads around their necks, and the *Krishna* book was displayed on their desk. Bob said he's been to their feast, and it was nice. After that, they're known to be Krishna devotees to the other mice. And on the last night, a party was held in the dining hall by the mice. Meat dishes and alcoholic drinks had been foraged from the human restaurant, and special vegetarian plates were prepared for the three non meat-eaters. The mood was mellow. Someone sang a folk song, Bob read some poetry. Bob then asked the tour guide, "Could the two Krishna mice sing their chant for us?" Chota and Arjuna launched into a *kirtana* without knowing exactly what it was. Most of the passengers joined in as if they were in a community sing-along. When the *kirtana* was over, the passengers asked questions.

They land in New York and they part. "Pray for me," said Arjuna. "Pray I don't fall into *maya*."

"Hare Krishna!"

They parted on a city street. Chota began asking for the whereabouts of the New York Hare Krishna temple, while Arjuna sought directions to Pennsylvania.

DIGRESSION

Bob, the poet mouse, was modeled after my ex-college buddy, Steve Kowit, who was just like this mouse. Kowit was a lifetime committed talented poet, and after many years we got in touch again and exchanged letters and books. He was a very nice person but an atheist. Finally, we stopped exchanging letters.

CHAPTER TEN

Chota asked scores of mice where the humans' Hare Krishna temple is, but they said they didn't know. It was cold and dark, and the mice were busy in the struggle to survive.

Finally, he met a mouse who said:

"Yeah, there was a book about it. The Swami who came to Manhattan. He came at an old age with no money. He was brave. I think the place was on the Lower East Side, something like 26 Second Avenue." Chota thanked him and gave him the last of the *prasadam* he had carried from the boat.

Chota goes into the subway and he finds it terrifying. There are rats down there and crocodiles and hellish noise, but he travels down the sewer. He surfaces at 26 Second Avenue. He sees the sign *Prabhupada Museum and Cultural Center / Kirtanas MWF 8:00 p.m.* The door was locked, but he entered in the mail slot. It is empty, and he is delighted to be there. One night he had a dream that the lights were turned on, and the human devotees had entered the room. It was 1966, and the Swami was there and he conducted a *kirtana* and chanted Hare Krishna. Chota awoke from his dream feeling sheltered and at peace. He reads a little bit from the *Prabhupada-Lilamrta* and then he has another dream that:

Prabhupada came and spoke to him from the dais. Humans were also there, but prabhupada turned to him. Prabhupada looked at him and said, "you, too, may chant *Hare Krishna*."

Chota looked up and said, "But what shall I do, Srila Prabhupada?"

"That's all right," said Prabhupada.

Chota woke. He accepted what Prabhupada had said, *he wants me to chant, me and everyone.*

On a Monday night, some devotees come and they bring *prasadam* with them, and they have their nightly *kirtana* and *prasadam* distribution. After the offering is made, Chota eats some *prasadam* and then hears the devotees say, “Let’s go back to Brooklyn.” The solitude was delicious, and he had such intimate dreams, but then he remembered his purpose, “I almost forgot! Living in Manhattan is so distracting. I came out to find where Nimai is. I have to go to their temple and work on it.” Chota jumped into a picnic basket with leftover *halava* and rode in the van with the devotees who chanted Hare Krishna all the way to Brooklyn.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Chota didn’t know what to expect when he arrived at the humans’ Hare Krishna temple. It was a huge building. He quickly found a mouse hole and entered within the walls. “I hope it’s not like the city sewer,” he thought. To his pleasant surprise, Chota found a mouse singing the Hare Krishna mantra while mopping the floor in the hallway.

Chota ran up to him, “Haribol! I didn’t know there were mice devotees here!”

“Whadya mean?” the mopper asked. He began wringing out his mop in a bucket.

“I – I thought,” said Chota, “I thought I was the only one.”

The mouse laughed. “You must be joking. There are devotees all over the world, aren’t there?” The mopping mouse seemed young and inexperienced, so Chota asked him in a patronizing voice, “Where did you learn about Krishna consciousness?”

“From Siva-jvara Prabhu.”

“I don’t think I know him,” said Chota, and he began to feel uneasy. “Is he here?”

“His office is on the third floor in the inner level wall,” said the mouse. “By the way, my name is Bhakta Joe, what’s yours?”

“Chota dasa.” They shook paws, and Joe offered to bring Chota to the office of Siva-jvara Prabhu.

On the second floor, Joe said, “This is the women’s quarters.” The door swung open and three female mice came out talking loudly. They carried books in a carrier with wheels, just like the female devotees in Guyana. All this was uncanny to Chota. How could it be? By the time they reached Siva-jvara’s office, Chota had seen several more mouse devotees, and it seemed as if there might be many more. A plaque on the door said:

Siva-jvara Prabhu

New York Guru of Mice

And then there’s a picture of his office, and Siva-jvara is seated at an executive chair behind a desk and he has a scarf on, and three other mouse devotees are seated in regular chairs. . . .

“Yes?” the mouse with the silk scarf looked up.

“Uh . . .” Chota suddenly felt awkward. “My name is Chota dasa,” he said. “I have just come from Guyana. I didn’t know . . .”

“Chota?” Siva-jvara seemed to find the name familiar. “Are you the Chota?” He grinned, “Are you the original mouse devotee Chota?”

‘This is more like it,’ thought Chota. “Yes!” he said. And he blushed.

“Please accept my humble obeisances,” said Siva-jvara. He scraped his chair back and bowed down on the floor. Chota also dove for the floor saying, “Please accept mine.”

“Excuse me,” said Chota, “but I just met a mouse mopping in the hall – Bhakta John or Joe. And he said he had learned Krishna consciousness from you. I am very curious – could you tell me, where did you learn?”

“From the human devotee, Nimai Prabhu,” said Siva-jvara looking steadily at Chota. “From the same person that you did.”

Chota was visibly shaken. He could hardly believe it. This will be hard to adjust to he told himself, but he smiled sociably as if he were only mildly interested.

“I never knew,” said Chota. “It’s quite a surprise to me. I feel like Lord Brahma in the story where he goes to see Lord Krishna in Dvaraka. Do you know that one?”

“Yes of course,” says Siva-jvara. “Lord Brahma of this universe once went to see Lord Krishna, but the Lord’s doorman asked him, ‘Which Brahma are you?’ Lord Brahma thought that he was the only master of the universe.”

Chota is really shaken to find his whole world is turned upside down, and he didn’t know what to expect. But Siva-jvara treats him very respectfully and asks what brings him to Brooklyn. He said he wants to find Nimai, and someone said New York is a good place for world communications.

“It is that,” said Siva-jvara. “Unfortunately, our Nimai Prabhu is not considered an important devotee by the humans. They don’t realize that he’s empowered to teach mice, so we hardly ever hear anything about Nimai. We sometimes listen in the walls to what the humans are doing and we find out what’s going on all over the world movement, but they don’t talk about Nimai. Since you’re here though, I could ask more mice to listen and we’ll try to get some news of him.

They ask Chota to speak that night to the devotees and they ask him to go out on *sankirtana*. He goes out on *sankirtana* with them in the city, but it’s too rough and dangerous for him. The pace is very fast, and the mice on the street are very rough and rude. After awhile, he just can’t take it, and he sits down on the bench with the women devotees. That night, however, Chota dasa is asked to speak about his experience with Nimai, and the devotees are all very attentive. He tells how Nimai began to instruct him, and he forgets his pride and becomes absorbed in the pleasure of it. Then they ask him questions, and the questions are very analytical. The New York mice are different than in Guyana, where they don’t ask questions like that. How

could you explain why it is that you were able to speak to Nimai Prabhu and not to other humans? And questions like that, and they are not exactly satisfied with his answers. But he does the best he can.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Listening in on the humans was a simple process for the mice. There was a concealed mouse hole in the human temple president's office, and a mouse could sit there and snoop on anyone speaking with the temple president. Arjavam dasa, the temple president, saw men and women in his office all day long. When he spoke on the phone, the voice of the person he spoke to was projected over the conference loud speaker on his desk. Siva-jvara told Chota that the mouse devotees would help him by eavesdropping so that he could get news of Nimai, but as it turned out the mice were too busy to put in the time at the listening hole, so Chota did it himself several hours a day.

He hears one thing; he hears the name of Gauracandra Swami, Nimai's spiritual master. The devotee said he was calling on behalf of Gauracandra Swami who wanted his secretary to come and join him in Bombay. But before the message was completed, the line became full of static and the devotee said he would call again. But so far he had not, or not when Chota was listening.

As he watched Arjavam, he developed a liking for him. He heard everyone's complaints and tried to help, although he often couldn't do much. He seems to be a very mellow devotee. One devotee even criticized him and said, "You're too simple to be the temple president; my wife said you ought to let someone more qualified take over."

"I wouldn't mind," said Arjavam, "but who?"

Then one day while Chota was listening, but not very attentively, Vira dasa, the temple commander came in and asked permission to exterminate the mice. Chota jumped and began trembling. He was about to run away but forced himself to stay and hear it.

“They come at night and eat from the kitchen bhoga,” said Vira. “Sometimes even in broad daylight. The cooks are sick of it, so I’m just going to spread some strychnine all over the floorboards. I think there’s a lot of them.”

“I think it’s better to keep everything clean,” said Arjavam, “Vaisnavas are not supposed to kill. Remember the story of the hunter who was converted by Narada into a devotee? He avoided killing even the ants.”

They argued back and forth about whether they should kill the mice. Arjavam seemed determined not to kill them, and Chota wished he could help him with his arguments. Arjavam finds a quote from the *Bhagavatam*, and he reads it aloud.

“One should treat animals such as deer, camels, asses, monkeys, mice, snakes, birds, and flies exactly like one’s own son. How little difference there actually is between children and these innocent animals.”

“I believe it is said,” said Vira, “that when the rodents get too offensive even Srila Prabhupada would allow killing them. I heard that the landlord at 26 Second Avenue wanted to exterminate, and Prabhupada said it was all right.”

Chota felt like screaming out, “That’s not the whole story. The landlord asked and *Prabhupada said no and the landlord came back and insisted.*” But in this case no landlord was insisting.

“Arjavam Prabhu,” said Vira, “the mice are even going on the altar and taking Radha-Krishna’s water and flowers. They crawl on the Deities. That’s offensive, seva-aparadha, and if we let the mice do this, this is also seva-aparadha for us. You’re the temple president so you’ll get the karma. The Deity is God, but it’s up to God’s devotee to protect Him against rodents and enemies.”

“Yeah,” said Arjavam, and he seemed to be weakening. Devotees knew that Arjavam had a soft touch, and if they just persisted long enough, he would change his mind.

Vira says, “It’s a war,” and Arjavam says all right, it’s your department, you do what you want. And Vira says, “Okay, I’m going to wipe them out.”

Then Chota thinks, “If Nimai could talk to another mouse, then I can talk to other humans.”

Chota came out of his hole and started climbing up the leg of the temple president’s desk. He was acting under a strong instinctive drive.

Chota reached the top of the desk and peered up at Arjavam. He noticed that Arjavam was a stockily-built human with dark hair and kind eyes. Chota prayed, “Lord Krishna, please help.”

Arjavam was surprised to see him. “Oh,” he said looking at the bewhiskered pointy face of the mouse. “Did you hear us plotting to kill you?” asked Arjavam.

“Yes,” said Chota, “and I wish to submit a plea on behalf of many devotees of the Lord that you please spare us.”

Arjavam was astonished to hear the mouse speak. He blinked his eyes several times and shook his head.

“It’s real, Prabhu,” said Chota. “By the grace of guru and Krishna a lame man can walk, a blind man can see the stars and a mouse can speak.”

“So be it,” said Arjavam. “But what can I do?”

“Give the order to spare us,” said Chota.

Chota explained there are hundreds of mice devotees living in the temple chanting Hare Krishna and practicing *bhakti-yoga*, so they shouldn’t kill the devotees. Arjavam seemed to accept it as another important interview. Then Chota says to him that he will personally see that the mice stop crawling on the bhoga and on the Deities and that they stay out of the way. “Just give me 24 hours.”

Then Chota runs to the mice in a panic and he tells Siva-jvara that they have to have a group meeting right away. Siva-jvara says let's talk about it among the leaders first. Chota says no, there is no time for it. Just let me speak, says Chota. And he speaks to all the devotees. We have a plan to avert this disaster.

Someone called out, "I know a plan. Let's send in a team of hit mice. They can diffuse the strychnine."

"We have to do more than just run away and diffuse the poison," says Chota. "I promised Arjavam that the mice would stop stealing bhoga and would stop disturbing the altar of Radha-Krishna deities. In return, he said he would personally try to stop the poisoning."

"Why should we trust Arjavam?" said Siva-jvara.

"If Krishna consciousness is going to spread to all species," said Chota, "we have to cooperate with the humans."

They argue about it, but they agree with Chota that they will do that and Siva-jvara says he is going to post an alert to watch that mice don't come out. Arjavam confiscates the strychnine and places it in his own closet. The next day Vira dasa reports to Arjavam that there have been no more incidents with the mice, no bhoga had been taken, and Radha-Krishna were unmolested. He even sent some *bhoga* out to tempt the mice and placed flour around the area to detect mouse footprints, but none come. "It must have worked," said Vira.

When the mice saw that the strychnine had been put away and the obnoxious, but not lethal, ammonia was spread around, they considered themselves saved from the disaster. Everyone praised Chota. Chota enjoyed the praise, but said it was Krishna who had saved them.

DIGRESSION

My book had an effect on some of the devotees in the movement. They said, "Don't kill that mouse, it might be Chota." Devotees I know generally use Havahart trap for mice and capture them without snapping them to death in a mouse

trap. They put some bait in the Havahart trap, catch the mouse, and then transport him far away so he won't come back. Or, they resort to what Arjavam did and spread ammonia. Or, just keep it very clean, Prabhupada said, and they wouldn't come.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

About a week after the genocide threat, Siva-jvara called Chota into his office. Siva-jvara asked him if he would like to move to 26 Second Avenue. He could be in charge of a full-time preaching center for mice. Chota thought it was a wonderful idea. He was beginning to feel aimless in the Brooklyn temple, which Siva-jvara noticed. Since Arjavam had blocked up the mouse hole in his room, Chota was no longer able to listen for news of Nimai. Neither could he fit in as just another member of Siva-jvara's *sankirtana* team. . . .

Chota moves to the Lower East Side. He selected a corner of Srila Prabhupada's writing room as his living space. He would hold *kirtanas* on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday nights, which were the nights when the humans didn't use the storefront. And he wanted to use his time chanting and hearing in the sanctified atmosphere of 26 Second Avenue. . . .

In addition to hearing Prabhupada speak through his books, Chota discovered Srila Prabhupada's voice over the tape recorder. The human devotees kept a large selection of Prabhupada's tapes, and it wasn't difficult for Chota to open a box, place a tape in the machine and press the "Play" button and listen. After finishing a tape, he put it back where he had found it. Hearing Prabhupada's voice was difficult at first, hardly any of the mice were able to appreciate it. They preferred to hear Krishna consciousness spoken by another mouse. "But if they tried to hear it," said Chota, "they could do it." He thought of ways to encourage them.

When Chota holds his programs, he plays tape excerpts of Prabhupada, and he asks the mice devotees questions about it

and he becomes very popular. He can listen better than they can and he asks them, “What did Prabhupada say?” And they struggle and try to say what they heard he said, and some of them could hear it and some of them can’t. But he guides them and continues to play excerpts, and they all like this new level of preaching.

One day an older mouse named Mother Candra arrived at 26 Second Avenue along with two younger female mice. Candra said that Siva-jvara had instructed them to live at the Second Avenue center and make it a base to go out and distribute books and *prasadam* to mice. Chota objected to their moving in.

“It’s for preaching, Prabhu,” said Mother Candra. “If we can do the austerity of going out to meet the people, you should be able to put up with us living in ‘your’ center. Do you have something against female mice?”

“No, I regard you as mothers,” said Chota.

Candra had orders from higher authorities, so there was nothing Chota could do. They move in to the temple, and the male mice live up in Prabhupada’s apartment. Then, the female mice come and complain to Chota that Mother Candra works them too hard, six hours a day out on the street. He is sympathetic to them, but there is nothing that he can do.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Then there is more description of his success in teaching with the tape excerpts, but Mother Candra reports to Siva-jvara that Chota’s classes are running about half an hour over the scheduled time, and as a result, some of the mice went to sleep later than usual. Mother Candra reported this to Siva-jvara in one of her regular visits to the Brooklyn temple. She also told Siva-jvara that Chota had said that *sankirtana* female devotees didn’t have to work six days a week or eight hours a day if it was too difficult. This report disturbed Siva-jvara who wrote Chota a note:

“The *sankirtana* is more important than your classes. Don’t instruct Candra’s party. I suggest you start attending our weekly board meetings in Brooklyn and learn our mood for preaching in the New York area. What about your search for Nimai Prabhu?”

Chota is chastised. But then he receives another note from Siva-jvara Prabhu. He gets a little entangled with the female mice. One of them says that she wants to get married and hints that he can marry her. He is getting agitated. He walks outside of 26 Second Avenue with the note. Stopping a moment beside a parked motorcycle, Chota opened the note.

“I heard that you are overwhelmed with the lunch program. It seems like an over endeavor to me. I’m thinking to call back all the devotees to centralized preaching in Brooklyn. What do you think?

Ys, Shiva-jvara dasa

P.S. Nimai Prabhu just arrived in Brooklyn.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

From the moment he read the note, Chota traveled as fast as he could to the Brooklyn temple to look for Nimai. He couldn’t find him in the men’s dormitory or the temple room. Chota then looked in the “boot room.” A place used by the human devotees to store boots and out-of-season clothes. There he saw Nimai Prabhu seated on the floor talking with Siva-jvara. Chota’s heart beat fast and he was about to run forward, but he checked himself. He felt pain that he was not the only mouse devotee in Nimai’s life.

Then Siva-jvara leaves, but Nimai goes to sleep. Chota waits until he wakes up and then:

Chota jumped on Nimai’s knee and ran up to his shoulder. He nuzzles against his friend’s ear while Nimai softly strokes his back.

“Chota, my little one ...,” said Nimai.

And there’s a nice picture of Nimai with Chota on his shoulder and he is stroking him.

“I’ve been waiting so long to see you,” said Chota. “Always listening in to find out where you were.”

“I also missed you very much,” said Nimai. “How have you been?”

Chota began to pour out what he wanted to say. He tried recalling his neat outline of questions, but he was unable to remain within bounds.

Chota says, “I don’t know where to begin.” And then he tells Nimai that the movement is increasing wonderfully in Guyana and he will tell him details, but first he has one important anxiety.

“I’ve come to New York to consult with you about a personal dilemma I am having. How long will you stay here in New York?”

“I have to leave tomorrow to go to India,” said Nimai, “to join my spiritual master. I also want to tell you what I’ve been doing, although mostly I have been in *maya*, and my Gurudeva has been saving me.”

DIGRESSION

This is a reference to the adventures in the Second Volume in the series *Nimai’s Detour*. He goes to India, and he has all the typical misadventures of a gullible Westerner. He gets involved with the *prakṛta-sahajiyas*. He goes to a quack doctor. Finally he gets thrown in jail by the police, and his guru gets him out and saves him. Now he’s asked him to be his personal servant.

Chota tells him that he wants to chant and hear, but the devotees make him feel guilty.

“But even if I try, I can’t give up the conviction and craving for taking long periods of time to chant and hear. I even had to leave Guyana. I took a sabbatical. Now I am coming to you. How can I give up my love for *sadhana*, and yet, how can I give up my other duties?”

After Chota had got this much out, he was panting and trembling. He worried maybe that it sounded completely inconsequential or incoherent.

Nimai looked quiet and thoughtful. “Your problem is so spiritually advanced,” said Nimai, “that I don’t think I can help. You’ve gone beyond me Chota. You were always an advanced devotee, even from the beginning.”

“That’s not true,” said Chota. “You were always my teacher and so only you can solve my dilemma.”

Nimai says he needs time to think it over. “You’ve waited so long to ask me these questions, and I don’t want to just reply with something off the top of my head.” Nimai has to go downtown to get his visa, and he suggests taking Chota with him in a small box. He could stay with Nimai while he does his business in Manhattan. But this is very dangerous, and they can’t get to talk while they’re out in Manhattan. While they’re in a store, a dog even attacks the box and almost kills Chota. Chota tells what a surprise it was that Siva-jvara had been learning from Nimai, and Nimai told him that it just happened naturally.

In the next chapter there’s a big *kirtana* in the humans’ temple, and Nimai gets to give a class and he stresses the importance of *sadhana* as if he’s speaking to Chota, who is also listening to the lecture. The next day Chota gets to see Nimai, and Nimai is in a sober mood and he says now I am in a frame of mind to tell you the advice. This is like the climax of the book: Nimai’s instructions to Chota.

“Don’t be afraid to be yourself,” said Nimai. “If you are feeling strong desires to intensify your *sadhana*, don’t suppress them. They are good desires. One may have to wait many, many lifetimes to have such desires, so don’t let your Godbrothers

intimidate you by calling you a *babaji* or whatever. You may not be exactly like them. I was trying to make this point last night in the lecture. We are each individuals, and even in the liberated stage everyone has a particular *rasa* with Krishna. So, even now your '*rasa*' should be respected, but you have to start by respecting it yourself. Don't be guilty or wishy-washy. My guru once said that about me and all the trouble I got into in India – it was because I was too wishy-washy. Even my Gurudeva went through this soul-searching. And he still does, to find his own place in the Krishna consciousness movement. When we were together in the mountains, he told me how he wanted to pray. Just like you're doing. And Gurudeva wanted to start a Vaisnava school, and he wants to travel and preach as a *sannyasi*. He's doing all that now. It's an important thing to recognize your way, and it has to come from within. Krishna wants our voluntary service. I also realize that aside from what others might say or debate, I have my own relationship with my spiritual master. That way my faith became stronger. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand," said Chota.

"But I don't think you should abandon your *prabhu-datta-desa*," said Nimai. "Do you know the meaning of *prabhu-datta-desa*?"

"Not really," said Chota.

"Prabhu means master," said Nimai, "and *desa* means land, so *prabhu-datta-desa* is the land, country, or place that has been given to you by the guru or the Lord where you should perform your service. You have a wonderful field in Guyana which you have developed yourself, and now you also have followers there. I think it is your responsibility to continue there. If not forever, at least it should not be left prematurely. I don't think you should come with me to India. I believe that what I am saying is what my Gurudeva would also say in your case. You don't have to run all over the world looking for places to hold retreats. You can chant and hear in your *prabhu-datta desa*, and the other devotees will learn to accept you. They may not be able to do it

themselves, and they may not even approve of what you are doing, but they will see, ‘*That’s* Chota’s way. That’s the way he’s serving *Krishna*.’”

“I think it is my way,” said Chota, “but how can I be sure it’s Krishna’s way for me?”

“One way to know is by the symptom of satisfaction. When you serve Krishna without motivation and without interruption, the symptom is *yenatma suprasidati*, you feel satisfied. As you feel deep satisfaction by this chanting and hearing, so you enter Krishna’s presence. Besides that, you are asking me and other devotees for confirmation. So, you should go out and do it, Chota. Chant and hear to your heart’s content and, at the same time, help others. Help them to find their own best way to serve Krishna. Just as you have particular tendencies and a kind of calling within Krishna consciousness, so others may have a different one, and you have to help them find the strength to follow their own path. You said you wanted to do Krishna’s will, so Krishna says in *Bhagavad-gita* that the best servant is he who preaches to His devotees. That should be part of your plan, because it’s Krishna’s plan.”

“I want to do that, Nimai Prabhu,” said Chota. “Recently, I’ve been giving classes in the evening to the mice at 26 Second Avenue. But unless I get regular *sadhana*, I feel like a hypocrite. How can I preach chanting and hearing if I don’t do it myself?”

“So do both,” said Nimai. “Just as Lord Caitanya said of Haridasa, ‘be well-behaved and preach.’”

Chota felt trust in what Nimai was saying. He felt filled with assurance. Because it was coming from Nimai, Chota knew that he could follow these instructions and live by them.

“I feel satisfied now,” said Chota. “I feel fixed. I want to go back to Guyana. I want to get involved again. But I will take time, as much as I need – no matter what they say – to chant and hear.”

The next day Nimai has to leave to go to India. There's a picture of Chota walking up a hawser of a boat again with his bead bag and a suitcase. He said the message came through and whatever Chota read in the *Krishna* book, it made him more desirous to read and also increased his desire to share it. He began to think of all the preaching he could do in Guyana when he went back. He remembered how his evening classes had been well-received at 26 Second Avenue and he resolved to speak like that every day to the devotees wherever he was. Chota also prayed to Krishna that his periods of solitude would give him strength to do it. No one was going to rob him of his right to be alone with Krishna, but he should share what he had learned with others.

When the week of solitude was finished, Chota reported to the boat bound for Guyana. It was another freighter. This time, however, he boarded as an ordinary mouse and not part of any tour group. He didn't have to go incognito.

DIGRESSION

Nimai's instructions to Chota are in my voice. This is how I think. I advise the devotee to chant and hear to his heart's content, but to serve his *prabhu-datta-desa* and to help other devotees find their calling. It used to be in ISKCON that there was very limited service. You either washed the pots, helped out on the altar, or went on *sankirtana*. Those were the only occupations. Now there are more choices. Solitude is still borderline; it's considered not preaching. But if Chota does as Nimai said, he'll take solitude and he will also preach. And I will have to accept that that is his way. Chota's way is my way.

After I finished the *Nimai* series, I turned to writing a series of fictional pieces, which I called *Stories of Devotion*. The first one was *Am I a Demon or a Vaisnava?* I think it was a successful story, and I got good reviews of it from the devotees. It's written in the first person by a man who was a demon in the court of Hiranyakasipu. I was careful not to write about Prahlada

Maharaja or Hiranyakasipu or Nrsimhadeva. I took a step back and created fictional characters from persons who were not center stage in the drama of the *Bhagavatam* story but who I could include as being on the fringes of the action.

The man who writes the story is called Harsasoka, which means “happy-sad.” And as he begins his story, he’s admitting that he’s been turned topsy-turvy in his demoniac attitudes by his son. His son is named Daityaji. His son plays in the palace with Prahlada Maharaja, and he has heard Prahlada Maharaja’s preaching and *kirtana* of the holy names. And he’s become quite changed. He’s become so blissful and effulgent and knowledgeable about Lord Vishnu, and he comes home and tells his father about it. His father, although a demon clerk, starts changing. He said, “It had a strange effect on me.” At first he tried to dismiss it as nonsense, as dangerous blasphemy. But then when his son explained it to him, there’s something soothing and enlightening about it. Prahlada criticizes materialistic life and exposes it as a waste of time. He says that we are not merely our physical bodies and our possessions. These things will soon be vanquished, and they give us so much anxiety when we try to protect them. We are not our bodies, we are eternal souls.

He’s heard it before and he considered it rubbish, but when Prahlada explains it and he hears it from his son, he likes it very much. His son also teaches him the Hare Krishna mantra, and he starts chanting that. And he’s writing down his thoughts .

Now, as it’s told in the *Bhagavatam*, the activities of Prahlada and the boys go on unnoticed by their teachers and by the guards at the palace. They’re just playing games. But Harsasoka gets caught; his writings are found, and he gets put into the dungeon. And he is afraid that his son may be punished also.

In the dungeon he begins to repent his inclination toward Krishna consciousness. He says he shouldn’t have been so swayed by his child’s infatuations with the teachings of Prahlada. And why is he suffering if there’s a God?

He asks himself, “Am I a demon or a Vaisnava?” He’s been brought up a demon, but lately he’s been dabbling in his attraction to Lord Vishnu.

Then, in prison, while doing labor, building a wall, mixing cement, he meets a sage named Tridandi, who was arrested by Hiranyakasipu. He was in the mountains meditating, and they put him in prison. Tridandi’s a confirmed Vaisnava, and he expresses his mind to Harsasoka and preaches to him about Krishna consciousness. And when he tells Tridandi that he doesn’t know if he’s a demon or a Vaisnava, Tridandi says that both the demon and the devotee often exist within the heart of a conditioned soul, where they war for supremacy.

Harsasoka takes a lot of heart from his association with Tridandi and his sympathies for Vaisnavism, but he fears for his life. Tridandi seems to know what things are going on in the palace, but Harsasoka doesn’t know how he knows it all. But he found out that Hiranyakasipu found out about his son’s activities and tried to stop him. He even tried to kill Prahlada, but he couldn’t kill him. In each case, when he tried to boil him in oil, tried to put him under the foot of an elephant, tried to throw him off a cliff, Prahlada was saved by Krishna. Hiranyakasipu became depressed, and his teachers told him, “Don’t worry about it. Just give us Prahlada back and give us more time. We’re sure that we can convince the child of the excellence of the demoniac materialistic teachings.”

Hiranyakasipu has agreed, and Prahlada goes back to school. Harsasoka figures that his son is back in school, too.

The warden’s son comes. He is called Indrajit, named after Ravana’s son. He starts a little conversation with Harsasoka, and the boy is innocent. Harsasoka says, “Why don’t you play with my son, who is in Prahlada’s classes.” He says, “Well, I’m just a warden’s son, they wouldn’t let me play with the Emperor’s children.” And Harsasoka says, “I can give you a note to my son, introducing you.” And the note says that he met a nice boy named Indrajit and he thought Indrajit might be able to play

with him and his friends. And in this way he communicates with his son, and tells him he's in prison but that he's all right.

Indrajit joins the devotees, and he's very happy. He smiles when he comes to see Harsasoka in prison, and says he likes chanting with the boys very much. He delivers a letter to Harsasoka from his son Daityaji. The son preaches to his father to be brave, and that it won't be long before Krishna acts to cut down Hiranyakasipu, and he sends him some *prasadam* in the note.

Harsasoka preaches to Indrajit, and they get on nicely together. He continues to meet with Tridandi, the sage. And Tridandi says it won't be long before the downfall comes from Vishnu who will intercede on behalf of Prahlada. He's encouraged by that, and he has an interview with the warden, which is very dangerous because he speaks up strongly to the warden, telling him that his time is limited and that he is under the control of Time. And the warden almost decides to kill him. The warden preaches to him about the glories of Hiranyakasipu, about how strong he is and how all the demigods are afraid of him. He lets him go back to his cell. But Harsasoka's very afraid of his meeting with the warden and sees he's not such a brave devotee, and it was embarrassing to his self-esteem. Indrajit comes to Harsasoka with keys to the cell, lets him out, he runs away, and he takes shelter in the upstairs of a baker's house. He understands that some devotees are hiding all over the city, and they're trying not to be tracked down by Hiranyakasipu's men. He's in a dangerous place still, but he's out of prison now. He thinks he wants to write some essays to circulate, arguing against the arguments the nondevotees give against Vishnu, saying that He's partial and that He doesn't exist, and so on. He starts writing in his new situation. Indrajit, who ran away from his father, has gone to a hiding place near where the boys live.

Sanda and Amarka, the two *brahmana* teachers of Prahlada, finally discover what is going on, that the whole school is being converted to Krishna consciousness, and they tell Hiranyakasipu. They're very afraid now what will happen. There will be

a crackdown on Prahlada and his boys. Maybe they will look also for Harsasoka. Some people do approach the baker's building, and they come upstairs. The baker comes up first, and he hides Harsasoka in a little doghouse, a little closet in the house. The demons take over the main part of the place, and they're going to live there and they've set out blueprints. Now he's pinned in a little corner of the house, but he can see through the slots in the walls.

He awakens to a tumultuous sound: "I've never heard such a loud and commanding sound in my life. Rather than try to describe it here, I can better say what it feels like. There's a tremendous sound of thunder. I'm afraid. There's something supernatural about it, something insistent. My hairs are standing on end. This sound is like a hundred thunders, and it hasn't stopped. It seems to be cracking the covering of the entire sky. I'm sure everyone else, like me, thinks the planet is being destroyed. Is it a bomb? Is it an earthquake?"

He crawls along the ceiling beam along the edge of the roof, and he sees big cracks in the tile, and he can see outside. He sees the sky is filled with lights. Clouds are scattered out there, and *raksasa* airplanes are being thrown into outer space as if from an explosion. But there's no smoke or fire, just light. He doesn't know what is happening, but he sees people running in the streets completely dazed and looking around for the origin of the sound. Everyone is terrified.

Then the baker unbolts the closet door and he says, "What's happening?"

The baker says, "Someone says the palace is being attacked. We hear the palace sirens ringing, although they are puny compared to the sound. The militia and the special combat soldiers are racing to the palace. From the direction of the palace, although it's a few miles away, we can hear screams and the sound of clashing weapons.

Harsasoka says, "Let's sit down and chant. What else can we do?" A few Vaisnava friends arrive, and they all sit together in

the baker's place and chant as the thunderous roar holds them in awe. One of the boys says, "Krishna must have come. Hiranyakasipu is dead." But they're not so sure and they don't wander out. But then Harsasoka's son bursts into the room. He's breathless from running, but he looks completely sanctified, transformed into a Vaikuntha being. But it's his son. "I saw it!" he says. Tears are streaming from his eyes, "With His claws," Daityaji said, and he makes a claw with his tiny hand and fingernails. "I saw His claws, His nails, He tore out the demon's intestines and put them around His neck." He goes on to tell what he saw and partially realized. It has now been told by many eyewitnesses and has been expressed in choice poetic language by the great sages of Vedic *sastra*. "We were on the outskirts and also saw wondrous things that had never been seen before. By the grace of Prahlada Maharaja, my son was present to see the appearance of Lord Nrsimhadeva, who killed the king of the demons and then sat on his throne."

That's the end of the narrative. One person who read the story said that I should have fluffed it out more and turned it into a book like *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson, with many incidents while Harsasoka was living in exile. But I didn't, I made it a short story. It's not a novel, it's a long short story. But it doesn't end there, it continues with an epilogue. The epilogue just tells that Harsasoka is happy now in Krishna consciousness, since Nrsimhadeva has killed the demon, and he's doing his duties of *sravanam kirtanam vishnu smaranam* and overcoming the last vestiges of his demoniac nature.

I can't say how I exactly came up with the creative process of writing that story. I just wanted to do something, and it started to flow and I followed it, keeping in mind my principles of making my characters not the central characters of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I don't like that; sometimes I see devotees write stories or plays or skits, and they write words in Narada's mouth ... but I don't like to do that. I created characters who were outside of the *Bhagavatam*. Harsasoka, his son, the demons, and you hear in the distance about Hiranyakasipu and

Nrsimhadeva and Prahlada. I just worked it that way. I put myself in the demons' shoes, thinking myself an ex-demon and writing with that split personality.

Multiple personalities. He didn't know what he was, and that was an interesting tension to the story. The man being a demon, then being influenced to become a devotee, then repenting, becoming a devotee, then being afraid to be a devotee, and then getting strength to be a devotee by good association.

I introduce different characters to help bring the story about. It just came by an inventive process, a creative process where I brought in characters to tell the story, like Tridandi, and a little sleuth from my storytelling proclivities about hideouts and intrigues and palace revolutions.

Another of the *Stories of Devotion*, is *Sri Caitanya Daya*. *Sri Caitanya-daya* is a full-sized book. The thing about this is that many people thought it was not fiction but an actual translation of a manuscript that I found, because I introduce in it an editor's name—Vaisnava dasanudasa—and I quote Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati saying (from Srila Prabhupada's purport) that there are many others who recorded Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's activities, and "Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura believes that the people of the world would benefit greatly if such notes were available. It is a most unfortunate situation for human society that none of these notebooks are still extant." (*Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta*, Antya 14.8, purport)

When I wrote that and then wrote the story, people thought that I had actually found a manuscript in India, a 500-year-old manuscript, and that I had translated it. That was really a form of flattery—or praise, rather—that I liked, that they thought it was a true story and they asked me if there were any more manuscripts. I said that I believed that there are more, but I didn't know where they were, that I was looking for more, researching, but actually it's just a fictional piece.

CITRANAGARA LOOK IN BOOK

It's composed of diaries of Harideva and his wife Chayadevi. First comes a diary of Harideva and then of Chayadevi. They alternate one chapter after another. As the story unfolds, we learn that Harideva was a *pujari* in a Laksmi-Narayana temple in the town of Citranagara, and he was very respected, but he had a fall down with a prostitute, and when it came out he was discharged from his duties, and he was shunned by the population of the village. In a reaction, he took to drinking wine and staying in his house, and he was very morose.

At this time—this was during the time of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu's tour of southern India—the people were alive with news of Lord Caitanya's coming and going in places in South India. And the fact was He would go to some town and preach to people, and those people would attain *krishna-prema*, and they would go and hold *kirtana* in other villages, they would just become wandering *kirtanias*. A group of them came to Harideva's village and lived there. They included a man named Caitanya dasa and his friends, and they had a wonderful influence on the town by their chanting. The people in the town were mostly worshipers of Laksmi-Narayana and were ritualistic, and they didn't know about Radha Krishna and Hare Krishna and Lord Caitanya, but Caitanya dasa and his friends enlightened them. At first, Harideva doesn't come out of his room. He remains morose and repentant. But finally he talks to Caitanya, and he changes. He joins them in this chanting, and he doesn't care that some people are snubbing him, and that he's not allowed to worship the Deities any more. He comes out of the closet.

His wife writes pieces in her diary that she's happy that the devotees are there and that her husband is coming out of the closet.

An opportunity comes that they want somebody to go and deliver a message to a town to tell them that Lord Caitanya is coming there. Harideva volunteers to go. It's a long journey that

he has to make alone, but he wants to prove himself to be a reformed devotee. Although he's 50 years old—he's not really the best person to choose for a journey like this—he insists on doing this as kind of a cleansing act, and he goes on a journey. For most of the book he writes in his journal about his past, his fall down, how it was like a bad dream. He describes how he was tempted and how he thinks back to his prestigious position as being the head *pujari* and how he lost it all. To lose honor is worse than death. But he takes heart in his mission. He sprains his ankle and has to stop for a while in a house, and while he does, some more devotees come by who had seen Lord Caitanya on His tour of south India, and one of them is a *sannyasi*. Harideva talks to this *sannyasi* and becomes very much affected by him. The *sannyasi* and his group hold *barinarna*, and Harideva wasn't chanting himself, but now he starts chanting. He feels very much purified and stronger. He finally decides when they leave he wants to go with them and go with this *sannyasi*.

Meanwhile, back and forth as you read the chapters, his wife is writing a diary, and she's writing letters to her husband and telling him that she approached the board of the Laksmi-Narayana temple and asked the members if he could be reinstated in his *pujari* position now that he's been reformed. Although they said they'd think about it, they weren't so receptive. She's very faithful, and she's performing her devotional service in the absence of her husband. When the *sannyasi* leaves the place where Harideva is staying, Harideva leaves with him. He decides not to carry out that mission of delivering the message. He gives the message to someone else, and he goes traveling on *parikrama*, *padayatra*, with this group who have seen Lord Caitanya and who have become infused with *krishna-prema*.

The *sannyasi* is very renounced, and he rankles Harideva a little bit because Harideva doesn't want to be a *sannyasi* yet, he wants to be with his wife. The *sannyasi* preaches against marriage a little extremely. They have a little tension between them, but

Harideva gets strengthened and purified by walking and chanting, in a very austere life with the *sannyasi*.

Then in an extraordinary chapter, Chayadevi writes that Lord Caitanya passed through their village of Citranagara. Here, I dare to do something that I usually don't dare to do—I say that she sees Lord Caitanya. She describes the scene how when Lord Caitanya came to their village hundreds of thousands of people came, and they destroyed the roads and the fences and the houses. There were just so many people crossing the rivers to get a sight of Lord Caitanya, and she couldn't get sight of Him with the people crowding around everywhere. But at one point when she's on the roof, she sees Lord Caitanya from a hundred yards away, walking back to His house after seeing the people. And she's saying how her hairs stand on end and her life changes just by the sight of Him.

I dare to do this fictional piece of saying that Lord Caitanya is in my story and is seen by one of my characters. She writes in her diary and wishes that her husband was there and says her town has now become a *tirtha*, and she is eager to show her husband all the places Lord Caitanya stopped when He passed through their town.

Harideva continues traveling with the *parikrama*, but eventually he thinks that he wants to go home and join his wife again. He tells the *sannyasi*, and the *sannyasi* doesn't agree. He says, "Why should you want to go home, why not travel with us? We're going to Jagannatha Puri, and we're going to see Lord Caitanya when He gets back from His southern tour. When will you get a chance to see Lord Caitanya?" But he says, "No, I've made up my mind, I want to sort things out and clean up my reputation in my home town." At the same time, as if by telepathy, Chayadevi is writing in her diary that she thinks her husband is going to come home.

The diaries end with the editor saying that this is the extent of the diaries that they found, but they realize that he arrived home, and he lived with his wife.

In the meantime, after Lord Caitanya passed through their town, they set up some Radha-Krishna worship in a small house in the town. She becomes, not the *pujari*, but very much a worker in doing the Radha-Krishna worship in that temple there. They continue to worship Laksmi-Narayana in the main town's temple, but they have this little temple where they worship Radha-Krishna, so she gets very absorbed in that, and there's some Radha-Krishna *rasa* described in her participation in the temple worship. Her husband comes home and joins her, and he takes part in this Radha-Krishna worship also.

There's a little bit of a manuscript taken from a pilgrimage that the husband and wife went on when they went to Puri, but they don't know what happened. We don't have information from the manuscripts whether they met Lord Caitanya or not, but they went on a pilgrimage to Puri together.

The book ends with an Appendix of a pamphlet that Harideva wrote about a theoretical understanding of fall down, how it happens, how to prevent it, and this is offered as a manual or helping fellow strugglers on the path of Krishna consciousness, that they can avoid *maya*.

The Appendix has another editor's note: that here is a journal written by Chayadevi three years after the activities told in the previous journals. It is an account of a pilgrimage which she attended with her husband and a large number of people from Citranagara village, when they walked to Jagannatha Puri in hopes of gaining the *darsana* of Lord Caitanya.

It's implied that maybe —although we don't tell it in this book—that maybe they did get to see Lord Caitanya. But I didn't want to be so explicit as to write a fictional *darsana* of them and Lord Caitanya.

I was satisfied with this book and the style I wrote it in. I like to write in diaries, and so I wrote a fictional account, like a novel, with alternate diaries of Harideva and Chayadevi written mostly in separation from each other but thinking of each other, and then him joining her again. He's sanctified and purified by

going on *parikrama* with a *sannyasi*. It ends happily ever after (so to speak).

When people inquired from me whether this was a real ancient manuscript, I told them it was a fictional story. They just said, “Oh,” and I don’t think they were disappointed. They were glad that I wrote a story, and they accepted it that way, as fiction, and liked it.

It’s an intriguing concept, to think that Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati said that there are probably many notes kept by people telling how Lord Caitanya entered their lives. I kept it on the outskirts of Lord Caitanya, telling that He traveled to different villages and met people and then those people became like touchstones and went out to preach to other people about Lord Caitanya. In this way, His glories got spread.

And I interweave into it the troubles of this man who had experienced the fall down, so it’s like a realistic down-to-earth story of a not-pure devotee who’s trying to cleanse himself from fall down and reaction to the fall down when he took to drinking and staying alone and being rejected. But it evolves to the point where he’s accepted again because his town also becomes much more liberal and effulgent. His town becomes transformed by Lord Caitanya’s visit, so when he returns there they accept him with more open arms.

I weaved a real life-story on the outskirts of the pastimes of Lord Caitanya, who actually appears in the story, briefly seen from a hundred yards away by Chayadevi.

I did have readers tell me they felt very enlivened by that scene where I describe the appearance of Lord Caitanya in my story. I think it was a dare that I took that paid off.

STORIES OF DEVOTION

I will now tell another book from the Stories of Devotion Series called *Vishnu-rata Vijaya: The Story of an Ex-Hunter*.

I wanted to write a book about *abimsa* or a book against the slaughterhouse, and I thought of the wonderful narration from *Sri Caitanya-caritamrita* where Lord Caitanya tells the story of Narada's conversion of the hunter, Mrgari, into a first-class Vaishnava. My story is based on that.

As with the story *Am I a Demon or a Vaishnava*, I removed my characters from the actual characters in the *Caitanya-caritamrta*. I did not write of Narada; I did not write of Mrgari, the hunter. I wrote of a boy who was the son of a hunter named Pasu, a fictional hunter, and I wrote about his meeting a disciple of Mrgari's. In that way I avoided writing fiction about *Caitanya-caritamrta* characters, which I don't want to do.

I claim that it's an ancient manuscript written by an anonymous biographer. Sometimes the biographies of great saints are called *vijaya*, *Narottama Vijaya*, or something like that—all glories to the saint who's being described. *Vishnu-rata* is the glorification of this Vishnu-rata person who was a hunter but became a great devotee by meeting a great devotee, a disciple of Mrgari, the hunter.

As it opens, Vishnu-rata is living with his father Pasu and his mother. He's leading the life of a hunter's son. It tells that his father was pleased with his early development. He took naturally to life in the woods. He learned to track animals and to be quiet and patient, he liked handling the bow and arrow and practiced it. He liked to please his father and do what he was taught.

But there were some early signs of what was to come later. He sometimes befriended animals, and his father just took it that this was all right and would prove useful in hunting. And he did kill animals under his father's order. He was not a *nitya-siddha* person, but he lived under the influence of his father, who misled him into thinking that the life of a hunter was his occupational duty.

He once asked his father why killing animals was necessary, and his father replied that if man did not kill them then the animals would overpopulate the earth. That's actually the answer my father gave me when I asked him why we had to eat animals. And then his father tells him, "Don't ask why, just do your duty."

Pasu tells his son to disregard the hermits and the yogis and the devotees, whom the hunters often found in the forest. He describes them as "crazy men who did not work to earn their living." But the hunter said, "You have to be wary of the sages because they could curse you, and they have some magic powers."

This was his vision of the *sadhu*, and the little boy didn't have any *sadhu-sanga*. But he was attracted to them on his own, and he didn't know what they were doing. But he once had an exchange with a *sadhu* when he met him in the forest, and he took a sweet from him. And then his father intruded on the scene and knocked over the *sadhu's* altar and dragged his son away. "So Vishnu-rata's childhood," the ancient biographer says, "was not all *lila* or divine activity." He said that he was in illusion until he met his spiritual master. He didn't realize the connection between eating the food on his plate and the killing of the animals in the forest. But he lost his innocence. He once saw a man pulling the head of a chicken off, and he saw a little boy crying. This was something that Prabhupada said he saw, and Vishnu-rata saw the boy cry in horror, and he cried and ran home to hide. Then he tried to avoid eating meat, but his refusal was not allowed. His mother and father got him to confess what was wrong, and he told them. His father was very angry with him and made him eat meat again, and said, "The *sadhus* may not eat meat, but you're not a *sadhu*." He forced him to overcome his scruples about eating meat. The biographer says that Vishnu-rata probably killed some small animals as a very young boy. But an outstanding incident that survived in his memory was the killing of his first ferocious animal. It was a wild boar. These animals are distinct from village hogs—they're

larger and tusked. And they will charge at anything that crosses their path if they are in the mood. When Vishnu-rata was about 11 years old, a particularly large boar was terrorizing the goatherds in the village, and the men went out to kill the hog—the boar. Vishnu-rata went with the party, and at one point he gets separated from the men and he's alone in the forest. Then he sees the boar, and he shoots arrows at the boar and hurts it. The boar charges at him, and he jumps on the boar and cuts its throat. He's covered with blood. The hunters come, and they all cheer, and his father says, "Damn, that's the best kill I've ever seen!" They all triumphantly march back to the village, and the girls look at him admiringly.

That was the end of his innocence. After that, he regularly killed animals. Those years were a high point in his relationship with his parents.

In the second chapter of the book, the ancient biographer tells a brief summation of the story that's in the *Caitanya-caritamṛta* about how Narada met Mrgari. We all know that, and I won't tell it here, but Narada met a hunter in the forest who was half-killing animals, and under his influence the hunter gave up his killing of animals. Narada told him about karma and showed him how the animals would come back to kill him. The hunter asked how he could be saved from the karma, and Narada told him to break his bow and just build a little hut and chant Hare Krishna, and so he did. Thus, Mrgari became a disciple of Narada, thereafter known as Narada-kripa.

As the story continues, Vishnu-rata and his friend Ambulal are sent by their parents to a distant place to buy some bows and some utensils. They go there, and they go to the village to see Narada-kripa.

"Vishnu-rata surprised himself. He began inquiring from the ex-hunter-*sadhu*. He says, "You were a famous hunter. What happened that you have given it up and you are chanting mantras to Krishna?"

Narada-kripa says he did nothing special, just that he met the great saint Narada, who came through the forest. They talk a little bit about Narada Muni and how great he is. The boy just thought that Narada was somebody written about in books, or that it was a myth.

“He’s certainly been written of in books,” said Narada-kripa, “but he’s definitely not a myth. I have seen him myself so I can attest to that.”

He explained to Vishnu-rata how he received Narada’s mercy.

These two boys away from home inquire in different ways from Narada-kripa, and they ask about animal killing, and he tells them it’s against God’s laws, and that’s why it shouldn’t be done. They’re not used to debate, so they just listen to him and get impressed by him. The evening ends, and they go home.

The next morning, the boy goes out to the forest early in the morning, and he’s in a different mood. He stalks a fawn, and what he would usually have done is injure the fawn, broken its legs, and then soon the mother would come and he would kill her. But this time he just coos and baby talks to the fawn and nuzzles him when he comes up to it. The doe returns and notices that her fawn is gone, and she snorts loudly threatening to attack, and Vishnu-rata just decides to leave. He picks up his bow and walks deep into the forest. He’s thinking to himself, “I’m a killer of animals. I cause them great pain, and I leave them flapping. This is a great sin. I am a sinner.”

He wanted to return to Prayag. He purposely broke one of the new bows and then insisted on going to the bow maker to have the faulty bow replaced. Pasu agreed. This time he traveled alone and went directly to the cottage of the ex-hunter. He bowed before the Tulasi and called Narada-kripa through the door of the cottage. He wanted to talk with him.

He asked how you can give up the occupation of being a hunter, if that’s the only occupation you know. He says, “All I know is that Narada told me to give it up. And I was earning my income, but I realized that everyone is being maintained by

Krishna and that's the real source of our income. So I'm being maintained by people who come and give me food. Your real occupation is to serve the Supreme Lord."

Vishnu-rata is very shocked by this, to think that he could live in other way than being a hunter. Then he makes inquiries about chanting. He wants to know what happens when you chant, does a vision of Krishna come to your eyes? He says Krishna appears in His sound, in the sound of His name, and that it would happen to Vishnu-rata if he just begins chanting. Vishnu-rata confesses that he really is afraid of his father, and he breaks down and cries.

But he asks very pressing questions, and Narada-kripa can't answer the questions, so the boy has to work them out for himself. He spends the day with Narada-kripa chanting, and he feels very happy, and he goes home to confront his father.

His father's angry that he's been gone, and he hasn't killed anything in three days. Then Vishnu-rata lets it come out: he tells his father that there was an ex-hunter in Prayag who had become a Vaisnava, and he had been talking to him. His father is angry, and he said why was he talking to this man who had given up hunting? And his father said, "Why has he given up hunting?" The boy says he met the great sage Narada. The father says there's no person Narada, and they get into an argument. Finally, it gets so volatile the father calls him a bum, and he says, "And that bum in Prayaga is no better than the urine of a dog." Vishnu-rata flinches. He says to his father, "You're a dirty killer. All you ever taught me was how to go to hell, and that's where you're going."

Pasu swings at him with his fist, and he hits his son on the lip. Vishnu-rata goes out to the back yard and pulls out his knife and begins slashing a week's collection of animal skins that were stretched out behind the house. Pasu comes out and howls when he sees what his son has done. He runs back into the house and returns with his club, and his son and he start fighting with his club, and people run to the house and a

policeman comes. The policeman asked the man why he hit his son. The son interrupts: “All I did was visit Narada-kripa, what’s so terrible about that?”

The policeman takes the boy to his home. He sits down with the policeman, and the policeman says he should be tolerant of his father’s anger. “It was wrong that you destroyed the skins. Everyone has to have their occupation. You and your father are hunters, and even if the occupation has some fault—just as fire has smoke—that doesn’t mean you should abandon it.”

“But killing animals is sinful,” says Vishnu-rata. “What do you mean by that?” the policeman asked. “If you want to grow to be a *sadhu* and not kill animals, that’s a different thing. I won’t meddle in your life and your relationship with your father unless you start fighting again. But just because a *sadhu* doesn’t kill animals, that doesn’t mean no one else in the world can kill animals. Do you understand?”

Vishnu-rata is sorry that he slashed the skins, and he stays talking to the policeman. But then he doesn’t go home again. He goes into the forest, and he kills a boar and then he brings it to his father’s house and leaves it in the doorway and walks off to Prayag.

Next is the third meeting between Narada-kripa and Vishnu-rata. He tells Narada-kripa everything that happened with his father, and the sage says “You should try to control your anger. You should go on chanting.” The boy says, “I didn’t—I forgot the chanting. That would’ve helped me. But how can I be free of this karma?”

Then they had a discussion about karma, and Narada-kripa tells him how Narada Muni showed him a vision of how the animals actually would come in the next life and kill him. This is described in some detail.

He stays for the night in the house in the yard of Narada-kripa, and he wakes up after a dream and decided he’s going to go back to his home country and protect the animals from the hunters.

He does that. It's a very impetuous thing. But he knows the forest like the back of his hand, and he goes there and he interrupts the hunting of the hunters. He has a conch shell, and whenever a hunter goes to shoot an animal, he blows the conch and breaks up the hunting. After a while people realize someone is doing this and they say, "We know it's you, whoever's out there, and you stop doing this or we'll get you."

Vishnu-rata sees his friends out hunting, and he jumps out of the woods and says, "Don't kill the animals." They see that it's him. A bunch of men come out and try to find out who's interrupting the hunting. His father comes out by himself and calls out to him and says, "You're gonna be in serious trouble. They're forming a big party, and they're gonna come for you. We ain't fooling around; I'll probably be there myself. But I'm just coming out now for your mother; be warned."

The boy goes back to the cave where he's hiding, and he finds the policeman is there. The boy is shivering in the cold, and the policeman gives him an extra *chadar* that he has. Vishnu-rata is wary of the policeman, and he's disturbed that he found him. The policeman says, "You're not the only stalker in the world." The policeman was a friend, but after all, he had the power to arrest him. But the policeman says, "I'm coming to warn you that all the hunters and many others are coming today to get you. You got away yesterday, but they are going to comb the whole forest until they find you. They're really riled up."

"But am I wrong?" Vishnu-rata challenged. He thought the policeman was someone who might understand. "Is it right that they torture and kill the animals? They don't know about the karma, but it's a fact. For all that killing they will have to suffer reaction. Do you know about karma?"

The policeman says, "I know about karma. I learned it from my mother and grandfather. But you can't force people to change their karma."

Vishnu-rata says, "Haven't you come to force me?"

He says, “No, I haven’t come for that. I force people to obey man’s laws, but God’s law is voluntary.”

What the policeman hints to him is that he shouldn’t interrupt the hunting, because the policeman will be forced to enforce man’s laws. And the policeman advises him to become a nonviolent *sadhu*, saying, “I admire you for doing this. I’m saying it confidentially because your father might not like to hear me say it.”

After that meeting Vishnu-rata leaves the familiar forest of his home, and he journeys again to Prayag. He surrenders himself as a fool before his spiritual master and asks to be accepted as a disciple. Narada-kripa actually accepted him and ordered him to take up the life which Narada had advised of continually chanting Hare Krishna and worshiping Tulasi. Vishnu-rata happily obeyed. He stays there and methodically studies the scriptures, the teachings of Narada Muni, and the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

That’s the end of the story, actually. His father was gloomy and angry for a while, but even he, to everyone’s surprise, stopped half-killing animals. He was quoted as saying, “What my son said is crazy, but I don’t break legs no more, maybe it ain’t necessary.” And Vishnu-rata becomes a sage himself and speaks to people about his former life and advises them to give up all kinds of animal slaughter and animal cruelty.

The anonymous biographer of *Vishnu-rata Vijaya* claims that Vishnu-rata Swami composed various writings but only one manuscript, an original work, has survived. We have already been informed that Vishnu-rata sometimes had dreams of his former life of a hunter. It comes as no surprise, as he has written about it. These vignettes may be from actual dreams that he witnessed or fictional devices used to bring out preaching points on his favorite theme of nonviolence to the animals and the need for Krishna consciousness.

The manuscript is written in his aboriginal language from the same period and styled as the biography. We have rendered it freely into modern English for contemporary readers.

(It's signed "Vaisnava-dasanudasa," the one who wrote the biography, and then what follows is a manuscript called "Dreams of an Ex-Hunter"). It's a series of negative, fearful dreams. Some of them are positive dreams of utopian situations where the animals are protected by the sages, and there's a series of those that end the book. Then, there's a series of notes where different words in the book are described.

It's a real propaganda book that could be read by anyone influencing people against hunting animals and towards non-violence. I'm glad to have written it as a contribution to that cause. It's about *harinama*, it's about *sadhu-sanga*, and it's about nonviolence to animals.

UNDER DARK STARS

This is a hard book to talk about. You really have to read it to see what it is. In the preface I say I am tired of people picking up the book and saying, "This is Satsvarupa Maharaja's diary, isn't it?" I asked the booksellers to tell them it's not a diary, but they really don't know what to answer, because to them it also seems to be a diary. Of course, there's nothing wrong with diaries as a genre, but I want my writing to be clearly a genre-bender.

And I think it's becoming more and more so, especially with the addition of more poems and the freeing up of the prose. Let the persona who lives now in Stuyvesant Falls, New York, remain, but I will try to continue smashing his pretensions and all pretentiousness. Let us see what Krishna and the muses allow.

Then I write an introduction and say that this novel, written in the late winter and spring of 2003, is without a plot, and that's all right; plenty of novels are plotless. But it has plenty of characters. The characters are close to me. (I mention some of the characters in the book.)

I also appear, but not even solely, not even mainly. Don't take it that all this talk is autobiographical. I'm mostly making it up, and that's why it's a novel.

SANATORIUM

Sanatorium was written after *Under Dark Stars*. There are even some poems in *Sanatorium* that appear in *Under Dark Stars*, and the characters Tim, and the Italian astrologer, Giovanni, appear in both books. But there's a great difference between the two books.

Sanatorium is a plotted story with developed characters in a dramatic line. Surprisingly, I did not write it with an outline written first or with notes taken first. I just moved into it and began writing, and it developed spontaneously into a story.

The main character is Swami Swims. His spiritual name is actually Syama, and by the end of the novel the character Sandy asks him to stop using the name Swims, and he uses the name Syama Swami. But in most of the book he's known as Swami Swims.

He's referred to in the preface as the "retired but searching leader who's driven by love to care for and protect the other patients." Then, there's Jane:

"...the hardcore karate biker, who is at heart a fierce heroine moving to pure love of God; Junior Barks, the quintessential teen rebel who everyone loves to hate but melts away your resistance; and of course Tim—me, you and everyone who has come up against their own courage and fragility on the way to enlightenment. Finally there's Sandy, the survivor of an automobile accident, left paraplegic, who, absorbed in love and

separation, carries the crew upward by her heart and beauty—the real soul of the sanatorium and the friend we could all use.

“In *Sanatorium*, the inmates reach out to each other and confront their personal paths to recovery and relationship. To fulfill the promise of spiritual authenticity, each must face the challenges, hopes, and blessings, and finally fear of life and death itself, that lead them on their ultimate journey to find their way home.

Swami Swims tells the story, and he’s written about it in the third person, not the first person. The book starts out with a paragraph written about “you’re not this body” and death, and how we take a different birth at the time of death. It’s straight preaching from Krishna consciousness. And then after the paragraph, the next paragraph begins:

“The preceding paragraph was written by Junior Barks, an offspring of the Hare Krishna devotees and a student of the Rudolph Steiner-inspired Waldorf School. He was shown a manuscript of this book, and he was appalled by its lack of straight *sastra* and orderliness . . .”

Swami Swims tried to make him aware that this writing was a kind of special new way to write, but he couldn’t comprehend, he was too young and straight. They included his paragraph in the book, and they said that perhaps they would let Junior Barks write here and there, and they’d print it in the book. But Junior Barks was a cantankerous little kid. He phoned Swami Swims and told him he was talking to a representative of Torchlight Press, and he showed them one of his little essays. They said if he gathered a manuscript, they would print a book for him. He wasn’t going to write for the Swami any more, and he wanted his paragraph back. The Swami hung up the phone thinking, “I wish you luck in your career, but I’m not going to give you your paragraph back. Besides, we could write also if we had Prabhu-pada’s books here in the sanatorium.”

The book moves slowly and leisurely. It reminds me of a book by Charles Dickens in which the writer expects you to

settle down with the book and not be pushed through feverishly by a plot of suspense and sensation. He takes his time in telling the story, and it has a lot of self-reflection in it. But it does move along also.

Right away, we're introduced to the fact that there is a sanatorium in Upstate New York, and it's for Hare Krishnas who are ill, and they're allowed to live there and get treatment there. There are doctors there, and they live in a dormitory. They have beds, and there are a few private rooms, too. Gradually you get to know the people who are there.

Bhakta Tim in *Under Dark Stars* goes to see Giovanni for a reading on his astrological condition, and he announces to the inmates that he's going to do that here, too. They make fun of him and say that, "There's nothing you can do to offset your shortened longevity. If you start listening to those astrologers, you won't be able to make a bowel movement unless they tell you it's okay, Swami Swims says. The palm lines in your hands will change if you clap your hands and chant in *kirtana*."

But Bhakta Tim is afraid that he has a disease, and it comes out on his visit to Giovanni that he does have a disease. He has cancer in his colon. And this is mentioned in an understated way in the beginning of the book, but later it's taken seriously. At the conclusion of the book he dies young, so his fears of shortened life are not foolishness on his part. Giovanni tells him that actually he is going through a very bad period.

Swami Swims is thinking of moving from the sanatorium to go live in California in a more secluded way of life. But he's debating about it in his mind. He's living now in the sanatorium, which is also Sacisuta's place. And he plays with Sacisuta's little baby, Laksmana, who is just a toothless infant.

The inmates do comedy therapy, watching Charlie Chaplin films and other old Mack Sennett silent films and early comedy films, and there's a kind of controversy about this with the higher authorities. There's a regular reference to the authorities in the religion, and their attitude towards the behavior of the

inmates. They keep records on them, and there's even a famous meeting with Swami and one of the higher authorities, and they talk about *his* profile.

These authorities are portrayed as bureaucratic and not so liberal. The inmates act on their own and don't always act as the authorities want them too. But it's been an established habit that they watch these comedy films.

It's an open secret that Swami Swims has trouble chanting his 16 rounds. He tries his best, but because he takes anti-depressant medicine, it makes him sleepy. He has had chronic migraine headaches for over 20 years, and he's being treated now by a doctor who prescribes a medicine. He's trying to get off these heavy medicines that make him so sleepy that he can't chant all his rounds. He listens to jazz also.

Like *Under Dark Stars*, there are poems inserted in the prose of *Sanatorium*, and there are references to jazz bands and jazz artists in the poems. That's part of the fun.

Swami Swims lives with the inmates, and he's their friend and guide.

Visiting preachers stop by sometimes who are touring the country on ambitious preaching tours. The inmates kind of don't look forward to these visits because the extroverted preachers don't understand them and are insensitive to their needs. They're condescending or they look down on them, and they really can't relate to the "sickies." There's a little tension about visitors who come there. Swami Swims also has tension with the visiting VIP Godbrothers.

As the plot develops, a muscle bound guy with a T-shirt revealing many tattoos, tight leather pants and a belt with metal studs walks into the office one evening. Devotees had just finished their work for the day. This is the office of the literary staff that is producing the book *Sanatorium*. Bhaktin Jane is there. She's the typist. She types 120 words a minute. She has diabetes. She could probably work in the outside world and take

insulin, but she's dedicated to typing Swami Swims' writing and stays in the sanatorium.

This man who comes in is Junior Barks' father. They turn off the video because he is an interruption, and a threatening one, too. Tim, the editor, says, "Oh, yes, your son is a nice boy, he's very precocious. He's been working in the kitchen, and we've advised him to keep a journal." The father says, "Well, how come you don't print his stuff in your book?" They reply that they have printed some of his things, "But we thought they were a little basic and repetitious, so we asked him to practice some on his own" The father says, "I read what he writes, and I think it's excellent; I'd like you to print whatever he writes right away."

Then Jane speaks up, and she says, "Is that an order or a threat?" She was the toughest of the bunch. Mr. Barks backs down a little. "What's the problem?" he says, "the rest of the stuff in your book is kind of zookey. I just caught you watching Charlie Chaplin. Why weren't you having a *kirtana*?" Jane says, "Look here, Mr. Barks, this is a free country; if you are so anxious to have your boy publish, you can use some of your money from wherever you get it and print a nice book of your own and sell it in many ways. We're doing him a favor by telling him how to write better." The father doesn't seem to have any answer to that. Jane goes on to say that "...we only print a thousand copies of our book, and we hardly can sell it ourselves. We like to write our way and he likes to write his way."

The father says, "All right. I'll work with the kid, and we'll make some of our own books. We'll make them better than yours."

And then he asks her, "What's your name?"

"Bhaktin Jane," she says.

"And what's that Sanskrit tattoo around your wrist mean?"

“It means, ‘Whom Krishna wants to kill, no one can protect, and whom Krishna wants to protect, no one can kill.’”

He seems a bit cowed, and he exits the office, closing the door softly.

“That was great, Bhakta Jane,” they say in unison.

She says, “Okay, let’s turn on the video again, and let’s not worry about Mr. Barks.”

The next day there’s a note underneath the door of the writing office from Junior Barks. Now he’s on a new thing. He said he met a visiting *acarya* who is speaking amazing realizations about Radha and Krishna beyond anything he ever saw in their books or even Prabhupada’s books. It’s a new opening of the heavens for him, and he’s decided he’s going to write a commentary on Rupa Goswami’s *Ujjvala Nilamani*. “Don’t expect to see me coming around and doing menial tasks in your kitchen anymore. I’ve gone on to better things. By the way, my father is interested in your typist, Jane, and he asked if she’d like to go on a motorcycle ride with him.” He gives the address and his dad’s e-mail and his own e-mail, which is now rupamanjari.barks@radhakunda.com. So, he’s quite a precocious kid.

Needless to say, Jane turns down the date offered by biker Barks.

Someone has a program in the *asrama* connected to the hospital for Food for Life for the poor children in Vrndavana, and he collects money for it. It’s a long program, and he shows pictures of the children with broken legs and starving, and he says, “I don’t like to blackmail you, I don’t want to show these pictures.” But he shows them, and then he collects money. Swami Swims gives \$108. But they feel a little intimidated by the program.

There's mention throughout the book of Swami Swims going to the dentist, Dr. Danz. Most of his teeth are gone, and he's getting fit for dentures. But there're a few teeth left. He has to go there repeatedly.

Tim goes to see Giovanni in a similar interview as in *Under Dark Stars*, with Giovanni speaking in the heavy Italian accent, and he says that you should fill up your emptiness with Krishna consciousness. Tim says, "Can I come again?" Giovanni says, "You're always welcome here, but for Ratha-yatra we're going to be really filled up here. And I won't be able to meet you then. But you are going through a bad period now."

Tim became afraid of his imminent death because of what Giovanni said: "Hey, kid, you've got a short lifeline." The men of the writing staff laugh at him for being afraid of his imminent death.

"I know what you're saying," Tim says, "but I'm just a worrier."

Tim said no more, but he thought he'd go back to Giovanni and talk to him some more about technical things, the Swami says.

"Maybe he'd get a precious stone to wear or give a black cow on a moonlit night or something like that. He just felt shaky and he worried, 'What if I have to go before I'm perfect, and not ready?' We all admit we're not perfect, but the swami is right. The solution is not to worry, but to work at it."

They watch a movie called *Limelight* by Charles Chaplin, which is not a funny movie but a movie he made in 1952, which is a tragedy. The plot is discussed in the book. It's controversial that they're watching it because it's not a funny-therapy movie, it's a preaching movie about the positive nature of life. Charles Chaplin plays the part of a burnt out ex-comedian, and he saves the life of a young ballerina who tries to commit suicide. He motivates her to dance—she thinks that she's paralyzed in her legs and cannot dance, but it's a psychological condition. He breaks her out of it and gets her to dance again, and she falls in

love with him. In the end they have a benefit for him, and he does his comedy act. They laugh at him, but then he has a heart attack and he dies.

Tim walked out on the movies; they turned the movie off because it's not funny. They take their pills and get ready for bed.

However, they decide in the sanatorium that they're going to continue to watch *Limelight*. There's controversy about it. The monitor, one of the authority figures in the sanatorium, says they can't watch it and he walks out. But they go ahead, and they watch it anyway. It helps them in their invalid condition.

Inmates and monitors. The monitors are out today on errands; the workmen are hammering on the flagstones in the backyard. Someone suggested they have an "art day" and everyone draw pictures. This leads to a discussion on individuation. They say, "If someone doesn't feel like drawing or painting, why should he be forced." Some of the people draw and some of them don't draw.

Swami says, "*Japa* comes first," and he's behind in his quota, a concession, he says, to his medication, which makes him sleepy.

Swami Swims wants to write. He wants to bring more people to Krishna consciousness.

Now again they get a visit from tough Mr. Barks, who strides into the sanatorium and into the writing staff's private room. He goes over to Jane's desk with his hands on his hips, and he says, "Hey Jane, let's take a spin on my motorbike." She looks up from her typewriter and says, "I already told you I prefer not to, so let me alone to work. Why don't you go into our temple room and chant Hare Krishna?"

He says he's "not interested in that mush. I want you."

Jane stands up and steps around the typewriter. She's wearing a Prabhupada T-shirt, and tough Barks is wearing a black T-shirt. He's bigger than she is, but what he doesn't know is that Jane is also a karate expert. Swami Swims speaks up. He says,

“Didn’t you hear what she said, Mr. Barks? She wants to be left alone; we’ve got important work to do.” Mr. Barks looks over at the Swami and says, “Shut up your face, cripple, or I’ll break it for you and give you a real migraine.”

On hearing these words, Bhaktin Jane swung her right arm, and with the heel of her right hand she hit Barks on the bridge of his nose. In karate there are three stages of force for this punch. The third force pushes the bridge of the nose into the brain and kills the opponent. Jane hit him to the second degree. She then swiftly lowered her hand and with the same punch, using the heel of the right hand, she hit him hard in the groin. Barks bent over and without any dignity cried in pain. He then stumbled out of the room. But before he left, Jane gave him a good boot in the ass. The workers were silent. Jane says, “Vaisnavas are peaceful and never hurt living entities; when demons attack, they can fight back, especially if a Vaisnava is insulted. That’s the worst offense.” And she nodded towards Swami Swims. He thanked her.

Then they go back to watching a film by Charlie Chaplin. Lights out is called. The men thank her again. They had seen enough fisticuffs without watching a comic film.

Junior Barks drops by. He says his father was thinking of bringing Bhaktin Jane to court for assault. She says, “I was merely acting in self-defense after his verbal assaults. If he wants to talk any more about it, he can talk through our lawyer.” Junior Barks says he’ll drop the charges if she writes a letter of apology. She puts a paper in the typewriter and writes a note:

“Dear Mr. Barks,

“All glories to Krishna. I apologize for being so rough with you. But you should not insult the Vaisnavas or make proposals to ladies who don’t want to associate with you. You are not welcome here when you come out with that attitude.

Sincerely,
Bhaktin Jane”

She gives the note to Junior Barks, who puts it in his pocket. He says he's come for another reason. He says, "Your book is going to the dogs. I'll give you more Krishna conscious paragraphs now and then if you'd like. We made approaches to the big publishers, and the anti-ISKCON forces haven't been successful, so I'm willing to help you."

"That's nice," said Swami Swims. "Bring something in, and we'll see if we can insert it." Two days later he submits another essay under the door. And the essay is quoted. It's another straight preaching thing. And Swami says, "Let's use it, even though it's the same thing he said before. He put it nicely." "And unlike his father," said Jane, "he's cooperative, and he wants to work with us. Maybe it'll have a good effect on his dad."

They write Junior a note saying they've accepted his piece, but he shouldn't expect any royalties.

The sanatorium provides many facilities. An acupuncturist goes around, a counselor goes bed to bed tending to each patient from the psychological point of view. There are several counselors with different viewpoints.

Doctors of all shapes and sizes approach and visit. Some say the root of physical diseases is the mind, and they use depth psychology to find out what has brought out this condition. Healers come from that angle. Chant your rounds, and health will follow. Some of the inmates, who have been in the Sanatorium for years, switch regimens but with no success. The caretakers are kind and determined that the inmates are actually ill, not loafers or freeloaders. They may have intractable diseases.

There's a big festival coming up. Single swamis and visitors drop by the sanatorium to inspect it and say hello. The monitors are proud to show them the big halls with all the patients, who are being treated mostly *gratis*.

One tall swami enters the hall and stops at the first bed, where Tough Barks lay with a blank look in his eyes. What happened is

that Mr. Barks had a motorcycle accident, and he lost his memory, so they moved the beds a little closer and took him in. Bhaktin Jane is taking care of him, and she's trying to treat him like a person with a blank slate and filling in his memory with Krishna consciousness. She was trying to help bring Tough Barks' memory back, but not the memory of his old life. "I want you to regain your memory as an original spirit soul," she said. "That's why I'm taking so much time with you, Mr. Barks. I want you to learn everything in the original way." Jane patted his hand and smiled.

The tall swami walked down the middle row toward the other beds. He asked a cripple if he was going to the festival, and the man grumpily replied, "No." In fact, none of them are going. They didn't appreciate being asked.

The swami did not seem to understand their condition. Many of them had had basic agoraphobia, anxiety disorders, rheumatism, and undiagnosed illnesses. They looked forward to the festival only because it would mean people would be gone and they could be alone. Almost every one of them had a little CD player with earphones. They could listen to their favorite music or write their memoirs or read favorite scriptures. Some were in just too much pain to do anything except try to enjoy the stillness, the quietness, but they knew that after the festival many swamis like the single tall one would be coming in to visit them with the same misunderstandings and proddings and greetings, and they just couldn't rise to the occasion and reciprocate. Of course, the monitors wanted to protect them, but they couldn't completely bar the visitors, with their curious desire to see the patients and offer them cheer and have deep talks with them in hopes of reviving their preaching spirit in Krishna consciousness.

Some of this was presumptuous. The patients felt the extra pressure and braced themselves for the week ahead.

There's a humorous scene in the book where a Boy Scout pack visits from Nashville, Tennessee. They are an award-

winning pack who have been touring the country to see as many spots and places of interest in our grand country, America. Someone suggested that they visit a successful sanatorium in Hudson County. And the authorities were happy to agree. They come in with their uniforms and their colored scarves, and some of them are carrying American flags. But they seem bored and put off by being in this “sick” place it was not their idea to visit. As the Boy Scouts looked around at the sickies, some of the more cynical inmates portrayed the Boy Scouts as silly assholes and truly resented their visit. Others saw it as a possible opportunity for preaching. The county politician said, “As they go down the rows, please greet them and answer any questions they have.”

This just shows another kind of misunderstanding between the patients and the outside world. “Goddamn Boy Scouts.” They continued watching comedy films at night for relief.

Junior Barks comes to visit his dad in the sanatorium. He says, “Dad, Mom and me want to know when you are coming home.” Tough Barks says, “I had a real bad accident, and I lost my memory. I don’t know who you are. Bhaktin Jane is helping me to revive my memory.”

“Why take help from her? She beat you up, don’t you remember?”

“Leave this to me,” he said. “It’s a spiritual revival we want, not a revival of material memories. Run along sonny,” said senior Barks, “and do whatever you wanna do. Don’t disturb me.”

The young boy goes outside and sits on the front stoop of the sanatorium for a while with his head in his hands. Then he walks back to the writing staff office and asks Swami Swims if there is any service he could do. The Swami says, “Yes, you could help keep this place clean; empty the wastebaskets, clean the bathroom, and help out with the cooking. But we can’t give you much attention right now, this is a busy week. Just be well-

mannered and don't come out with all that egoistic stuff, and I'm sure we could fit it into our family."

"Where will I sleep?"

"We'll find you a bunk, that's no problem. The only problem is your free will – surrender it to Krishna."

So Junior Barks moves in.

A high administrator in the religious hierarchy comes to visit the sanatorium, and one of his duties is to oversee. He would come once a month or once every three months, and each patient had a file made up by the monitors and doctors. It contained their health records and reports of their behavior at the sanatorium. Swims has to see him. He enters the chief's room without much thought of what he is going to say. The chief was a tall man with rather bright orange *sannyasi* cloth. They exchanged *pranams*.

"You're one of the first devotees to join this movement," said the chief with a genial smile. "You had a lot of asso-ciation with Prabhupada. You're almost everyone's older brother. So we all admire you, and yet at the same time we expect you to keep a high profile and inspire us."

Swims didn't like the introduction. He said, "I was lucky to get in so early. At the time of death, I'll remember Swamiji, as we called him then. It'll depend on his leniency.

The chief says, "Yes, you have done a lot of service for him, but now you've been suffering for over 20 years with migraine. It's a pity that you can't be more on the front lines pushing this movement. I think there's a tendency for invalids to get out of touch with the Movement. If I may say so, you had to drop out of the GBC because of your illness, at a time of great trauma. I mean trauma for the whole of ISKCON, when bad things were happening. You may have a tendency to think that things are still like that. You may have a tendency to fear devotees and not want to get back into it.

Swims says, "I'm willing to do whatever I can if I recover physically, but it's true, chief, my temperament has changed. I'm 63 years old, and I don't have much hope of getting rid of these chronic headaches because I've tried every remedy possible, and I'm still trying new ones."

"We've had no complaint about your writing," said the chief. "But there has been some concern about the medication that you're taking. I've had a long discussion with your doctor, and I'm satisfied you're not overdosing in any way. Do you chant your 16 rounds every day?"

"Chief, I tell you honestly I can't always do that. I still have side effects from the medicines that make me very sleepy when I chant. I don't want to 'bash myself' with the holy names. Krishna knows I want to be at that standard."

"This is one of my main points," said the chief, and he leaned forward. "You do things like watch comedy movies. You've picked up that this is a good therapy for persons with anxiety and other disorders that make them feel depressed. I haven't found this recommended anywhere except in Norman Cousins' book, *Anatomy of an Illness as Perceived by the Patient*."

"No, you'll find it in other places also; my doctor also recommended it."

"Anyway, it's a little unorthodox. They're not Krishna conscious films, this Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy and others. And the main thing is, it takes up precious time. You could be finishing up your rounds."

"Chief, I can't explain to you what migraine headaches are like. People describe it like picking out your eye with an ice pick. They say they feel like jumping out the window, committing suicide, banging their head against the wall, or they feel like their head is being blown up by an explosive. Unless you've had some of this pain or the other pain the sanatorium inmates are having here, you really can't empathize. This little laughter that we have at the end of the night really does wipe away our absorption on our pains, our self-centeredness about it. And we go to sleep

laughing. It really sounds trivial and not Krishna conscious, but it helps us to go to sleep despite pain and to exchange little jokes, and to think of little, light things in the midst of pain, so it's been approved by all the local monitors and Hare Krishna doctors."

The chief says, "Yes I know, but I don't want you to overdo it. Don't watch full-length films, and don't watch films that don't fit into the category."

They talk some more and then the chief says, "I'll be back in three months, and I want to hear that no matter what, you're chanting 16 rounds, that's the bottom line for me. All right, that's all I have to say. Dismissed."

"Dismissed?" thought Swims. "What is this, the Army? Anyway, what more can I tell him? I'm certainly not happy about my *japa*. I have nothing to defend about it. I've got into bad habits."

That's a not-very-satisfying meeting that Swami Swims has with the chief. The chief is a little bureaucratic and doesn't empathize with the Swami's condition. And then they go watch a film, Charlie Chaplin in *Shoulder Arms*.

Then it's not until page 280, which is well into the book, that Sandy is introduced. Somehow they made room for another inmate in the sanatorium. She was in a wheelchair, paralyzed. She was young, only 19 years old, very pretty, with straight blonde hair and blue eyes. She'd be attractive to any man except she was a paraplegic. She was from Australia and had been visiting America with two friends, but the car she was in got into an accident on New York's West Side Highway, and she was injured. She was allowed entrance into the sanatorium on the recommendation of her father, who was a highly placed Hare Krishna leader in Australia, and who knew of the good reputation of the sanatorium. She was there for physical therapy, which she practiced very seriously. Her name was Sandy, another uninitiated one. She was very quiet, yet not cold. She only accepted whatever she was offered. She spent her time

reading *Srimad - Bhagavatam* and chanting many rounds. When asked how many, she said it wasn't good to tell how many you did over 16. Starting from the beginning, she deferred from attending the comedy movies, which affected some of the others. Some thought she was a snob. Others thought it was a good example.

Sandy would spend at least two hours a day writing a letter. She was very private, and when asked who she was writing to, she would only say, "A friend."

She writes every day, and gets letters from her fiancé. She writes to him in hopes that the letters are printed in the book. "Dear Braja," she writes:

"I've been in the sanatorium for a few days, and I haven't heard from you yet. I stay in the sanatorium, but there's a separate building where I am reviving physiotherapy for my legs. I do this faithfully. We have no other duties, so I have plenty of time for my *sadhana*. The devotees are friendly here, but I am new and so much shy. Most of all, however, I miss you dearly. Do you still love me?

She expresses how she was attracted to him and goes over their association and how he proposed marriage to her. But now this terrible car accident has come, and she's a scrap of a human being in many ways.

"I do not know what will become of me. Will I have to live forever without being able to walk? It may turn out that I will be a very awkward and ungainly-looking person, and maybe I will never be able to get out of the wheelchair. I'm afraid your affection for me will change. Please let me know what you really think. I'm immediately awaiting word from you.

"Your servant,
Bhaktin Sandy"

She meets Swami Swims, and they hit it off nicely. He tells her that, "They say you have a good chance of recovering normal

function in your back by the therapy, and they have very good workers and equipment here. But you have to be patient. And sometimes patience is very bitter. I've had a migraine condition for 20 years, but I'm still hopeful it'll go away. In the meantime, you can make friends here and take your fellow inmates as part of your spiritual family. We're very happy to have you here because we see you are so serious about your *sadhana*."

One of the authorities in the institution asks Swami Swims to have a meeting with all the inmates and tell them to be especially kind to Sandy. He does that. And they're all willing to do that, to welcome her in and make her feel well, to ease her anxiety about her separation from her fiancé.

Then a very crucial incident happens. It's mentioned that Jane tries a different approach with Mr. Barks. She tries to treat him more as a normal person and go on from there. She tells him she wouldn't tolerate any drinking, smoking, cursing, or womanizing, but they can loosen up a little bit. She lets him wear his old skinhead haircut and his regular clothes, a T-shirt revealing all his tattoos (after all, she had a tattoo also). But she takes him out on a wheelchair.

One day, as they go into a wooded secluded part of the park, they're approached by three tough-looking skinheads. Immediately the men became aggressive without any cause. "Hey," one of them said. "Look at this pseudo-skinhead in a wheelchair and his phony-tough game." The middle man kicked Barks on the chest with his boot and knocked the wheelchair over. Barks hit his head on the ground. Jane became enraged. She ran around the back of the wheelchair and righted it. Barks then stood up and with a haymaker punch slugged the middle man on the chin and knocked him to the ground, unconscious. Jane then did her favorite karate move, the punch with the heel of the hand under the nose and then into the groin. That man then screamed and limped off into the woods. The third man didn't need any warning but ran off unharmed. Barks sat down heavily into his wheelchair.

Almost immediately a police car pulled up. The cop rolled down his window and said, "We saw what happened. You're people from the Hare Krishna Sanatorium, right?"

"Yes," said Jane, "and this man in the wheelchair had a bad motorcycle accident that made him lose his memory; now he may have a relapse." The cop says, "We'll round up those culprits. You just go back to the sanatorium."

The cops round up the other culprits, and the inmates go back to the sanatorium. "You're safe here," Jane says, and Barks began to smile. "We just had a good fight, huh?"

There's finally a letter from Braja to dearest Sandy. He excuses himself for not writing earlier; he was involved in the Ratha-yatra in Sydney, Australia. But he assures her that her psychological condition is very important for her. She has to cooperate with a team of therapists and do whatever they tell her to do. This is her *sadhana*.

She should not be afraid that he will reject her: "I will accept you as you are in your wheelchair and your bent condition, and that doesn't lessen my attraction to you. We are not just attracted to flesh and body forms. I am attracted to you on a soul-to-soul level, so I can be as patient as it takes. And you should be also." He goes on to tell her that she should be assured that he's praying and trusting that she'll get out soon.

Sandy was very private about the letter, and she didn't talk about it with the devotees. She thought that there was a little loophole in Braja's devotion to her, because he seems to be counting on her coming out soon and being fully recovered, whereas she was thinking that maybe he'd have to accept her without being recovered, but basically she's satisfied.

The next thing that happens is that Barks wakes up in the middle of the night to find that his memory has fully returned. The return of his memory had started when his wheelchair was knocked over by the skinhead, and he hit his head on the ground. But now it suddenly returned completely. He felt like his old self before he entered the sanatorium. All the work that

Bhaktin Jane had done on him vanished. He no longer had a taste for her and the Hare Krishna stuff. He wanted to leave and go out and drink and whore and ride his bike. He wanted to start by going back to his house and seeing if his old lady was there. If there was no man with her, he'd stay there for a while, screw with her and see what happened. Otherwise, he'd just have to take to the road and see what turned up.

He quickly wrote a note and left it on his bed. Then he takes a couple hundred dollars from a man's drawer, and gets on his motorcycle, which is parked outside, and takes off into the night. Jane hears the motorcycle roar and jumps from her bed and runs to Barks' bed. Swami Swims runs also. And they see what happened, and they say, "Let's get back to bed. Everything is in Krishna's hands." Jane said, "I tried. Maybe I was getting a little attached to him in the end."

There's a touching scene between Junior Barks and Sandy, where he comes up to her and asks her what she's reading. She says she's reading the Third Canto, the first part, where Vidura goes and meets Uddhava. He goes to the library and gets a copy of the Third Canto and begins reading it himself. Then he goes back to Sandy and asks her what she thinks of that chapter.

She tells him, and then she asks him what he thinks. He says that his situation is like Vidura's, he was kicked out, and he's fortunate that his dad has left. "I have to be on my own now and stay with the saints and sages, I mean the devotees in this place, and hear from them. The relief Vidura found from entanglement with sinful persons is a relief that I have found, and I am not going to walk back into it. I say this with no idea of comparing it to your situation. I agree you have a happy life ahead of you." Sandy began to cry. "You'll heal," Junior continued, "and it's right for you to return to your home, because you'll be straightened out and have a husband who loves you, a normal way for a woman to live, not to walk around begging and being without any shelter. I was just telling you my view, that's all. It's different."

There's another letter from Sandy to Braja, in which she technically tells him the nature of her condition, which I researched, a spinal condition.

"Under 'condition,' they wrote: "incomplete compression of the spinal cord at C5/6, resulting in motor and sensory loss; possibly reversible.

"Cause of injury: blow to forehead sustained in car accident

"State when admitted to ER: unconscious, Glasgow coma scale 5, intra-cranial hypertension."

Sandy: "Some of these words are technical, and I don't know what they mean. I remember a tube being inserted in my mouth and my spine being immobilized, the bladder being drained and some medicine being given, which they called ranitidine, to prevent stress ulcer. For pain relief they gave me opiates."

She goes back to the accident and tells him about it. She says she's going to try her best to get well as soon as possible, and she hopes that he will wait for her.

Sandy writes again to Braja, and she says she's pressing her therapist and asking how soon can she get out. "They say it normally takes two years, but people have been known to get out in one year." She says, "Is it possible anyone could get out in less than that?" They laugh at her and say, "Just be patient." But she says that she's in good shape by being athletic before her accident, and she's very dedicated to getting better. She says it would be nice if he could come and see her there, and she writes the lyrics to "My Funny Valentine." and hopes that he will love her even though she's "a funny valentine."

As I've already mentioned, Mr. Barks got his memory back and went back to live at his old home, with his old "wife" and his old friends and his old ways. Bhaktin Jane suggested to Swami Swims that they go and visit Barks at his place. He says, "I'm not afraid as long as you're there," thinking of Jane's skills at karate, "My steel cane can also be used as a weapon. Let's make it a date for tomorrow."

The Swami was actually worried about going and didn't see much use in going, but he didn't want to appear timid to Jane. Before he goes, he does some exercise with Sacisuta, punching on the heavy bag. And he starts punching very hard, and Sacisuta asks, "What are you training for?"

"I'm not training for anything," the Swami says, "but Jane has talked me into going to visit Barks' home tonight, and he'll probably have some friends over. I'm afraid of what might happen."

"Would you like me to come along?" said Saci.

"Sure, if you can manage it." So Saci comes too, wearing a T-shirt and shorts and showing many of his tattoos and his muscular physique. They arrived about 8:00 p.m. at Barks' house and knocked on the door.

"Come in," Barks shouted. They opened the door and found him sitting in a comfortable chair. He now had a big beard and long hair. The room stank of a combination of liquor, marijuana, and maybe some other drug. In the room with Barks were three bimbos with big breasts and big bellies, and two men who were similar to Barks. They wore similar hairstyles and ripped dungarees. The men had surly looks on their faces and a few scars.

"The devotees entered and shut the door behind them. Barks burst into a big smile. "Janie! Have you come to bring me back to the sanatorium?" He laughed.

His wife says, "Are these the Hare Krishna twerps?"

"Watch your mouth, Alice," said Jane. "We're not twerps, we're on a peace mission. We're delivering some spiritual food to an orphanage down the block, and we have a pot of *kichari* left over. Remember, Barks, how you liked to eat *kichari* at the sanatorium? So we brought it to distribute all to you."

"Wow! Thank you!" said Barks. "Yes, Alice, you better watch your mouth around Janie, she once busted me up. She's a black

belt karate expert. She hit me with the heel of the hand under the nose. She could have killed me, but she restrained herself. She used the same combination of punches on some skinheads who attacked us in the park. She did it to one guy who was six foot six and weighed about two hundred and fifty pounds. He just crumpled up in time for the police, who cruised by in a car. So don't mess around with Janie."

At these words the other men shriveled back.

"And look at this man, Saci's your name?"

"Yeah," Saci replied, tight-lipped.

Everyone was polite and seemed to want to end the meeting on a light note. Before it got into anything like philosophy of Hare Krishna twerps or motorcycle dopes, or "Why are you drinking liquor?" they wound it up after about 15 minutes. The men certainly heeded Barks' warning, and every once in a while looked at Saci's massive chest and muscular legs and arms and took note of Jane's tall stature and fully believed in her black-belt abilities. With all smiles around and diplomatic words, the devotees shook hands and backed out of the room with a decent collection, having sold some books to the bikers.

Braja writes another letter to Sandy. He says, "I'll push your wheelchair down the marriage aisle to marry you, or we'll have a fire sacrifice and sit side by side so you can sit in your chair and I'll sit beside you. We don't have to wait for you to be all straightened out. I didn't propose to a body but a soul. You're still completely there, whole, as I feel so simply in your letters ... but I don't know if I can wait two years..."

He writes on and on about that and then asks if they could get permission to get him to to America. Sandy then asks Swami Swims could they have an altar in the Sanatorium.

"I've thought of that," he said, "but where could we fit it?"

"If we had a small enough altar, it could go right in the middle of the rows between all the beds and everyone could get to see it."

They don't have a carpenter, but they bring in a table, and set up the Deities there. The inmates have different Deities that they're keeping. And some people nearby donate large *neem* Gaura-Nitai Deities.

The sanatorium now has an altar, and they consider it like a temple.

Swami Swims then goes to see the doctor, the head doctor of the rehabilitation center, Dr. Bush, and he asks if he knows about Sandy King. The doctor says he knows her, and he knows her father too. Why is he asking about her?

Dr. Bush impresses Swami Swims as a real stuffed shirt. He can hardly tell he was a devotee—he's wearing a suit, and he doesn't have any Krishna pictures in the room. Swami Swims said to him, "Devotees sometimes have trouble getting over here from Australia. I thought if you or the rehab center could send him a letter saying Braja was needed here to work as some kind of junior therapist, that might help him get his visa."

"Preposterous!" said Dr. Bush. "Don't you know that this rehabilitation center is famous all over the world for the training and expertise of its workers? It would be a scandal if we brought someone in here with no training at all. Get this idea out of your head." This interview is cut short, and the attempt is foiled. They had their altar, but it's not considered a temple.

Swami Swims goes to the head of staff of the sanatorium and asks him if he could get through to the embassy for a special exemption for Braja dasa to enter the United States to be a *pujari* for the Gaura-Nitai temple Deities. The staff boss was congenial and said the idea wouldn't fly. The sanatorium was clearly a place for people to recover their health. It was a medical place, not a temple. Even if they had placed an altar there, that was just for private worship, and it would be scandalous to try to get someone in on the grounds of being *pujari* in a temple.

Swami Swims tells Sandy the attempts he made to get a visa for Braja dasa, and she listens and says she's got another idea, but all their attempts fail. They try from Australia, too, and even

the father gets involved and says he realizes that the embassy cannot accept the interpretation of the sanatorium as a temple, and they cannot issue Bryan an “R” visa to come there as a religious worker. “I guess Krishna doesn’t want us to live together for now. He’s increasing the pressure for us to live in separation,” Sandy says.

Next, I’m going to describe the sexually explicit section in the book, which brought down so much condemnation on this book that a GBC committee was formed, and they read that excerpt and ordered me to turn in all the unsold books. They threatened me with expulsion from ISKCON, stripping me of *sannyasa*.

And they did all of this without even reading the wonderful book. They just read the sexual parts.

What happens is that the scene is set in Australia. And Braja dasa is seduced by a girl named Andrea. She comes into his room and she says, “Maybe you should put thoughts of Sandy out of your mind, because it’s just a hopeless case. It’ll take years for her to recover; she may never recover. And I have to confess, Braja, I have a real crush on you. Do you find me an attractive woman?”

Bold as she was, she placed his hands on her breasts. She then kissed him and embraced him. But he stopped and pushed her away. “Andrea, I can’t do this. I’m engaged to Sandy. I couldn’t do this. Even if she’s crippled, she’s my woman.” The girl presses him further, but Braja dasa is resolute. He stands up and takes Andrea by the hands. He says, “I can’t do it. Please don’t be insulted because of my rejecting you.” She looks down, dejected, and he sees her to the door. At the door she looks at him with puppy dog eyes. “I don’t feel insulted,” she said. “I still have a crush on you. I have my eye on you, and I’ll be back. Sooner or later, I think you’ll succumb. I want you too much, and you’ve already tasted my charms.” Braja calms himself and his overall being. “What the hell was this,” he thought. “Are they going to come at me from all sides? Am I really such a

good-looking guy? Why are they preying on me like this?" He couldn't write this in a letter to Sandy.

Braja dasa then travels by train to South Australia, to the farm region. He has a good friend, Rupa, who settled there years ago, lives in a simple house with his family and some male devotee workers who help him cultivate about 50 acres of farmland. They sell their produce and are self-sufficient. Braja asks him, can he live there? He tells him about Sandy and about what happened with Andrea in Sydney with the seduction attack. He says,

"Could I stay with you, or rather, with your men? I'd work hard in the fields every day; I'm not a slouch."

Rupa smiled. "Sure, can you milk a cow?"

"I've never done it, but I can learn."

"Can you plow with oxen?"

"I can learn. I can pull weeds. I can plant tomatoes. The men can teach me anything."

And so he moves in there, safe, away from the seductive girls.

Back at the rehab center at the sanatorium, the headmaster asks to see Sandy King. Swami Swims rolls her in, in her wheelchair. The headmaster says, "Sandy, the staff and I have been talking about your case, and we have a proposal that we'd like you to consider: it concerns a change in the basics of your routine regimen. We're not going to change any of the basics of your daily routine or exercise, but we have a different goal in mind. Our original plan was to keep you here for perhaps two years or more until you could give up the wheelchair and walk normally. But realizing your desire to return to Australia and your fiancé, and realizing some of the up-to-date methods used for paraplegics, we're thinking of a different strategy."

"What's that?" said Sandy, with wide-eyed curiosity.

"We're thinking of making an adjustment in your therapy so as to enable you to make the return flight to Australia before

you are fully recovered. That is why you are still restricted to the wheelchair. It certainly wouldn't be the first time such a thing has been done. Paraplegics and people in wheelchairs have been flying for many years. But with patience—with your type of injury, there are certain risks that we need to address and that you need to be aware of.

He explains what some of the risks are.

He tells her they're going to start some special therapy where she's suspended in a tank that's filled with a special ionic solution. "It will feel like you are experiencing a kind of weightlessness. We will then do a large number of low-frequency sound vibrations within the solutions. Initially this may feel as if the marrow of your bones throughout your body are being genuinely vibrated."

This is in preparation for her going on the plane trip. He says they want to have plenty of room on the airplane, so he advises that they reserve at least a couple of first class seats for her and also book a flight for one of the therapists to accompany her. She can do her stretching exercises and the isometric exercises she has taken a liking to. With a therapist there, if a complication comes, the therapist will be able to do the needful, recognize the symptoms and initiate emergency treatment.

She's overjoyed to hear this and goes back to her room and writes Braja a letter telling him she's coming back. Braja has since written to her confessing the seduction attack that Andrea made on him, and she writes back to him that she's just as good as any other girl—she's just as attractive, so he needn't be attracted to any other girls.

And so their relationship improves even more, and it seems imminent that they'll be coming back together again.

Ongoing themes in the book are Swami Swims' inability to chant 16 rounds, and his living with it until such time as he can do it, and his plans to move to California to get more seclusion and to get away from the pressure of management, in which he is involved very much at the sanatorium. He intends to go to

California for six months and then spend six months back in the sanatorium.

Tim's cancer gets worse. His mother and two younger brothers and father and older sister had all come to see him. They brought their lawyer with them too, and the Hare Krishna lawyer was there too. They intended to discuss Tim's will and Tim's father's will. There were some legal technicalities regarding a life insurance policy that the lawyers wanted to talk about.

Tim said, "I'm 21 years old and I've already made up my own will, and it's been notarized. There's nothing to discuss about it. The two lawyers can talk about it, but I don't want to be involved."

His parents are very much against Krishna consciousness, and they just want to be sure that Tim doesn't get any money from Tim's father's will. The meeting is rather cold.

But it is the end of the road for Tim, and the devotees gather around his bed after the parents leave. And they chant Hare Krishna, and they talk to him. And Tim's spirits are good.

Swami Swims asks Tim, "Are you feeling much pain?"

"No," says Tim, "when you talk about Krishna I don't feel any pain. This material world is pain, and I'm finally leaving it. Wish I could've done more here, been a healthy devotee and gone around to tell people about Krishna. Maybe I'll come back and do more of that. Whatever Krishna wants me to do, I must be ready."

Swims massages Tim with witch-hazel, like his father used to do when he was in his casts. Junior Barks comes in behind Swami Swims, who was wearing a *gamcha* only, and Junior begins massaging Swami Swims with the witch-hazel. And he starts chanting. Swami Swims was feeling tired in his back. They all are chanting together, and massaging is going on.

"Tim, why don't you have a spiritual name?" asked Swami Swims.

“I don’t know. Is Swims a spiritual name?”

“That’s the name you guys tease me with. My initiated name is Shyama Swami.”

“Yes, I’d like one. Can you give me one?”

“Are you following the four rules? Are you dedicated to Krishna?”

“Yes,” answered Tim.

“So your name is ‘Tri-kala-jna dasa.’”

“What does it mean?”

“One who can see the past, present, and future,” said Swims.

“I almost feel I can see that now,” said ‘Tri-kala-jna. Then they began another *kirtana*.

Then there’s a poem:

“He’s going and we are sad.
The hope we had for happiness
is never bright and sweet tonight.
These crowds and children . . . ”

Tim never grew up to make some big contribution. Even his intimate leader didn’t initiate him until at his death. Dear to a small number who knew he’s a special person, known even to Prabhupada, who passed away even before Tim was born— that doesn’t matter in spiritual connections.

“Now you can go to your father
and he can embrace you as
you pass away. He kindly says,
‘Dear ‘Tri-kala-jna dasa,
You must serve in
all directions. Keep growing
in all dimensions.

‘You have a lot more to do
and I will give you strength
to do it. Come now and accept birth

in a fine Vaisnava family
who are eager to conceive you
in pure non-lust.

Saintly eagerness for a boy
to learn the holy names from
the beginning and get a
jump-start from Lord Caitanya.”

Tim is cremated, and a reliable devotee is given the ashes to place in the Yamuna. Different devotees speak about Tri-kala-jna's devotional service at a funeral service, and then they go back to their beds, feeling their physical ailments. It had been hot in the crematorium hall. Swami Swims has to visit with a couple of guests.

“Swami Swims was set on his plans, which he wasn't revealing to anyone. His previous confidante was Tri-kala-jna dasa. He would have told him his date of departure for California and what he expected to do there, but now he was more tight-lipped about it. He was planning to leave the sanatorium on August 15th, which was a few weeks away, and his flight was scheduled for August 18th.

“It's not that bad here,” thought Swims. “I could live here for the rest of my life, especially if I knew what Prabhupada wanted me to do. If he revealed it to me in a dream or something like that. It's a humble kind of service. I do have this migraine, and it does prevent me from going around, and it's swell to be taken care of by so many devotees and have them look up to you in a genuine sense because they're indebted to you. They can't get around, and you can't get around much either, so it brings out your kindness. But you have this artist sense in you, the sense that wants you to find your own being. Sounds like a lot of crap, I suppose, but it isn't. I want to paint and I want to write, and I don't have full facility to do it here. Very little facility—I have so many duties. So if I could be alone for six months, I could just think of who I was; it might solve my *japa* problems too. Give it a chance.”

Swami Swims called for a meeting with Jane and Junior, the remaining members of his writing staff. He said, “I suppose you’ve heard some rumors that I’m going to be leaving the sanatorium in about a month to go live in more seclusion in California. I plan to make a pattern of this—six months there and six months back here. I want a life where I can have more introspection, because the duties here are really sometimes overbearing.

“For example, today just suddenly blossomed into much more than I expected. A disciple arrived with his wife and said his marriage was on the rocks. Then suddenly news that my old Godbrother is coming, along with a swami, and we’re all going to have dinner. And that’s going to be cooked by a visiting Indian family, including the man’s wife and son. And they’re all going to stay overnight. I thought it was going to be a quiet day. And who knows what’s going to happen tomorrow?

“So I need a place where I can have really uninterrupted days, a place where I can get up in the morning and not have to ask myself, ‘What’s going to happen today?’ But I don’t want to be neglectful of you or the writing. In fact, I think the writing will be enhanced by my moving. I’m nearing the end of *Sanatorium*, and when I go to California, I’ll be starting something new. But I couldn’t think of a better typist than Jane or a better editor than Junior. Jane types at a record high speed. But Jane, you could also learn some of the other skills that actually Tri-kala-jna had to a higher degree than Junior has, and that is how to incorporate editing while you’re typing at the same time. He knew my writing style so well and also the art of editing so well that he was able to do this almost miraculously. And I would get a manuscript with changes made and yet options for me to make, which was on a very high level.

But the real option is up to you—what do you want to do?

I don’t think, Jane, that you’re in the sanatorium for any illness that is so severe that you couldn’t go out and get a job as

a typist. I know you have no material desires. You don't seem to want to get married, but I don't know . . .”

Jane reveals herself to Swami Swims, and she says, “I look to you as a spiritual master. As you initiated Bhakta Tim the other night, I was very touched, and I wanted to ask you to give me spiritual initiation also before you leave here. I'm officially qualified with the four rules, and I read Prabhupada's books and all that. I would die for Prabhupada, and although I don't like the bureaucracy of his movement, I certainly feel loyal to him and his mission, and I want to serve it however I can.”

“And you know that, physically, I would die defending one of his Vaisnavas. I wish I could live with you and be your bodyguard. I don't think you would allow me to do that. I mean to go with you to California and fight off the black bears and timber rattlers for you. I'm sure you wouldn't want a woman with you. So I'll stay away, but could you initiate me?”

Swami Swims said, “Yes I will, I would consider it my duty. And it would be a great pleasure. Would you mind if we do it just now in a very informal way? Give me your beads.”

She handed him her beads, and in a private room he chanted all 16 rounds, while she chanted along with him. Then he said, “I do not have time for an initiation lecture. Please hear tapes of my initiation lectures regularly. Your spiritual name is Janesvari. J-a-n-e-s-v-a-r-i devi dasi. Do you like that name?”

“I think it's perfect.”

“Tell people that's your new spiritual name and that you're now initiated and have new responsibilities. You can dress the same way you always have, but always behave in an exemplary way, with your language and everything. But I won't stop you from fighting if occasion arises.” He chuckled. “Janesvari devi dasi—my fightingest disciple, my Hanuman, my dearly beloved servant.”

She pledges that she'll stay in New York and she'll get the best computer equipment by begging or borrowing and learn how to

do things in the most modern system so he'll be proud of her. "Even if it's only you and I, we'll produce these books faster and to your satisfaction."

Sandy writes another letter to Braja and says that her exercises are going steadily and her therapists continue to tell her that her muscles are developing well and on schedule, "and it should be a matter of months only before I am fit to travel with my wheelchair on an airplane back home."

Then she writes to him about how Syama Maharaja (that's his real name, not Swami Swims) has initiated Tim before he passed away, giving him the name Tri-kala-jna dasa, and he's initiated Jane, Janesvari. And she writes to Braja that she's very impressed by Swami Syama, and she would like to be initiated by him. She's given deep thought to this, and she writes about how he wrote a book called *Entering the Life of Prayer*, which was controversial but now it's widely accepted, and how he's done painting, and it was favorably reviewed in the *Washington Post*. He's gone through traumas as a GBC man, as he was always submissive and afraid to express his own feelings, which is sometimes different from the institutional feelings. Now he's retired from the GBC due to the pain of his migraines, and he's able to express more his strong desire to write poetry and prose and to paint. I'm very attracted to his emphasizing individualism in Krishna consciousness and saying that Krishna wants our individual expressions, not just institutional expression. Krishna wants us to give Him our own hearts, and that will please Him."

"What do you think if I accepted Syama Maharaja as my spiritual master, even though you have a different spiritual master? Do you think this would cause any conflict between us?"

She said she's asked the other devotees there, and most of them, the husbands and wives have different spiritual masters, and so she doesn't see a problem.

But Braja writes her back and says that his spiritual master passed through recently, and he asked him about her being

initiated by Syama Maharaja. And he didn't think it was a good idea. He thought husbands and wives should be initiated by the same guru, or it would lead to conflicts over giving donations and things like that. He asked the temple president and he was of the same opinion. But he said that, "If you really have it in your heart that you want to accept Syama Swami as your spiritual master, and take direction from him, I don't want to get in the way of that. I would like to get to know him more. Could you ask him to write me a letter and tell me how he feels about married life and about your life with me. I think that would help us."

Then there's a letter by Bhaktin Sandy where she tells that what has happened, that her husband's spiritual master is against it, but she says that she is in much admiration of him, and if she can get permission she would like to become his disciple.

Syama Swami writes back that he's glad her husband wants to correspond with him, and he will do so, but he doesn't think there's a conflict in taking initiation from different spiritual masters. He thinks the decision is ultimately up to her. "I hope that Braja will be reasonable and present his reasons to me."

Then Swami Syama writes to Gopinatha Maharaja about his disciple, Braja, and says that he's willing to consult with him on important matters of the two disciples, and he won't do anything in conflict with him. But he feels that if the girl really has it in her heart to desire to accept her own spiritual master, she should be allowed to do it.

Throughout the book there's been some mention of an arthritic mom there, modeled after my disciple, Murari dasi, in Puerto Rico. She's from Puerto Rico, where she lived with her son, who works out in a gym and is paid for teaching weightlifting and things like that, although he himself is aging. But she's never been able to settle in at the sanatorium; she hates the New York winters, and she mostly thinks of Puerto Rico—the fruit, the beaches, the sky, and the people who she knew in her homeland.

She entered voluntarily for her arthritis, which seemed to deteriorate in Puerto Rico, but it didn't get any better in New York. On her own will, she was allowed to be released under her son's care. And he flies up to the New York sanatorium, and they make a cake for her, and say goodbye to her, and "Please don't forget us," they say. And her son's going to take her to a trip to Vrndavana first. She says, "I will send you things from Vrndavana and Puerto Rico too. Hare Krishna! Goodbye, prabhuh!"

Braja writes back to Sandy and says he's thought out the problem of two spiritual masters and decided it's not a big problem at all. It was a simple thing. He went into the temple and sat before Prabhupada, and sat next to Lord Caitanya, and he prayed to all the Deities, Krishna and Radha, and ultimately he went back to Prabhupada. And all the time he was chanting the Hare Krishna mantra.

"Ultimately I decided it was not a big problem, it was a simple thing: it is something between you and me. Therefore, the question is whether I trust you. Do I think you are a foolish girl who is about to choose the wrong spiritual master? Do I trust that you have considered rightly and have the guidance from the Lord within to choose the right spiritual master? Do I believe that there are many qualified spiritual masters in ISKCON? Yes, I do believe there are many qualified spiritual masters in ISKCON. And that is what the GBC says. So ultimately I put my trust in you and our love for one another."

He says he's not going to mention it to his spiritual master, but he gives her his permission and his blessings and tells her to go ahead with it.

Then there's an initiation of Bhaktin Sandy. But for this they do it a little more formally. They set up a tent outside and have a fire *yajna*. "She sat in her wheelchair, and Syama Maharaja sat facing her. There was a platform and a fire *yajna* between them. As many inmates as possible came out to see, and others gathered at the door. He gave an initiation speech, which was

rare for him. Then he took the *japa* beads which had been FedExed from Australia by Braja and chanted on them while she also chanted. She looked very lovely in a new *sari*, and Janesvari placed the new neck beads around her neck.

Swami Syama says he was very honored to serve at the sanatorium, and he considered it the cutting edge of preaching in the Krishna consciousness movement. When devotees who were sidelined with injuries proved that they could continue their *sadhana* or just continue to try, they were setting the best example. He had all respect for them, whatever they could do. And he was sure that Krishna and Prabhupada were willing to take them back to Godhead at the end of such exemplary lives.

Sandy couldn't bow down to her spiritual master, but he touched her on the head. He felt very, very lucky. Who else could expect to get such an outstanding disciple as Bhaktin Sandy?

He told her, "Your spiritual name is now Subhadra dasi. She is the sister of Krishna. Is that all right?"

"Yes, thank you, it's a beautiful name," said Subhadra.

Then when everyone quiets down after *kirtana*, the head nurse stands and says, "I would like to add some auspicious words to this ceremony. On behalf of Dr. Jamieson, the head physician who's in charge of Subhadra's case—Dr. Jamieson feels that Subhadra is now well enough and strong enough to make the flight back to Australia."

All the inmates shout, "Jaya!"

The head nurse continued, "We at the clinic are so proud of her exemplary behavior that we have taken up a collection to help with the expenses of her flight, and we would like to present it to the bride-to-be at this time."

Subhadra exclaimed, "Oh Prabhus! O Gaura-Nitai! Thank you very much!"

Then there's a final poem that ends the book. It's called "Somewhere."

Somewhere in upstate New York
there's a Hare Krishna sanatorium, and I've
just told you a little bit
about it from the viewpoint
mostly of Syama Maharaja.
He's leaving now but says he
might go back in half a
year if that's his calling.
If he does I'm not sure any
of the same people would
be there. But the pain
would be there and the attempt
to become Krishna conscious.

Would you like to hear
more about this sanatorium
or are you sick and
tired of its tortures
and you've heard quite enough
for a lifetime?

Let Syama Maharaja know
if you think it's a good service for him and
something you'd like to hear more of.
Whether you go back to that sanatorium
or not, the suffering
will go on. So let's bless
those brave souls who endure it and those
who serve them,
directing them towards Krishna's will.

I wrote about the hospital sanatorium with about 100 beds, fictionalized, as located in New York in Sacisuta's house. I said I was leaving to go to California. I actually did leave to go to California and lived there for a couple of years. Then I went to Mexico, which was a bad idea. Then I came back in the U.S. and

moved to Delaware. Now I'm back in the U.S. again, in the same place that *Sanatorium* was written.

Now I don't live in a hospital. I live in a house with just two other companions. But Kaulini Prabhu lives in a house of her own next to Sacisuta in a convalescent stage of life. I live in an invalid state of life. The thread of *Sanatorium* is still carried on here in upstate New York for some of us. And Sacisuta is still a strong presence of generosity and compassion and support.

My Godbrother and disciple, Haridasa dasa, who has a Ph.D. in pastoral counseling, used the book *Sanatorium* in the seminar he taught at Bhaktivedanta College in Radhadesh, Belgium. He used the book to teach compassion and healing, and he had all the students get a copy and read it.

The reaction to the book was gratefulness, tears, and breakthrough, and it was very successful.

I've already written separately in the autobiography a piece about censorship, and I've described the censorship of *Sanatorium*. But I can speak about it a little more now, since I've just written about *Sanatorium*.

Incidentally, my Godbrother and disciple, Aghari, liked the book so much that he had hopes of making it into a screenplay for a movie. He wrote an official letter whereby I gave him permission to do so. He said it might come out quite different than the book; that would be all right, though. I gave him that permission, I signed my letter to him. We'll see if he ever does anything.

But it remains a banned book, and that's a shame. I feel it was a great disgrace and wrong action of the GBC committee, who never said anything about the book for three years, and never read it until *rtviks* got hold of it and published an article in their magazine saying that it was a dirty book. They published only the seduction scene and said it was a disgraceful book. Then the GBC committee perked up their ears and read those parts and agreed with the *rtviks* and came after me.

They basically said that, “It’s all right if you write a book like this, if you want, on your own, but not as an ISKCON guru, not as an ISKCON representative, as a *sannyasi*.” I felt really bad about that. The message was even delivered to me by a disciple of mine, which was humiliating, and they demanded that I write a letter of apology and that I return the books in a display of abridgment of freedom of speech. They were intent on destroying the copies that hadn’t been sold until we wrote to them that that was outrageous, and they finally decided to store the copies in New Vrindaban.

The censorship had an immediate effect on my writing. I became gun-shy to write anything personal, and I stopped writing. I went back to writing a book, *A Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam*, but the style of *A Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam* was to write the purport in Prabhupada’s language and then to free writing, very personal writing, taking off freely like a jazz improviser. But I found I wasn’t able to do it until Volume IV went for a hundred pages or more without any personal writing or any free writing. I just fielded questions from devotees about the subject matter of the texts of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Then I finally started writing personal comments about my life when I moved to Delaware. I wrote about my difficulties in being examined by the GBC committee about my fall down. It took a while for me to be able to recover from that wrist slap of *Sanatorium*. I’ve recovered now, and I’m writing freely in my autobiography and in my daily poem things about my life without fear of censorship.

I have not heard from the authorities, so I assume I’m “under the radar” now.

I admit that the sexually explicit section was excessive, and I won’t do it again. I’ve learned my lesson. But in my defense, it was real, spoken by real characters, with real language in a real personal way. It wasn’t sexually titillating. It was done just to show the strong temptation that Braja faced, and that Braja controlled himself from the attack. I spelled it out in plain language that this girl was a *mayadevi*. She stopped at nothing;

she even put his hands on her breasts and kissed him. She was so outrageous, but he was faithful to his Sandy, and ran away from that place and went to the farm. I just wanted to make it a realistic scene, so I did so.

Many people appreciated what I did. Perhaps no one had written before of the realities facing young *grhasthas* being sexually attracted to one another, and how they have to deal with that and follow the four rules at the same time. Part of their bond to each other is a physical attraction of man to a woman. They have to live with that and show affection to each other.

Sandy and Braja openly admit that they are attracted to one another, and they want to have babies. They want to embrace each other. I deal with it realistically, and people are grateful that I did.

Sandy is a very pious girl, and very absorbed in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and Prabhupada's books and learned. She doesn't even want to watch the comedy films, but she's attracted to her Braja and loves him as a man.

THE PRACTICE OF WRITING MEMOIR (PART ONE)

Today is September 17th. I'm dictating from writing assignments from Natalie Goldberg's *Old Friend from far Away*, the practice of writing memoir, working with Baladeva, who's inventing questions.

What would I have been, studying in graduate school instead of going into the Navy?

I would have been studying English literature, probably picked an American author of the 20th century, and written about him. I remember in a class at Brooklyn College they had us get up and talk about ourselves, and I said that after college I would go on to take a master's, and I said if worst comes to worst, I'll get a Ph.D., and they laughed, but I never did get the master's or a Ph.D. I went into the Navy, hoodwinked by my father who told me I had to go into the Navy or I'd get drafted into the army. I got out resentful and eager to move to the mystic expansion-consciousness territory of the Lower East Side, which I did with no intention of going to graduate school. I just wanted to be a writer and took part-time jobs and then took a welfare office job.

My English professor who tutored me to become a writer advised me not to go into academia. She said it would kill my writing career, but I was inclined to be a professor. I told my father that's what I wanted to be and he said, "Oh, wow, that's the end of the line," meaning he thought that was a really demeaning choice for an occupation. But I might have become a professor.

The memoir assignment is *itch*. You can take it in the metaphorical sense.

When I was in the Navy, was I itching to get out? I certainly was. What did I do to pass the time to speed it up? Nothing, you just had to endure day by day. I eased the pain by smoking marijuana at great risk on the ship, and I wrote. Wrote a few

letters to friends on the Lower East Side and was quite determined not to go back to my old home but to go immediately from the Navy directly to the Lower East Side and get an apartment with my discharge pay.

When did I start getting an itch to free write?

There were books involved. A book by Peter Elbow: *Writing Without Teachers*. He proposed that you free write, and then, even more importantly, it was Natalie Goldberg's *Writing Down the Bones*. I did those writing sessions where you just write without thinking and keep the hand moving. First thoughts are best thoughts. I have a lot of energy for that. I used to write for an hour. Writing sessions. And then I finally did one that I published called *Shack Notes*. I had a little shack built for me by Samika Rsi in his backyard in the forest, and I would go there and write. I compiled a lot of pages, and Kaisori edited them.

There was a great freedom in free writing, not to just have to write expository essays in Krishna consciousness, which I did for 12 years, writing from the *Bhagavatam* chapters for *Back to Godhead* magazine, but just writing off the top of my head, from my gut and trying to steer toward Krishna. There's free writing, and there's something called directed free writing, where you chose a topic and you write everything you know about it. I tried to bring my free writing to Krishna consciousness so it wouldn't be just nonsense babbling. I even did an oral composition called *Radio Shows* where I imagined I was a radio raconteur like Jean Shepherd, and I was in my studio and I turned on Prabhupada singing Hare Krishna and then I just began talking. I free-thought my way through a session of about half-an-hour, and I would do another one. I made two books out of radio shows. They were good.

I could immediately do? tough heart topics.

Talk about my boat ride on the Yamuna with Bhurijana.

He hired a boat, a man with a pole to take us out on the Yamuna, and we relaxed as the water went by, and we talked heart to heart. He said I was a good person to talk heart to heart; I could immediately speak of tough heart topics. We talked about our lives. How we had gone to see Narayana Maharaja. How we were treated by the GBC. How we yearned for Vraja. How we had experimented with other philosophies. And we bonded.

Bhurijana heard I was writing autobiography, and he sent me all the letters that I had written to him. I don't know why he did. I read them and I liked them, and I wanted to print them in the autobiography. I told him and he said, "Wait a minute, show me the things that you want to put in. I may turn red." I said, "Well, trust me." And he said, "Well, you trust me and show me the things." Then I realized that the correspondence was so private and confidential. We discussed his trouble with *gurukula*. We discussed everything, things that he wouldn't want to see in print, and he said he was a very private person and was sensitive. I decided not to print the letters. I might get good reading material for the autobiography, but I would strain our relationship. I didn't want to do that because he's one of the three-and-a-half people in the world who know who I am and who I have an intimate relationship with. We're different. I'm writing memoir, and he's writing an overview of the *Bhagavatam*.

We had a good friendship while living at Gita-nagari where I was the zonal guru and GBC, and he was the *gurukula* teacher. We were both brahminical, non-managers and loved to read Prabhupada's books. Our form of Krishna consciousness was not top priority in ISKCON. That was more collecting money, managing men, opening temples. We were more introverted and reflective.

Bhurijana was always my guide in Vrndavana. He would take me to special places that weren't necessarily famous *lila* places like Varsana, places he had discovered which were nice, places

on the riverbank under a tree, and we would go there together, and we would write and we would talk. His favorite thing to do is to wander around Vrndavana and take photographs. Like me, he now has a bad ankle so he goes around on bicycle with his camera. He loves Vrndavana. He's spent many years there. I was always a visitor to Vrndavana, but he would take me under his wing.

TALK ABOUT A TEACHER

My main teacher was Prabhupada himself. I came to Krishna consciousness because of him, not because of another devotee. He was my *bhakta* leader, my guru, everything in one. I wanted his attention, and he gave me personal attention and drew me in with his storytelling and his authoritative *parampara* preaching about Krishna and Lord Caitanya. I became a responsible son. He made me the first secretary in ISKCON. He was kind to me.

He was kind to everyone, but he had a capacity to develop personal relationships with individuals, so I felt that he knew me as "Satsvarup." And he trusted me, and he thought I was sincere. He gave me responsibilities and a sense of mission, working in his mission. From the beginning I got in on the ground floor when it was just a beginning movement. Just a few of us. Our swami. But he had a vision for spreading the movement far beyond what we could comprehend.

Talk about my first *japa* beads. They were red, big beads from Tandy's bead store. That's what we all had and on the west coast, too. We wore them around our necks and then eventually in bead bags. Tie a good knot between each bead. I still have my beads; I keep them in a bag as worshipable. I don't chant on them. But they were very dear to me for many years. I chanted on my red beads.

Yes, they're like a baby blanket for security, clutching them. Prabhupada chanted on them. Once I left them behind in a store and when I noticed it, I panicked and ran back and got them. I was so afraid to lose them. I always kept them with me

in my bead bag. I had no desire to switch to Tulasi when we heard that you're really supposed to chant on Tulasi beads. But Prabhupada supplied us with these beads, so this was sacred for us.

I chanted on the beads, and I told Prabhupada that I had trouble counting how many rounds I chanted, and he said, "Oh, you get counter beads. You get little beads. And every time you chant a round, you move one of these little beads." I went out and got those. I think I was the first one to get counter beads. Vaisnavas use counter beads. I sewed a bead bag out of a shirt, an aquamarine shirt that I had. Prabhupada saw it, and he said, "Get a proper bag." Then Hamsadutta's wife, Himavati, started sewing bags.

As I look at them now, the paint has faded in the middle, but none of them are broken, and I have a very strong cord in between them. A devotee named Turiya strung them for me. Brahmananda wrote a poem in 1966 that he was chanting on the beads, and it was like a spinal cord, he said. He chanted on the subways.

I would squeeze them so hard. I would put holes in the bead bags, put holes in my gloves and get bloody blisters. Prayer beads.

What should a disciple know about me? What's the most important thing?

That I'm a bona fide spiritual master. That they should help me print books, like Isana is doing in Russia. It's not complicated. It's a simple relationship of love and trust. You accept me as the representative of Prabhupada and as your spiritual master. They get it. Many of them get it. They're very dedicated.

Well, if they don't read my books or if they're not interested in them, then there's a lacking in the relationship because so much of what I am is a writer.

In my own service to Prabhupada, I've taken up writing and publishing, both in cyberspace and in books, as my main service, so it's nice to see disciples responding to that, reading the website, buying the books, distributing the books, printing the books. Not that many disciples get it, and I give them the freedom to do the service that they want to do, but I underline what is most pleasing to me is if they would get involved in helping me get readers. (Baladeva questions: You yourself also worked right from the beginning on the press and this and that. Were you disappointed when you had to go and do other things? How did that happen that you had to go do other things besides press work?)

I worked on Prabhupada's books and ISKCON Press in Boston, and I had to do other things. But then I did the Library Party again. That was the best service. I've written about that in *My Letters from Srila Prabhupada* in Volume 3. The excitement of working to produce the spiritual master's books. Our whole temple in Boston was doing that. Service in separation, it was very real. When disciples, like Syama, Gopa, Rupa, and Isana and Nitai do so much to print my books or distribute my books, it's very dear to me.

There's a writing assignment to describe the happiest time in your life. There were different times I was happy. I was happy when I first came to Prabhupada at 26nd Avenue in 1966. That whole summer, fall, and winter were wonderful. The whole early years were very fulfilling. I was also happy living alone in Wicklow, although I had headaches which was a little sand in the sweet rice. But I was painting five canvases a day and writing the series *Every Day, Just Write*. I was free as a bird. Very creative. Those were happy times. The present, 2013, the past three years living in this house, Viraha Bhavan, have been very peaceful and contented, creative flow, posting on the website every day, leading a schedule of concentrated *bhajana*. I'm happy.

A *sannyasi* Godbrother asked if I get bored just staying here. I check myself... reality checks... but I'm not bored. It's

flowing like the Stuyvesant Falls. I don't get bored. I'm happy. I just wish they could publish my books more.

Tell me everything you know about *halava*. *Halava* is a great favorite among devotees and new people. In the Gainesville food program where they serve *prasadam* to the college students, they always serve *halava* in the meal: different kinds of *halava*. It's such a wonderful sweet preparation. I loved it in the beginning. I would eat a lot of *halava*, and it was the first preparation I learned to cook. I'm not much of a cook, but I learned to prepare *halava* nicely, with the butter and the semolina and the sugar. Mix it to the right consistency till it gels and comes out a little cakey and hot, offered to Krishna. Prabhupada would say, "I don't think you people have ever tasted such nice food. We were attracted to come to Krishna consciousness by *halava* and sweet rice and simply wonderfals.

I made *halava* for Prabhupada with wheat germ in Tokyo on a cold January day, and he ate a whole bowl for breakfast. And he said, "Who made the *halava*?" It was obvious that I made it; I was the only one there. I said, "I made it." He said, "It's very good." I was very pleased with that exchange.

GRANVILLE AVENUE

I remember the Sunday feasts in Boston on Granville Avenue. I would cook a batch of *halava*, and it would be very pleasing to see the Sunday guests get blissed out taking seconds and thirds.

WRITE ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE FOODS

I remember being in Mayapura and taking fruit salads with mango and banana, and I don't know what it was mixed with . . . cream, condensed milk, and Prabhupada even came out on the veranda. There weren't many of us there, just a few *sannyasis* during the off season. He said, "Are you enjoying?" And it was so nice to be in Mayapura on the veranda eating *prasadam* and having Prabhupada like you to be eating. The

mangoes were so delicious, and the bananas and the condensed milk. Eating with your hand. They may have put grapes in it, too.

There was a time in Mexico I had a meal with Baladeva and Narayana-kavaca at Baladeva's apartment, and they served angel spaghetti, the thin spaghetti with bread, tomato sauce. And I ate like anything. I ate four pieces of bread soaked on tomato sauce; I just kept eating, and the angel hair spaghetti. I've never been able to duplicate that experience.

I learned to cook *sukta* for Prabhpada. It's a bitter preparation. His sister taught me, although she didn't speak English. She showed me how to do it, and I don't know, somehow I got it together. And he said, "Your *sukta* is good. You have learned how to do it." And I prepared *sukta* for him many times. I couldn't do it now. It's a tricky preparation, but he liked it. And in Vrndavana, when we got there, Yamuna cooked for him, and he told her, "Learn from Satsvarupa how to make *capatis*." She was humiliated, so she came to me to learn how to make *capatis*, and I couldn't make them puff up. She must have been wondering, why did Prahupada send her to me.

TALK ABOUT PASTA

As a child I growing up, we would go to Pops. Pop is my grandfather Gaurino. We would always eat spaghetti. That was the one dish that we ate, lots of spaghetti and meatballs and Italian bread. Tomato sauce. But when we came to Krishna consciousness there was no pasta right away. We didn't know whether it was bona fide. When I traveled to Italy, I saw they were eating pasta like anything. Chitrarupini prepared, and my disciple Visakha prepared delicious pasta preparations. In the Rome temple on Saturday morning, they served pizza. Devotees would take piece after piece. It was really good. Good crust. They make lasagna and white lasagna.

Tell about the biggest mistake you made, which was considered a mistake by others, but you didn't think it was a mistake.

I wrote a novel called *Sanatorium*, which we printed, and we sold 1,500 copies of it over two years. Then the *rtvik* people printed in their magazine an excerpt from it which had explicit sex in it, where the fiancé to my heroine was approached by a *mayadevi* in Australia, and she tried to seduce him. There's some explicit description of sex when she so audaciously attacks him, but he fends her off and then he leaves the city and goes to live on the farm, and he's true to his woman.

The *rtviks* pointed out those passages and the GBC read it and they formed a committee during a meeting in New Vrindaban, and they had my disciple, Pragosa, call me in Mexico and tell me that it was a terrible book, with all the sex in it. They didn't read the book; nobody read the book. They only read the passage, but they were shocked that I would do this. They were so puritanical, so unrealistic, about such a wonderful book about healing in the sanatorium.

I went back and forth, consulting Aghari and Narayana-kavaca and Baladeva about what to do. The committee wanted me to turn the inventory of books in to be destroyed, like the Nazis burn books. Some people said that I should defy them and some said that I should go along with them and be loyal to ISKCON. I caved in. I wrote a little letter of apology for writing the book which was published in *Dandavats*.

I was so humiliated by the fact that Pragosa was the one to deliver the news, and he said to me, "How do you feel about being a guru? Is it really too much pressure on you? And being a *sannyasi*? Would you like to retire?" It was so presumptuous of him to talk to me like that. It really hurt my freedom to write. And the fourth volume of *Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam* was hurt because of that. I would write straight *Bhagavatam* purports and then I would free write, but I wasn't able to free write anymore. I lost my ability, and I stopped writing.

...

That repression by ISKCON authorities was very hurtful. Freedom of the press was squelched by the conservatives. If they did it again, I would probably not cave in, and if it came to it, I don't know. Would I leave ISKCON or what, like Dhanurdhara Swami did? We'll have to see.

VICE

When I asked Prabhupada to give me initiation, he said, "You'll have to be a vegetarian," and I said, "I already am." What if he had cross examined me for all the vices I had? How would I have felt? I was ready to give up all vices without reservation. The first day I went to the temple, I had such a transforming experience that I gave up all my vices. It was a great relief, a great freedom. I was joyful. I don't know how it happened. I did it on my own.

When was I stunned by somebody not caring about something I truly cared about?

I was stunned when my father said he was going to vote for Richard Nixon instead of John F. Kennedy.

A SECRET PLACE I KNOW ABOUT

When the Boston temple was at Glenville Avenue, there was a little hill nearby, a very small hill, but I called it Paramatma Hill, because I would go there when I was too stressed and too much in anxiety about the temple or about the teenage hoodlums, or about my wife. I would go there, and I would find peace by just thinking things out. It was quite a place-related experience, going to that little hill and just calming down and thinking things over.

My van traveling in Europe was like a secret place. I remember we stopped in one temple, and Lokanatha Maharaja came into the van, and he said, “Oh, this is like your cave.” And it was like my cave. I had a desk in there and a bunk in there. A small van, not an RV vehicle, but Madhu and I traveled all throughout Europe, and we parked in gas stations overnight. It was a secret world, and I wrote there in the back of the van. Got up early.

I had little writing sheds in Ireland: one in Geaglum, the peninsula off Inis Rath, and one in Wicklow. I could have written in the house, but I liked the idea of walking out of the house in my Wellington boots and going down to the shed, unlocking it, and going in there and being isolated and writing. That was a secret place. You were forced to write because you went into that shed.

Cezanne broke new ground in painting. What about me? In the future what would I like people to think about my art or my free writing?

Well, some devotees have rejected it and think it’s a big hype, but it’s not. It’s naive art; it’s outsider art. There’s a whole field of art that’s recognized in the art world. There’s a magazine, *Raw Vision*, dedicated to it. You have to be educated in art to appreciate my art and not expect it to be polished like ISKCON illustrators. There may be drips on my art. I may not be able to draw hands but the devotion comes through, the color comes through, sincere expressions come through, vibrancy. This was appreciated by the reviewer of the *Washington Post*.

As for my writing, it’s certainly new ground. Within *Every Day, Just Write*, I used to write series of things. One was called “Field Work.” One was called “Samplers: Poetry Hall.” I would write in different ways . . . unique expressions that came to the imagination. When you read them now, they’re fresh and enlightening.

I would like people to appreciate the originality and the God consciousness, expressed as old wine in new bottles. Dig it. I

don't expect the present conservative audience to accept it. They just want expository writings and polished art. I do find people who do appreciate it and that gives me a sense of gratitude when I hear these people say that they very much like my work. Not the conservatives.

I think in the future people will be more receptive: devotees and non-devotees.

I just wrote out of necessity when I had to write without thinking of pleasing a particular type of audience. It was my honest expression.

MY IMPRESSION OF DRIVING CABS

I'm a non-driver so my experience is riding with drivers. I felt safe with my drivers. With Baladeva and Madhumangala. They were good drivers. Madhumangala liked to speed, but he was a good driver. Caitya-guru was my chauffeur when I had an Oldsmobile. He was a good driver.

Momentous decisions made while driving? Well, while driving in the United States we would talk on the library party and decide things. What college to go to . . . whether to go out and see Prabhupada in Los Angeles.

What windows have I looked through and where have they led me?

One of my favorite windows was the window at Gita-nagari in the cabin. It had many panes to it, and it overlooked the path and the Tuscarora Creek. Usually nobody would be there, and I would look out at the creek and think while writing the *Prabhupada-lilamrta*.

I used to go to Vrndavana regularly and stay in the same room in the guest house. There was a porch, and I could see the Prabhupada Samadhi dome and see down into the campus, see the devotees walking around. I was very happy there. I didn't

have to go out to visit places. I could just stay in that room and look out the window, the screen.

At Geaglum, there was a beautiful window. It had no panes; it was just one big glass, and I would open it in the morning and look out at the lake strait. And look over at Govindadvipa. In the evening, the full moon would hang like a big lantern, and the reflections would be in the water. It was amazing. Down at the edge of the land there were these palomino-colored weeds, and there were swans on the lake. It was very scenic. I used to like to look out that window.

How do I feel about writing memoir?

I think it provides good reading. I realize it's unusual for a Vaisnava to write about himself, but I've gone past that barrier and I'm unabashedly doing it. I think it is helpful to others to read the testimony of a person who is struggling to be a devotee and is stable in Krishna consciousness. My memories span pre-Krishna conscious and Krishna conscious times and are human testimony.

In *Back to Godhead* magazine one of the most popular features is the genre article "How I came to Krishna Consciousness." We want to read that story. The memoir is an expansion of that.

Natalie Goldberg says it's an act of surrender and generosity to write a memoir. I like the sound of that. I share myself with my readers.

It's a different process than other forms of writing.

Silence can be a friend and an enemy. Tell about both.

In solitude, silence is sweet. Krishna says He is silence in *Bhagavad-gita*. When you're with another person, silence can be inimical if they don't appreciate you, and they don't want to talk. They have nothing to say. They snub you. But I like silence in general. We can eat in silence, or we can eat while reading the scriptures and not talk. Monks do that in monasteries. Prabhupada says *mauna* in Krishna consciousness means to stop nonsense talks and to talk about only Krishna.

In chanting we want to keep the mind silent and not have intrusive thoughts. We want to just hear the Hare Krishna mantra and not hear the chatter of the monkey mind. Controlling the mind means keeping it silent so that you can hear Krishna's names. In recent years I've been able to do that. Just concentrate on hearing and not have intrusive thoughts. The adage is: "Silence is golden."

MEMOIR IS KALEIDOSCOPIC

You can tell the same story in different ways, just like you turn the kaleidoscope and see different colors when the pieces of color shift. You shift from topic to topic, taking these writing assignments and looking at different facets of your life. It's not a linear process of just telling things in the order that they happen in your life but diving anywhere and everywhere when you have enthusiasm to describe something. Sharing it is like a turning of the kaleidoscope.

What is fresh and new to you today?

Kirtana-rasa came for his weekly visit. He was dressed in a tie and white shirt and dress pants ready to go to court after lunch. We had angel spaghetti and green spinach, rapini. I was excited to bring him down to the basement to show him my latest paintings. My latest paintings have been of Radharani and the *sakbis* and Krishna and the cowherd boys. And then, even more lately, the *gopis* and Krishna – the *gopis* picking flowers and Krishna coming to stop them, and Krishna. Today, I did the pay toll, the *gopis* with pots on their heads coming to pay the toll, and he liked all the paintings. I pointed out to Baladeva that his Radha and Krishna tattoo is paint, and that's one of the forms of a Deity. He remarked to me, "Well, your paintings are also a Deity." Prabhupada said, "Paintings are windows into the spiritual world." That was fresh and new to me today, to show him my paintings from the recent days. It was fresh and new to paint the pay toll today. Kirtan-rasa said he's glad I have this in

my life. Every day a new painting. I don't know what I'll paint, but something comes fresh and new from the colors in the bottles in the shapes and forms.

What's brewing under your mind?

Narayana has been purchasing me linens and a comforter for my bed, very tenderly making me comfortable. Today, the pillows arrived. They're wonderful, plump pillows I could sink my shoulder and head and neck into the pillow, and I slept very nicely in them. I like my new sheets and comforter and pillow. Sleeping is in the mode of ignorance, but we have to sleep for physical health. When you can sleep in luxury, it's nice.

It's not necessary to have a wooden pillow like St. Teresa of Avila had, or to lie in the dirt, or to lie on nails to punish your body. I'm old, a little comfort isn't going to be sense gratification. I wake up refreshed and do my service. I wake up at 11:00 p.m. at night. If I can get some comfortable rest, it's not sense gratification.

My relationship with Narayana isn't, in general, tender. It's been touching that he's been tender about these bed linens and doting on me to get me the right things. It's surprising. Usually he's a little abrasive. If I ask him to do something menial or something extra, to walk down the stairs an extra time, he'll show his annoyance. He'll refer to his pain. Everything he does is painful for him because of his back, so if you ask him to do something, it's stressful. But he's shown his tenderness in this particular aspect of supplying me bed linens and a comforter.

How has the perception of time changed during my life?

It seems to be slowing down now. I know I don't have many years left in this body, but it's precious, and I'm savoring the schedule that I follow with a concentrated *bhajana*. I seem to have time. Although I don't have much time, I seem to feel that I have time to practice Krishna consciousness, to write poetry. The decision not to travel has held time for me. Dhanurdhara Maharaja asked if I get bored. I don't get bored, but I stay in place, and time is measured peacefully and intensely.

I once asked Prabhupada a question. I said, “I feel I can be many selves. Which self would Krishna want me to be?” I was thinking how in relating to different acquaintances I would play different roles, and one didn’t know who one truly was. What kind of a person would Krishna like me to be? I was thinking of the hip person, the boyfriend, the comrade, the writer, the reader. These were the different selves I was thinking of. The person who’s subordinate, the person who’s dominant. What do you want me to be, Krishna? What will be pleasing to you? And Prabhupada answered by saying, “This boy Steve is nice. He types and gives money. You all should do like that.” He went right to the core of the services I was rendering rather than addressing my question of masks before society. He told me what he perceived in me in plain language. My services. You are your services to Krishna. That’s your eternal identity, servant of Krishna. And in the spiritual world we have our *svarupa siddhi*, *sthai-bhava*, one main function that we do for Krishna, *siddha-deha*, in our eternal form. That will be revealed to us one day, what kind of a self we will be for Krishna, and we will offer him that service in Goloka. Now we serve as *sadbakas*, chanting and hearing and preaching.

When Prabhupada said that answer, I was completely delighted and in love with it. I went downstairs and strummed on the double bass that I had given to the temple, and I was just happy that he had answered in that way. He showed me his love, his recognition of me.

Tell of a reading experience when you really loved to read.

When I was a young *sannyasi* during the peak times when the BBT was producing Prabhupada’s *Srimad-Bhagavatams*, they would send me a copy with golden gilt-edged pages, and I would break out the new book and start reading it with great delight: the story of Ajamila, the story of Prahlada, the story of Dhruva,

and then I would lecture on them in classes and write essays about them. Lord Siva, “Chanting the Prayers Sung by Lord Siva.” This wonderful world of the *Bhagavatam* that Prabhupada had dictated in the early morning and had been edited and illustrated and printed in Japan had finally come out and into our hands like precious gold. I read it, rhapsodic, and the devotees went to the airport and distributed them.

My enthusiasm for the books was infectious. When I would speak on them, others would become enthusiastic also. The books became available to everyone at the same time, and we would talk about them. Only dullards would not be excited that a new book had arrived and would want to read it. After all, this was our only access to Prabhupada. “If you want to know me, read my books.” He was in India, he was traveling, but this was the essence of him, arriving in the BBT printed book.

What gift have you wanted to give someone but you haven’t given it yet?

The gift I want to give is my books. I had a vision for printing all my books and distributing them in institutions and libraries. I’ve written a hundred books, and we made a proposal to print them all. One hundred copies and distribute them. That vision has proven to be a little idealistic. It’s very hard to accomplish; to raise the funds and even to get institutions to accept 100 books. It is the gift that I want to give. Maybe I’ll be able to do it, or maybe my followers will be able to do it. If not a hundred books, at least some. And the memoir is the latest aspect of it, the autobiography with the summaries of my books and the answers to writing assignments.

We have the books available as e-books now, Kindle and Sony, and the other e-books. This is the way that people are reading nowadays, but I also like to print private sets of actual books and give both gifts.

...

I see that the proofreading is a thorough and very good job. I thank you again for your hard work on this manuscript.

Words in the service of Prabhupada: Satsvarupa dasa Goswami.

No more: What do you no longer have or want?

I no longer have managerial responsibilities in ISKCON. I don't want them. They make me stressful. They give me headaches. They don't seem to be spiritual. At this late stage of my life, I don't need them. I don't have a family. I don't want one. I'm a *sannyasi*. I live with a couple of monk friends, but I don't need family entanglements.

Is there anything I do want? I do want to see my books published and read. I do wish to see my disciples flourishing and happy, and all the devotees happy. I am happy with my *bhajana*. I love my schedule.

Tell about a time you interacted with a fish.

Well, one time when I was a little boy, my daddy and mommy took me up to the country in upstate New York. We stayed in a cabin, and in the morning I went with a fishing pole out to the pond. I threw my rod in, and I caught a fish right away. I was afraid. The fish was flapping.

I was afraid of the fish, city boy that I was, and he had the hook in his mouth. I ran to my father and I said, "I caught a fish and he's flapping. Would you take the hook out of his mouth?" He came and he took the hook out of his mouth, and he threw him back into the pond. That's my interaction with a fish.

I wasn't on the walk with Prabhupada when he said, "Good morning and suffer."

DEATH

Many of my Godbrothers have died in recent years. Good Godbrothers like Gopiparanadhana. He could have done so much for Krishna consciousness. And Sadaputa Prabhu, a great scientist preacher. It's a great loss that they passed away at their

peak time. And Tamala Krishna Goswami. Sridhara Swami. Not necessarily that I would be friends with them or buddies with them. But I would have liked to enjoyed their contributions to the Krishna conscious mission. Especially Gopiparanadhana. He produced the *Brhad-bhagavatamrta* and was going to give us a wealth of *sastra*, the *Sat Sandarbhas*.

I had a good closure with Bhakti Tirtha Maharaja in my last meeting with him. We went over the differences we had, and we patched them up. After that, I would call him every week on the phone, and we would talk intimately. He took my phone calls even after he stopped talking to everyone else, and he asked me to write a letter about him after he passed away, which I did. I honored his mood and believed in it. Here is “The Letter He Asked Me To Write”:

June 27, 2005

Dear Devotees,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

About a month before His Holiness Bhakti Tirtha Swami left this world, I asked him if there was something I could do for him when he passed away. He immediately said yes, I could write a letter on his behalf and spread it widely. I was glad that he had such a positive request in mind, but unfortunately he never gave me many points about what to say in this letter. I spoke to him a number of times afterward, as it was my custom to speak to him weekly. But often times he could not focus on points for the letter and toward the end of his stay it was very difficult for him to use the telephone. But I do have a few items that he did ask me to write in the letter. When he couldn't give me more than that, we mutually agreed that I would have to write the rest of the letter from my heart.

One point he particularly asked me to write is that we are all going to die and the Krishna Conscious centers in which we live have to go on. We have to anticipate the grief that will

occur when the leaders depart and we have to serve each other to ensure that the legacy of these centers continues. He asked me to help in the legacy of Gita Nagari because it was an important project for the whole ISKCON movement. He expanded on this and said that in general the leaders, being older members, had to “be there” for each other in all ways.

He reminded me that personally I had a connection with Gita Nagari in the early days when it was very dear to me as my own residence. So I should wish Gita Nagari well under the leadership of Bhakti Tirtha Maharaja’s disciples.

At present, I’m not fit in health to travel to Gita Nagari, but I’ve honestly put into this letter his wish for me to support his disciples there, and I will try to fulfill his request as soon as I am able.

He wanted to remind readers of my letter how he and I were very close to each other in his early years in Krishna Consciousness when he was only a *bhakta* and how we revived our friendship and came close together near the end of his life, thank God.

Perhaps this is a good place for me to say something in my own words about his prayer, “in the mood of Vasudeva Datta” and the ensuing cancer. I trust that Bhakti Tirtha Maharaja was sincere in his prayer. It was a different tactic than the way he had been acting up to that point. He had been very actively preaching sometimes in unorthodox ways, presenting himself to business men, to political leaders, and getting great effects. Since I first worked with him he was an unorthodox preacher, when we worked together on the library party. In order to sell full sets of books the BBT salesmen had to wear a wig and suit and present oneself as a book salesman and one had to do some fancy talk to convince the professor to take a full set of books. They didn’t want to take them from a missionary or a Hare Krishna person so we made a presentation that we were straight book salesmen from a book company known as The Bhaktivedanta Book

Trust. We had to do it all in one day before we moved on to the next campus. There were about six salesmen in our party and Bhakti Tirtha (known as Ghanasyama) was the most adroit and successful member in the party. To be most successful, he had to sometimes talk in very clever and roundabout ways, far beyond a simple missionary presentation. We all knew that he was making this kind of presentation, and we praised him for it. Prabhupada also knew that he was making a tricky presentation, and he appreciated it. Ghanasyama continued this not only through the United States but in Europe, not only in Western Europe but in Eastern Europe also. He had amazing adventures and sent the sales results to Prabhupada.

But I was surprised that he made such a sudden change in the momentum of his outward preaching to make a prayer to take away the world's sins by an act of petition to the Lord, an intercessionary prayer, or prayer that all the world's karma be put upon himself. It was a very different kind of thing than he had been doing. When I asked him about it, one answer he gave was that he thought that his present preaching had not been effective enough. He wanted to do something more dramatic because the world's corruption was so great and there was also a need for purification even in ISKCON. So he was willing to put his body on the line completely for total purification of himself (so that he could become a pure actor on behalf of Krishna) and – provided Krishna would take the karma from others in return for Bhakti Tirtha Swami's sacrifice – he would increase his work in this world.

Some have doubted his prayer. But I accept it as sincere and also as efficacious. Bhakti Tirtha Swami has shown the proof of its working in the many good things that have happened as a result of his prayer. He did not expect to get hit so fast with a terminal illness. But neither did he expect to get so many good results in terms of people reforming their ways. Many, many people wrote him letters that they were inspired by his sacrifice and that they themselves were now reforming

their acts and purifying themselves. He said that in particular many ex-*gurukulis* wrote to him of their change for the better and also many errant ISKCON adults appreciated what he was doing and were returning to the field – many, many. So he could not help but think that his intercessionary prayer on behalf of karmic-laden souls was doing good. And he felt it was doing good for himself also. So this is one thing I am writing in my letter as my own personal faith in the spiritual warrior.

Some of his Godbrothers wrote to him and asked him to stop the prayer. They did not like to see him die. But he was determined to continue the prayer. One Godbrother wrote and said that this was not the method for purifying souls but that souls would be purified by higher knowledge. But I agreed with Bhakti Tirtha Swami that souls can get purified by love from God, by God's mercy, and yes, by intercessionary prayer. Souls don't just get purified just by *jnana*, knowledge.

A point I do remember him mentioning was that the leaders are all departing one by one and this is a sign that our Krishna Conscious movement is moving on. We must help each other's disciples too in their movement and in the preservation of their faith. I think by this he means that it is important that all the leaders support the disciples of Tamala Krishna Goswami or Sridhara Swami or Bhakti Tirtha Swami or each leader as he passes away. It is one loving family and all the leaders are *sikṣa-gurus* for the younger devotees. We should help them by supporting their faith in their guru and moving in to support their centers, not moving in to take them away or to take away their faith.

Bhakti Tirtha Swami set an important precedent in departing his body at Gita Nagari. He had time to go to Mayapura or Vrndavana to pass away but he did not. He wanted to set the example that his own *prabhuṇpada-datta-desa* was a holy *dhama* and he passed away there to set the example to his disciples that this is where they should work and worship. His Holiness Radhanatha Swami set a wonderful

example of compassion by staying over seven and a half weeks at Gita Nagari – despite so many demands for him to be elsewhere – just to give Bhakti Tirtha Maharaja solace and association. He also took part in the final ceremonies of his passing away. The plan was to place *sannyasa* mantras on his chest in the ceremony held in the Gita Nagari temple where Bhakti Tirtha Swami was to be taken on a palanquin and placed before the Deities and garlanded with flowers. After that, three devotees were to take his body to a professional crematorium where he was cremated. His ashes were then to be taken in an urn to Mayapura where they will be buried in the standard ISKCON guru fashion in a row where his Godbrothers, Tamala Krishna Goswami, His Holiness Sridhara Swami, and the others are to be buried. A small *pūsṭa samadhi* is being built at Gita Nagari. But if someone asks: “Why didn’t he go and leave his body in Mayapura or Vrndavana; this is controversial.” I think the answer is that Bhakti Tirtha’s precedent is backed up by *sastra* and will be repeated by others.

In an article in *Back to Godhead* magazine about a year ago, this subject matter was covered. Long time Vrndavana resident, Kurma Rupa? Prabhu, quoted the *Bhagavad-gita* verse, “Whoever thinks of Me at the time of death will attain Me,” and said that this verse refers to consciousness not geographical location. Whoever is thinking of Krishna at the time of death will go to him. Certainly Bhakti Tirtha Swami’s room very much had a Vrndavana atmosphere with chanting going on day and night and Radhanatha Swami leading him by the hand to the holy abode of Krishna. Also I have heard Bir Krishna Goswami’s intention to pass away in the holy *dhama* in North Carolina where his beloved Deities reside. I have also heard Sivarama Swami’s intention to pass away where his Radha Krishna deities reside in Hungary. So, this is not something wrong that Bhakti Tirtha Swami has done to pass away at Gita Nagari, which is not within the material world.

There is so much written already about Bhakti Tirtha Swami in the notes and appreciations by his disciples who are actually there with him sacrificing and going through great austerities to take care of him in his last months, and there is nothing that I can add to that except my humble praise for their love and work for their spiritual master. I look up to him and with awe and reverence, even though he calls me his “big brother.” He has promised to keep in communication with me even after he has left his body, and I hope that this can be true. Why not? Everything is possible in the line of transcendental communications. We have promised to keep in touch and hopefully to see each other again. It will be my good luck if I can see him because I know he will be transcendently situated.

A final point: aside from the issue that Bhakti Tirtha Maharaja died as a self-sacrifice to purify others, just consider the exemplary way he passed through a long and horribly painful disease. He had to endure a cancer which produced big tumors all over his body. At one point his foot had to be amputated. During those days, when possible, he was still active, lecturing, writing, chanting, cheerful, and in his usual down-to-earth, humble mood. As the disease progressed, his thoughts turned more inward toward his own spiritual destiny, but he continued to keep up grateful communication with his caretakers and with whoever came to visit him. Then, along the way, he broke the collar bone on his frail body by a slight movement. Still he persevered. In other words, he set an ideal example for what we will all have to go through in one form or another, the path leading to our death. Srila Prabhupada said, “Don’t think this won’t happen to you.” Like Srila Prabhupada, Bhakti Tirtha Swami has again demonstrated an ideal departure from the world, and in his case, through a prolonged painful ordeal, faced cheerfully, manfully, and with full dependence on Krishna and His devotees.

Forgive me for my poor excuse of the letter he asked me to write. My intention was to give support to him and hope that all his wishes will be carried out by his associates and by the ISKCON movement and that he will be honored as he is due.

Yours in the service of Prabhupada,
Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

CHOOSE A TOPIC THAT CATCHES YOUR INTEREST

Poetry. I'd like to write poetry. I've written 16 poems. Mostly based on dreams. Now I've come to a cross in the road, having trouble writing more. I wanted to keep a poetry journal, without judging them or thinking of publishing them, but just have a discipline of writing poems. Just today in the mail, I see that there's a book here: *Selected Poetry of Rilke*. I have a little stack of poetry books on the floor to read and get inspired by. I have to find my voice and write without attachment.

The type of poetry I like is free verse, colloquial, and I know what I like to write. I don't need to experiment.

Obese: Your physical appearance and what it means to you now.

I'm not pleased with my physical appearance. I have double, triple chins. I have soft breasts and a big protruding belly, which a dermatologist looked at and said, "Oh, you've got to get rid of this." I'm not at 190 pounds. I'm hovering at 188, 189, but I can't get down below that. But I work out every day. Saci says I'm strong and well balanced.

I shouldn't worry so much about it. I'm not this body. It kind of happens in old age. I'm very sedentary. People think I look all right. Well, most of my life I've been underweight. I was 118 lbs. when I went to see Dr. Krohe. He told me to put on weight. When I got up to 140 he told me to stop, but I kept going. So, I'm an underweight person. Pictures of me in the 70s and 80s show a very thin *sannyasi*, even in the 90s. Changing bodies.

When I first met Swamiji he seemed very exotic. He looked like Lord Buddha. His golden skin. His otherworldly eyes. His transcendental aura. He was a very exotic person to me, talking about Krishna and Lord Caitanya and the spirit, spreading Krishna consciousness. Chanting on beads, eating *prasadam*. He led us like the pied piper. He was not an ordinary person. When he spoke, the *parampara* spoke through him.

CAPTURE A SLOWED DOWN VIGNETTE

Baladeva dressed me in my painting clothes, and I went down to the basement. I picked out a light blue canvas and set it on the easel. All the paint jars were open, 24 different colors. I decided to paint Sukadeva Goswami lecturing to Maharaja Pariksit and sages. I started with blue for Sukadeva and made an oval for his head. I painted two lines across the forehead and then drew in the eyes with a Stabilo pen. I painted the rest of the face, leaving space for the mouth. I painted his arm pointed upward. I would use a small brush for his fingers. I did his torso and painted him naked. Then I did some *sadhus* sitting on the ground listening, and I painted a *sannyasi* standing who, to me, resembled Jayadvaita Swami.

It was taking time, and I saw that it was past 11:00 a.m. already, and time was running out. I hastily added two stout, brown trees with blue blossoming flowers. I painted a red mat around Sukadeva for him to sit on. With a small brush, I dipped it into the black ink and pressed it against the white pupils of their eyes. It came out perfect for each eye; a black dot to give them life. I sat back to look at my completed painting and was satisfied. I had contributed to world culture. Baladeva came down and gave his brief approval. Then I went upstairs feeling tired.

Someone asks: why do I have to finish a painting in one session?

I don't. Sometimes when the time is up, when it's a quarter to 12, and I haven't finished, I stop. But if it's 11:30, and I'm almost finished, then I move quickly and finish it up. I like the sense of completion. If I can do a painting in a day, it's good.

SOME REPEATED SCENE IN MY LIFE FROM
A NEW ANGLE OF VISION

The era of migraine headaches lasted 20 years. They would inevitably start with a pain in the right eye. I would take some medicine to try to stop it, but it often was not effective. The pain bore through, and I had to stop all activity and lie down in bed. I allowed my mind to freely wander and just waited patiently and endured it. I had some tapes of relaxation. I would sometimes play them, but they didn't abate a headache. I listened to nature sounds. I darkened the room. I relaxed. And the time went by. My list of things to do falls by the side. Night time comes, it's still there. I try another pill. I try to sleep. Sleep often makes it go away. During the night, the pain persists.

I don't wonder, "Why me?" I don't blame Krishna. I just take it as fate. Gradually, it goes, done, and I'm a new man, ready to face the world until the next time.

In a sense it was a waste of my life. They say migraine is life-threatening because it takes your life away. You can't do things. You can't live. But I think it gave me patience to endure sufferings that will come in the future and then will come at death. I've mostly forgotten the experiences, and I'm living in the present headache-free state taking advantage of the freedom from pain. But I did learn lessons.

Some people couldn't understand. They wanted to see me. They wanted me to do things, but I simply couldn't under those conditions. I went misunderstood, like such people do, and neglected. Dhanurdhara Maharaja said that when you're sick, you become the object of compassion. I found that to be not completely true. Did it give me a sense of urgency to get things done? Yes. Now that I have up time, I want to use it all in Krishna's service and not waste any time. Rupa Goswami says

that this is a sign of steady *bhava* . . . to be very concerned that I not waste any time.

Memorial Day was the day, not the fourth of July, in which patriotism came out in our little town of Great Kills. We had a parade that began from the next town, Eltingville, and went down to Hylan Blvd. and came up Nelson Avenue and stopped right at the end of our street at the Veterans of Foreign Wars building. There, three shots were fired from rifles, not accurately, at the same time, boom, boom, boom, and some speeches were made and crowds sat on the embankments watching the parade go by. There were Cub Scouts, boy scouts, high school bands, veterans, and we saluted the American flag. I marched in a parade, got tired.

My father never talked about the war, so I don't know whether he was near people being killed and what he saw and what he experienced. He put out fires on the ship.

He took us all to Washington, D.C., to see the monuments and showed me the Gettysburg Address and the Lincoln Memorial and said, "That's a great speech son. Memorize that." I was young so I bought into it, community observance. Later in life, there was a generation gap, and I wasn't so patriotic.

Did I ever think that spiritual life would be peaceful?

Yes. But Prabhupada said it wouldn't be peaceful; don't expect that. You should preach and take on the burden of spreading the movement and face obstacles. I heard him talking to a man and saying that the goal wasn't to be peaceful. We fight for Krishna even if we're agitated. We serve Krishna and spread His mission. Take on anxiety.

Getting over things. Prabhupada in his general military mode.

As the years went by and the movement got big, Prabhupada exhibited this more and more. He drew close to him secretaries who were powerful, military-like people, and he stressed book

distribution and results and money. The *brahmanas* like me and Bhurijana found it a little difficult. We wanted to see Prabhupada's soft side. And he *did* exhibit it, but he had great burdens, he had limited time, and he had to be tough. He was never rough with me, but I knew his standards.

I was attached to "my" Prabhupada as I knew him in the beginning when ISKCON was just a little family, and we all had access to him and there was so much affection shown. Then, it had to be more formal when he had so many disciples. I fondly remembered the 1966 days. And he did too. Those were happy days he said.

We never get over Prabhupada's departure. It was a great loss. It *is* a great loss. We can't be corrected by him. We have to cooperate. He said our love for him would be shown by how we cooperated to maintain the institution. So much evidence of his teachings is preserved on the VedaBase. We know what he wanted. We have to be faithful and cooperate, but we miss him to be the final decider on issues, to discipline the strong-minded disciples, and tell them what to do. There is a high degree of Prabhupada consciousness still among his devotees; in his next generation devotees, too.

He said his books would be the lawbooks for 10,000 years. He's the founder-*acarya*. He's meant to be the central figure way into the future. The *siksa guru* for all his followers. Like Madhavacarya is for his followers. There may be other *gurudevas*, but Prabhupada, it's true that there will never ever be another you. I claimed that from a song *There Will Never Be Another You*.

Write letters to devotees – maybe devotees who have passed on. I think I'll start one to my departed Godbrother, Sridhara Maharaja.

Dear Sridhara Maharaja,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

I wonder where you are now. It's been years since you departed. You were the jolly *sannyasi*. I didn't get to know you so well, but I always had a good relationship with you. I remember when you broke your leg and you were in a cast, you joked, "I just had a major fall down!" In the end, your body was bloated up, but you kept a good sense of humor. I remember you as a *brahmacari* in Bombay driving in the jeep and going on walks with Prabhupada. You helped me arrange his tickets for national travel when I was his secretary. You were a kind-hearted person, and you began to initiate and your disciples loved you. Maybe we will meet up in the spiritual world.

At the end, you sang to Indrayumna Swami "Happy Trails to You," which was appropriate for the traveling preacher.

Dear Brahmananda,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

I heard that Satyaraja is writing a book about you. He said he interviewed you and made ten tapes and that you had a very good memory for detail. I'm glad to hear it. You did such tremendous service for Prabhupada, and it's good that it will be recorded in a book form. You received the most letters from Prabhupada than any devotee. I was second. You were his man in New York City in 1968 and '69; in '66 and '67. If I don't meet you again, I offer you my warm regards. I know you've had your ups and downs; I've had mine too, but you are a Prabhupada man 100%, and no one can take that away from you. I hope you are not depressed. I hope you are happy in Krishna consciousness.

I'll write more letters later. What memories do you want to hold on to at the time of death?

I'd like to remember the early days of Krishna consciousness with Swamiji at 26 Second Avenue. Those were the best times. Yes, I like to remember those early days. The special attention he gave me to bring me into Krishna consciousness. His being so exotic. Our Swami. Our kind leader on the Lower East Side. Taking us out of our hippie-dom into being devotees of Krishna, the pack of us, 12 of us. We became new friends, Hayagriva, Kirtanananda, Acutyananda, Michael Grant. The young movement. And then me going to Boston on your account, serving you in separation, writing you a letter every week, working in the welfare office for you. I was close to you then, guided by your letters, and you encouraged me. I like to remember our close association. You had so many disciples, even in the beginning, and you gave attention to each one of them. I'd like to remember that at the end.

I experimented with speaking extemporaneously over music to an audience. I did it at a Vyasa-puja meeting. I played jazz and classical music, and I talked about the spiritual world. I played a piece by John Coltrane called "The Wise One," and it conjures up the guru, so I talked about Prabhupada. I played the ballad "My Funny Valentine" with Chet Baker and Gerry Mulligan and came up with some emotions and expressed them. I was having a good time improvising and interrelating with the musicians and with my audience. I thought of the spiritual world to a piece of music by a classical musician and talked about what it might be like. It was an attempt at creative free expression, and I thought that it was successful.

I also did them without an audience and just recorded them. I sent them to Madhava to send out on the tape ministry. He liked them very much.

Recall eating lunch on the veranda at Mayapura with the GBC men. Brahmananda wolfing it down. Ramesvara poli-ticking. Pancadravida joking. Throwing food. The food was delicious

and served with reverence to us elite members. We ate with hearty appetites. Give me some more *dal*! They would come by with more *capatis*. It was blissful sitting out on the veranda. Prabhupada's men. And then you would finish and wash your hands. Take some condiments.

I remember people coming to me, trying to get me to vote for a certain issue. Gopala Krishna Maharaja, Bhavananda, Ramesvara; all came to my room on different occasions and asked me to vote for something.

I liked going on *harinama* in Boston Commons in the summer when we had a temple of 60 devotees. We would go every day. We would take our lunch out there, too. *Dal* and *capatis*. We would keep a constant *kirtana* going and attract a crowd. Boys and girls together in the van. Hridayananda Maharaja. Rukmini. Baradraja. Saradiya. Vaikunthanatha. All of us singing together. Sacisuta and his wife. We put on a good show. It was lots of fun singing at the top of your lungs, holding off the cynical Boston crowd by the sheer energy of your voices and your Krishna consciousness in your *dbotis* and *saris* and your shaved heads. Every day we went out. Summer.

In 1966, Swamiji kept a jar of *gulabjamuns* which we called "ISKCON bullets" under his worship table and his worship room. It was understood that they could be taken by anyone who wanted one, who needed one at any time of the day. People who were breaking the smoking habit would go and get one. If I had a bad day in the welfare office, I would go and get one. They were delicious. You put the whole thing in your mouth, and it crushes sweet and drips out of your mouth and you're zonked.

Someone went and raided and ate them all up. It was preserved for emergency like a fire extinguisher.

At one point the GBC passed the resolution that books had to be approved before they were published and to be read by a senior devotee, who wrote a letter of approval. I was very intimidated by this resolution, because it seemed like a hampered freedom of the press. I submitted one book to Mahanidhi Swami, and he read it and approved it. But then they rescinded the resolution because it became too unwieldy for them, and the period of censorship was over.

At the Catholic Church no objections step at the front in the book. My first reaction was to start printing a series of booklets without approval called *ishta-gosthi* for my disciples. I did a few volumes of that one, on the radar, no profile printing. I gave one book out to someone to read and he never read it, and this was one of the frustrations that the GBC body recognized, that these were books to be read, and they weren't read.

I've heard that resolution was in the offing. I became much in anxiety before they passed it, because it was my lifeblood to publish books, and my books' front was already becoming experimental.

How did I really feel about lots of the disciples in the closed relationships over the years?

I wrote a book about my feelings of loss for disciples called *The Litany for the Gone*. I mentioned particular individuals and how they left and how I felt about it. It was very personal, and I was hurt. And they gave up their vows, stopped being devotees. It was sad.

After a long-term relationship, I lost Madhu, Kaisori, and Madhava. They were all heart-breaking.

It was almost like my parents rejecting me so totally. They don't want anything to do with you. The disciples would drop out of sight, some of them even campaigning against me to my other disciples. And they write to me.

Prabhupada wrote a letter to Jayapataka Swami about the spiritual master taking the karma of the disciple. What happens if the disciple rejects the spiritual master? Prabhupada wrote back that the spiritual master is no longer responsible for the disciple.

In 1966, Prabhupada taught us a version of *Brahma-sambhita*. He said that here is a song about Krishnaloka. He didn't say where it was from, and he taught us:

*cintamani-prakara sadmasu kalpa-vrksa-
laksavrtesu-surabbir abhipalayantam . . .*

And he translated it. This is a verse about the spiritual world. He introduced it. And then as we read, so many verses became favorites of ours. People memorized the verses. Hridayananda Maharaja used to memorize the Sanskrit. Sanskrit was introduced straight away.

Prabhupada's instructions at initiation were that we must promise follow the four rules: no illicit sex, no meat eating, no intoxication and no gambling. That was the basis of the initiation vow, and to agree to chant 16 rounds of the Hare Krishna mantra every day. This made you a Hare Krishna devotee.

In the early years there was a contrast between the East Coast and the West Coast. The East Coast was conservative and the West Coast was liberal. We didn't go in for Mantra Rock dances and accommodating the hippies so much, and we followed Prabhupada's instructions strictly. They didn't follow the instructions so strictly, but they were liberal dealing with the non-devotees. It was not brought up to Prabhupada, that there was a difference between the West Coast and the East Coast devotees, I don't think. He accepted us all.

Devotees on the West Coast would attend Prabhupada's classes, and after they would go down to corner to the doughnut shop, and Prabhupada would walk by sometimes, and they would sink down in their boots.

I don't remember Jayadvaita Brahmachari joining the temple, because he joined in New York while I was in Boston. He joined at 26 Second Avenue as Prabhupada was in India. His first assignment was to organize the correspondence of Prabhupada, and he would see Brahmananda crying tears giving lectures, and he was moved by the devotees' attachment to Prabhupada. And I did him an early favor in 1968. I invited him to come and be Prabhupada's servant for a month. He was witty, playful, sharp, friendly, humorous, activist. And he came back to Boston when the press came, around 1969. We were editors together on *Back to Godhead* magazine.

...

He would come into my office, and he wasn't all business. He would tend to hang out in banter, and I was more business-like, get down earth and do our work. He was sharp in *istha-gosthis*. He could debate in the good logical mind about something from the *sastra*. Debates occurred because of different opinions about the temple.

"I don't remember a particular program when I was with Prabhupada."

When I was Prabhupada's servant I got to hear him every day. I don't remember any of those lectures now. I was often sleepy during the lectures. It wasn't my favorite time. My favorite time was the morning walks. I don't remember what he said on those walks either, but they were wonderful. It's all now long ago, and my memory is shot.

NOTICE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

I am looking at Baladeva sitting in front of me in his V-neck T-shirt. Over his shoulder is the Prabhupada *murti* in the corner of the room. It's quite distant from my chair whereas Radha-Govinda are quite close. I am looking at the blank TV screen. It's just a black rectangle that I don't see otherwise. Now I don't

watch it at all for weeks, months at a time, and I'm glad. I'm looking at dead flowers on the altar that need to be changed. I'm looking at my own feet crossed on the ottoman in front of me. I'm feeling a little warm in the room. I can't see the art table. I was trying to draw from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m., but I was too tired. I can't draw. My brain is not working well when I am tired, like right now.

JOURNAL (PART ONE)

February 28, 2014

3:08 a.m.

I saw a book lying face up on the lower shelf of my book case. It had an intriguing cover, but for several days I didn't bend down to pick it up. Then I did. It was *Life's Companion: Journal Writing as a Spiritual Quest* by Christina Baldwin. I did not recognize the book or know why it has been placed so prominently, so intriguingly, on my bookcase. What an odd coincidence! I began to read it, and I liked it. It advocated keeping a journal and gave many suggestions how to go about it. I decided to start a private journal, aside from the poem I write every day and post on my website.

Baldwin writes about finding the spiritual in our everyday lives. I don't think of myself as on a spiritual quest. I have found my path, Krishna consciousness, and have been pursuing it for 45 years, but Krishna states in *Bhagavad-gita*: "For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me." (*Bhagavad-gita* 6.30) I can't claim I'm at that stage, so I *am* on a spiritual quest, trying to see Krishna everywhere and see everything in Him. I see a value in writing down my thoughts, trying to find my authentic self behind all the pretentions, so I shall do these writing exercises as suggested in Baldwin's book. She suggested timed writing sessions. You set the time clock with an alarm and go for about ten minutes, stopping abruptly when the time is up. Another is flow writing.

You pick out an object in a room and just write free association on it, trusting that language will carry you. She says dialogue is an important tool in journaling. No formal rules: just start a conversation and try to come to some conclusion. She says questions are another tool. You ask yourself specific questions and give answers. Another tool is writing unsent letters. The point of the book is the importance of silence and solitude in life. I don't have much time right now, but later this morning I'll do a timed writing exercise and flow writing. I think journal writing will be fun. Now I immediately publish what I write. It will be nice to write privately with no immediate plans for publishing.

5:07 a.m.

This is a six-minute timed writing session. I might get interrupted by Narayana coming up the stairs. The journal is a journey. The mind tells you what's passing through. I'm 73 years old but may have some more active years before I die. I want to live peacefully in this house in Stuyvesant Falls for the rest of my life. I don't want to travel. I publish my website poem with illustrations by Gurudasa. I live comfortably but simply with my two companions, Baladeva and Narayana-kavaca. They don't get along well with each other; they live here out of duty to me. We try to get a third man to come and help Baladeva with the chores as he is physically and mentally impaired. Sometimes there is no other help, and to just get the three of us to do things is hard. I know my handwriting is hard to read, but I'll make an effort to make it legible. I'm writing with a Pilot Precise V5 Rolling Point. I'm reading Sharon Olds' poems, *Stag's Leap*, about her feeling the loss of the man who was her husband for 30 years and left her. The poems are wrenching, open and honest, very courageous. But she doesn't believe in God so one can't get real nourishment from them. I've written past the six minutes alarm.

Flow writing, 9:25 a.m.

I'm looking at the statue of Hanuman. An astrologer suggested I worship him to offset the presence of Ketu in my horoscope, which cuts down longevity. Superstition? Why not just pray to Krishna to protect you as He wills. I don't know. It sounded like a nice idea. I got the prayer, "Sri Hanuman Calisa." I soon became convinced. I read the 40 verses every morning. Hanuman promises to keep whoever invokes him free from troubles. One who chants his name is free of all pain and disease. One achieves greater fruition who approaches him. One feels a sense of protection in reciting the prayer. I'm short of wind now from exercising in the gym. My congested cough is still present, and there is a rattle in my throat and lungs. I went to the E.R. of the hospital, and they say my X-rays show I'm clear of pneumonia (two previous X-rays showed that I had it). The doctor says I'm "on the mend," still rattling and coughing but nothing to worry about. This old boy had a chest cough for over a month and has taken two course of antibiotics, and now I'm on the mend.

March 1, 2014

6:25 p.m.

I realize it's not going to be easy to keep up writing in a journal. I'm sure there are things I want to discuss with myself, but I'm not sure how to go about it. My daily poem is really a newspaper of my day. But there is other stuff I can talk about. I like to be alone and silent. I don't like to hear voices from the floor below. Usually at this time I watch comedy TV, from 6:15 to 7:00 p.m., and then I take sleep medicine and go to bed. I fall asleep quietly and wake five or six hours later.

But I would rather spend my time writing in the journal than watching TV. I just received a letter from Kaisori from Mayapura. She described it as a "soft" place and said much mercy was available there. But I have no desire to go anywhere in India. Just the thought of traveling is daunting to me. I am

content to stay in my room and go downstairs for lunch. Christina Baldwin talks about the importance of meditation, but it's mostly impersonal. My meditation is chanting *japa*. I don't want to bash myself, but a lot of my mantra chanting is just counting numbers. I chant to finish the quota so I can turn to my poem. I should try more to "just hear." Journal writing is a kind of meditation. You connect senses and get to know yourself better. I like myself; I like my company, but I need the companionship of my assistants. I have only two minutes left, and I have to stop this writing, but it's been fun and helpful. My desire to be more centered in *japa* is constructive. Now it's time to stop writing, but I'll be back tomorrow. Just keep connecting the senses, and your journal will flow.

March 2, 2014

3:20 a.m.

Dialogue

"So you like this idea of keeping your journal?"

"Yes I do. I can follow some of the exercises in the journal book."

"Who are you?"

"I'm your friend, ready to accompany you on a venture."

"But you may have some different opinions than I do."

"I suppose so. There have to be different views to keep the dialogue going."

"What do you think of Yogesvara visiting?"

"I see no harm in it."

"You are afraid you won't have much to say to him. Do you feel threatened that he is writing a biography of Prabhupada?"

"A little bit. It seems like competition to *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*, but he can't outdo it or replace *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*."

“Yes. He’s probably got a special audience in mind and a fresh approach to the treatment of Prabhupada’s life. You can be generous and answer his questions.”

“What about this journal?”

“Well, it’s a journey. You are allowing yourself to speak freely although you always think that you will eventually publish it.”

“But it’s nice I’m free about that as I’m writing now. I’m just accumulating writing expressions. I don’t have to think of what I’m achieving, it will just flow.”

“But you would like to go inward with it and explore and express your psyche.”

“Yes, I would like to go deep and adventure some.”

“You’ll just keep writing every day and see what goes, huh?”

“Yes, it’s an open-ended journey.”

“Baldwin says, ‘Spirituality is the sacred center of which all life comes, including Mondays and Tuesdays and rainy Saturday afternoons in all the mundane and glorious detail.’”

“I like that. It’s just the unpacking of your whole life, what you are doing, what’s happening . . . ”

“I can include memories.”

“And the present dynamics, like the relationships in this household.”

“Yes, what’s going on?”

“I haven’t got time now. Narayana is coming up in five minutes. But I’m willing to get into it, how Narayana thinks Baladeva is very difficult to live with and causes him all kinds of stress. And how Baladeva thinks he’s innocent, and Narayana is just creating problems for himself.”

“I’m glad we had this dialogue.”

“Me too, let’s do more. In all frivolousness of whom we are. Just two voices talking back and forth. I think of it as friends

talking, not one person trying to lay a trip on another person. Yet two voices contributing.”

Baladeva teased me when I said the journal was private. He said, “You’ll publish it in a month on the website.”

“No,” I said. “It’s private.”

“Your middle name is Private.”

He imitated Hanuman baring his chest reveling Sita-Rama. Then he said even if I wanted to publish I couldn’t get it typed because all the typists are backlogged with priority work on the autobiography.

6:10 p.m. Flow writing

I’m looking at the black TV screen. But it’s not turned on. I’m writing instead. Can’t choose words. My chest is still congested. It’s been months now. You search for yourself. You’re an old guru. The TV is better turned off. No one is coming to bother me. I’m snug in my *bhajana-kutira*. This is how I like it. Now, if I could do something constructive. Once upon a time there was a man who had lived most of his life. He had written over a hundred books, and still he was writing. He had voices in his head.

Dialogue

“Kirtana-rasa came and gave me a massage. Next Friday, Yogesvara is coming to interview me. A week from Monday, TJ comes for yoga.”

“These are external events. What’s internal?”

“There is my drawing. I finished a surreal picture with many figures.”

“Is drawing internal?”

“It’s creative.”

“Is internal something hidden, like the unconscious?”

“I don’t know. It’s my relationship with Krishna. It’s me, the spirit soul. Internal is my spiritual state, my progress.”

“Are you making progress?”

“Gradually. I am more maintaining. I am selecting and posting Jiva Gosvami’s *Gopala-campu*. I’m chanting *japa*. I’m writing my poem. These are internal events. By mentioning I’m progressing, I’m actually engaged. I’m not stagnant.”

“Where do you want to be in five years?”

“I want to be here at Viraha Bhavan. I want Baladeva and Narayana to be here, if possible. I want to improve my *japa*. I want to maintain my health.”

“It’s up to Krishna, isn’t it?”

“Yes. Man proposes, God disposes. I can make my five-year plan, but events are not in my control. I live every moment at His mercy.”

“How do you think of Krishna?”

“As my well-wisher and protector. I think of Him as Govinda, the cowherd boy. The lover of Radharani. I like to read about His pastimes.”

“Do you think you have a right – are you qualified to think of Radharani?”

“Yes, She is the mother of *bhakti*. I like to read the glories of Her pastimes with Krishna. I worship Radha-Govinda Deities and offer Them incense and write a poetic stanza to Them every day.”

“Now our time is up.”

March 3, 2014

11:42 a.m.

Baladeva gave me a massage, and now I’m resting before lunch.

“Do you like lunch?”

“Yes, I have an appetite. And it’s the big social event in the day when we gather and someone reads scripture. I like sitting at the table and being with the men. It takes about an hour, and then I go up and take a nap. After the nap I draw for about 45 minutes. Today, I’m going to draw crippled devotees with a cane, with a walker and with crutches. Draw it small and then copy it large. One is a dream. Today, Narayana spoke affectionately about Baladeva. Yesterday he spoke against him.”

“What is causing you anxiety?”

“When Baladeva and Narayana don’t get along. I’m having trouble with my chest congestion also. It’s difficult to do handwriting. I’m afraid it’s not legible.”

“Then print it.”

“Yes, I will. I have to proceed slowly and not write so many words. It goes slow.”

“That’s alright. I see myself. I see who I am.”

“Do you like what you see?”

“Yes, but he’s fragile. I can’t serve freely. It’s my private journal. I can read what I’ve written and enjoy it.”

“Why do you like it?”

“Because it’s mine, and it’s mysterious.”

“I am like a character in *Alice In Wonderland*.”

“Like the Mad Hatter or the Rabbit. That’s a wonderful book. I should read it again.”

“Why are you fragile?”

“Because I get headaches still. And I’m not strong. I’m also nervous. I have anticipatory anxiety.”

“What’s that?”

“That’s what Dr. Nitai Gaurasundara diagnosed me as having, anticipatory anxiety. I get anxious anticipating the pain of a

headache, and I anticipate stress. I have a mentally related disease. I take some medicine for it.”

“Are you sane?”

“Yes, I’m sane. I just get nervous and don’t like stress, breaking from my regulated schedule, confrontational meetings. I’m definitely sane and not senile. Don’t say that about me. I’m transcendental. I’m a spiritual person, fine tuned. I can see all right with my glasses. I can see within with the inner eye.”

“What do you mean?”

“I am more than meets the eye. I have an inner life. I see through the scriptures, *sastra-caksusa*. I see with the eyes of Sukadeva Goswami. I have Prabhupada’s blessings in my life. Therefore, I’m not shallow. I have inner resources.”

“Do you think your inner resources will be tested?”

“Yes, at death. And when I face stress.”

6:08 p.m.

I’ve been led a long way on my spiritual journey. From the innocence of a nominal Roman Catholic, to a college atheist, to an agnostic with writing as my religious vocation, to an eclectic dabbler in books from the east – and finally finding my spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada, and surrendering totally to him and his mission. I served as an obedient son and member of ISKCON for decades. Eventually I became more independent and didn’t live in temples. Now, I don’t even visit temples but write a daily website on the internet. I do not take part in mainstream ISKCON activities, but I am loyal to the movement. I’m a kind of lone pilgrim on my own path, living in Stuyvesant Falls in New York. I do not work under the direction of any GBC man. I’m happy to be free and independent. I have, in a sense, retired, but I receive visitors and have some correspondence and write my daily poem on the website.

“What are you doing now?”

“I am writing in my journal. The evening time I reserve for this.”

“What do you want to say tonight?”

“Baldwin’s book is talking about religion and spirituality. ‘I am not particularly religious but I believe I’m spiritual.’ Well, I’m both religious and spiritual. I follow the teachings and practices of Gaudiya Vaisnavism, Krishna consciousness. I believe in Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I chant His holy name and daily read the scriptures. I follow vows prohibiting four kinds of sinful actions. I eat only vegetarian food offered to Krishna. This is who I am, a Krishnaite.”

“Are you following esoteric practices?”

“I am not a *prakṛta-sahajīya*. I don’t indulge cheaply in the affairs of Krishna and the *gopīs*. But on my website I present *rasika* literature, currently Jiva Gosvami’s *Gopala-campu*. I worship Radha-Krishna Deities, but I love all parts of the *Caitanya-caritamṛta*, not only the *antya-līla*, Lord Caitanya’s mood of Radharani in separation from Krishna. I like Srila Prabhupada’s books, his emphasis of preaching Krishna consciousness. I am following that. So, I am esoteric but down to earth in my practices.”

“Are you reading *Alice in Wonderland*?”

“I began today. My edition has original drawings by Tenniel. I like it. Alice became tiny, now she is ten feet tall. I am going to draw a picture of her big.”

March 4

3:48 a.m.

I am writing down just a few words in the brief time before Narayana comes up. Nitai is trying to print my books in India with the help of a donor. He will phone Sacisuta and see what he can do to get the books ready for production. I am kind of in

the background doing a little pushing to inspire the parties to cooperate. It is a very ambitious project, and I hope we can realize it. Book printing is my main preaching. It is hard to distribute the books. I've written many books helpful to devotees in their *sadhana*, books about Prabhupada, and further in fiction. We want to put them all in print. And I'm compiling Volume Two of *The Story of My Life*. The manuscript should be completed soon.

11:26 a.m.

Journal entry

Baldwin is writing about disorder and despair, passing through a "dark night of the soul." She says we all have to go through this. Currently, I am at peace, and my life is in order. When I went through my fall down I was in disorder. I was infatuated with another man's wife. Then I passed through the infatuation and again embraced renunciation. But then the secret affair was exposed, and I was scandalized. The whole of ISKCON knew about it, and many of my disciples lost faith in me. I was allowed to remain a *sannyasi*, and I stabilized. Four years later the woman wrote a 38 page letter exposing our relationship in full detail and sent it to the GBC. This opened a new investigation of me, and they asked me to write a transparent letter admitting to all the details and telling the full history. My first confession had been brief and therefore not truthful, so I wrote a letter in drafts until it was open enough and blame taking enough to satisfy the other party. My letter was widely broadcast on the internet. Again, I was shamed. The ISKCON committee allowed me to remain a *sannyasi* and a guru to those who had faith in me. I cannot initiate anymore, and I'm asked to keep a low profile and not be engaged in GBC management. For one year I had to periodically report to a four-person monitoring committee, and my books had to be approved by a peer before I could publish them. I obliged all these rules, and eventually things returned to normal in my life.

I'm a respected elder in the movement, and I try to function for those who still accept me as a guru by writing books and my website, which has a big happy readership. Those days were a dark night of the soul. I was lonely, but I have passed through that and feel forgiven by Prabhupada and Krishna. Now I have to remain steady and upbeat.

The journal is a place where I speak of my past and present. As I have stated, I am at peace with myself, provided that I can keep the two housemates at peace and run an efficient *asrama*. Narayana says we have to have a meeting to discuss who will do all the various duties once Maitreya has gone. We want to see Sacisuta take on the duties of GN Press.

March 6, 2014

3:45 a.m.

Last night I wrote of my aspirations for the next life. And I stated my satisfaction with my present activities as preparation for going back to Godhead. I can repeatedly write on these vital themes. Prod yourself to bring out new lights.

In *Gopala-campu*, Jiva Goswami writes that only the confidential assistants of Radha and Krishna are able to see them. Nanda's palace is described. It is hard to understand the opulence of it. It is so opulent with thrones, big gates, paraphernalia, etc.

Krishna-prema brings bliss and grief. It is inconceivable. Jiva Goswami is a great philosopher and taster of *rasa*. He gives us a taste. If we are pure and submissive we can receive it. He admits it makes him excited to discuss Krishna in Goloka. "Since persons like us are incapable of describing the nature of the *gopis*, what may be said of actually seeing them? Is it possible to praise Radha by saying, 'Lakshmi cannot compare to Radha?' The other *gopis* who surpass Lakshmi cannot compare with Radha's beauty."

6:06 p.m.

I want to go back to Godhead. I'm doing the best I can to bring that about. I'm 73 years old and still have my vitality. I am writing under a desk lamp. Baladeva and Maitreya cleaned up my room today. They took many books away. I want to say I'm all right. My body is fragile, but I do exercises every day. Tomorrow I get my hair cut and shave, and the next day Yogesvara comes to visit me. e.e. cummings: "Dying is fine)but Death ?o baby I wouldn't like Death if Death were good" We don't believe that. We are not afraid of death. I remember when Prabhupada died. He said, "I have no desires." He went internal for 24 hours, not talking or trying to communicate or interact with all the persons in the room. Then the doctor said he had four more hours to live and after about that much time we saw him make involuntary "dancing" movements with his legs, and 15 more minutes he obviously passed away. He stopped breathing and living. I should wish to pass away as auspiciously. He was in Vrndavana in Kartika. I don't particularly want to go to Vrndavana to die. I would wish not to be in great pain. I would wish to have clear consciousness until the end and be surrounded by a few devotees. We will see what happens and what path I have to take, what challenges and obstacles. I hope my books can be printed and placed in libraries and other public places. I want to publish more volumes of my autobiography.

I am publishing a poem every day with illustrations produced by Gurudasa. It is beautiful and entertaining and produces news of my life, but I don't think that we would want to publish it as a book.

Baladeva hurt his ankle. He said, "I'm doing it for you, Gurudeva. Just let me in the back door [to Goloka]." Prabhupada said that if we held on to his garment, he would bring us to Goloka. He said he had a key to the back door. A lovely concept. I want to go in that back door with Prabhupada. Prabhupada's key. Baladeva thinks I can let him in. Let me go first, and then we will see if I can help others to enter.

I'm writing my path. It's a slow road, peaceful, with quiet regulation and *bhajana*. I don't want to be disrupted by excitement or violence. I don't want to exert myself more than I'm doing. I sleep less than six hours at night and maybe two hours in the afternoon. God willing I will be here tomorrow and write some more at this time.

March 7, 2014

11:34 a.m. Flow Writing / Timed ten minutes

I'm looking at the two digital clocks. The smaller one is about 40 seconds slower than the big one. The big one keeps time by seconds also. I look at them while I chant *japa* early in the morning. They are comforting like a fireplace. They also prod me to move along and chant quickly. I stop before 2:00 a.m. and write my poems, after I've done 12 rounds. Like a sandglass, it's measuring out my life. My remaining term is flowing down to the bottom of the glass. Unique ways to watch and measure time, *tempus fugit*. And yet, winter seems to be lasting so long. The drying out of clothes on the line. They say your longevity is given to you in a certain amount of breaths. Yogis can leave at their own will. Srila Prabhupada says better a moment spent in association with a pure devotee in full consciousness like Haridasa Thakura, than a long pastime.

6:14 p.m.

"Are you ready to talk to Yogesvara tomorrow?"

"I don't know. I was remembering how much praise I got from my Godbrothers when the BBT was publishing the volumes of *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. They thought, and I thought, that Prabhupada was empowering me. Then the anti-guru, anti-ISKCON group criticized, said I presented Prabhupada as a mortal, not enough hagiography. In general, it has been embraced and the condensed version is mass distributed."

“What will you tell Yogesvara?”

“I’ll be honest. I can have the books out to look at. Each volume is different. I can speak about them. See what he wants me to talk about.”

“Are you glad you wrote *Srila Prabhupada-lilamṛta*?”

“Yes. I guess it’s my best contribution. I did it with devotion to Srila Prabhupada. I had a lot of help with researchers, typists, editors, and interviewers.”

“But you love your other writing.”

“Yes, the Prabhupada-related books and the personal writing, journal and poems, *EJW*, etc. I was able to prefer myself freely.”

“And now the autobiography?”

“Yes, I have a Volume Two reading. I had recourse to Baladeva’s refashioning of writing assignments from Natalie Goldberg’s books. Or we may have to do it again, labor intensive.”

“What is the journal for?”

“Discovering myself. Trying to write on vital subjects. I want to do myself better, prepare myself to express maybe different things.”

“That’s where dialogue comes in.”

“What’s your biggest anxiety now?”

“Maybe trying to get people, Nitai, Krishnacandra, Sacisuta, Narayana-kavaca, Krishna-krpa, to help me get moving and organizing to print the books. It’s going slow. Nitai is so busy with his business, Saci is not focused on my books, Baladeva and Narayana tell me to be patient. It’s a big endeavor, getting the books into print and placing them in reading centers. I want it to happen while I’m still alive.”

“What else is anxiety?”

“Nothing much. I’m hoping to live to an old age. Hare Krishna. I haven’t prepared material from *Gopala-campu* for

tomorrow's website. Maybe I should stop this journal and do it now."

"There, I did it. I have three minutes left. Take your pills and go to bed. Pray to Krishna for devotion. Worship His lotus feet. Chant the names of Radha and Krishna. Be a good boy, old man. Tend to your flock. Take care of yourself. Cooperate with Godbrothers like Yogesvara."

March 8, 2013

6:15 p.m.

I spent several hours with Yogesvara today. I agreed to read his manuscript of the biography of Srila Prabhupada. I didn't have much to say.

Now I'm alone with the journal. You write your life. I'm busy, creative with my website, and trying to compile my autobiography. I love Srila Prabhupada. Yogesvara said Srila Prabhupada lets you be yourself and serve him in your way. I believe that too. I am in my sunset years, peacefully flowing in a happy life. I'm writing privately, for myself. Keep on truckin'. The motto of the U.S. Marines is *semper parati*, always faithful. I want to be a faithful dog of my spiritual master, write books for him, for his followers and seekers. I can't think of any topic for tonight. Death is always waiting. That will come at its appointed time. TKG wrote a Ph.D. thesis on Prabhupada. He said his *maha-vakya* or "great utterance" was "Krishna the Supreme Personality of Godhead" and "devotional service" – dynamic key expressions that contained so much.

Snow is on the ground. Laying heavily on the branches of the little evergreen in our backyard. The sparrow hawk sits on a branch and swoops down and carries a sparrow away. And the cats stalk the birds. Fewer birds are visiting our feeders.

I'm not aware that I'm suppressing some traumatic event in my life. I think I'm pretty much aware of what I went through, what people did to me, and what I did to myself. I don't feel a need to express it in my private diary. I didn't go to war. I was in

the peacetime Navy. Yogesvara says Krishna consciousness is similar to the holocaust. We repressed our lack of awareness to Krishna. The holocaust survivors repress their memories of suffering. I don't get the con-nection. True, I was standing in darkness and my spiritual master has opened my eyes with the torchlight of knowledge. I was suffering for want of knowledge of God. I was immoral. I smoked marijuana, took LSD, masturbated. The things a person does when he doesn't know he's a temple of God. Now, I'm relieved by His Divine Grace. I'm clean and humble. I'm caring, and I take care of myself. I'm *atmarama*, satisfied in the self, but I am attracted to the pastimes of Krishna, and I want to serve Him in the spiritual world. Krishna is peace. He wants us to help the sufferings of others by delivering them Krishna. I'm doing that online. I spend my morning preparing a poem for the world. It includes a segment of astounding *Gopala-campu*. Then go write of your little life. Tomorrow I'll write a stanza about the visit of Yogesvara. Go forward, drawing pictures and posting one every day. This is the end of the first week in March. They got 20 inches of snow in Boston, digging out their cars. I have to end now.

March 9, 2013

Baldwin says keep your journal private. That way you can be candid and not be afraid you'll hurt people or be embarrassed by your awkward expressions. Good advice, and I'm following it. My handwriting is so cramped almost no one but me can decipher it. But they cracked the code for Egyptian hieroglyphics.

6:12 p.m.

Dialogue helps keep a balance in self-esteem.

"You are always saying you're content and peaceful. Is this really so?"

“Yes, but it’s dependent on my living the way I do: alone in this house with two assistants and not traveling or lecturing or having confrontational meetings.”

“Are you too protective of yourself, staying in a comfort zone?”

“No, I don’t think so. I’ve been there and done that. I want to live this way. I think I’m fulfilling my responsibility to Srila Prabhupada, writing my poem online, and trying to put books into print.”

“What if you were forced to live more outwardly and actively?”

“I would adapt, but I don’t think anyone is going to force me ‘out.’ I’ve paid my dues. The GBC is not going to come after me, and there is nothing they could do. I’m free to live as I am. And I’m mature and responsible enough not to misuse my freedom.”

“Do you feel secure in this house? Maitreya asked you if you had the deed and you said no. Sacisuta owns the house.”

“Yes, but he has given it to me to live in, and he’s not going to kick me out. I trust him, I don’t need legal ownership.”

“So you are happy, and you are not stagnant and underachieving?”

“No, I don’t think so. I’m flowing through the months and years. It’s a wonderful life in Krishna consciousness. I’m happy to stay here and read and write.”

“What about the journal?”

“It’s going its own way at its own pace. I like the commitment to it. I think it’s useful to think things out and talk to myself and observe. I want to encourage myself but also to confront myself.”

“I can’t seem to shake your confidence. You don’t want so much confrontation.”

“No, what’s the use of it? But I’m open to healthy questions of any situation and activities. I don’t say I’m perfect or that I can’t do more. I want to surrender, *saranagati*, to think myself humble. To do things favorable to Krishna consciousness. To avoid things unfavorable. To always see myself as in need of Krishna’s protection and willing to serve Him. The six items of surrender. To always act as a servant to the servant.”

“Are you completely surrendered?”

“No, I’m a work in progress. I’m imperfect. I haven’t reached the advanced stages of devotional service. I don’t have the symptoms of a *maha-bhagavata*. I’m lacking in devotion and realization.

March 10, 2013

4:45 p.m.

The journal is the repository of my daily thoughts. Each evening I reach out in a particular dialogue. Something always comes up. Last night you challenged your security in your house, and you asserted that you are happy. You defended yourself realistically. You are not overconfident, euphoric, saying you can do no wrong. You know you don’t experience advanced stages of *bhava* or *prema*, but in your acquired way you are perfectly worshipping Radha-Govinda. We may not expect the advanced state to occur in this lifetime. They are very rare. But you enjoy reading of Radharani going to Nandisvara and being embraced by Yasoda and the cowherd boys serving Krishna in His bathing and dressing. This is nectar to read, and to hear it touches the heart.

I’ve been having social remembrances and fantasies. Don’t want to indulge in it. I’m not going to write it out. Daylight savings time started today. We haven’t changed our clocks, so we will let it go until Saci brings breakfast. Saci’s daughter got her driver’s license, and he is going to buy her a car. Kirtana-rasa had a tough legal case defending a criminal, but it was settled by

the D.A. without a trial and everyone was satisfied. I haven't found the journal *that* useful yet, but I'm trying to confide in it and tell my story. I can reach out and find a memory.

6:19 p.m.

Talked on the phone with Haridasa. His daughter's wedding was last week. I'm here on a Sunday night. Muktavanya just filled my air humidifiers. I'm looking within, and I see a peaceful old man. He didn't attend the tenth annual meeting of leaders in Mayapura. He attends his solitary *bhajana* in the morning.

"Are you lonely?"

"No, I'm not. I have enough association with devotees. I like being alone. I like my own company, as Thoreau said. Haridasa's daughter married a U.S. Marine. Kirtana-rasa offered to bring me a comedy video. If I watch it, I will miss two nights of journal writing."

"Where are you going on your journey?"

"I'm going quietly in a gentle life of reading, writing, and relaxing. I rise early and chant Hare Krishna mantras (Baladeva is coming up the stairs). Push yourself into new areas in your journal. Baldwin advises: catch a memory and go with it. I visited Steve Kowit in his apartment on the Lower East Side. He introduced me to marijuana. I thought it was wonderful. I would always like to take it. And for a few years after the Navy I did. I stopped after my first evening attending the *kirtana* and lecture by Swamiji. Stopped all kinds of intoxication and illicit sex. My wonderful first year with the Swami. Yogesvara said I wrote *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta* 30 years ago, and the people will think about it differently now in their interest in Krishna consciousness. That doesn't mean his biography will replace *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. There is room for more telling of Srila Prabhupada."

Face the blank page.

"Are you retired?"

“I’m still active but retired from institutional life in ISKCON. I live alone in an *asrama* with two monks and sometimes a visitor. We share *Srimad-Bhagavatam* readings at lunch. Baladeva is the best cook. “Hare Krishna startles London.” The three *grhastha* couples Prabhupada sent there.

I have three minutes left. I did not delve into anything deeply. Writing along the surface but sometimes bobbing up with something from a depth. You were always shy with girls. Not sexually aggressive. I had my experience starting when I was 19 years old. Time to stop.

March 30

5:49 a.m.

Baldwin talks about memories and recording subjective feelings. After a painful experience we write our feelings and we confide in someone. Eventually we come to a synthesis where we are objectively real and reach a conclusion. My life is peaceful. Now, I have no shock of hurt feelings. The last tension I had was when I wrote my transparent letter in response to the other party’s letter to the GBC. That must be more than five years ago, and before that was the GBC’s banning of *Sanatorium*. My scars are visible but healed. I have a deep scar down my right forearm and a slight one on the forehead from 1968 when the plate glass window fell on my head.

6:10 a.m.

I scarcely remember being an elite member of the GBC and one of the 11 initiating gurus in ISKCON. For nine years we reigned in the zonal *acarya* system, until the grassroots movement took it down. I participated in the reform and wrote *Guru Reform Notebook*. Then I resigned from the GBC. For years I stayed in the thick of lecturing, but as a traveling *sannyasi*, with no control over temple management. Then I gradually started writing retreats and finally settled in Ireland for five years,

writing *Every Day, Just Write* and painting. I showed my paintings to my disciples at a Vyasa-puja meeting. Varuna said he thought they were *maya*. Many of them had hearts on them and alluded to my confession of my secret attachment. I don't know what happened to those paintings. Maybe Samika Rsi threw them out. I sent many love letters from a fax over a year. I was completely in *maya*. All that is over now. It's drifted far back in the wake of my ship. As Srila Prabhupada wrote in the *Jaladuta* diary. "The ship is plying peacefully now." A dog is barking nearby as I write this. I have picked out my selections from the *Gopala-campu* for tomorrow.

The ship is plying smoothly. No visitors expected. My mind is in concentration on journal writing. I can just free associate. During Brooklyn College years I would get up at 6:00 a.m., take a half-hour train ride to north of Staten Island and then a half-hour ferry ride to Manhattan, and then a half-hour subway ride to Brooklyn College. Same thing going home after classes. I lived in our family home, but I was estranged from my parents' middle class values. I studied for my courses and tried to get A's. I didn't have much social life except with many of the writers of *Landscape* magazine. I had to attend weekly evening meetings at the naval reserve building. Weekend beer drinking with Staten Island buddies. Going into active service for two years in the Navy was a Damocles' sword over my head, and then when it happened, it was like accepting a prison sentence. Now I'm living life of mostly solitude, active in writing and drawing.

March 12, 2013

12:26 p.m.

Looking at the radio I use to call the men downstairs. "Narayana, can you hear me on the radio?" "Coming." "Baladeva, can you hear me on the radio?" "I'm putting on my braces and I'll be up." Master and servant. They are my friends. I did my exercise this morning, worked out. My throat is

congested. I spoke on the phone with Lila-avatara. She's been bed ridden for months with the flu. She has stopped chanting her rounds, and calls herself "useless Lila-avatara." I told her she will come back, she will get better. I asked her husband Vishnu-aradhanam to take inventory of my books. He said he would do it and send the result to Sacisuta.

6:10 p.m.

"What memories were taboo in our family?"

"Father never told of his experiences in the Navy in World War II. No one spoke about sex or religion. We didn't discuss why daddy didn't go to Sunday Mass, but my sister and I were strictly obligated to go by my mother. We didn't discuss family finances. Father would tell us selected stories from the fire house. Then at 19, when I began my love affair with my college English professor, I kept it a complete secret even from my sister and my closest friends. I didn't share my taking drugs with my family. When I shared with them my following of Krishna consciousness and my spiritual master, I was rejected and disowned by them for life.

How do I feel about that? I accepted it. I thought I was like Narada Muni who was orphaned at five years old and took to renounced spiritual life. Swamiji didn't teach me to grieve for my parents' rejection of me. He told me he was my eternal father, and my other relationships were "immaterial." I made ISKCON my family.

Mother Kaulini had lunch with us today. She said they are having a five-day *kirtana-mela* in Mayapura, and she watched it live on the internet. She saw and heard Niranjana Swami and B. B. Govinda Maharaja lead *kirtana*. I am removed from all that although I like to hear about it. I have a transcript of a lecture Bhurijana gave in Mayapura. Haridasa told me there was a meeting of *sannayasis* and senior leaders, and everyone reported on what they are doing. I'm telling my story on the website. It has been raining all day, temperature at 53 degrees. Maybe there will be no more snow. I await the spring weather and hearing

the birds chirping at dawn while I'm in my *bhajana-kutira*. Keep your heart open, and love will find a way in, says the maker of heart design jewelry. Am I keeping my heart open? Yes, to my few friends and to Krishna. Lila-avatara asked if our relationship was eternal. I said yes, but she said then it ends when we go to the spiritual world and we have a relationship with Krishna. I told her of the songs of the *acaryas* who yearn to serve their spiritual master in their spiritual form, assisting Radha-Krishna. I hope to serve Srila Prabhupada in the spiritual world. That would be nice! Or maybe I have to return to the material world. Can he be my guru again? I want to keep the connection with Prabhupada.

March 13, 2013

12:30 p.m.

I want to keep up my connection to Prabhupada. I'm one of his disciples. I'm obligated to him for pulling me out of material well/hell. He wants me to preach. I'm doing it in cyberspace and by publishing books. I just wrote a memo to so and so who wants me to be his *diksa-guru*. I told him the GBC forbade me.

6:10 p.m.

I have my manuscript of Volume Two of *The Story of My Life*, over 400 pages, ready to turn over to Sacisuta for production. I hope he will take care of it and move it along. It is not as catchy as volume one, but I think it is a good read.

I'm looking at a photo of little Radha-Kalacandji, the Deities I took from Dallas and placed at the altar at Gita-Nagari. For a year now they have been returned to Dallas. Gita-nagari didn't have enough devotees to worship them. I read Bhurijana's lecture that he gave in Mayapura. It was ecstatic, about Maharaja Pariksit praying that if he had to be born again he wanted devotion to the unlimited Lord, the association of devotees, and

friendship to all living beings. He spoke with reference to Jiva Gosvami's *Gopala-campu*, and about Akrura bringing Krishna from Vrndavana to Mathura, etc. At the end the audience applauded. He said, "I was empty. If anything good came out it was due to your association."

I was just interrupted in writing. I had to review Gurudasa's illustrations to the web. We are going to miss a day on the website because our computer is being repaired. The ship is still plying smoothly. My back is against the chair.

Saci is going with his son tomorrow to watch Syracuse University play baseball in Madison Square Garden. I don't know if it's a good day to give him the manuscript. He read to me in the morning from Caitanya-caritamṛta about the confidential reasons for Lord Caitanya's descent. Next, we'll read about the advent. Slowly getting ready to give my lecture on March 26th. I think I'll write out some notes from an outline and review them. I just give a few lectures a year at festival times. I'll give a simple devotional talk on the mercy of Lord Caitanya and chanting of Hare Krishna in the age of Kali. Glorify Him, don't bite off more than you can chew. Talk about how easy it is to attain God consciousness in this age. Someone will be in the audience with his wife, *grhasthas* with their children and maybe some yogis. Give a good vintage SDG lecture on chanting Hare Krishna and how Lord Caitanya brought it. You can also mention He is Krishna in the mood of Radharani.

March 14, 2013

12:06 p.m.

I took Excedrin for a headache. It is cold out today. I was also weak in my exercises this morning. We are behind in posting the website. I can be patient. The manuscript for Volume Two of the autobiography is well over 400 pages. I will take some of it out. The journal is an act of discovering yourself. Last night I discussed that I want to lecture "on chanting Hare Krishna" for my Gaura Purnima lecture. *Sikṣastaka* tells the glories of the

holy name. It cleanses the mirror of the mind and is the life of transcendental knowledge. It increases the ocean of bliss and gives us the taste for what we are anxious. You have invested all Your energies in Your holy name. There are no hard and fast rules for chanting. You are offering esoteric knowledge of chanting, but I am so unfortunate that I commit offenses to chanting, and therefore I cannot taste the nectar. The first offense is to blaspheme devotees who are spreading the glories of the name. The second offense is to treat the names of the demigods as equal to the chanting of the holy names. The third offense is to disobey the order of the spiritual master. He gives us the holy name, and if we reject his advice and his order, it is an offense to the holy name. The fourth offense is to blaspheme the Vedic literature or literature in pursuance of the Vedic version. The fifth offense is to consider the glories of the holy name to be imagination. The sixth offense is to make some speculative interpretation of the holy name. The seventh offense is to commit sins on the strength of the chanting of Hare Krishna. The eighth offense is to consider the chanting to be some pious religious act. It is transcendental. The ninth offense is to teach the glories of the holy name to the faithless. The tenth offense is to maintain material attachments while chanting the holy name, even after hearing so many instructions on the matter. It is also offensive to be inattentive while chanting. One must be careful to guard against these offenses or he cannot get the result of chanting – *krishna-prema*.

6:10 p.m.

I've decided to lecture on the ten offenses on Gaura Purnima, but first I'll give a big introduction. I'll say in order to know Lord Caitanya you have to know Lord Krishna. For that you have to study the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* are non-sectarian. They accept the authority of the Bible, the Koran and Lord Buddha. Different *avatars* appear. The *Vedas* are like the unabridged dictionary. Mention different books in the *Vedas*. Say *Bhagavad-gita* is widely accepted as the jewel of spiritual wisdom. Krishna is the speaker. He teaches the path of *karma*, *jnana*, *yoga* and

bhakti. In each case He says the goal is to reach Him. In *Srimad-Bhagavatam* also, Krishna is established as the original person, the source of Lord Vishnu. Once we accept Lord Krishna, it is easy to know Lord Caitanya. In the 11th canto it is stated, in the age of Kali, Krishna will appear, but He will not be blackish. He will be always chanting Hare Krishna, and He will appear with His associates. And in the authorized biography of Lord Caitanya, *Caitanya-caritamṛta*, it is described that Krishna appeared 500 years ago in a disguised form as a pure devotee of Krishna, but His confidential associates knew Him to be Krishna Himself. He appeared to teach the *dharma* of the age, the congregational chanting of the names of God. He taught that the age of Kali is so detrimental spiritually that no other practice like meditation, study of *Vedānta* or yoga could by itself liberate a person from birth or death. But in this bad age, God has made a special dispensation: simply by chanting His names without offense one can attain love of God. Lord Caitanya took part in long, ecstatic *kīrtanas* in which He manifested all the symptoms of ecstasy. Simply by seeing Him people became transformed into devotees of Krishna. Lord Caitanya wrote only eight verses, called the *Sikṣastaka*, about chanting. And He commissioned His followers, the six Gosvamis of Vrndavana, to write books on the science of *bhakti*. In *Sikṣastaka* He writes, “One should chant the holy name of God in a humble state of mind...” He also writes, “Oh my Lord, You have made Yourself completely available in Your holy names, and there are no hard and fast rules in chanting. You have invested Your full potency in Your holy names, but unfortunate as I am, I commit offenses in chanting, and therefore I do not taste the nectar.” In the scriptures it is described that there are offenses in chanting and that one should guard against them or he will not get the fruit of the chanting.

Then I’ll go through the ten offenses. I’ll add inattention in chanting and say how important this is. We can chant in *kīrtana* and privately on beads in *japa*. Lord Caitanya practiced both

forms, and we are very happy to honor Him on His appearance day.

I'm writing down the lecture on a legal pad, and I'll try to memorize it. It will be a good introductory talk on Lord Caitanya's mission. I won't even mention the confidential reasons for His advent and the mad, ecstatic demonstrations in the Gambhira.

March 15, 2013

3:50 a.m.

I just finished my poem. The website isn't functioning properly right now due to technical difficulties. It will shortly be corrected. I'll write out some more of my lecture today, then I'll be free to write something else in the journal tonight. I'm interested in Saci taking over the manuscript of Volume Two of the autobiography. He has to clean the manuscript, then turn it over to one of his proofreaders.

6:12 p.m.

I'm sitting at the desk for journal writing. Kaulini and Danistha came for lunch today. Narayana was angry at me when he came up early in the morning. He doesn't like to do menial chores. Baladeva said his vocational disposition is to be a valet. The Catholic Church elected the new pope, a man from Argentina who is 76 years old. There are many problems in the church. ISKCON has had its problems too. But they are celebrating a *kirtana-mela* in Mayapura. I'm still writing my Gaura Purnima lecture.

I can't think of anything to write. Had a strange dream in my after lunch nap about a highly talented couple who were making films of their children in very sophisticated activities. One of the little ones was caught eating crayons, and their parents were very concerned. Every afternoon bizarre dreams until 4:00 p.m. I started a surreal drawing by placing four elves with *tilaka* in the left-hand corner. Tomorrow, to music, I will improvise big

figures in the right. Maybe starting with a big elf. In my dream, a couple said they were studying Norwegian mythology which was superior to what was studied by the psychiatrist in Vienna. If I could only dream of Krishna, like the pastimes in *Gopala-campu*. That would be spiritual dreaming, to see Krishna and His friends and cows, playing the flute and teasing the *gopis*.

But I never dream of the spiritual world. Occasionally I have a dream of Srila Prabhupada which is very nice. Most of my dreams are concocted fantasies of material life in bizarre scenarios. Does the new pope dream of Jesus Christ? Does he dream of his life as a priest in Argentina? Are the life of REM dreams, illusions within the illusion of my material life?

“Are you in the illusion of material life?”

“Well, I don’t believe my body is myself. I am not in that illusion. I’m enlightened about the eternal soul and the Supersoul, the identity of God in my heart. I perceive the soul and Supersoul by my intelligence, guided by guru, *sastra* and *sadhu*. I’m intellectually convinced of this, but have my taste of realization experience as Krishna’s eternal servant. I accept it from *Bhagavad-gita* and *Caitanya-caritamrta*. He who knows the spirit soul in his relationship to Krishna doesn’t suffer from *maya*. My eyes are heavy, and I have three minutes to go. The Supersoul gives me guidance as my conscience and as Krishna’s standing from within. He gives me intelligence and determination to serve Him. He helps me see that everyone is serving Krishna.

March 16, 2013

6:13 p.m.

I remember leaving the house at 125 Katan Avenue and looking back at my father and mother and feeling they didn’t know me or love me. I think by that time I had already experienced expanded consciousness on drugs. It was an empty, helpless feeling looking back at them and thinking they were

only pretending to be concerned and that their vision was very shallow. For many years it had been the opposite. I had looked up to them with full trust and accepted their authority. Gradually, the generation gap occurred. When I went to the junior college and came under the influence of two intellectual professors, the gap with my parents broke apart. I wanted to become an intellectual, like Dr. Alexander and Dr. Pessen, and I saw my parents as anti-intellectuals, stuck in middle-class values. The relationship then ceased to have depth, and I always had psychological warfare with them. Still, at 17 years old my father had such influence over me that he convinced me to sign up for reserve officer candidate and go for six weeks training in the summer at Newport, Rhode Island. I passed the exams but refused to go back for the second summer. Then I had to go into two years of active service as a sailor after college. What an anomaly for me! I could have avoided the whole military experience if I had just stayed in college and entered the master's degree program. I felt it molded me, and I resented it. At least I avoided war experience and didn't have to go to Vietnam. After the Navy I didn't even return home but went directly to the Lower East Side and rented an apartment in the slums. I was on my own at last. But that turned out to be not so happy. After several years of surviving, writing, and smoking pot, I met the Swami and entered spiritual life. That meant my history was changed completely, and I have never stopped being a disciple of Srila Prabhupada and a member of ISKCON.

As a Krishna conscious person I believe I am not the body; I am a spirit soul, a part and parcel of Krishna. I believe I am in a most prestigious position and that I have obligations to present Krishna consciousness to the world. I refrain from sinful activities, and I chant 16 rounds of *japa* a day.

March 17

6:19 p.m.

I just had an accident in the bathroom. I cleaned it up and

came to the journal. I finished writing my Gaura Purnima lecture, and now I'll study it. I'm not in the mindset for journaling. I have a colored pen point. You can just say anything. Yogesvara is giving the Sunday Love Feast lecture right now in Alachua, Florida. He's there to give a seminar in *Isopanisad*. My frequent lecturing days are over. I don't want to do it. I prefer to write. Ramila and her husband Yasoda-dulala are coming on March 17th and staying for a month. They will miss my lecture, the only one I'll give while they are here. They can help in the *kirtana* in the evening. The husband is a sculptor. We'll get him some art supplies. They are used to the association of Vrndavana and Mayapura, like the twin *pujaris* and a *sannyasi*, and the GBCs who live and visit there. I haven't much to say beyond the daily poem. I write it. I hope it will be saved. I keep going, drawing and journaling and going to bed at 7:00 p.m.

We'll manage to find time together. I can convey to her that I'm at a very happy time of my life if people would just cooperate with me in my book printing and read my writings.

Krishna is very kind to me. I had pneumonia. Went to the hospital twice. The second time it was just bronchitis, and my pneumonia had been subdued.

March 18, 2013

10:16 a.m.

Saci wasn't available for exercises this morning. Muktavanya suggested we go to the gym and do exercises ourselves at 8:30 a.m. At 8:40 Baladeva came up and caught me dozing. He suggested I go back to bed or rest in the La-Z-Boy chair and take a nap. I dreamt I was in New Dorp, Staten Island, although I lived in Great Kills. I wanted to go to college, but I had missed my morning class. Then I realized I wasn't enrolled in college. Then I walked into a wall of fresh white paint and ruined my top coat and pants. I asked a young man for 50 cents to take the train home to Great Kills, but he gave me five cents. I lamented

my plight and gradually realized I was dreaming and woke up with a headache. It was a nightmare of anxiety.

EVENING SESSION

Baldwin writes about the inner child. She wants to record memories of childhood and create dialogue between the adult self and the inner child. I was short and skinny, never physically strong. My father was away in World War II when I was two years old until five years old. My mother was lonely and took care of us. I was little Stevie. My aunt Mary teased me and called me “lover boy.” I was shy. I see a photograph of me and my sister, Madeline, two years older than I. I am a very little boy with straight blond hair and a sweet smile. I suck my thumb. My mother wrote it into her baby book: “He is a thumb sucker,” and I chewed my finger nails even when I was in my 20s. Why did I do it? Was I so afraid or insecure? Poor little Stevie, he was afraid of dogs until uncle Sal gave him a puppy, Mickey, who lived 14 years. I was afraid of rough older kids. When I walked on the street I was relieved to see if the guy approaching me was with a girl, then he’d be less likely to attack me. But I don’t remember being beat up by bullies. Maybe I was. I was a coward. I’d back down from a fight. I don’t remember being breast-fed, maybe I wasn’t. I don’t remember being coddled.

“What do you want, inner child?”

“I want to be protected by my father. He’s a strong man.”

“Didn’t he always protect you?”

“Yes, he did. But when I was a teenager I didn’t want his protection anymore. He became overbearing.”

“Did you have a happy childhood?”

“Yes, I did. My parents didn’t fight, and they didn’t beat us except occasional spankings. I received plenty of toys and time to play. I did all right in the lower grades except I had a tendency to hang out with the trouble makers, not the good boys. This continued in high school, and as a result, I got low

grades and couldn't get into the college of my choice. I wanted to be accepted by the rebels up to that point."

"When did you start masturbating?"

"As soon as I reached puberty, at age 14. I did it frequently. I didn't lose my virginity until I was 19."

"What about the inner child, is he still alive in me, what does he need from me?"

"He's sorry they made him a Boy Scout. He didn't like that. The Cub Scouts was all right. I didn't like the Boy Scout meetings and going to summer camp."

"I can't seem to see you, inner child, but I'll keep writing to you and ask you if you want to come out or how I can help you."

March 19, 2013

5:23 a.m.

I just read the birth of Krishna in *Gopala-campu*. Balarama appeared first from Rohini, He was brilliant white. There was a little delay while waiting for Krishna to appear, but then He arrived on schedule. Both boys had their horoscopes read, and it was predicted they would kill the demons and protect the pious. They gave bliss to everyone as Krishna and Balarama.

5:28 a.m.

I'm writing early. The inner child, self parent doesn't grab me for dialogue. I can't go back and be that little boy, I don't know what his needs are. My parents were controlling me, and I was malleable. Once I was punished and had to stand in a corner. My mother forgot me, and I stayed there a long time. They used to tell this as a humorous family story. I don't remember what I was thinking, standing in that corner. Sometimes daddy spanked you and you cried. Did you learn your lesson? Were you angry at them? Did you and your sister have conspiracies against them?

Only much later, as I remember. I remember my sister telling me that an older woman's breasts were disgusting. This was when she had developed breasts and was expressing her dislike of our mother. She was daddy's little girl. She liked olives, and he praised her for that. I hated olives. She ate better than I did. I didn't make "the clean plate club," I didn't finished eating my food. I liked bread and butter. Father tried to teach me how to swim by holding me up in the water. I was slow to learn. They discovered that Madeline had a heart murmur, I felt sorry for her, but it didn't seem to affect her much. She became a cheerleader in high school. She teased me that I was afraid of my friend, Alvin Galter, she said "the truth hurts." I thought she said that because someone hurt her with the truth about her. I *was* afraid of Alvin Galter because he could beat me up. Once I had a quarrel with my boyhood pals, Billy and Alvin, and they turned against me. Billy came to our house and asked me to come out. Then he proposed that we walk into the woods. I knew Alvin was waiting there, and he would scare me and maybe beat me up, so I left Billy and went back into the house. I was too smart for them. Mostly we played nicely. Little child, what do you remember?

"I had a nightmare and woke up scared to be alone. I went down to my parents' bedroom and they let me sleep between them. That was nice. Once I was thinking of Jesus Christ and hell. I wondered whether Jesus would let someone hold a hot pressing iron against my body. I decided he wouldn't let it happen. I kept a picture of him as a boy teaching the elders in the synagogue. I wrote 'love' and 'true' on the picture."

"Do you have any bad memories?"

"Once mommy and daddy had a fight. They settled it by taking us out to have hamburgers."

"Were you mistreated by your parents?"

"I experienced that only when I went to junior college. I became an aspiring intellectual and saw them as anti-intellectuals."

“Write about something else.”

“There was heavy snowfall today, but it was 38 degrees and melted on the roads. Gaura Purnima is coming soon. I have memorized the English translation to *Bhagavad-gita* 6.47. I am getting ready for my speech. Writing in the journal, I don’t have much direction. The inner child has some dialogue. I will try to write more on it. My parents were displeased with my high school grades. I was a ‘C’ student and failed to get into Brooklyn College. I went to the newly opened Staten Island Community College and was humiliated. But I had two great professors as good or better than any I had at Brooklyn College.

I’m looking forward to the spring. I’ll do the same things I do now, writing my daily poem, relax, chant my rounds silently.

“Do you think you should chant out loud?”

“I used to be afraid it would provoke stress and headaches. That doesn’t seem so likely now. Prabhupada said we should hear our own chanting, but I am now conditioned to chanting in my own mind, and I think that I do it attentively. It’s faster that way. It’s what I like. I’ll try a little experimenting with vocal *japa*.”

“Why don’t you associate more with your Godbrothers?”

“I live apart and don’t want to travel. I don’t miss it. I like my own company.”

“Are you cheating yourself by this?”

“I don’t think I am. Srila Prabhupada and the *acaryas* are with me by reading his books.”

“Are you proud, too esoteric?”

“I don’t think I am proud. I’m not isolated. I think I want to stop now and look at *Gopala-campu*.”

March 20, 2013

6:09 p.m.

Narayana and I are getting along all right, but he’s moody and

sometimes gets angry with me. Baladeva says Narayana sometimes needs to take a vacation and go to Mexico where he has two people who will wait on him as servants. He needs a lot of solitude. Baladeva is fixing the door to the barn. My Deities' water cups are missing. I have a few people in my life, mostly disciples. You need to have some friends. I don't feel lacking, although I have few relationships. I manage to say something about my 'little life' in a few stanzas of a daily poem. I write about my *japa* in my poem stanzas twice. I write when I can remember it, what they read from *Srimad-Bhagavatam* at lunchtime. Today, he read that we should stick to the feet, first two cantos of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, the lotus feet of the Lord, until we are free from sex desire. We should not jump to the *rasa* dance. Sukadeva is describing meditation on the Lord in the heart who is eight inches high. He describes Him in detail, His clothing, His hair, His smile. He is the most beautiful form. The impersonalist denies this personal form; they worship the effulgent rays emanating from His body. One can meditate on the Deity form in the temple. I could write about today's reading in "The Lord in the Heart" chapter in my poem tomorrow.

More snow and cold. When is it going to end? Write about your friends in your journal. It's self-centered. There is a small Buddha in the snow in front of Saci's house, and a Buddha head in the backyard under a tree. Keli-lalita put them there for ambience to their yoga studio. I have my Gaura Purnima lecture managed; I keep going over it in my mind. I hope Ramila and Yasoda-dulala will be here for our celebration.

I don't know if TJ is coming tomorrow for yoga class. He should have phoned by now. I'll do exercise with Saci in the morning. The next-door dog is outside barking. We give them weekly cookies to keep him inside, "Operation Hush Puppy."

We have been listening to Sonny Rollins during the massage. I'm not writing the journal for self-awareness. Baladeva is very dear to me. He's a loving person. He has health and mental

issues. He acts like a clown, teases me, and jokes with me. “I’m your best man,” he says. He has a tattoo, “Property of Satsvarupa Gosvami” with a dog’s choke collar around. “That’s a real commitment,” he says. I haven’t spoken with Giriraja Swami in a long time. We are distant friends, but we respect each other. We don’t have a guest room for people like him. People are coming up to this room and disturbing me while I try to write. My night meds are here. I will go to bed soon. I like to wake up early, before midnight, but I usually don’t. That’s okay. Make notes about people in your life and how you feel about them. Sacisuta is a very busy family man and businessman. He spends so much time with his son. But I don’t demand too much. He’s supposed to manage GN Press, but I don’t know if he knows how much he’s involved in it. Narayana doesn’t want to do it. Hare Krishna. This has been a rambling session. I wanted to keep it up and write for self-awareness.

March 21, 2013

6:13 p.m.

Writing for self-awareness. I am self-centered in the journal. Little Kaulini got her new car today. She’ll be driving to school and taking her siblings. Saci said we can have a press meeting Monday. I will make a list of topics. Baladeva is borrowing \$1,000 from me to pay for changing Ramila’s and Yasoda’s airplane tickets so they can stay two months. Ramila is a sweet disciple who feels some love for me. I’ll get to know her better while she’s here. Writing my life in solitude. I’m not like the pope, a man with many managerial duties. I am like a retired monk. I write my website, and I write a book per year. Who am I? Ten pounds overweight. I can’t walk much because of my bad left ankle. I aspire to go back to Godhead, Goloka Vrndavana, and I keep hearing Srila Prabhupada say we should try for that and that it is possible. I may not make it, and I will accept that. Like Maharaja Pariksit I pray that if I have to be born again, I can have devotion for the unlimited Lord,

association with devotees, and friendliness to all living entities. I need the *rasa-sastras* about devotion to Radharani for the pleasure of Krishna, and I am attached. We shall see. I'm posting *Gopala-campu* and liking it very much. It's a long book. I did both exercises and yoga today and feel it was okay.

Baladeva wears his leg brace outside of his pants. He says he doesn't mind because he was in a wheelchair when he was eight years old. He needs help in running this *asrama* and will have it in two months. I'm going to continue to wear saffron yogi pants and not my *sannyasa* uniform. I find those clothes too awkward and uncomfortable. I'll wear the uniform on Gaura Purnima. The pope has to wear his uniform. The pope emeritus can wear simple robes. I don't like ecclesiastical formality, the ISKCON temple morning program. I like my private worship of Radha-Govinda. It is still cold, in the 30s. Who am I? A journal keeper. I write down my thoughts. "It's just something to write about," said Baladeva when he interrupted my writing to ask me for \$1,000. Something to write about.

I used to confess my sins to the priest on Saturday, and after my prayers I would go up to the front altar and kneel down and say extra Our Fathers and Hail Marys. Then I would feel clean and receive holy communion the next day at Mass. "Make a good act of contrition," "... I fear the loss of heaven and the pains of hell." I promised "to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin." Little Catholic boy. Received confirmation. Got a little slap on the face from the bishop as symbolic of the punishment I would endure to stick up for being faithful to the church. Those were innocent years. My faith crumbled when I went to college. I followed the atheists like Bertrand Russell and Albert Camus.

March 22, 2013

3:52 a.m.

Keeping a journal for self-awareness. I want to know who I am. I am a 73-year-old Hare Krishna person who has paid his

dues and has a fall down on his record. Radhanatha Swami said I am not a stainless *sannyasi*, but I am much loved in the movement. I'm an old-timer, an old fart. I have my wits about me and relish *rasa*. I like my friends whom I share this house with. I'm settled but not stagnant. I work out on physical exercise with my trainer Sacisuta. I am cared for by caretakers. I take medicine. I don't take walks. I chant silently in my mind. I listen to *Srimad-Bhagavatam* at lunch and during my breakfast.

6:07 a.m.

Rules and beliefs. I live by them. I am comfortable with them. I accepted the rules and beliefs of Krishna consciousness. Four rules and 16 rounds. I have rules in my private life where I demand a lot of solitude for protection so people don't intrude on me. Now I've taken on more privacy by keeping this journal. It's supposed to be helping me be self-aware by writing down how I really feel about things and people. But I'm not doing it so much by the book. I've given up the rules required for living in the temple. I don't want to impose them on me. The obligation to go to the morning program doesn't fit me anymore. I have my own morning program. I believe fully in Krishna and Srila Prabhupada. I'm following him in a different way than when he was here, but I am still following him. He is my master. He rules my life. I follow the spirit of the law, not always the letter. For example, I don't wear *sannyasa* clothes, but saffron cotton, yogi pants, T-shirt, and orange hoodie. That's my personal dress.

I like my life in this house. Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishna-loka. But with chanting I have no connection. So laments Bhaktivinoda Thakura. Hardly tasted the nectar of *harinama*. He wrote his *Saranagati* from feelings of *dainya*, or unworthiness. But then he expresses full surrender to the lotus feet of Radha-Krishna. He's a great master. "Day and night I've been living in this dark world without seeking to make the connection." In the song, *Gopinatha*, he calls himself a fool and mad, but he asks the mercy of Gopinatha. The *gopis* of Krishna, without reservation, they gave everything to become His

maidservants. They are very dear to Him. They are mad after Krishna and take all who risks to be with Him. I believe in Krishna and the *gopis*. I am not qualified to practice *raganuga sadhana-bhakti*, but I read the *rasika* books and worship the Deities of Radha and Krishna. These are the rules and help I live by. I worship Radha and Krishna, as the Divine Couple, and I offer them incense and compose a stanza that I post on the web. It is my belief that the Deity is not a brass idol but Radha-Krishna. They are accessible to me as also in their names Hare Krishna, Hare Rama. I am a nectar hound.

Rules and beliefs. Don't tread on me. Hideout journals. He lives on the fringes of ISKCON, practicing his self-styled *sadhana*. Krishna is in my heart. From him comes knowledge, remembrance, and forgetfulness. He is the speaker of *Bhagavad-gita* and says *bhakti* is the only way to reach Him. He is the Supreme Lord. Srila Prabhupada is the intimate servitor. Because Srila Prabhupada is the confidential servant of Krishna, I worship him as good as God. My Vyasa-puja was in the yoga studio. Srila Prabhupada has given us these gifts. I ask to be kept in a corner of his heart.

I live by the rules and regulation. Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishna-loka, and with chanting I do have the connection, but I could chant better, not just trying to get the rounds done. I will try to do better tomorrow.

March 23, 2013

6:28 p.m.

My journal writing time taken up by Gurudasa and his computer. This will be an abbreviated session. Gaura Purnima is coming soon. I have my lecture managed. I want to practice self-awareness through the journal. Why not? A neophyte and accomplished veteran devotee, a devotee of sorts. Baladeva is cooking like mad for different persons. My mommy took care of me while daddy was away in World War II. He never talked about it. We were glad when he came home.

He tried to give my mother another child, but it was a miscarriage. I was playing on the street and saw daddy come out of the building holding mommy in his arms. The relatives, the neighbors, took care of me.

It's very windy out and cold. The house is filling up. Gurudasa doesn't have my dictation for today. The machine is on my desk. I'm 73 years old. The pope, newly elected, is 76. You can be active in old age. I rowed for eight minutes this morning. Hare Krishna mantras should be chanted without offense and then one can go back to Godhead. The *namabhāsa* stage is good, but chant without offense, don't criticize devotees of God. The Catholic Church is dwindling but strong in some places. The two Queens men just came over to say goodbye. A dog is barking. I have to urinate. Baladeva has to take the money out of the safe to pay for Ramila's plane ticket. I'm drawing steadily, nice colors, they go on the web. I want to print them by photography later. Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishna-loka. I do have connection. Dogs are a nuisance, and cats are killers. I don't watch them anymore. I don't watch TV anymore, I write in the journal. Become self-aware, ask yourself questions, write your way clear of confusion. Give up all beliefs that you don't need anymore. Saci's basketball team in which his son plays, they root for Syracuse University.

March 24, 2013

6:13 A journal for self-awareness

Hridayananda Maharaja has written a public letter that he is retiring from lecturing. It's not good for his health. Now he will devote himself to writing, and he can reach more people that way. Good idea Maharaja, welcome to the club. Become a writer. But here I am not writing for an audience. I am writing to express myself, get to know myself better. Yogesvara Prabhu gives lectures to the yoga students. He plugs into *Bhagavad-gita*, has the students chant a verse in Sanskrit and starts to explain the verses and some of Prabhupada's purport. But then he goes out on a limb and tells seemingly unrelated stories. Reads a

children's book and then he winds up with the *Gita* again. Sometimes they don't quite weave, but he holds their attention, and it's fascinating material. I talk of my simple life. Tell us again how Baladeva works so hard to cook on his own Food for Life program. He asked, "Is giving *prasadam* 'planting the seed' of devotional service, and so it has to be offered by a pure devotee?" He says he prays to Lord Caitanya when he offers the food, "Please let it plant the seed." I told him his presentation is potent medicine for the conditioned soul. For persons who do not want to take to the devotional practices, eating *prasadam* can melt their heart and make them receptive to render service to Krishna by chanting, hearing, etc. Kirtana-rasa massaged me today and said my left arm was more relaxed than my right. He said it's because the writing is pretty much of a strain on my right arm. Sorry, brother right arm, but you have to take on the stress for us. I was in pain, and it tones up the wrist and forearm. I write my words. Haridasa is going to send me a book he's reading, *Easy to Remember*, by William Zinsser. It's about the American songwriters from the 1930s to the 1960s, and how they composed songs that touched peoples' hearts. I would like to hear more how to touch peoples' hearts and maybe give you Krishna in fine writing. Writing your life's story with summary studies of your books and writing excerpts from the journal. Rush and print. It's still your private world. You share some of it with others, "Thank you, thank you," says Sonny Rollins to the night club audience. "Now we are going to play a tune that many artists play. It's a version of 'I'll Remember April.'" And out of it comes bebop with Elvin Jones on drums. The world is an interesting place. We are attempting to work the Dragon System technology where you dictate and a machine can type from your voice. You have to train it to know your voice and your special vocabulary. In advance, you can give your machine a dictionary of special words like "*bhakti*" and "Caitanya." We'll try it. The right hand may have to continue its work in the journal.

"How is the world?"

I think that it's all right. Today, I said KR's son was a spoiled brat. Gurudasa said maybe I was a brat too as a child. I said "not like that." He agreed, knowing my father was rather strict. He said to me, "In this family you are just a dog wagging its tail." In other words, don't get too big for your boots, don't try to dominate, just be the cheerleader.

March 25, 2013

6:10 p.m. The day before Gaura Purnima

I spoke 32 minutes on the phone with Haridasa yesterday. Yogesvara mailed me his book about Dacca trials. I am writing my journal. Kalki dasa sent me two necklaces for Radha-Govinda. Each morning I offer Them incense and compose a little poem. We had a press meeting today. I'm going to try working with the Dragon technology that changes voice dictations into typed copy. Be patient with the learning curve. My inner voice says speak.

"Remember when you did vigorous free writing sessions? You were able to write faster, and you let the words pour out. No more can you do that."

"Remember when you took three- to four-week writing sessions at retreats and kept diaries and wrote timed books? That took more energy and time than you have now."

"Remember your vigorous morning walks? They were delightful in the country. Now your arthritic ankle won't let you walk."

"Remember when you free wrote on the IBM Selectric and then immediately dictating it, deciphering all the errors? I no longer have the Selectric and don't know the keyboards."

"I still have energy to compile volumes, summary studies of *The Story of My Life* and writing assignments from *The Practice of Writing Memoir*. I will produce a book this year. It's already written and the rough manuscript is being scanned, and then

made into copies for me and for proofreaders. *Prabhupada-smaranam* is being reprinted in India, other books too. Producing literature is the driving force for a person. It's the first duty for a person in the renounced order. Then holding lectures and talks among the devotees. The air humidifier is drifting smoke up to my face. The Germans were extremely sadistic in the holocaust. There is no snow on the ground, I am passive and receiving guests and writing. On Facebook, 3,200 people "liked" my posting. That's a lot of friends in cyberspace. I gave Saci my drawings to photograph. He said he liked them. Prema-bhakti has picked out 30 of the paintings that they photographed that they would like to make prints of. I'm steadily drawing from a limited, repetitive repertoire. I keep it up, varying the colors and figures. I can't work the iPad to turn on Yogesvara's lectures. Everyone is getting some more advice. Will you read the book by Yogesvara on Dacca? At least start it.

Gurudasa took pictures of my press meeting. I didn't even notice him. Saci is doing his job. He's working with Nitai and Caitanya-candrodaya. Keli-lalita will do proofreading. I am somewhat self-aware but want to use the journal to bring out more expressions of memories, self questioning, etc.

March 27, 2013

6:20 p.m.

Journal writing is hampered by festivals and guests. I chant *japa* very early in the morning in my mind and in a whisper. I don't pray much but race against the clock. It's not so good, but it's also holy; I know I'm chanting the names of God. I stopped reading *Justice at Dacca*. I will write to Yogesvara and tell him the accounts of sadistic torture and killing in the concentration camps is too heavy for me, but I'll tell him I like his lectures. I'm

writing this with a crooked pen. I finished a drawing today but did not start a new one. Overall, I have to average one a day if I'm going to publish one a day at the website. I can't read through the horrors of the holocaust, I'm sorry. I prefer to read *Gopala-campu*. Gurudasa was sent home. I'm an author of books and now a writer of summary studies of my books. Gurudasa has been taking up my time. I lectured on Sri Krishna Caitanya and they said it was good. Dhanurdhara Swami is back and Rama Raya is here, and they are having a *keirtana* with Baladeva.

Krishna consciousness is being practiced all over the world by various of varieties of ways. Prabhupada accepted many kinds of offerings. I bring him a literary gift in a daily poem, a new book per year, and reporting of my old books. They have to freshen up the format of my website page. I wanted Janardana to do it, but Caitanya-candrodaya wants to do it. But can he do it? Torture of human beings is inhuman. It had never been done on such a massive, scientific scale until the Nazi death camps. They don't want to forget it, but I can't read it. Narayana leaves today for Mexico. He says he doesn't want to go, but he's in the process of trying to sell his houses. I believe he'd rather stay here.

My inner child was protected from horror, but we went to play in the rough streets of Queens up till the age of eight. A boy named Harold made us take off our clothes, and he made toasts in the oven. My mother didn't want me to play with him. When I was a boy I had a birthday party, and she told Harold he couldn't come. She said, "We don't have enough chairs." Harold replied, "I'll bring my own chair." That became a famous Guarino family story. I wrote about Grandpa's death in a short story, *In Brooklyn Snow*. It won a 25 dollar prize. My mother liked the way I portrayed her as lady-like among the rougher Italian relatives. It was somewhat sentimental, but it captured the inner memoir.

March 28, 2013

Rama Raya is here, but I've been avoiding him. Also avoiding

Dhanurdhara Swami. I protect my solitude. I wrote to Yogesvara and told him I'm listening to his lectures but had to stop reading his book about the holocaust. I told him it gave me nightmares and conscious horror reveries. I hope I don't disappoint him, but it's too much for me to take. I offer obeisances to those who went to the death camps, who died there, or survived to tell their stories, and I offer my respects to those who are keeping the memory alive, writing books about it. But I don't think it's my *dharmā* to read it.

6:15 p.m.

I'm writing with a Sheaffer fountain pen that Ramila and Yasoda gave me. Rama Raya served me milk and read to me, but I didn't invite him to stay and talk. I wanted to write. I have weaknesses in my body that will eventually cause me to die. Now I have trouble urinating. Narayana said the cure is to eat asparagus with four cans of Coca-cola. Want to try? The pen could be used for drawing. What is self-awareness? Being aware of different sub-persons within you and letting them speak and synthesizing their voices. No, I'm not interested in that. I look down into the clear water and see my reflection. Narcissus. He thought he was beautiful. He was cursed to suffer a great loss.

They took photos of me lecturing. I told the ten offenses in chanting. I'm still waiting to get back my copies of the manuscript of Volume Two of *The Story of My Life*. The siren just went off at the firehouse. Writing with blue ink. I have to keep the page dry. Rain won't ruin the page. You will put your head down tonight on the pillow. Sweet bizarre dreams. He woke on time to chant his rounds, but he did it very slowly. Wasn't satisfied. My father wore a fireman's helmet. I wore the white sailor's hat. I don't hold long conversations. R. was demanding conversations at length. Ramila and Yasoda told of the earthquake in New Zealand. Grieving. I never witnessed one. I've seen hurricanes and snowstorms. Obama gets criticized. He has to work with a Republican Congress. I didn't eat my chocolate energy bar today. Baladeva said he will make spinach

dal and *puris*. I did exercise with Saci today. He works me out. Hare Krishna mantra makes you happy. He says you should chant constantly. I only chant 16 rounds. You are not writing journal sessions to bring out self-awareness, just going with what sentences comes to mind.

March 29, 6:15 p.m.

I saw Yasoda's paintings and liked them very much. With Rama Raya here, it's a little too much socializing at lunch time. I'm here to write a journal with my slow moving pen. I recorded my voice for the Dragon automatic typing system. I recited JFK's inaugural address of 1961. Swing low, sweet chariot. Today is Good Friday on the Christian calendar, the day Christ was crucified. Easter Sunday he comes back. I am no longer a Christian but a Krishnaite. Yasoda said I was taking his wife back to Godhead. I said I hoped to go, but it was up to Krishna. He, Yasoda, is a very congenial person. Ramila loves reading *The Story of My Life*. It is a good book. We printed 200 copies. Print more copies of *Prabhupada Smaranam*. The incense they gave me doesn't smoke or give off aroma. Yasoda did a portrait of Ragunatha dasa Gosvami with two tigers and one of Radharani shielding him from the sunshine. Elongated features of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in the Gambhira. Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishna-loka, and with chanting I have a connection. Main breakdown of faculties is the entire panorama. Just getting chest congestion.

I was in the Navy when JFK was shot. I was out and temple president of Boston and working at the welfare office when Bobby Kennedy was shot. My supervisor asked me what our religion said about it. I said it shows you don't stay in a human body. You can't escape death, it may come at any moment. Will we have lunch with our company tomorrow? I would rather give my attention to Yasoda and Ramila. They want to give me one of his paintings. Just stayed with him for more than an hour. At one point he called "home" and said aren't you happy? She said

she was very happy to be in Stuyvesant Falls. They like the quiet here. They say it is very noisy in Mayapura with tourist buses always arriving. I like the quiet here. Sometimes the dog in the backyard barks when I'm taking rest at night but then he stops.

March 30, 2013

6:22 p.m.

Late start in the journal, scattered brain. The dog Shadow is barking wild. Disturbing our Stuyvesant Falls peace. Yasodadulala came at lunch today. He has small spectacles that fold up. Not for a person with senior age sight problems. We talked about the difficulty of his having an exhibition of his paintings. Maybe he won't do it. He thinks they are too limited to a Krishna conscious audience. But I don't think so. We sent my poem to Gurudasa late in the day. He does good work, but doesn't send it to me at a regulated time. This is a program taught by Dhanurdhara Maharaja at the Bodhi Yoga studio. He is not a member of ISKCON, but it doesn't stop him. He's an extrovert, and has, as he says, "the gift of gab." I'm with Hridayananda Maharaja, retired from lecturing. Baladeva said they recovered the material of him rephrasing questions from Natalie Goldberg's book. That's wonderful. Volume Two has more than enough material. Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishna-loka, but I am negligent in how I chant. Too much speeding to get the rounds out of the way. I can't slow down. I have to be concentrated and have chanting with devotion, praying to Nama Prabhu and Radha-Govinda. Ramila wants to type. Give her work to do. How did your reading of JFK's speech come out for Dragon? Give it a glossary of Sanskrit words. Saci went to watch the Syracuse basketball game rather than attend Dhanurdhara's lecture. I will be sleeping. Strange green dreams, no Krishna consciousness. The pen just ran out. My head is a little heavy. The desk lamp is not very good. My mind swims through the water like a snake. Yasoda's paintings are good. He has a good drawing hand. One of Advaita

Gosvami dancing, “like a *manjari*.” He has good anecdotes to go along with his art. One contains Allen Ginsberg with the words he spoke about Prabhupada’s *Bhagavad-gita*. Yasoda said he appeared to be *yukta-vairagya*, but he was decadent. Three minutes left. The child poses with a football, a skinny kid in Queens, New York. Now belly-fat in upstate New York. The worst of winter is over. The tulips and crocuses are coming up.

April 1, 2013

6:08 p.m.

April is the cruelest month, mixing memory with desire. I went to the *kirtana* last night. Get beneath the persiflage. I’m drawing. Ate alone today to escape the tyranny of faces. One-to-one. He’s talking to himself. “Your painting is no good.” said Hridayananda Maharaja to me in a dream. I wanted to get back at him. Writing for self-awareness. I am the drawer of little people with *tilaka* and upraised arms. Who was I when it all happened, the zonal *acarya* of many places. Going along with the wave of elitism, excessive worship, female disciples. Where was I during those years? Doing my duty, I thought. Is it your duty so sit on an exclusive *vyasasana* high above your Godbrothers? Is it your duty to wear the best silk? We all came down. Now I wear saffron pants and an orange T-shirt and hoody and shoes in the house.

He said I was taking his wife back to Godhead, but I don’t know if I am going there or can send them there. I have committed crimes against the state. I cannot be elected to office. I am not allowed to initiate disciples. I can’t attend the GBC meetings, nor would I want to. I have a burn on my lips. I have a huge protruding belly. I am good for something. I write my daily website. I eat chocolate energy bars. I chant *japa* early in the morning, 12 rounds, then I write, then I chant another four rounds. You openly tell how you do but assert that your mind is fixed on the holy names. I don’t think of something else. I “just hear” but don’t concentrate in prayer, “please let me serve you.”

Maybe I can try to do it more. But with chanting I have a connection.

Avoid the gossip. Who was whose young girlfriend. Who is gay? I am not going to say. I won't bash my inner child drinking his mother's ice tea with lemons in it in summertime. Little boy sitting at the table. His feet don't touch the ground. Drank so many cold drinks and ate so many popsicles he had to go to the doctor. Doctor Workman in Eltingville. He diagnosed me as having Osgood-Schlatter disease of the knee and I couldn't play sports for six months. I listened to the Brooklyn Dodgers winning the seventh game of the World Series in 1955. My radio's batteries were fading, and I held it against my ear. A physical education teacher, Bernie Atkinson, kept coming to me and asking the score. When I arrived home after school the game was already over, and I watched the Brooklyn celebration on TV. Suddenly it was anti-climatic. I didn't care that much anymore. Now I don't root for any particular team, I'm a Krishna conscious devotee, and I read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Gopala-campu*. I root for myself in the production of my books. Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishna-loka, and Bhaktivinoda Thakura says, "Chant three *lakhs*."

April 2, 2013

I went to the doctor today and tomorrow too. Short of breath, congested chest, swollen hands and ankles. Pulmonary tests, CAT scans of the chest. Blow test. How is the lad doing? Oh, he's feeling fine. It's a cold day. The body caretakers, the pain in my ankle. Draw me a particularly out of place. Slept and let my nap until 3:00 p.m. The baseball season has started, and the Yankees lost their first game. Many of the players are injured. I am out for the season. He says I may be gaining weight because my body is resting light, in the swollen ankles. SDG has Medicare for that. A long list of the meds I take. For headache, for this and that. Michael Kelly wants to be back in May, and a whisper of a chant is coming out of the man, like a

wasp of summer for the Mayapura incense. He whispers “Hare Krishna,” but it’s mostly silent in the mind. I have not read your book, sir. Have you read one of mine? My journal writing just got interrupted as I reviewed Gurudasa’s illustrations from yesterday. Baladeva gets told to be quiet. I start taking the new medicine, and I should wear diapers because that “goes with this program.” Who is this man? He is lucky. He came out to chant the Hare Krishna mantras. Chanting in time and resting, and I went on the same day. Tomorrow is following with pilgrimage and that’s a CAT scan in a week. The time is up. A man has honestly appeared.

April 3, 2013

6:14 p.m.

The journal writer is searching for his awareness. The present morning is the tip of the iceberg. Ninety percent is in my past and in my unconsciousness. So many years have passed in ISKCON. So many mistakes too. I see a thinning of my later years. Shadow is out barking. Hare Krishna. They are planning a surprise party for Anartha’s 60th birthday. A youthful picture of her at the ferry in simple dress for Anartha’s 60th birthday. Of course I can’t go. A lifetime’s achievement. She has certainly been a good wife and mother. Where did I go wrong? I’m confessing to a woman that I was in love and had an attachment to her. It was foolish and offensive and led later to the fall down. A checkered life. We are just reading of Akrura who himself was offensive to Krishna. It was due to his taking Krishna to Mathura that the *gopis* cursed him. Maybe I was cursed. I was certainly a fool. Hare Krishna, Do you chant with offense? Reading a book about *siddha-deha* which is given by the *diksa* guru to his disciple by Krishna’s mercy. What is he going to say in conclusion? Would you like Srila Prabhupada to reveal to you his *siddha-deha* and yours? What service have you done to deserve it? Without too much TV. *Siddha-deha . . . trnad-āpi*. It is giving yourself the pass in a start. It’s supposed to get warmer

tomorrow. I don't wear a hat, just a coat and a hoody. Where are you going? Nowhere. I'm staying right here. *Vaya con dios*. Go with God. SDG is my chief. He is worried about his future. He is so shy around girls. He never grew up and learned to dance or drive a car. He's computer illiterate.

April 4, 2013

6:27 a.m.

Baladeva is telling me I have to pee more. My body is retaining liquids. I can't make it flow better. I don't want to bloat up and go to the hospital like Sridhara Swami. So, somehow pee more. I slept a long nap up to 6:00 p.m. I didn't eat much spaghetti at lunch and no asparagus. I'm not an ideal patient. I am a patient. I don't get headaches anymore. I passed the manuscript of Volume Two and can give it back to Sacisuta. I made some changes. I have to get a report on the pulmonary test before I resume my exercises. Show the manuscript to Saci and just get it back. Some pages are out of order. The last section can be taken out. I am not sitting comfortably in this chair. I get up early and chant. The website is managed. We want to improve the page and make it more active. I am the man with nothing to say. I did my yoga class. TJ leads me through the *asanas*. It is not that spiritual. The inner man reflects on pain. He's reading a book on *siddha-deba* by a swami of the Gaudiya Matha. It is theoretical. The *diksa-guru* reveals it to you when Krishna desires. It is the highest perfection, but why concern yourself with it.

April 5, 2013

6:21 p.m.

Resting a lot, the body is tired. My CAT scan came out all right, but I'm still not flowing urine freely. Talk with Yasoda-dulala. He's friendly. I smiled at him with my dentures. Gave Sacisuta back the manuscript for Volume Two. Soon it will be

ready for the proofreaders. I chant *japa* early in the morning though I don't do it so orthodox. I try my best. Baladeva instructing me gave me a headache. He says if I can't pee I have to be taken somewhere (hospital) where they will make it happen. My literary brain. Some pages out of order. Fix it in the proofreading. It's my time to die. Got some years to go, some books to publish. He put the manuscript in good order in a good binder. Yasoda looked at my drawing of a lady doing *arati* to a Tulasi plant. A man dancing before Srila Prabhupada. Go for your blood tests, go see the nurse practitioner. Where is the inner man? I wrote a reply to Varaha Swami on his *sutras* on *siddha-deba*. I have very little time to spare. Baladeva put his back brace on and his knee brace, and gave me a massage. The inner man hears Srila Prabhupada say we should go back to Godhead, and he aspires for it. He'd like to go to the kingdom of God, Goloka Vrndavana, and serve Radha-Krishna there. You must have greed for it and *adhikara*, qualification. "I'm a new sailor on the *Saratoga*" said Yasoda. Baladeva is training him how to refill the humidifier. The inner man is so thirsty for *bhava*. He writes summary studies of his books. He writes of his personal life in early days.

From the practice of writing memoir: Baladeva and I have to do it again because the tapes were lost. They say you can pray to Saint Anthony or Hanuman for the recovery of lost things. I pray for my youthful hand to write free writing.

April 6, 2013

6:18 p.m.

The inner man is intruded on by the presence of two devotees in the room. He wants to say "I'm alone with my thoughts," but he cannot. I had a nightmare that I and other devotees were hostages in a prison. They were torturing us. It was relief to wake up. Now I'm alone. Everything has been said. You are a new man with new thoughts. I am stuck, drawing a picture of flowers, roses of red, pink, yellow, and orange on long stems

held by a man to his chest. Let the flowers be offered to Krishna. “When your old wedding ring was new” – tune running through my head. All the devotees celebrated Krishna’s festival and then they went home. Mother Yasoda and Nanda Maharaja were in ecstasy. They lovingly looked at the features of their child. Their child was the Personality of Godhead, but they saw Him with *vatsalya-prema*.

I am a non-entity. Keeping a journal for self-awareness. I am not the body; I am pure spirit soul. And I am being controlled by a higher consciousness and His rules. You can analyze yourself and see the self, *atma*, and learn of the *Paramatma*, and finally there is Bhagavan and your relationship with Him, to live together in the spiritual world where you serve Him in transcendental loving service. You learn your part in His *lila*. That is called *siddha-deha*. Bhaktitirtha Maharaja, surely before his death, told me he wanted to be a cowherd boy in *sakhyā-rasa* with Krishna. So did Gopa-kumara. But the highest position is *madhurya-rasa*. Within *madhurya-rasa* is *gopi-manjari*. They want to be the servant of Radharani without a direct relationship with Krishna. They feel everything Radha feels in relationship with Krishna. This is above my head in terms of realization, but I know the theology and am attracted to *radha-dasya*. Just become the servant of Lord Caitanya and your spiritual master, and by serving them in *barinama-sankirtana* by *sravanam-kirtanam*, you will realize your *rasa* with the Lord.

You are a servant of Krishna, many times removed. Don’t jump up to the best and remain lowly and humble, then Krishna can pick you up. Don’t try to jump over. Make cookies, drink coconut water. Your drawings are what they are. You have a few minutes left. That angel had to come to face his wrongs. He finally did. The movie ended happily. You will die and go to the higher birth. Old age and disease are impetuses for a devotee. He becomes eager to go back to Godhead and meet the Lord.

April 7, 2013

6:09 p.m.

The inner man said don't think too much of *madhurya-rasa*. Keep yourself low and humble, and be active in Krishna consciousness. Wait for Krishna to pick you up. Writing today after talking on the phone with Haridasa. Krishna is monitoring me. Men who are like hogs, dogs, camels, and asses do not take time to hear the glories of the Lord. He compares the dogs to college graduates who get their diploma and then go begging for employment by a master. Hogs are compared to people who eat abominable things. As the hog eats stool, they eat the flesh of animals. A human is meant for offering vegetarian food to Krishna and eating the remnants. Camels eat thorns which cut their tongues and they taste their own blood. The human form of life is for self-realization. Yasoda-dulala told me he is reading *Sanatorium*. B. B. Varaha Maharaja writes that *siddha-deha* is revealed very secretly from the *diksa-guru* who knows his own *siddha-deha* from his spiritual master, and the knowledge is given only when Krishna wills it. He attacks the *babajis* and *sahajiyas* who cheaply give out *siddha-deha* in *gopi-bhava*, without having it themselves. A challenging book, because one thinks that Prabhupada didn't teach this although he urged us to go back to Godhead.

Keep a trim fighting weight and do exercises under Saci's instruction. How am I doing? I'm afraid that Krishna would come out too clumsy if I paint Him. Draw Him with your childish talent, and it will be all right. Draw Him playing with friends. The inner man has not chanted his *Gayatri* mantras. He will have to follow his journal, must try to cut it off here to say the mantras.

The man wants his voice. His heart is beating tremblingly. He doesn't give regular public lectures. He wrote that a woman is not supposed to give *diksa* but what about Jahnvi Ma? I cannot follow his constructions, so don't know whether to accept them.

I'll write him a letter of encouragement, but don't know what I should express in print. I admire his scholarship, his trust in Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, but don't know if my Prabhupada wants me to read him. He writes against the cheap teaching of *siddha-deha* with *siddhi-pranali* and that is good.

April 8, 2013

6:11 p.m.

Krishna married many wives, winning them by fighting and *svayamvara* sacrifices. Krishna allowed me to draw the picture of Him today. He is ability in man. I have a relationship with Him. He is my protector and master. He wants me to preach His name and fame. I'm preaching to the devotees. I went to the nurse today and gave blood. I am who I am. Leave me alone, and I will produce books for you. I realized I will die, but I don't know when. Krishna will protect me. I will try to remember Him at death and go to Him for eternal service. "Anyone who thinks of Me at the time of death attains to Me." Srila Prabhupada repeatedly writes that we should chant the Hare Krishna mantra. Spring finally starting. Sounds of birds. Hare Krishna *japa* in the morning, 16 rounds, then chant silently in your mind. I will eventually enter the kingdom of God. Paint red roses on a tree next to Radharani and a purple and green peacock at Her side.

"How are you doing?"

"I am doing tolerably well. I am retaining liquids. I have to weigh myself every day. If I gain two pounds in a day, consider it an emergency. You want to lose weight. Chanting makes you happy and responsible."

"Where are you going?"

"I am not traveling. I am going to the end of my life. Yasoda tried to bind Krishna, but the rope was two sections too short. When He saw she was fatigued, Krishna let her tie Him, but then He pulled down the twin Arjuna trees."

“Why am I short of breath? What about your ankle? What about retention of liquids?”

““These things are happening with old age. They are due to the body. I have an inner man. He has to force people to publish his books. The nurse drew my blood. She had a photo of her young son. He looked like a young animal with a perky smile. They have lots of pictures of dogs in their office.”

“How are you doing in prayer?”

“I don’t pray much. I think of the Lord who killed Bhaumasura. I believe it. I wrote ”Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead” on my drawing. I could try to pray, just hear the mantra, just pray to the Lord by gently saying the names Krishna and Rama and the name of His consort Hare. That is praying. And discipline yourself to keep a numerical count. Pray to be steady and use your awareness of God and your own tininess. Pray for the strength to continue approaching Him, pray to love Him and appreciate Him. Pray to the Lord to receive you.

April 9, 2013

6:15 p.m.

I am feeling “all right.” Pains are tiredness in the body. Rama Raya is doing wonderful service going out every day on *harinama* in New York City. He needs help in organizing, and a man is here to help him. My inner man didn’t want to read the Holocaust books by Yogesvara. I told him so, but I haven’t heard back from him. I didn’t want to read all the sadistic torturing by the Nazis. I didn’t think it was my duty. Maharaja Pariksit wanted to know about the process of creation. He didn’t rush to the topic of the *gopīs*. He gave up all material wealth and heard about Krishna from Sukadeva Gosvami. My eyes are tired, my limbs are weary, I cannot walk properly on my ankle. I cannot pee freely, my ankle and hands are swollen. Baladeva gave me dire warnings. This morning I gave copies of

my drawings to Ramila and Yasoda. He is transforming the basement into a “yellow submarine,” plastering the walls, then whitewashing them, then painting murals on them. He’s making a place for me to paint down there.

“Who are you?”

“Swami’s son. I write a poem every day, but I don’t . . . Spring is coming, Laksmana plays baseball and basketball. I am tired, I don’t have much to say, rhubarb pie, cranberry juice, junk food, *prasadam*, working steadily at drawings so you have enough each day for the website. I just spoke with _ and his wife. The house is a temple, Krishna is my Lord. Krishna speaks *Bhagavad-gita*, and makes it clear, surrender to Him is the goal. My mind wants to quit writing. He is not self-aware, he doesn’t smoke cigarettes or commit illicit sex. My fall down was about ten years ago. I’m not allowed to initiate. I will tell that to whoever asks for initiation. I’m restricted from taking disciples, that’s just as well. The dogs are barking. I’m not in the mood for flirtations. I have to carry my burden. Lord Krishna protects His devotees; they seek shelter in Him. Pray to Krishna, “Please lift me up, I want to rest in Your arms.” That will be done soon enough, pray to Him to take you back, pray to Him. That means he wants to stop his non-eternal body and to wake!

April 10, 2013

6:11 p.m.

The Lord cut off the head of Bhaumasura. Kids are shouting in the streets. The inner man reads the book on *siddha-deba* and learns it is not attained by greed. It is bestowed in secret when the Lord desires, through ones *diksa-guru*. I accept this theoretically, although Srila Prabhupada never taught it. So many things one doesn’t know. How long do you have to live? What do you have to do to advance in Krishna consciousness to

the right point? I have to chant better, I have to be kinder, I have to open my heart. What are you going to do? I'm going to behave myself and continue to do as I am doing. I don't know something else. Prabhupada, thank you for your gifts. I have to rise and strive. My day will come. There is no absolute peace and quiet. My hand can only write painfully slow. It is a token to put the thoughts down. I have exercises and yoga tomorrow. The body gets tired lifting eight-pound weights. It's building me up. I don't know my *siddha-deha*. Am I supposed to be concerned? We had *kitchari* for lunch. Yasoda-dulala took three tortillas filled with Tex Mex preps and ate "Dusty Roads" dessert. I had two tortillas. It was nice today talking to the guests. Gita-nagari *dhama* bought forty Brown Swiss cows and will sell "Ahimsa" milk. They hope to succeed. I am not dialoguing with my inner child. I don't know where he is or where he exists, or that he wants my care. I would be willing to assure him he is loved and there is nothing to fear. Srila Prabhupada is protecting me, and my needs are met. The children are talking in the street at dusk. My mother and father are dead. They disowned me long ago. I live with the devotees. I am a cripple and cannot walk for long because of the pain in my ankle. My head is fairly clear. I didn't finish a surrealist drawing today while listening to jazz (Sonny Rollins, *Freedom Suite*). Our flag is red, white, and blue. Krishna consciousness is easy for the simple. We take by submissive aural reception. I read Srila Prabhupada's books, second canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, "the process of creation." Your eyes don't see spirit. You see through the eyes of the scriptures. I am inquiring what is best for me? Tell me of the killing of Bhaumasura and Krishna marrying 16,000 wives. He expanded to be with each one of them. Krishna can do the impossible. He is all-powerful. What is a nerd? Am I one? I am not a brave warrior. I stay at home.

April 11, 2013

6:12 p.m.

I am writing in my journal. Ramila cleaned and dressed Radha-Govinda today. Krishna has a yellow band of silk around His forehead and a big peacock feather behind. Radharani wears a *candrika* and small jewels on Her forehead. Both have little flowers on Their heads. Ramila hoped it wasn't too "radical." It is very nice. Yasoda is working away at his long project in the basement. I couldn't finish my lunch. I don't know my *siddha-deha*, I know I'm an eternal servant of Srila Prabhupada and Lord Krishna. I was expressing sentiments of aspiring to be a servant of Radharani, but now I don't know if that was presumptuous since I don't know my *stayi-bhava*. I may be a cowherd boy or a servant, but still, Prabhupada encourages us to worship Radharani and to take shelter of Her. So it is not wrong. She is the mother of *bhakti*. I should not jump up but serve Prabhupada's movement and serving devotees in Krishna consciousness. I am doing that. We are posting Krishna-kumara's age on the website. He's a young boy taking care of cows, playing with His friends and killing demons. Krishna never loses a fight. Now He will destroy Vatsasura. When it is time to read about the *gopis*, we will read that. In second canto we are hearing Maharaja Pariksit inquiring about creation. That is just as important as *gopi-bhava*. Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is in charge of creation, maintenance, and destruction, but He appears as a human and enacts pastimes with His devotees. He is not impersonal. He maintains 16,108 wives and was a perfect husband, He is the perfect lover of Radharani. He is my Lord, He is my best friend and well-wisher. He wants me to come back to Godhead and serve Him eternally in bliss and knowledge. Prabhupada stood up for Jesus Christ and Saint Francis. He had to preach to his audience. The Krishna-Balarama Mandira is filled with Russians. It is crowded. The festivals and going on *parikrama* with visiting several places in Vrndavana. I am content to stay in Stuyvesant Falls and do my *Bhagavatam* in the morning. In my journal I

report trying and also trying to see Krishna in myself better. I'm shedding my skin. I'm having trouble passing urine. I may go to the urologist about it. I don't want an operation on my prostate gland. I rang for a second shot in my ankle to remove the pain. My body is deteriorating with old age. You cannot expect comfort in your body. You are not the body; you are spirit soul. The goal is to go live with Krishna. Yes, Prabhupada, take me to the shelter of Radharani.

April 12, 2013

6:12 p.m.

I've finished reading Varaha Swami's book on *siddha-deha*, now I have to write him a letter praising him. Yasoda-dulala is here in the basement. He's creating drawings of Caitanya *lila* and other things. I should not seek after fame and adoration. The *acaryas* write against *pratistha* as the most poisonous of all *anarthas*. Yes, I would like to have my best paintings commented upon. Saci says they have photographed 60, and they have picked out 30 of them to print. Prints could be made out of them, and they could be sold. Is that too much to ask? When will the second volume of the autobiography be ready to send to the proofreader? I am a literary man, I read some books for my vocation, not many. I am drawing *constantly my whimsical figures* with *Vaisnava tilaka*. I'm still retaining liquids. I do not know how long my body will last and give me service, I should not try to enjoy it. It is a bag of blood and bones, stool, and urine. I'm absorbed in daily morning *bhajana* which means *japa* and writing of a poem. The great liberated Vaisnavas learn the places in Krishna's *lila*. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati knew his *siddha-deha*.

Our Srila Prabhupada received from his guru the *sakti* to spread Krishna consciousness all over the world. He alone had the potency to create a worldwide movement. I am a tiny member of that movement. Let us tell the story of one agnostic who became a leader in the movement of ISKCON, and how

he relinquished his power. How he lives now content in a house in upstate New York and writes daily for his website. He publishes a book a year. He is writing for self-awareness. He wants to know who he is. Is he a Vaisnava or a demon, is he an egotist or a humble soul? In his dreams he sees weird, bizarre scenarios, not simple devotional visions. His subconscious houses anxieties, internally he is not all-pure, things from the past still live beneath the surface and come out in dreams. Perhaps I should just distance myself from dream life and not recall it. I am not the person of my troubled dreams just as I am not my arthritic ankle. I am pure spirit soul, part and parcel of Krishna. I want to think of *krishna-katha* always, I want to praise the Lord. Hare Krishna mantras soothes me as I race through my minimum quota. Time is up in this session.

April 13, 2013

6:11 p.m.

I hear a bass line somewhere. It is not perfectly quiet. But generally it is not noisy here. I have been quoting from my journal in my morning poem. I'm a private person, but I reveal a lot. I'm searching for myself. I'm a poet and a spiritual journalist. I cannot connect with my inner child. He is left back there, large-eyed and afraid, I think he didn't receive enough of affection and support as a child although he was given a peaceful stable environment as long as he played the role his parents wanted him to play. Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishna-loka, and I do have a connection. I pray rapidly in the early morning and hear the words in my mind. I cannot initiate disciples, I have told Bhakta Andrea that because of my fall down I'm restricted, otherwise I maintain my disciples and spread my pixie dust. I spoke with Nitai Gaurasundara today. Baladeva was too busy to talk to Nitai. Yasoda is making a base relief of Caitanya Mahaprabhu floating in the ocean. Ramila dressed Gaura-Nitai. I have an inner life. My afternoon nap is filled with a nightmare. I am open to mercy through His Divine

Grace, but am I doing enough in his mission? I don't travel and lecture, neither does Hridayananda Maharaja. We preach by writing. I also draw pictures. The dogs are barking, my teeth are loose, but it is manageable. Blood flows through my veins. Saci's father is in his 80s. My brain is working. I don't get headaches, but I'm fragile. Keli-lalita is in Vrndavana. I'm supported by Saci. I'm financially secure. I do exercises in the morning. So-and-so is a powerful preacher. Blood and ink. Shortness of breath and trouble in urinating.

"What are you worth?"

"I am valuable. I preach to devotees. I care for myself, and I am a worthy person. But I am easy on myself. I don't take on stress. I avoid anxiety. I like myself and my company. My mind wants reassurance. I haven't finished with the second volume. I wish Saci would return the manuscript faster, but I shouldn't be anxious; we have time.

April 14, 2013

6:23 p.m.

I wish Saci would bring me the manuscript to Volume Two and then the next step in the Dragon process. But I guess there is time. Are things going well with me? I like to be alone. I took lunch alone today rather than socialize. I'm not active in preaching except in my wonderfully active daily website. Gurudasa finds good pictures. I don't feel guilty about not being a lecturer. Let others do it. They had a Vaisnava-Muslim meeting. Ravindra-svarupa is writing a paper on Srila Prabhupada as founder-*acarya*. I am compiling the second volume of *The Story of My Life*. I am hearing from *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, second canto and tenth canto, Krishna and Rukmini. He told her He was not a good husband because He abandoned Radharani. But we know that He could never abandon Radharani. Krishna is inconceivable. The authorized

scriptures says that He is Bhagavan, possessing all opulences in full; all wealth, all fame, all strength, all bodily beauty, all knowledge, all renunciation. He is Bhagavan, but to the residents of Vrndavana, He is the best master, best friend, best son, and best lover. They know Him in *prema* without awe and reverence. He says one has to approach the devotees of Krishna to know Krishna. Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He kills all the demons. He plays with the *gopis* in the *rasa* dance. As one approaches Him He reciprocates, but He told the *gopis* He could not repay them for their love of Him. He was in debt to them and asked them to be satisfied with their devotion.

How am I spending the day?

I'm staying close to the coastal waters. I'm not a great research scholar or a lecturer from Prabhupada's books. The journal for self-awareness.

How do you know yourself?

You are satisfied where you fell short. I could chant better *japa*. I could talk and reach out to people, talk on Skype.

April 16, 2013

6:08 p.m.

Journal entries are random pieces. You could review them all and find your quest, your recurring themes, but you have to be able to read the penmanship. The roofers are right outside my window today. I moved to Dhanurdhara's room and slept. Baladeva makes jokes about my problems. He is not malicious, it is welcome. *Vasudevam sarvam iti sa mahatma sudurlabha*. Ramila said in the coming years she will turn her trust from her husband to Krishna. She's also relying on me. I told her I won't fail her again. I'm too old to get into trouble. We await the time of death. Ramila wants to die in the holy *dhama*. I'll take New York with the books in progress, get them ready for people. Hope before I pass away, that's what he wants. To live on

through his books. 'They are my presentation, and they are potent. The best of the art work, keep turning them out. "Somebody finally got it right!" Ramila's father said on hearing I had given her that name. He keeps his distance from Bhavananda who comes to Mayapura three times a year. They keep their distance from me, random shots at self-awareness. Steps on the walking journey, "Here is another time and place. I wrote this the day they chased me out of the house." R asked me to be liberal in my association with Yasoda, what can I do? Have a talk with him, ask him what his travel and lecturing is? I value my privacy. The time is coming when I have to account for all my arts. Krishna will say, "You deserve such and such next life." They are relying on me, but I can't say I'm pure in Krishna consciousness. I did what I could, wrote the books, and wrote about them. My Godbrothers are my friends, but I don't see them. They wish me well. The music is running through my head. It rained today, chasing the roofers away. I should go to the urologist and confess my problems. I can't flow freely, not enough. They may have to do some surgery. I'm walking on this journey. I don't experience "altered states of consciousness." Just the same, even flow. I flow over the river in the day's events. I don't feel death is very near. Am I prepared for it? What do I have to do? Die peacefully thinking of Prabhupada and Lord Caitanya and Radha and Krishna and the Krishna consciousness movement. I spend my last years in writing. Give them books. They are grateful. Krishna consciousness is the cause of the soul and the soul's relationship to God. I am the eternal servant life after life. Publish the journal when I am gone. It contains my daily reflections before I go to bed. He kept the heart open. She plans to send her son to *gurukula*. He is 16 years old. He is not being abandoned. He is living in the *dhama*. I have time on my hands tonight. Tell you a story about the time a store owner broke my *danda* over my head in Tucson. It hurt my pride. I went back to Los Angeles and talked to Karandhara. "Did it hurt?" Not much, I tried to get the police to help, but they ignored me. A Hare Krishna in saffron robes seeking justice from assault.

April 16, 2013

10:20 p.m.

I woke up early because I want to write down my dream. I was at a Navy meeting, and some things happened right away that sounded like I wanted to write them down. But I put them off for later. The more time passed friendly things happened, but I thought I could write about it later. The officers were being all right. He told me I was okay. I got the feeling I was going to be given an experience by writing through it as it happened. The men started running out of the meeting although it wasn't over. I didn't want to get into trouble, but I ran out also. We came to a place where friends were meeting and making beautiful music and a wonderful feast was prepared.

At this point I decided to write everything that happened and not use any other structure. I decided that this was the way I should write my journal. Just observe every thought that was arriving and that would be the best process. You would not miss anything, and you would achieve your purpose of a process journal. Damn the waiting for deeper things to say. Say it as it comes out. I have interrupted my sleep to record this important resolution, and I intend to follow it.

April 17, 2013

You just write what comes. Heavenly choruses, the Charlie Mingus Band. I played it, and drew improvised drawing figures with my Tombow pens. We had *idlis* for lunch. Baladeva is as dear to me as my life airs. May he live longer than I.

Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishnaloka, and with chanting I have a connection. I do heartily . . . I do hereby follow all interest in my books and give it to humankind. I am not a writer. I strain to lift eight-pound weights. I punch the heavy bag with light blows. When I was very young I was pretty thin. He has so much to learn. When you give, and get hit on

the head, you will understand, and it will deepen you. I wondered what is this hitting on the head I have to endure? Some of it I learned in the Navy and on the Lower East Side, and I learned it in the vicissitudes in ISKCON. I am pledged to write down what happens. My heart belongs to Krishna. He is my Lord. He is everywhere, but He is present in His original form in Goloka Vrndavana.

Dreams. Note down the fragments. The bizarre worlds. You were at a Navy meeting and interesting things were happening but you were not writing them down, then you realized that if you didn't write them down you would miss the whole experience. So you thought of this in relation to your journal and decided to write it all down.

Today the roofers finished their work, and the house is quiet. A man comes to fix the water in the pipes so it doesn't soak books. Yasoda Dulala is experimenting with cement. I did a second drawing I am happy to say. Next, I do a drawing of a few devotees dancing or doing some devotional service. Sitting down, eating *prasadam*. We ate at the dining room table. Krishna is sustaining us and the whole universe. Not a blade of grass moves without the will of the Lord. Chant or be silent in your mind. I am not responsible for other peoples' *japa* discipline. They know they should do it. They don't have a taste for Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Write it on the walls. Keep it in your heart and mind. Tell it to the world. Bebop music while he massages me. Walks across the street are difficult with my arthritic ankle. "Take big steps," says Saci, "stand up straight." But I can't do it. "Oh, Lord, this material body is a lump of ignorance and the senses are a network of paths unto death. Somehow we have fallen . . . and of all the senses the tongue is the most voracious. But Krishna has given us this nice *prasadam*. Take it to our full satisfaction . . ." I say the prayer in English every day at lunch. Krishna is in my thoughts but not in dreams and the unconscious mind.

April 18, 2013, 6:21 p.m.

Rama Raya was bitten by a tick. Baladeva will take him to the ER to find out if he has Lyme disease. Write down what happens. I didn't dream of Krishna. I dreamt I was some young man who was trying to convince Allen Ginsburg to return to living in New York City. We were in the Caribbean, and I was corrected because I didn't understand a sign "Hud" meant "Stop."

Hearing Krishna's friendly talks with Rukmini. He says those who worship Him for material pleasure, such as sex life, which is available in lower species, are less intelligent. But because they worship him in their prayers, it is a benediction. Sometimes Lord Krishna removes the material happiness so they have no one to turn to but Him. Lunch was all right today, *subji*, *dal* and bread. I had an accident in the bathroom, and Baladeva cleaned it up. He said, "There is philosophy, and there is practical service." And he walked into the bathroom barefoot and with his pants rolled up. He warned Rama raya that if he goes walking in the woods, he should tuck his pants into his socks. Now he is the city boy who is in pain over his tick bites. Lyme disease can be dangerous.

Yasoda is busy with his basement project. He asked if I have good enough health to talk with him at lunch every day. I assured him that I was, but Baladeva is trying to get me an appointment to see the urologist. I'm slow at finishing my drawing. I slept until 5:00 p.m. and skipped the chocolate energy bar. Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishnaloka, and with chanting I have a connection. Gaura Govinda Maharaja, who preached such high philosophy, has passed away, for years now. His followers say he went to join his beloved Lord. Margaret Thatcher: "So adored, so despised." Baladeva took out the reference to *Sanatorium* on my website. Don't stir up the hornet's nest. I am writing at a slow pace. I don't think of Krishna enough or deeply. I haven't prepared the *Gopala-campu* for tomorrow. Yesterday we covered Lord Brahma's bewilderment with the *lila* of Krishna.

I didn't have time to read the journal book.

April 19, 2013, 11:22 a.m.

The journal is about going, not arriving. We are not trying to produce a finished product. It is in the process. It seems that Baladeva is not coming to give me a massage. It is too late. I forgot to drink my coconut water at 9:00 a.m. If I took it now it would cut into my appetite for lunch. I spent the morning on a surrealistic drawing of people reading books, a man with a wheelbarrow of books. It is good enough to post on the website. When will I start working on the Dragon system, train the machine to recognize your voice? Saci is slow to do something on the press. Ask him for a quicker response. He may get upset. He is involved in his son's sports' career at ten years old, baseball and basketball and the management of a big successful business. I ask him to spare a little of his time for me. I have a few letters to dictate. We have visitors coming in May and June. You will meet with Rupa-vilasa, Kaisori, Jayadvaita Swami, and Suresvara in the next two months. I can talk with them and ask what they are doing.

6:16 p.m. Rama Navami

Hanuman has just been polished; he's bright and shiny. He burned down the city of Sri Lanka and killed many demons. He revived Lakshmana with the herb he brought, and Rama embraced him with deep joy. Ph.D. scholars cannot understand *Ramayana*. It must be heard in disciplic succession from realized devotees. Soon in *Gopala-campu* we will hear of Radha and *purvaraga*. Krishna has reached his *kaisora* age. He and Balarama killed the donkey demons in the Talavana forest. Krishna and Balarama sometimes disagree, but They love each other dearly. Later, They appeared as Gaura Nitai. We heard of Ramacandra killing Ravana today. Feast on simple *prasadam*, we did not fast.

Muktavandya wrote in a letter of his happiness in Krishna consciousness. The book on journal writing is helpful. She says a journal can be whatever you like, "confessions, grocery lists,"

you are free to go formless. Just lay one sentence down after another. Writings are important. I have written many of them and will come to an end at the end of my life. They can be read by others. I did a rewrite of my April 17th *japa* report, but it got lost in the computer. I'll write a new one tomorrow. Tomorrow and tomorrow, the days go by. Radha Govinda will receive Their new dresses tomorrow. It will be Saturday. Nitai Gaurasundara will phone for a brief talk. I'll tell him what happened to improve my health. The journal is a journey. I take a loan, but I am guided by my spiritual master. He sets the boundaries and priorities for the best way to make progress back to Godhead. Surveying the armies on the battlefield of Kuruksetra, Arjuna lost his courage to fight. Krishna says to him, "These words are not fitting for an Aryan, rise and fight." He does. Krishna doesn't ask me to "travel and lecture." Please keep my writing service. I will next draw three persons with extraordinary hair. One will have a big Afro, a man will have hair standing straight up from his head, and a man will have long hair and a beard. They will all have *tilaka* and chant and dance.

Some rock star visited Cuba. It was controversial. Obama is criticized. Keli-lalita is back from India. The Reddy family is stabilized. She will cook for them. I am happy without wife or children or family. I live with the devotees, some of whom visit me. Let them come. I am well situated. My journal records my quiet days.

April 20, 2013 6:30 p.m.

Kirtana-rasa massaged my back and said the right side was very hard, "like a rock." The only reason for it I can think of is the handwriting I did at night. I tense up my shoulder and back. Maybe the words coming out are also there, tense and crippled in my cryptic arthritic penmanship. I have a solid hankering for *bhakti*. Ramila dressed Radha Govinda in a sensational way, very dashing and nice. We had her paint the faces. Kirtana-rasa is working on an exciting defense case. I am too fat. I retain liquids. Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishnaloka, and I do

have a connection. The drawings are coming out with varieties. Krishna knows your song before you sing it. I did sing what came, the artist's improvisation. Pictures of me and Prabhupada. Gurudasa is doing reruns. Pictures of Krishna and Kaliya amidst sculptures of ISKCON. It's very hard. The sun is out, and twin birds are mildly moving in the hay. Why are you so tense? I am not, my body and mind are tense, but I want people of the world to feel feelings of joy in Krishna consciousness. I am with my Lord. He is with me. I belong to Him. I accept the scriptural statements. Yasoda is painting the pipes in the basement. I dreamt I was working in an office, and we wore neckties. We got off at 4:00 p.m. and got caught in the doors, trying to exit. Fortunately, that's not my reality. I did exercise with Baladeva today. I curled the eight-pound weights and rode for five minutes. Balarama killed Rukmi when Rukmi cheated Him. Krishna sat silent. We must go down to the room today, hopefully at the day's ending.

This is the new journal writing pad, 11×14 inches. Learn to write with the arm.

April 21, 2013, 6:23 p.m.

I'm writing in a new pad with a brand new tipped Sharpie pen. The idea is to free up my movements and learn how to write larger with less strain on the fingers. It's not easy to break my habit of cramped writing. Go ahead, I tell myself, "Write larger, use your arm. Don't be a miser." I spoke briefly with Haridasa. He told me Rukmini spoke at Potomac on Rama Navami on "Rama's Journey and Our Journey." Yasoda is making a wonderful bas relief creation out of cement in our basement walls. In addition to Caitanya *lila*, he did a figure of Vyasadeva with me, SDG, way down under his feet. My offering: "A lifetime, SDG."

I'm trying to write even larger but it isn't easy. Gurudasa offered to type my journal. Maybe I can do it with the Dragon system. It's a little less stressful to keep up, but I cannot do

productivity in drawing, but I'm committed to it for the website. The journal is a journey. Each entry is a piece in the mosaic. They link together to make a bigger picture. The weather turned cold. I'm challenging you to write larger, but you are not much responding. No process can produce the real thing, honest Krishna consciousness. You have to open your heart; be a real devotee. You wrote a good poem today, pressing on several places the way Ramila dressed the Deities. This is my early morning penmanship preaching. Be a real devotee. Tell your truth to the world. Be a witness. Stop writing. So, several pages are quickly used up by writing in large letters. I dare you to write larger, but you can't seem to rise to the occasion. All right, I accept you as you are. Rehabilitate pen point. A truck roars by. Otherwise it is quiet, and the buses and the birds are chirping. Also Keli returns in the evening.

Haridasa has *harinama*. I may have broken Ekadasi by eating half of a chocolate pudding dressing bar. I will have cashews when I get up early in the morning. Please try to write larger and clearer so you can read it later. Your handwriting isn't good. The time is up.

every day, just write

In Volume Two of *The Story of My Life* I begin using excerpts from *Every Day, Just Write*. I explain how the book series began with the concept that I would stop writing separate books and

would put everything into one book. The title of the first volume of EJW is: *Welcome Home to the One Big Book of Your Life*. It was conceived of as a journal but not just an ordinary journal; it would include poetry and special sections like “The man who lost everything,” “Field work,” and other thematic sections. I printed excerpts and commentary from several volumes in Volume Two of the autobiography. In this Volume Three, we print four volumes, 8–11, and we will continue to print excerpts in subsequent volumes of *The Story of My Life*.

Every Day, Just Write, Volume 8: The Primrose Path, North Ireland, April 5–29, 1997

Introduction

According to my schedule, I should have begun this volume on April 7, 1997, which was the day after I finished *EJW* volume 7. But on that morning I suddenly decided to restart *A Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam* instead. I could come back to *EJW* some time in the future.

I started up the engines for *PMRB*, informed my associates to do research for it, and started covering four verses in one day, and two verses the next day.

But then this morning around 8:00 a.m., while walking out to the shed to do my next *Srimad-Bhagavatam* verse, I had a thought or emotion that I wanted to write down, and I wasn’t sure whether it would fit into the next purport or a comment of *A Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam*. I forget what it was now, something about the blossoming black thorns, an emotion that seemed low, like a low note on a horn. As I think of it now, it reminds me of Kerouac’s advice for spontaneous prose, “Blow as deep as you want.” To be able to just write exactly what was coming at the moment.— You wanted to say it without any hesitation, whether it fits in with what went before or after. I had to ask myself whether *PMRB* offered me that facility.

By the time I reached the shed—the walk takes about two minutes—I decided to resume *EJW*. But what about *The Poor Man*? I decided I could give it one shot each day, at midnight, and the rest of the day go for *EJW*. Will it be possible to do both of these?

Anyway, here I am starting two days late, with a new title and a fresh gratitude for the facility to write at any time whatever you want, especially to capture the flow. And without worrying whether you are preparing enough literature, whether it is formidable enough to publish and so on.

Comment:

I felt good about that decision to return to *EJW*. It is such a liberating format. It allows me to write whatever is on my mind during the day. I was happy to return to it after a two-day lapse. I had been going strong for seven volumes, one after another, since I arrived in Ireland.

April 8, 1997, 8:30 a.m., Geaglum, shed
Lead me down the primrose path.
Pass me down the toothless
lower plate.
Down to the hellish planets not—
Unless you need it, did even
Jesus have to go there on a
visit? Did Yudhisthira have to
see? We know Narada goes
there to preach.
Spare me!
Lead me – lead you, yes
I'll lead you down the
primrose path where the flowers of the genus
primula bloom –
bearing tubular yellow five-

lobe flowers and a rough leaf
shaped like a spoon,
growing close to the earth.

Wild flower emblem. I don't
want to mislead you or me.
"Primrose path" a cliché means
I'm leading optimistically and naively saying come along, it's
nice and sweet and good and
you gullibly follow but it
turns out to be not at
all so gay and light but
I mislead you.

Why choose a misleading
way for a volume title?
I want to contradict it
disprove the cliché,
celebrate the actual wildflowers
that grow on the path
I walk on weak feet
weak head.
But me in April
in Geaglum.
What I say and feel –
but be on guard too that
it's not a mislead "primrose" path. Aye
and neither a
too prim, affectedly
precise and proper way.
The abandoned, the delight
of the little flowers skirted
on our walk as if they were
meditated there by Nrsimhananda
Brahmacari who made a
mental path for Lord Caitanya.

The little flowers' way.
Fioretti, Saint Therese,
little Stevie's little life.
Little strife,
he avoids the worst,
"I get headaches,"
dear primrose path
and nature
spring is temporary.

They won't last long but
at least this season while
I write.
Flow gently sweet Afton
while I write this refrain.
Flow gently motorboat-disturbed Lake Erne,
flow empty of that noise in
morning at midnight, all dark
while I write
grow the roses yellow.
Eire passing time.

Comment: I gave the title "The Primrose Path" first to celebrate the fact that the path leading out to the shed was filled with primroses on both sides of the path. And I liked the little flowers that grew so close to the ground. Then I knew there was another meaning to primrose path, but I wasn't sure exactly what it was. Later in the book I found a quote by William Shakespeare that defines the primrose path, and I'll give it to you when we get there. But I pretty accurately got it in the poem, saying that it's when you lead someone down a path and they gullibly follow but you mislead them. But I wanted to contradict that and lead you in the right way. But the first meaning was just a simple appreciation of the flower.

It happened to be spring, and I was happy because it's my favorite season. The primroses are among the first to bloom.

I'll try to get some more information on the usage of primrose path. Perhaps it implies that the person leading you down that path is cynical, deliberately taking you somewhere for his devious purposes. He advertises the path as lovely with wildflowers and bright times, but then he exploits you and it turns out not nice at all for you.

I certainly don't want to be that kind of writing guide for a reader. It's another rap I have to beat if I use this title. Let it be the simple primrose path of actual nature, imperfect as it is but not intended as devious or foolishly optimistic. And let me risk the danger of the other implications, yet beat the rap. Or you may judge for yourself, dear reader, now I have lead you, and to where?

April 11, 1997, a dream

Comment: I recorded dreams in *EJW*, but I usually don't use them for excerpts for the autobiography. They are too bizarre, too private. But I'm going to include one dream because I think it's interesting and appropriate. I framed the dreams in a little rectangle, this one is titled "TKG checks me out in Ireland."

There is some kind of Irish resistance movement to ISKCON, similar to the Irish in England. I'm on the rebellious side. A spontaneous meeting takes place where I am discussing my position with Tamala Krishna and Jayapataka Swamis in the presence of Madhu. They are doubtful (especially Tamala Krishna Maharaja) whether I really have to do what I'm doing. My health couldn't instate me at one temple. I try giving the example that the temple president always has to be willing to do the needful. He does so many things, but I cannot be held accountable. I say at a certain point in my health career I decided that I must do what's good for the headaches, I can't force myself and I'm not going to feel guilty. They're not arguing with me in any heavy way. They're listening, but they're putting forth different suggestions that maybe I could think otherwise. Tamala Krishna Maharaja suggests that maybe the temple could be run without my participation if I lived in a

temple. I'm willing to hear this and thinking maybe there is something in what they are saying. Maybe I'm staying in Ireland in this resistance movement because of Madhu's sentiment about it. I say to them at one point, "It's not that I'm doing nothing." But they don't seem very sympathetic to the role I'm doing for ISKCON in Ireland. I don't know what they think I might do instead. We had just begun to discuss the topic, and there is so much more. I don't tell them about my literary career being enhanced by this kind of life, or that things that I just can't take—personal meetings and pressure, and what it's like when a headache comes. I don't really get into it, but rather I describe how I'm not so bad off physically, that I'm able to do a considerable amount each day, but the headaches might come unpredictably.

This dream, of course, may come in the usual way that the unconscious presents the other side of things that maybe are repressed with me now—like how actually I'm becoming so strongly supportive of the way I'm doing that the other subconscious feelings may be speaking up, represented by Tamala Krishna and these other devotees. But the dream also might be coming since lately I've been having a streak of good days, no headaches, and maybe my sub-persons are asking for a re-evaluation of time.

I go back into the dream again, and Tamala Krishna stays for a while in Ireland, observing how I live here. He ask me a few questions about it. He says, "Instead of defying the North American GBC . . ." I say, "I'm not defying . . ." He thinks I should be with a temple or something, but it has to do with Ireland. My situation is parallel to the country of Ireland resisting England. By that analogy he says I should serve a lot more in the temple. I'm serving with the Irish devotees who are like Ireland resisting being a part of England, a situation that would never change. I'm not able to tell him fully, because he's not favorable enough, that I'm very ill and that Ireland is a relaxing place for me, or why I do it. He's not unfriendly, but he is not confidential enough for me to share myself with him.

When he leaves I think maybe later when I see him he'll be more friendly about the situation. After he thinks about it and absorbs it—he accepts that I'm an Ireland based devotee. Certainly I have to accept it myself as I presented to him.

He says about himself that he always does what anybody asks him to do in the GBC. I say, "Wait a minute, you aren't like that. It sometimes took a whole committee or the whole GBC to get you to do something." He concedes to that and says, "Yes, sometimes I myself made some big problems and that's why they addressed my situation." That implies also that because I didn't raise any problems, the GBC is not bothering me to do something else.

Tamala Krishna Maharaja seems to be a perfect person for this dream. He's capable of loving feeling toward a person like me, and at the same time he's very scrutinizing. If he gets on your case he can analyze it and take it all apart. Of course, years ago I told him that I don't want him to do that job on me anymore but to accept me as I am. But here he is in a dream—voluntarily coming to Ireland to check me out, out of friendliness but also in that overbearing role. I'm not there when he gets on the train to leave. Baladeva has pulled me aside and proposes to me that for \$500 I could get a special flight when I leave Ireland. So Tamala left and I don't know what he is going to do, if he'll report me to the GBC or what. I imagined he'd be friendly, and the next time I meet him, he'd amusedly concede that I'm doing all right and would accept my identity as a person living and doing at least some kind of preaching in Ireland.

Even Ireland for me is a symbolic place. I don't have to stay in this country all my life. But it's now the place, the ground where I'm committing myself to this kind of non-managerial life. For that, I have to continue fighting.

Comment: TKG and I used to have an intimate relationship. We would meet either at Gita-nagari or Dallas, his home base, or in India. We would have private talks. I would write out an

agenda for our talks, philosophical topics, controversies in ISKCON and so on. He liked me making an agenda. Then we would talk about things. His voice of opinion was stronger than mine, and we tended to come to the conclusions that he formed. Then as the years passed, I went through some changes of my own. I decided I wanted to be more authentic, more true to myself. I took counseling from a devotee counselor in England. He affirmed my feelings of wanting to be myself and asserting myself. When TKG and Sivarama Swami found out that I was taking counseling from this devotee they were upset with me. The devotee was a disciple of Sivarama Swami. They said if I had something that I wanted to bare my mind about I should have talked with them, senior devotees, and not this “counselor.” But I thought the counseling was valuable. Anyway, the next time I met with Tamala Krishna Maharaja in Gita-nagari I prefaced our meeting with saying that I wanted him to accept me for who I was. Right away he objected. He said, “If you’re ‘off,’ then I have the right to tell you that.” I said no, you have to accept me as I am. He said, “Well, if that’s how you feel about it I don’t think we can be close friends anymore.” It was a big change in our relationship. We were no longer intimate. I realized that in our relationship he had felt the right to take me apart like a car mechanic fixing a car and put it back together the right way. I didn’t want him to do that job on me anymore. If he couldn’t do that, he didn’t want to be my intimate friend. From then on we were cordial and respectful but not intimate. Then he came into his academic career and that distanced us more because I wasn’t of the academic ilk. TKG, even after his passing, came up in my dreams often. He represented a controller wanting to manipulate my life.

At this time in my life in 1997, I was still working out my right to be myself. Later, I became more solidified in my position. This evolves in the writings of the *EJW* volumes. Volume Two is called “The Search for the Authentic Self.”

April 16, 1997, Appearance day of Lord Ramacandra, 4:30 p.m.

I sit here at my desk facing the window and facing the quay and lake strait. Devotees pull up in cars and take boats over to Inis Rath to attend evening *arati*, readings on Lord Ramacandra and a 7:00 p.m. feast. I feel awkward that I'm not going. Someone might ask, "Where is Satsvarupa Maharaja? Is he still not feeling well?" They may see me sitting here. I'm not going to duck under the desk. I have *Srimad-Bhagavatam* set up to read and write a little more.

BAMA-NAVAMI BLUES

1.

Listening to my own Hare Krishna man's songs,
those were good days. Did you know it?
Fueled and springboarded by such an unsavory
pair, JK and AG, reading him with
devotion for a friend many years after
his alcoholic death.
I am alone, it is
best that way. I'm just a little itchy today
because so many are going across to
the island, and I'm afraid they may want me or
criticize me . . . No it's okay, I've
got my medical pass.

It's as if they're forcing you somehow to behave.
If you don't go into the temple room and sit down while
someone reads
one and a half hours from *Ramayana*,
then what are you going to do instead?
I read third canto. Uddhava
is telling how he was ordered by the Lord to
tell His pastimes to sages and even to
the Deity Nara-Narayana at Badarikasrama.

That's not a poem, but I wouldn't mind
having a long one.
You can make this *Every Day, Just Write* anything
It can turn into a legend. It
can become 152 esoteric verses
or what's likely you'll keep as close as
possible to the bone each day. Maybe more of it
like the good bread Mother Isana makes and I
offer to Prabhupada and eat with *dal*, and so on.
I mean every day fair,
guilt, shyness, little fears;
inner flame, getting ready to tell someone who
may ask why I am still ill – tell him
I'm always this way. Then grab your beadbag
and . . .

2.

Those early mornings are good a long
poem like Olsen's, but I don't care for it.
And Patterson. My own squatter's rights,
Geaglum bustout, tell something like
Dandelion's rights, cow's rights,
squatter's short odes.
You agree that you are
and that you're a writer
and that you're not going to
give up reading *Bhagavatam* to be a writer,
if you settle on all that then
maybe you could go beyond bankruptcy
to inner source
imagination
given by Krishna
some full manifestation.

You mean an elf fable?
No. A ranting against water skiers
and fishermen? Long poem to

death of cow?
No, but all of these things
I could just sneak away and just be free
of guilt and embarrassment and feelings of worthiness (the
material kind)
and finally free of self even
then praising Krishna in own words.
No, no, it's not to be
it's just what is.

The proclamation declaration of independence
while they rode the boat to and fro
and I walk and sit and read by
fading light. You never loved me,
I wrote the right book
It's all going down and devotees
know best. So it's a shame they are not better
more together socially and me more willing
to meet and shake hands
but it's better as it is
Better and better
every day say the optimists.

3.
I could drink so much water, 18 ounces
from midnight to 3:30 a.m.
You can drink that much?
We hereby want to know if you were to
drop the little life of water drinking
and such, leave the author's private things behind
then what do you have?
You'd have to think about that a long time
do what you want and need to do
I need to read a lot and then lean over
and use the legal pad. They are
side by side like two rails of the
train track. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* propped up

at an angel so I can read okay
and beside it the open legal pad. With right hand
I write, and I read tracing down the page with
a pencil. That's all.

You mean you would tell the history of some town? Or
some other metaphor?

No, I will probably only stick to this, actual life. Hare
Krishna Hare Krishna.

I don't have time for anything else,
I don't have the imagination
it doesn't seem right.

Our spiritual master told us to go and preach
I'm avoiding that in some way
but trying to pass this off as preaching.
I really can't do much else.

And so I say again and again and again,
why don't you just throw off all these misgivings
and be who you are and sing the only song
you've got. "If the fool would persist
in his folly, he'd become wise."

Remember that, under the George Washington
Bridge?

I say don't go back to those memories,
your own hand, the bathroom floor wet,
the particulars, two more weeks here,
not even that. Tell these days,
a little at a time
Rama-navami blues.

9:00 a.m.

Uddhava is going to Badarikasrama. My hand is staying here
for now. But my soul can travel too, even back to Godhead.
You have to leave behind attachment to this world and body.

Don't take another life here. Work hard, risk. Live by codes of Vaisnavas. I'm tired but I ought to proceed, persist.

Curtain drawn in shed so sun isn't blazing in. I wrote a note to a Godbrother who is here explaining my headaches and apologies for not attending the Rama-navami services yesterday at the temple. Praised him for his work. In this way I'm hoping he won't spread bad stories about me. I also do intend to go to the temple for festival days hereafter. Social psychologist Boisen (presented by Ravindra-svarupa) says you internalize the values of the people whose approval you desire. They don't have to tell you what they think of you, but by your conscience you know the standard. You know how they will feel about you, or you imagine it and thus you judge yourself by those standards. This can create a feeling of failure. For this, you need to confess and expect forgiveness and then proceed to rectification.

Who do I confess to? Some trustworthy Vaisnava.

Sin is when you fail to perform on the standard you've vowed to follow and you know your authorities (those whose opinions you value) will disapprove. Again, they don't even have to know you transgress—you feel the sin within. This sin is again society or the selected, higher society. I have been fond of philosophies like Sören Kierkegaard and Thoreau's, who say the individual is more important than society. But I must admit I too am socialized. I want to please persons other than myself. I want to please my spiritual master and Lord Krishna and the *acaryas*. You want to join the topmost society of love of Krishna.

Inevitably you fail. There are conflicts, obstacles. You keep on striving for success. You must control your senses, restrain your lower nature.

Comment: I presented the problem of socialization from the psychologist Boisen in a philosophical way. I didn't give my gut feeling about it. I was going through a period of accepting my limits with headaches and also pioneering in my way as an individual. In other words, even if I didn't get headaches, I

didn't want to socialize so much. It really wasn't so much of a conflict. I was getting strong in my own convictions. And Ireland was a friendly place. The devotees supported me in staying alone and lecturing once a week. That's why I stayed there for five years. Manu welcomed me staying in his house by myself and not going to the morning programs. And then eventually I had my own cottage in Wicklow, where I was free to follow my own schedule and give a weekly class in Dublin. The devotees were all satisfied with that, and so I had no real misgivings. And as some people commented, because of my presence in Ireland, there was no Narayana Maharaja invasion, no *rtvik* invasion and things were lined up pretty well with ISKCON and the GBC.

Every Day Just Write, Volume 9: Something Reading or Writing, Ireland, April 30–May 19, 1997

It begins with an epigraph, a quote by Srila Prabhupada “I tell you this is my practical experience. I am here always working—something reading or writing, something reading or writing, 24 hours. Simply when I feel hungry I take some food, and simply when I feel asleep I go to bed. Otherwise, always, I don't feel fatigue. You can ask Mr. Paul whether I'm not doing. I tell you I take pleasure, in doing that, I don't feel fatigue.” (Srila Prabhupada in the Bowery Loft, spring 1966)

Comment: This is a favorite quote of mine because the two activities Prabhupada mentions are my main two activities “something reading or writing.” And there he was in the Bowery loft with practically no followers working on his *Bhagavatam*, and he was taking pleasure in it all day long, 24 hours. He would take some food or he would take a nap, but he would never feel fatigue. I like to follow in his footsteps. Now in 2014 and for the past four years I've been living at Stuyvesant Falls in the *asrama* Viraha Bhavan, and I don't have any managerial duties, and I don't travel and lecture, so I'm emulating Prabhupada's activity: something reading or writing. Dhanurdara Swami said,

“Don’t you get bored here?” And I don’t get bored, you can ask Mr. Baladeva. And I don’t feel fatigue. I am not composing *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, but I’m wiring literature in pursuance of the Vedic version, so it’s also transcendental, and I don’t feel fatigue.

April 30, 1996

Here I am at 12:04 a.m. Here I am at the time I had designated for writing *A Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam*. But I can’t bring myself to do it. I’ve reached a crossroads (I was going to say an impasse or a breakthrough—but neither of those are so clear yet. I haven’t decided).

The preparation for each day’s work has become dutiful—too much responding to other peoples’ questions which are often not what I want to write on. Their quotes are demanding, challenges, sometimes too literal (material) readings of the verse. I just want to write.

Writing can help me. It has to be a risk, but it has to be Krishna conscious. “Write what comes” has been my motto for almost ten years now.

So I’m not doing *PMRB*.

I’m about to travel out of Geaglum after six weeks here. Go to someone’s house in Belfast. They told us I couldn’t have devotees coming and going to the house. They said there’s a British flag flying across the street in a Red Hand—extremist for pro-British North Ireland. How in such a place can I be peaceful? If I’m not peaceful will I be able to write?

Have I been able to write well while in a peaceful environment? Do headaches stop me from a flowing literary career?

Comment: I left my peaceful situation in Geaglum out of duty. I wanted to visit the Belfast temple to encourage the devotees there. It would be a short visit, and then I would go to the south of Ireland and establish myself there.

Belfast. I was thinking out loud with Bhakti Rasa about what I could do at the disciples' meeting Friday night. I said I've actually come to Belfast just for my disciples, so I want to encourage them. I know some of the issues they're dealing with, such as the criticisms they receive from the congregation which they are sensitive about. Also, they're interested in the preaching here in Belfast, and I think they're doing their best. They're also struggling with a small amount of devotees and a big temple building. It might seem obvious what I should do is speak immediately to those issues.

But I'm afraid I might lack practical expertise, and even lack compassion and love for what I was talking about. Then how would I be relevant to them?

Another idea I had for a disciples' meeting was to talk something personal about myself. I had an idea that I could describe to them my writing needs, and yet I'm aware that the readers have needs. This produces a kind of tension, but if I spoke about such a personal thing it wouldn't be something that they could really use in their own lives here in Belfast.

Bhakti Rasa suggested that sometimes when I write about my writing life, creative problems, writing art, etc.—I openly say that I hope my readers will use this and apply it in their own lives, not as writers and poets, but as whatever they're doing. I claim there is a relevance in one devotee's struggles—and it can be applied to others. When Bhakti Rasa said this I thought it was a good bridge for what I was trying to get at. In other words if I just speak about Belfast's problems it won't be so meaningful to me. But if I speak about my writer problems it may not be meaningful to them. So let me openly say that I'm going to approach their lives by talking about my own.

Comment: I think most devotees got the bridge that I was aiming for. I clearly explain in the beginning that I was going to talk about my service, but they should apply it to their service. One devotee in particular, Pragosa, who was a manager and later became a GBC for large areas thought I was talking only to

artists. He even began to boycott my lectures. But I think most devotees liked that I was being personal and tried to apply it to their own lives.

As we left the temple I noticed that half the front gate is ripped off. I heard that someone broke in and smashed the windows on some cars. When I mention the incident, Bhakta Fergus told me what actually happened. About a month ago a young man living in the temple turned out to be crazy, took a hammer from the temple and went around the neighborhood bashing cars and calling out, “*Karmis* are demons!” That person is now in a psychiatric hospital, and devotees are suffering reactions from the neighborhood. Fergus said just today as we entered the temple grounds the man cursed him. “The last time I went to the temple he also cursed me,” said Fergus shrugging.

Hearing this makes me a little fearful. It also increases my respect for the temple devotees, most of whom are women, for the way they go on with their duties as peacefully as possible. I was lecturing on the religious principle of tolerance, but they’re actually living it.

Pages 36 and 37:

Poke fun at yourself.

But vanity is the other extreme.

I’m not an ordinary fellow in ISKCON.

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

Care and feeding of delicate
Plant should be learned
By those who care—
Too much water or too little
Is dangerous for his health
Same with sunshine. Don’t
Expose him to louts

Shouts or bleats of sheep
About to be slaughtered.
When you drive him over
Bumpy roads in a cheap car,
Do you know what it does
To his system? He gets
Constipated. Think over
How to keep mites off him

Put him in a pot and worship him
By many names, “One who is
Dear to Krishna” and preserve all he
Writes because you never
Know he could be another Shakespeare,
A Rupa Goswami for us
And it will all be lost if
You don’t care

Please care for my
Drooping leaves.
Don’t break me or burn me
prematurely. Give me hope to
write in peace. And I’ll
give you blooming *manjaris*
eggs and chicks,
somniaulant poems . . .
the unconscious,
the conscious—he among his
Godbrothers ought to be left alone
to tell a story of
what it’s like to be a
converted shmerk. The rose fading
‘the pebble I the brook of
ISKCON warbling his meters uneven
Ought to be given a foot brace
And cane and let to pasture

In his brain are memories
And mystic scholarship
It's true he's struggling in
Basic ways to surrender to his
Master. That too we may
Appreciate. But this message should
Be kept only by those who love him. If others read of
My asking you to protect him,
They will laugh in scorn
And what if he hears of that?
So keep it quiet.

Comment: That was an ironic poem, playful boasting, self-deprecating, confessing, very personal. To be read by those who love me. And to be overlooked by those who don't love me.

Another poem page 43:

Swami, they love you in New York airport.
The reporter persisted, "At what age did you
have your first enlightenment?" He said
At four or five.
The devotees cheered.

Swami, they love you,
You made us swamis too, junior to you and gave us *dandas* in
order to preach

Swami, I'm afraid.
I'm not a lover of the Name
But you don't reject me but give me service,
"Something reading or writing,
Something reading or writing
And when I get hungry I eat some food
And when I get tired I go to bed
I don't get tired, 24 hours serving Krishna."

He didn't go out at all some days

From the Bowery loft
“I don’t get fatigued. You can ask Mr. Paul
if this is not true.”
Thank you for that class, it was very
Nice hearing you talk about the swami
But what about you, are you a real
Swami or fake?
Oh I am real. Are you a *vaidhi bhakta*?
And how come . . . how come?
I am doing what he said to do,
Doing what comes naturally

Comment: Prabhupada saying he felt his first enlightenment about four or five age was not something he repeated. It was just a comment he made at the airport. Devotees didn’t press it. He wrote in a letter to Tamala Krishna that there was never a time I was not Krishna conscious. So I don’t think he ever expanded on this four- or five-year-old enlightenment. He didn’t like being prodded about his inner realizations. Prabhupada was challenged by a man in India who asked him, “How are you *sama-darsanam*? How do you have equal vision toward all living entities?” And Prabhupada avoided him, and then he finally said that he was preaching to all different kinds of people around the world without discrimination. That was his *sama-darsanam*. And the man was very impressed.

4:30 p.m. Within a minute I found the verse I was thinking of:

*tasmad ekena manasa
bhagavan satvatam patih
srotavyah kirtitavyas ca
dhyeyah pujas ca nityada*

“Therefore with one-pointed attention, one should constantly hear about, glorify, remember, and worship the Personality of Godhead, who is the protector of the devotees.” And maybe

use the one before it also—the highest perfection of doing your duties is to please the Personality of Godhead.

This may seem unreal or like a platitude—please God and praise Him. But that may be because we did not know who God is to please and praise. We could never do it. He seemed so high and far away, abstract from our earthly struggles and immediate satisfaction.

Srimad-Bhagavatam and *Bhagavad-gita* give us a new life in God consciousness. It's not meant to replace one religion with another, such as converting from Christian to Hindu. That's not it. There is one God, but in Krishna consciousness we know much more about Him, His teachings, His form and activities in devotional service, both in this world and the spiritual world.

Srotavyab—hear about Him. I can give an example of that. Blow their minds, maybe, with Govardhana *lila* or Kaliya *lila* and say God can do anything.

Then mention *keṛtitarvas ca*—and give example of praising God by an ordinary devotee. One great way is to sing His name, share with others about Krishna, talking about Him. Anything done to spread His word is a kind of praise. Favorable. I guess the best example is chanting, singing. Or simple praises in your own words.

Then *dhyeyab*, remembering. That comes naturally after hearing and chanting. In your mind you think of Him, how He allows you to act, how you want to serve him. Chanting is good for this because you hold Him in your mind by His names.

How foolish he is thinking he will live forever. It's not a bad idea to sit and read and stay awake with the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I was thinking maybe it was the good old days, 1970s, when I was in my 30s and last years of my 20s, I used to read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* with vigor. I'd repeat it on frequent occasions. There were no *rtvik* controversies, no ISKCON gurus, no Narayana Maharaja *rasika* controversy, just Prabhupada and everybody trying to follow him, everybody completely neophyte and admitting it. Those were the good old days. But when you

remember them more, they were also full of holes. People were leaving the movement, and the Scharf brothers were ruling east and west capitals like gangsters and saying they were the best devotees. No one admitted that they were in *maya*. Everyone pretending . . . I don't remember. My wife and I, that was not good old days. I never imagined being a *sannyasi* would cure the ills. I became one and wandered around the U.S.A., writing only occasionally in the back of the van, an ordinary essay with the beginning, middle, and end. That was good enough to please my spiritual master, and they went frequently into *Back to Godhead* magazine. But more often I was roaming and lecturing on the basics. I remember I used to like to read the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and I still do if I can get awake time and put other things out of my mind.

Comment: Baladeva remembers that when he joined in 1977 the atmosphere was very strict about not criticizing devotees. No one would do it even in their mind. But when the guru reform era came in about nine years later, then devotees were widely criticized, and it still goes on. But it's a very clear thing in the *sastras* that Vaisnava *aparadha* is the mad elephant offense. If a mad elephant goes into your garden, he uproots all the creepers. So if you offend, or blaspheme, or hear blasphemy of a devotee, it will uproot your creepers of devotional service. I try to stay free of Vaisnava *aparadha* by keeping a respectful distance from devotees who may not be like-minded to me. I offer them obeisances, but I don't associate intimately with them. But I don't speak against them or think badly about them. The introduction of the internet helped spread the poison very widely.

What do the ISKCON leaders say of you? They say we are not perfectly sure because he hasn't come in for a complete checkup in about ten years. Never see him at the main gatherings, which is every year at Mayapura. He comes at odd times. We can say for the most part he seems to be operating harmlessly but not enough. We heard he gets headaches, but have not investigated. We have more important things to do as

the city police so we haven't investigated. We did receive a few calls but you see, we are battling schisms on the left and right, and this person you mentioned is himself rather supportive of our cause and is a good example, at least upholding a group of persons who look up to him. To attack him would not serve any purpose right now. We will let you know in the future. We've got our database. He is hard to get hold of, but he has a skinny neck after all.

I don't rewrite tirelessly or at all. I may be wrong in many ways as a writer. I want to be first a devotee, disciple of my spiritual master. Then my service is writing. I write. I pray he accepts it, and that it serves others for Krishna consciousness. I mostly write for the devotees who already know Krishna and want to follow Him, who accept *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* as their scripture. That's not "all of us" as states the title of Raymond Carver's collected poems. But in another way it is all of us. We are meant to be devotees of the Supreme Lord. We are all in the material world. At least I don't think Krishna is God for only a few thousand, or a few million.

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

Comment: Regarding my saying that I write for devotees, Prabhupada wrote me a letter that we have enough members now, and now it's time to boil the milk. He meant that we should train the members that we already have in Krishna consciousness. So my "preaching to the choir" was authorized by Prabhupada. It's in the tradition of the *acaryas* like Rupa Goswami to write books for devotees.

Furthermore, I was specifically writing for my disciples. My method of training my disciples was not so much to give them a project to develop or to micromanage their lives. But I wrote books for them, teaching them *sadhana*, *japa*, reading, Vaisnava behavior, and so on. Now 20 years later from the writing of *Every Day, Just Write, Volume 9*, my books are being read not just by my disciples but by the new generation of devotees. They are handbooks for Krishna consciousness. They are used in seminars. They are considered necessities for training core members of ISKCON.

What did you learn? That sages such as Vyasa would not have spent their time on Krishna if He was just a myth, that Sukadeva was perfect in impersonal realization but still became attracted to the pastimes of Krishna. I'm closer to them in some ways. Swamiji taught them to us, Narada, Sukadeva, Maharaja Pariksit, all the great souls, and the ones of Vrndavana are the best. Uddhava went there and examined the *gopis'* devotion and felt that "they are far better than I am in their love for Krishna." He didn't want to pray to them directly, afraid they would reject his request, but he wanted their blessings so he prayed to become grass in Vrndavana so that in the future he could get the dust of their lotus feet. That is a metaphor, but it is also direct truth.

You are feeling that you want to do so much, read and write so much, more than you are capable of. Your head pain will signal when you actually have bitten off more than you can chew.

I'm not interested in systematic studies of the Krishna conscious books. But I want to go on reading regularly which is good enough for me, and which I think will please Srila Prabhupada. It's also a way that I can learn, becoming familiar with what he is teaching. He has distilled the essence of the *tikas* of nine great commentators, and if I read the Bhaktivedanta purports I will glean all that. Do it very carefully.

A string of prayers in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* chapters is like a string of precious jewels, eternal teachings. Brahma says, "Now

I am asking You to protect me in the work of creation of the universe. I don't want to fall down by associating with the demons." He knew it was possible. It is possible for me, too. But I will pray Krishna, please protect me. That means I have to also rightly use my free will and not get too much involved in any nondevotee pursuit, including literature reading, or attempts at literature making. And what to speak of other diversions. Keep on mowing down, keep avoiding too much association. But the mail comes in, and we all live in the world of ISKCON, and the outer world is there, menacing and blaring.

Comment: I am afraid of the material world. I have stepped back and removed myself from interaction with the materialists. It's a relief. I do my concentrated *bhajana* starting at midnight, and I'm not disturbed by outside thoughts. We get warnings from the scriptures how a devotee should not even see the face of an atheist or should not associate with women. The material world is a very dangerous place.

It is the society for Krishna consciousness. You become Krishna conscious and spread it to others. Spread it like butter, like a wild fire, like a fad. It was a fad. In 1969, in Britain and elsewhere, but it didn't spread so much, slowed down in the 1970s. Before we knew it we were becoming our worst enemies. Get out of the airports, he said, you are ruining your chances. It was too late? No, ten years went by, and they mostly forgot us, but then the anticultists were hitting hard. Then in the 1980s we were *a cult of gurus and disciples* and that crashed down again and again and again, the big towers of empire builders falling down, and I escaped with only my thin hide and *danda* and traumas. I think, hey, my disciples, do they love me? Why does so and so not write? And when they do write . . .

Comment: What were my traumas? One of them was being rejected by the mainstream of American society. In the 1960s we were regarded as a harmless part of the counterculture. But then the anticult movement polarized us. That was painful to go

through. Another trauma was that when the “guru reform” came by the grassroots members of ISKCON, and when so many ISKCON *diksa-gurus* fell down, my disciples inadvertently began to look at me in a relative way. At least some of them did. I was part of the guru system, and it was being torn down. Absolutism was not the trend anymore. When another guru would fall down, I would lose disciples. And then I had my own trouble.

Everybody writes from where they are at in the century, and the decades, and from their mother and father. In my case, Father Hicks being the last Catholic priest I talked to, in fact the only one I talked to. I was not in my right mind, but too much a confused rebel. Gone from that, lapsed Catholic. Now the Swami is my polestar. I will say the same things. I go back there again and again. I grew up in the institution. Got the top places. Now you could say I’m retired, you could actually say that. I am forced by the pain in my body to live quiet. Behind the lines. We are in the army, and we use military metaphors. Behind the lines, the front lines, you have to meet the opposition. It’s a fight against the material energy, capturing Sita back from Ravana, the Kuruksetra battle, fighting to preach against the demons. Fighting against the complacency and the schisms. Well, OK, I’ve got to do it easy, while I can take advantage of a quiet place.

Krishna told Brahma: “I like your prayers, now go ahead and start the incredible job no one else could do. It’s material, but it’s in My service. There has to be a world and universe because the *jivas* want it. So you please create it. You have a desire to create and you want to do it for Me, so go ahead.” We will be reading, I guess, how Brahma created various vicious creatures. But we already know he will be protected because he prayed and asked, “Don’t let me fall down, don’t let me take the credit.”

Comment: In 1997 I was saying I was retired. I was still in the migraine syndrome then. I am free of that now. I am active in cyberspace printing my website every day. In one sense I’m on the front lines. But I’m not a controversial writer. I present *rasa sastra*, *japa* report, my little life, what we’re reading in the

lunchtime and my meditation on Radha-Govinda. I don't attend international meetings. I avoid the GBC.

I may be free of migraines, but I've entered further into old age. I recently underwent surgery for my prostate. I have ongoing health issues. I'm almost 75 years old. So things aren't going to get better in terms of health. I have limited time, and I'm using it in the best way that I think I can. Serve Prabhupada's mission and preserve my integrity.

I read Narottama dasa Thakura's *Prarthana* and how he laments that he's such a wretch and he has no devotion and so on. But he alternates these songs with songs of desiring to have a female body and be a *sakhi* in Goloka Vrndavana and serve Radha and Krishna. He is an extreme unique example. I can't imitate him. But I thrill to read his songs. As for myself, I feel peaceful living in Viraha Bhavan with Radha-Govinda and my associates, my caretakers and the little community supported by Sacisuta. I'm in touch with faithful disciples, and some of them are trying to print my books. I wish there was more activity of reprinting my books, but it goes slowly. I have a legacy proposal that I want to see my books in print again. I made some ambitious specific proposals for reprinting my books and placing them in institutions, but my disciples could not follow up on it. I made that proposal a few years ago at my Vyasa-puja speech. Now one person, Nitai, in India, is completely overworked in his garment factory business, but he is trying in the little time he has to reprint my books in India. He has reprinted two books and another one is under way. He is my hope. And in Russia it is encouraging with Isana and Alexi getting my books translated and distributing them at festivals. I have many books printed on e-books like Kindle and Sony. My books are available on Amazon. Over 7,000 people say they like my website on Facebook. I would like to see acceleration in the reprinting, but it's not happening. I will continue to encourage Nitai and anyone who wants to come forward and help. I hope it will go on even after I pass away.

The GBC resolutions for 1997 just arrived. As I read the resolutions, two emotions came – one was the rising of what I consider unworthy or offensive attitudes on my part towards my Godbrothers who are doing GBC duties. The other feeling is the closing in like hands around the throat as the institution keeps making laws to control its members. For example, there is a new law that a candidate for taking *sannyasa* has to be prepared for being sent somewhere in the world far from where he may be presently serving. His fitness for a particular service somewhere will be decided by *sannyasa* committees, GBC, temples, GBC men, temple presidents – and the last mentioned was the candidate himself. This seems quite normal, I suppose, for institutions, such as the Catholic Church, and certainly military service you join and then “they” decide where you serve. If you don’t wish to come under any kind of control, then don’t apply for *sannyasa*. Practice serving in renunciation and preaching that keeps you more distant from those powers. I mostly slip out of the grasp of the institution’s encroachment because I’ve already passed through all the changes and stages while Prabhupada was here, and now I’m old (enough) and infirm. It is best that I not use my imagination to think of ways in which I may come under more scrutiny and control in this lifetime. Also, don’t voluntarily come close to those who are manipulating and officiating on behalf of *sankirtana*. And what about publishing what you think?

May 14, 1997

Don’t neglect the reading; learn the art of combining. I don’t have to understand all technicalities or subtleties such as, “Factually, time has nothing to do with the relativities of things; rather, everything is shaped and calculated in terms of the facility offered by time ... Time has no beginning and no end ... Time is not subject to any form of psychology, nor are the moments objective realities in themselves, but they are dependent on particular experience.” (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.10.11)

Lord Brahma's great anomaly in lusting after his daughter is told, not avoided. Still, he must be approached with respects. The sons of Brahma, led by Marici, spoke to him about it. Brahma became ashamed. He gave up his body.

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

Brahma, what's up? I can't say your name here. You are too great. I can say my name, "Sats, what's up?" Everyone else will object. Their privacy is being invaded. C and D and Y and L and M, my Godbrothers and Godsisters G, Q and Mary and Du and Devi and Dasi and my disciples, Sumana and Angel and Protrassa and Simana and Dudaiva and Worry das, Upaneva, Goons. Name as many as you can name and make up. Many don't want to be mentioned with any candor in your books. They all may be hurt by your words.

So don't pin it on them. It's like that. Brahma is too exalted, and Charlie is too lowly and most are in between. Be anonymous, say, "A certain person, red-haired and divorced." Or, "a certain piquant sycophant." A cinquefoil and jonquil were walking together, and they were spied on by the mental police. They were in the act of baking a pie. The pie was still hot and left cooling off by grandma on the windowsill when some naughty boys passed by and were enchanted by the odor of the hot fruit pie, so they stole it. Grandma was mad.

That you can tell because you saw it 50 years ago in the Sunday funny papers. Little King McNurty, who you actually know, cannot be written about.

He made the *Vedas* come from his mouths, by the grace of God. His good reputé was not taken away, although he was punished a little.

The *Bhagavatam* is endless nectar. There is always more. I mean 18,000 verses is a lot. By the time you reach the end, you

forget the beginning, so you go back again. Plus, there is *Caitanya-caritamṛta*, *The Nectar of Devotion* and *Bhagavad-gita*. You just keep going through them. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is the longest. So we say endless nectar. A deep student never gives up any part of it. Hare Krishna! At midnight it starts, and we ride along with it. “The Pregnancy of Diti in the Evening” is next. Just sail along one chapter to another in whatever thoughts come to mind. This is called keeping a journal. A collage of reading and writing. “Each thought that is welcomed and recorded is a nest egg, by the side of which more will be laid. Thoughts accidentally thrown together become a frame in which more may be developed and exhibited.” (*Journal of Henry David Thoreau*, January 22, 1852)

That’s the end of Volume 9.

*Every Day, Just Write, Volume 10, Choosing to be Alone, Part 1,
Ireland, May 19–29, 1997*

. Now we're starting Volume 10. I'm living at Manu's house.

May 20, 1997

12:20 a.m.

Please help me purify writing and mind. The body has to be given up. I really don't want another body. I wish to join You in the spiritual world. I am so much afraid and so much seeking my own liberation. I know this isn't the mentality of a pure devotee. How can I call to You to please take me to Krishnaloka? I ask, "Please let me remember You and continue my devotional service in the next life." That's what Lord Caitanya also prayed for, for eternal, causeless devotional service, life after life.

As I go down, may I be at peace with the Lord and understand His dominance in all things, including my own physical demise and my transference to a next life. May I feel devotion for His Lordship, who is all great and the sweetest loving person. May I serve His devotees.

Nowadays I am often alone for one reason or another. I seem to seek it out, and You reward me my desire. But I will make this a Krishna conscious solitude by hearing *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and chanting and writing, which is a form of communication.

The Supreme Lord was dissatisfied by the insulting words of the demon, thus He placed the earth planet on the surface of the water to float and turned to fight Hiranyaksa.

You feel pledged to tell what is happening in your little life and not be ashamed of it. You won't consider things too insignificant for writing. You should also not feel reticent to tell what you read in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Since this writing will purify you, go ahead with it.

If you wait until you are ecstatically moved before you write, then you won't be able to keep the hand moving. *Sannyasis* are told to keep the wheels moving, but you must continue writing also. Srila Prabhupada compared the spiritual master to a teacher of penmanship. He simply wants to see his students busily engaged because he knows they will improve by practice. It doesn't matter if their present writing isn't expert. Practice makes perfect. I do feel for the Lord who is derided by the obnoxious demon. I would like to see the demon destroyed.

Comment: Choosing to be alone. Do I feel that I am alone now in 2014, living in Stuyvesant Falls? What's my definition of alone? Yes, I feel I am alone. I don't have to take part in a morning program in the temple. I don't have a schedule of lectures on tour. I'm not traveling. I'm writing my website and my autobiography. I'm living with two caretakers in an *asrama*. So I define that as alone.

In 1997 I was also alone. I was living in Ireland and giving a lecture once a week. In the north I was living in Manu's house and giving a lecture at Inish Rath; then, when I moved to the south, I moved into a house in Wicklow, and I gave a class once a week on Sunday in Dublin at someone's apartment. The devotees were very cooperative and supportive in my solitary creative life. I was writing *Every Day*, *Just Write* and painting, and reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

Travel was, in 1997, still looming. I would go out and take tours, but I came back to Ireland as a base. I wasn't torn by my identity and mostly stayed in one place, but did travel and lecture and see disciples in different places in Europe and then once a year go to America.

9:05 a.m.

“Please narrate the activities of the Lord, which are all magnanimous and worth glorifying. What sort of devotee can be satiated by hearing the nectarean pastimes of the Lord?” (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.20.6)

Srila Prabhupada writes, “The narrations of *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam* may be read thousands and thousands of times, and still, without fail, new aspects of the subject matter will be relished by the devotee.”

What sort of a devotee quits on it? Not me, I’ll keep on reading as many times as possible as long as I can see, or at least hear. I can’t claim I’ll remember for long, but I can keep this short-term memory at least until I write it down. When I get blanked out by one method or another – I mean “for good,” then I hope to pick it up again in my next life.

Comment: In my autobiography I am now putting excerpts from early volumes of *Every Day, Just Write*. I like the journal, and so I’m giving it. I’ve said that to take a reader through my books is a precious experience because my books are my life. I give them quotations from the books as autobiography. This is my life; my literary life. And I tell you what I was doing back then. This is the rationale for excerpts from *Every Day, Just Write* from 1997.

Comment: In these unedited volumes I’m reading from of *Every Day, Just Write* that were printed in three copies, Guruseva has placed artwork that I did from that time. It’s very nicely produced. It will probably never see the light in a published book. It’s very different art than I’m doing now. Now I’m painting more realistically. These are crude figures done in ink, and they are not so legible. They have words on them like *cetodarpaṇa-marjanam*, and three vague figures: one red, one green, one black, and murky pinks and blues and scribbles. It’s very modern-looking art, but quite different than what I’m doing

now where I'm making everything so realistic-looking. This is very daring work.

May 23, 1997

12:10 a.m.

Now gently, reader, we will hear of the conversation between Svayambhuva Manu and Kardama Muni. It began because Vidura inquires about Kardama and Devahuti. Shall we hear what the sages say? I know that many things are floating through our minds, but we ought to at least pay attention to *sastra*, return to it from our distractions. The mind is always flickering to various subjects, like lightning striking different clouds. Fortunately, many of my thoughts are concerned with Krishna consciousness, but still it bounces here and there. No way to keep it centered as *yogis* do – like a flame in a windless place, so is the mind fixed on the higher self. But I can have my pole. I hanker to return. Neither are the journeys and leaps to be condemned.

May 24, 1997

12:06 a.m.

I have found an easygoing combination for writing and reading in *Every Day, Just Write*. The “writing while reading” method assures that I don’t neglect *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, even on a daily basis. I don’t want to get absorbed in a writing marathon in a way that would exclude concentration on the books that are more important than any books I could create. It “grounds” me in transcendental science to read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* every day and not just a token amount. It keeps me faithful and chaste to read Srila Prabhupada. It gives me hope of knowing the Supreme Person.

Comment: Are there favorite sections in the *Bhagavatam*, or some sections that I just read dutifully? Ya, there are favorite sections that I look forward to reaching, and reading and writing

about them. But I try to follow Prabhupada's mood that everything is good. Just slow down and be patient and read the Puranjana allegory by Narada Muni. And read "Calculation of Time, From the Atom" and extract the nectar from all of it.

4:00 p.m.

There *is* a mood. An exact way of presenting things that is Srila Prabhupada in the Bhaktivedanta purports. I want to approach it with full faith and acceptance. I may use whatever intelligence I have to accept it better. I may use something I have learned in literature or religion, but ultimately I have to (want to) accept Srila Prabhupada on his own terms. He is within Gaudiya Vaisnavism, but I want to learn that from him. He is my spiritual master and can teach all. He didn't tell us to go to Narayana Maharaja and learn a whole new different or higher or more intimate understanding. If it is *raganuga* we should learn, take it from Srila Prabhupada. If we are warned that we are not eligible for *raganuga*, learn that from Srila Prabhupada.

For example, when I see Srila Prabhupada talking of Krishna's greatness, which he often does, then I don't want to catalog it according to some other standard and judge, here is Srila Prabhupada teaching for neophytes. It is more important to seek out the passages where he speaks of service to Radharani. Prabhupada speaks rarely of service to Radharani and often of "transcendental loving service to the Lord." What he teaches will lead me to the highest. I learned what the highest is and the best way to approach it.

Comment: Now, in 2014, and for the past several years, I have been posting *rasa sastras* on my website. This isn't reading from Srila Prabhupada's books, but I do read from his books every day. I read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Caitanya-caritamrta*. I am sharing what I'm reading when I post the *rasa sastras*. I don't write commentary on them, I just quote four verses a day from Rupa Gosvami's poems, and they are illustrated by Gurudasa in

a nice way. I am attached and attracted to the *rasa sastras* and the pastimes of Radha and Krishna, so there is no harm in reading them as long as I don't abandon reading of Prabhupada.

May 25, 1997

3:15 a.m.

Slept in from midnight to 1:00 to assure I'll be headache free for the 8:30 meeting. Many devotees will be in attendance, those aspiring for first and second initiation and their spouses. I skipped the early, best shot at reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. But it is my main hope and occupation in the coming months. I am "forcing" myself to do it. I say, "Go ahead, learn to combine reading and writing in an act that alternates from one to the other and leaves a record on paper." The total experience of reading can't be recorded. Neither can I read and totally absorb what Vyasa and Srila Prabhupada are saying. I give, therefore, a fraction of a fraction. But it is my subject matter. I challenge (invite myself), "Make it into an art. Learn by practice. Go further with it than you have yet."

If I can learn this, it will be a way to write within the safety of *sastra*, yet "on your own" to write of the experience.

And the experiencer.

I'm here on this day wishing to return to *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and the process of purification, of becoming Krishna conscious. Even if I don't make it today, I'll record that. If I don't love spontaneously to read, I'll read anyway and benefit.

Comment: Here's a reality check. I'm dictating now from the year 2014 in a different place than I was in 1997. I didn't have a website then. Now I write a poem every day and present *rasa sastra*, a *japa* report, a drawing. There's a "Life in the Asrama" piece and excerpts from the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Caitanya-caritamṛta* that we're reading, and then a stanza about Deity

worship of my Radha-Govinda Deities. This is a different world than 1997.

May 26, 1997

Last night I thought, “Take It While You Can” was a good title for this volume, but on waking it doesn’t look so good, doesn’t speak to me. The “Take” looks aggressive, does not reveal its Krishna conscious import. Take what? Could be a motto of hedonists, “Grab all the gusto you can get.” Steal it, seize it. The meaning for a devotee is “take to devotional service; time is short, don’t waste a minute.” The personal meaning for me is that I have freedom to live alone, at least for now, so take it while you can. It’s a kind of private motto I can repeat to myself but doesn’t flash its meaning clear enough as a title. Take it, the opportunity, the permission of time and Providence. They are letting me alone to read, and I am taking this sign to go ahead – moving in the reading and writing pace. The peace, the daily walk, being left alone – this isn’t conveyed openly by “taking it while you can.”

Offer it while you can.

Comment: The title I finally chose was “Choosing to Be Alone.” At this time I was standing up for myself, for my rights. I was refusing to be swept along in the exterior activities of ISKCON. I was taking my time to read and chant and write in Ireland. And now I continue to do it at Stuyvesant Falls. It was a natural personal maturity as a devotee that I evolved to this position. It was bold, it was revolutionary, but it was a quiet revolution. I was supported by my disciples there also. I wasn’t a recluse. I gave a weekly class, and I corresponded, and I wrote books for them.

I have always promoted and allowed for internal expression. It is not that I expect my disciples to do as I am doing. I am supplying them an example of a life of one who lives alone, but

many of them are householders, and they take the good proofs of my solitude in the form of books and example, but they don't have to imitate me. I don't know any of them who are living like this.

These are real – wings of Garuda, as he flaps them he creates the sound of the *Vedas*, the tears of the Lord which forms at the lake of Bindu-sarovara, Lord Vishnu as expansion of original Krishna. These are not mere symbols. It's not only a subject matter of academic study. Reality. For now I open my mind to read it, and I bow my head to pause and receive it. I remember the early days when I first received it from Srila Prabhupada, and I receive it today – hold it in mind's eye, a picture, a feeling at least of everything that is stated.

Here I am in a blessed condition, reading his book, even after his disappearance. I don't need more advanced books. I need him to guide me personally in his own voice as he did then. It is safe and also progressive.

4:10 a.m.

Last night, just before Madhu went off for music practice, I asked to talk with him. He sat on the floor, I sat in the chair and looked out the window toward the meadows and the forest. After going over a few schedule formalities, I told him that I intended to spend the extra time staying in one place and reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and writing. This was nothing new to him, but for me there is something confidential that I hadn't mentioned to him yet. It's perhaps the hopes that I'm again going to try to enter a reading state, like "*samadhi*." As I spoke, my doubt came out about whether this is actually preaching. I had just read Prabhupada's statement that a devotee should take risks. I said if I respond to this call to preach, it's not that I could just do something completely radical and different. For me it would mean getting in the van and driving around Europe visiting temples. Would that really be so much more effective

preaching than staying in one place and reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (and writing what can be turned later into books, and writing letters)?

Comment: The above section was me making a reality check whether it was right to try to enter a state of *samadhi* in reading and writing. But I wasn't torn about it. I was conclusive. I thought it was preaching. It was the most effective thing I could do.

The pressure of living alone is a greater stress, creating insecurity, than the stress of contending with devotees, temple routines in proximity to socialization with Godbrothers. Obviously, this morning's little "freak out" is not a clearly thought out plan. The stark facts may be that you really do want this isolation. Even though, in an external sense, it appears more risky, makes you think you're not pleasing Prabhupada. But if I am deeply satisfied inside, and I'm doing such a harmless thing as reading and chanting, there's a good chance that I will please Prabhupada – even more than if I live in a temple but feel bottled up, harassed by too many meetings, news, etc.

Go into the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, confess your inability to do it, to be interested and to pay attention – and then keep going and trying. The admission is not throwing in the towel. We admit but keep trying.

As for staying in this house or another house and not attending the ISKCON morning program, and not giving many lectures, go ahead and do the thing you most want to do. Trust yourself a little. I don't trust myself utterly and blindly. Obviously, I am always questioning. Can't get through a single day without it. But I am nevertheless hanging in there and liking it. This quiet life. And it is no empty life but full of writing and reading projects, and preaching also by writing letters in answer to what they write to me. Even the ISKCON controversies

reach me. I am asked to say something about them sometimes. It's hardly a complete exile or isolation.

Hare Krishna! Come to the shore at the end of another day and soon start thinking about the short night's rest; then when you wake you can read more about the marriage of Devahuti and look for the word Krishna and *Bhagavatam* and pure *bhakti* which is there in his purports. Seek that connection. The doubts you raise are actually helpful ways to make me alert so that I can start paying attention and valuing what he has written. This instruction is becoming dominant, and I am building up in this.

Comment: How do I feel about not getting many letters now? I wish I were in contact with more disciples, but they don't write, so what can I do? Maybe they don't want to disturb me. I do get some reports, and some devotees visit me. I don't mind the lack of heavy mail. A lot of people are in touch with me from my website on a daily basis, and I feel a good connection. The Facebook statistics said that 8,000 people like my website. They are not writing me letters, or sometimes they do even write me letters on the Facebook, but I don't answer them. They are just comments. I am in touch with a lot of people without getting personal letters.

"You are fit for such and such work in Krishna consciousness. You can act in this way." (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.22.7, purport) The spiritual master instructs the disciple knowing his particular ability. He assigns him to a department in the *sankirtana* movement. "He trains him in such a way that by his tendency to act he becomes perfect." *Bhagavad-gita* teaches that you become perfect by acting according to your ability, as Arjuna did by acting as a warrior for Krishna. "If one is a literary man, he can write articles and poetry for the service of the Lord under the direction of the spiritual master . . . the spiritual master is expert in giving such instructions." I have a

number of instructions from Prabhupada that I should write. I am writing a bit differently but that's OK, judging by the results. Help yourself through the day. Most vital writing, share it with others. Consider it your life and soul. Carry it out as your only duty.

Comment: When I get letters from devotees who say that I am helping them, it very much encourages me. I was getting letters in 1997 and that helped me in my resolution.

Comment: I am looking at a picture in this book. It's written on a handwritten page with a drawing of a face of a man all over it. His mouth is open, and you can see handwriting in it. At the top it says "hosts of sages" and at the bottom to the right it says, "this is not a beautiful man Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna." And then there's all this handwriting and this big pink face and a man with red hair standing on end. It's a good drawing. Guruseva would pick out the pictures, I just sent them to her. Here's one that shows the Swami sitting on the dais and musical notes and HK HK. And then "early days of ISKCON best *vande 'ham* is chanting. "Swamiji 26 Second Avenue." Two people chanting and dancing in yellow *dhotis*, and the guru with his hand in the *jnana mudra*.

I did the artwork at different times in the day. Maybe out in the shed. At Manu's place. On Bristol boards. Small work. Not big paintings on canvases. Guruseva was a great encourager in my art. She wrote me eloquent letters about the creative process, and she would send me pictures of other artists' work. I got a lot of encouragement from her and from her husband, Madhava, who published my books.

Nowadays in 2014 I am painting on canvas with acrylics. I am very satisfied with the equipment I have and the brushes and the

cooperation of Baladeva in preparing the canvases and the brushes. Narayana takes photos, and we post it on the website, and we share the artwork right away. I do a lot of *lila* pastimes with Krishna, and then I alternate and do wild paintings where I just paint by intuition. Today, I just started painting a form, and he turned into a man and he had an accusative finger pointing at another man who was doubled up as if he was hit by a bullet, and a woman screaming in the other corner. This was a painting in the school of Michele Cassou who wrote *Life, Paint And Passion*; who taught to write by process not product. Just ask yourself questions: What would I do if I really let myself free? Then, this painting came out today in that way. I was satisfied with it. And I am equally satisfied with the many pictures I do of Krishna and Lord Caitanya and Radharani. Devotees may favor those, but I like the other ones also.

I've looked at a lot of artists. I have books by Marc Chagall, Paul Clay, Kandinsky, etc. I don't get that much from them. I am an outsider artist, primitive, naïve. I can't paint nice hands; I can't paint nice faces. But I paint earnestly, and the emotion is projected to the viewer. I think I'm mature in the way I paint. I am satisfied that it's not very polished, like Kaulini, who just got a \$40,000 scholarship to go to art school. She does very polished paintings. I'm not that kind of artist. I'm a barefoot artist like Emily Dickinson who said she was a barefoot poet.

While writing this book I read a book about Herman Melville and his retirement and how he was reading different books. He read a book by the novelist Balzac and the torments of the author's life he had: the constant frenzied activity. Inspiration. The slow development of one's craft as an artist. Art as a kind of religion. Lost manuscripts and part of them. The pain as well as the exhilaration of writing. The necessity of letting other matters go as one writes. Opinions of other authors. The literary lawsuits. The pain of proofreading. The headaches from dealing with publishers. The frantic attempts to meet deadlines. The

more than occasional inability to create an event. The public's power to inflict pain. The agony of having works rejected. Good and bad critics. The fear of being a has-been. When I look at this list, I realize I am not a writer in that professional or full artistic sense. I don't want that life. I don't have the joys and the excitement of it, but neither do I have the harassment of it. Maybe I used to think more that I could be that kind of a writer within Krishna consciousness, serve Prabhupada in his movement by turning out books, maybe books of fiction, and maybe even some dream that these would attract the non-devotees. At any rate, I would be a fully involved writer, turning out one book after another. Until very recently, I was thinking of this at least within the spiritual context, that I would write different books for the Krishna conscious readers.

But within the last half year by writing *Every Day, Just Write*, I have gone to a stage beyond this. I say "beyond" implying that it is something better. But at least it's not the life of the creative writer for whom art is religion, who is always anxious to win over the public and so forth and so on. I am exempting myself from that by writing whatever comes within the life of Krishna consciousness.

That doesn't mean I write less, but I write with the kind of detached attitude towards those concerns of the "creative writer." I should keep this in mind when people say that my service is to be a writer, or when I myself say that I am a writer, or when I read books about becoming a writer. I really don't want to be that kind of writer. I want to be a devotee who gets absorbed in Krishna consciousness, in prayer, and for whom writing is a kind of prayer, and a way of expression.

May 30, 1997
12:15 a.m.

"Oh, please be inclined to me. I'm staked out for a little while in Ireland, calling to You in a mixed voice. She asked me, 'How long do you want to stay in Ireland?' It took me by surprise. If I

said, ‘For my whole life,’ would she have stamped it that way, ‘permanent resident’? I didn’t think so. I’d said, ‘One year,’ and I got it. One year at a time. And who is to say? But nowhere else seems friendly to my endeavors. Isolated I have become. Live with it. Find people who will support you in it. Take a year at a time. But don’t think anywhere is a permanent home.

“Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna.”

11:50 a.m.

“Browsing through C. G. Jung’s *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. When he was about 11 years old he was knocked down, hit his head, and after that started having fainting spells. Later, he discovered this was a self-inflicted neurosis, which he enacted to get out of going to school. Reflecting back on it he says, ‘What had led me astray during the crisis was my passion for being alone, my delight in solitude. Nature seemed to me full of wonders, and I wanted to seek myself in them.’

“This sticks in my mind as a warning that being alone can actually be passionate. We usually think of passionate along with being in human society, always trying to be appreciated by people, enacting your desires with people, and so on. We think of goodness as the quiet life. But here could be a passion for that goodness, or as in Jung’s case, a passion for entering nature and getting away from the human world. I have to be on guard not to be carried away. It could be another trick from *maya* to deviate you from your real purpose in life of service to guru and Krishna. Too much being alone can be a kind of sense gratification, even if you justify it by always being engaged in some of the limbs of *bhakti*, *sravanam kirtanam vishnu-smaranam*. Of course, I don’t say that all motives for solitude are bad.

“In fact, early this morning I felt some good inklings. Something can happen in solitude that I’m not even aware of at other times. It’s just a realization, actualization of the things we talk about –a hankering to know Krishna, ability to pray, etc.”

Comment: What happened that I said I had good inklings early in the morning about solitude? I can't remember now, 20 years later, but I did get intuitions in my solitude, so that I wasn't thrown off by reading that Jung. He thought it was passionate to be alone.

June 3, 1997
12:15 a.m.

“Daruka's ‘request’ to be zapped by Krishna is interesting, a kind of joke now. But we seek something like that, it seems. Instead, one could be content to practice the often superficial quality of chanting on beads and reading the scripture. And say, ‘This is all I can do,’ and wait for death in a resigned way. Write it out, the embarrassing record.

“Pray for God's mercy. It comes in the form of appreciation for Nama and *sastra*, comes in full faith in Prabhupada's books and giving us all we need.

“See *anarthas* within yourself.

“Admit that your position – even the present one of choosing to be alone – is not the best, and yet it is the best you can do for now. I read that one should hear about Krishna in the association of devotees. I must conclude that I am mostly doing that by associating with my master's books and learning of the great souls therein, thus associating with them. My non-association with Godbrothers may imply that I do not love them or respect them as devotees, that I feel proud and better than them. I will try to beat that rap and consider that I do respect them, yet have my personal need to be alone.”

Comment: Prabhupada said that we each have to fly our own plane. On the ground we can share instructions and association. But in the air each pilot is on his own.

That's what I'm saying. I have associated a lot with devotees in my early career. Now I am flying in my plane. I'm associating with Narada Muni and Rupa Gosvami and Prabhupada, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, and all the devotees in Ireland.

You can't patiently read all that Srila Prabhupada has written; it passes by the front of your brain and mind. When reading, it comes into the eyes, from the print on the page (but when hearing, through the ears). You are limited to how much you can be attentive to and how deep is the quality of your attention.

Why do you add to this stock of written material your own? You can't read all that you have written. Why create an unnecessary burden for yourself and others?

One answer is that I can't help but write. It helps me as an exercise or therapy. I think things out. Also, my writing evolves. What's already published may be good, but now I'm in a later stage of expression.

I write a lot so that I may eventually get better at it and express something worthwhile.

The devotional service most suitable for different types of devotees is determined and fixed by the mercy of the spiritual master. (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.25.28, purport)

Bhakti-yoga, or devotional service, which is executed in nine different ways, headed by hearing and chanting, aims for complete realization of the Supreme Lord. (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.25.29, purport)

Srila Prabhupada approves of me doing this. He might not approve of me dropping out of more active preaching. But I say that I am actively preaching by publishing, by corresponding with disciples, and by personally exchanging with them in each place.

It may be exceptional to spend so much of your time in chanting and hearing, but at least a few may do this without upsetting the general mood of ISKCON. I say, 'so much' chanting and hearing, but it's pitiful how little I do, 16 rounds a day, and at most, two hours reading. Can't seem to do more. Write . . . some.

Comment: I say, "it's pitiful how little I do, 16 rounds and two hours of reading." So what do I do with the rest of my time? Some of it is spent in writing. Some of it is spent in maintaining my body. Some of it is spent in eating and sleeping. Taking a walk.

Devahuti . . . (This "story" of my Notebooks is that I'm reading in this section. There's a narrative of "I" giving you regular snippets of what I read. The story tells of me sometimes nodding out over the book, of thoughts that interrupt me, confessions of my tepid interests, inability. Tells of the sound of the wind. Raises the question – Is this, *too*, pretension? Is the latest sentence merely literary?)

Do you *hear* the wind, or do you think that it's a good thing to write down that you're hearing it?"

I'll dictate a poem.

"Move along, poke,
drag-ass. Be chipper,
Daddy. Your heart's in
the highlands. You too are
a utopian pessimist.

"You unkindly describe yourself
posterily, for posterity.

You sat in the toilet seat
in royal way (oriental-
style.) Hearing his master speak
and fighting flies of dislike
toward his master's delivery.

"This fellow we joke at
it's for his pleasure,
the butt of our jokes,
our only fellow.
We do bequeath . . .
may he die in the
arms of the Lord
by guru's grace."

Page 74 in the unedited edition:

4:25 a.m."

'It's never easy to write,' he said. The head and hand conspired. He grew drowsy after bath while trying to read aloud. He was reading 'Prayers of Lord Brahma for Creative Energy' chapter. The Lord said to Brahma, 'I will always be with you. I am pleased that you glorify me.' He said that, 'It was I who gave you the inspiration for your prayers.' Then the Lord left that place. Brahma was ready to create.

The false lever, the tired eyes. The trying to go beyond that tiredness. Oh, he's got an important personal mission on behalf of Krishna. I used to scoff when a disciple said, 'I don't know what my mission is.' But when they say they are forming their 'mission statement,' as they learned from Steven Covey. The personal mission is to get straight, serious, and write this here thing. This is a musical sonata, jazz blues. To dance by the piano as I play it. To fall down dead and alive. To recall no more Monk or Basho or God in the vague sense, but Krishna in

Vrndavana as taught by our spiritual master. To contact the actual Krishna as He is in the *Krishna* book. But you can see Him in your mind, too. I don't know.

It's got to be. His daughter is taking motorbike lessons. Another takes gymnastic lessons. Another is in the can for racketeering and worse. Two other jailbirds sing to me and sing direct to God and tell me about it. One writes a prayer every day in his own words in that chilling, horrible atmosphere. Another is an old-timer, mellow, sees Krishna somehow, and they don't keep it to themselves."

POEM FORM

"Relax, serious.

Swami, I am not a scholar,
learning from the person in charge of
religious studies, won't become your
academic preacher in the world.

I'm not on the computer on behalf of the
communications department of ISKCON.

In my dreams I lay in bed beside a GBC man
who didn't like me. But I'm not like that.

'I'm your *cela*,' he says.

I'm trying to prove it fresh and ready,
like a newly-flamed *capati*."

"In 1997, how is my poetry being accepted?"

I publish poetry books every few years. Poetry is not as popular as handbooks for Krishna consciousness. But I have my following. And I'm dedicated to poetry regardless of the reception or vox populi. I put poetry in *Every Day, Just Write* in different places. I sing; I write in free verse; I divide the lines; I'm happy and poke fun.

Be a simple and obedient pupil. Use your mind and intelligence to study his books. Even if it's difficult now, not new, and some points of study you omit, always be coming to his book, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Then you will please him, an old dog, not able to do the tricks he used to; he doesn't wag his tail so much, and he can't jump through the hoop. He's lost the complete act of submission for that. He says, 'Give me a service capable of my position.' But what is his position? At least we can say he can't hack it anymore as GBC meeting-attender, as *BTG* editor, and more lately as an active traveler and preacher. Then what can he do? He can read some. And write a daily chapter with merry resolve to put it together as the latest illustrated booklet.

The day of June 5, is here. Roses and weddings. Gorse in supply. I will walk the hill. Meet with M. Come back to this desk again and again. Write a few letters.

O grace, O grace.
Play the tune.

This Krishna consciousness for you – offer to God, your best friend, if only you can know Him.

I was going to add, 'and be worthy of His companionship.' But He's so kind. He's with you as your friend, even though you are now covered over. He wants you to return to your original purity.

May I know this in my heart, self, truly.

I am simply stumbling and racing. Don't be so judgmental like Simone Weil, making decisions on world religion and saying what is right and wrong. Be a student who hears from his teacher and accepts it. You can ask questions but then accept

what he says. Some of his answers you may have to hold and wait before you understand.

Now wind this up. I will like to splash some paints next door. I don't want to sleep now. I want to stay awake and positive. Then go on the walk and ask permission first. At every step ask to be able to do your thing, but do it in the service of the Lord. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. Then throughout the day return to the holy book of Vyasadeva and see what is being said about the soul, material nature and the Supreme Being.

Sankhya-bhakti, am I on the right track where the daisies grow and remember Krishna. Say the mantra of Hare Krishna and pray to know Him, Krishna the Supreme. He's the Swami. The Lord is good. Don't you know it?

"I wrote 'Krishna' in red
on a black background,
printed on A4 paper.
A very good morning because
I remembered you are supposed to
think of Krishna and be happy.

Today is election day. Madhu says the Fine Gael Party is likely to win. In my own world I would like Satsvarupa's Pro-Reading-and-Writing Party to win the election. The progress has been slow, but they're in power now. So let's give them more time. After all, when I wrote to Prabhupada asking if it was all right to read for three and more hours a day in his books, he said, 'As GBC and *sannyasi*, your main duty is to read my books, otherwise how will you preach? Whenever you get time, read my books.'

My Wicklow or Geaglum activities will be justified as long as I continue a regular infusion of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I say it can't be force-feeding, but neither can I wait for a stage when I will be

spontaneously attracted at all times. My plan is to go regularly and try again. I find gems, a phrase that will touch me, make me serious about the soul and the relationship with the Supreme. Overcome my dislikes. Some determination is necessary.”

A painting of a black cow’s head. A painting of two men with bead bags. One of them says, “Come on, let’s chant and walk.” The other one has a cane and his finger extended in his bead bag and around him the letters “HK HK KK HH HR HR RR HH.” Jaunty lines. Jaunty figures.

June 8, 1997
5:10 a.m.

Headache all night and still going on. It brought me this comforting insight: ‘Living alone is my speed. I’m not just choosing to be alone, but it’s forced upon me by my chronic illness. So you can stop your mental speculation whether you ought to do a lot more. You can’t.

The life I’m living is also a very busy one, and therefore I say, ‘This is my speed.’ Reading *Bhagavatam*, writing my endless book, answering mail, receiving mail, this and that – I sometimes feel like I’m rushing through the day. There is plenty to do, and don’t complain about a lack of it. Rejoice. And tend to the work of the soul.

Comment: It’s easy to forget now in 2014, when I’m headache-free, how much restricted I was in 1997, and for 20 years, with headaches. It forced me to stay in one place, chosen as Ireland. And I did get lots of mail. It would come in stacks. It would break my peacefulness, and I would have to answer all the letters. And when the headaches came, I would lose a whole

day. So the deliberation of whether I should do more was a moot point. I couldn't do more. The fragility of my health was very prominent.

This finishes *Choosing to Be Alone*, Volume 10.

Every Day, Just Write, Volume 11, Sacrifice for Bhagavatam, Part 1, Ireland, June 10–19, 1997

June 10, 1997, 2:12 a.m.

Dreamt of lower nature. When I awoke I thought of sacrifice for *Bhagavatam*. Give up lesser for the sake of the greater. It will be good if I can do. Enter the study, for relishing. There is no motive in doing it. Srila Prabhupada says, “Read my books or else how can you preach?” But I am not reading now just to get the topics for a lecture or debate. That will come automatically as I read. I call it unmotivated reading.

Dictionary – sacrifice: noun, “The offering of anything to God; anything offered to a divinity; surrender made in order to gain something.”– v.t. “Sacrifice (to make an offering or sacrifice of, to offer up a sacrifice to some deity).”

It’s nice how the Cambridge dictionary sees it in relation to God. Probably an American dictionary would mention the baseball play “sacrifice” where the batter gives up his own chance to get on base in order to advance the position of a teammate already on base.

My starting idea is that by insisting on a reading program in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, I’m swinging my time in a tangent to it, and thus sacrificing the possibility of a more concentrating writing marathon or literary project. In the past I would suspend entirely or minimize daily readings so I could write my book. Now I’m insisting on reading every chance I get and asking the writing self to come along. He can free write in between reading attempts. He may write notes of what “we” are reading or he may write whatever comes to mind, but he can expect days uninterrupted by thoughts and acts of reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

I want to go back to Godhead. I want to develop love of God. “If we give up *bhakti-yoga* and simply busy ourselves in the analytical study of the nature of things as they are, then the

result will be practically nil.” (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.29.1–2, purport)

I can write *bhakti* without reading all day because I’ve read enough and can remember it, but I feel the need to keep it real and vivid before me. I’m a bit desperate for the actual taste and realization of Krishna consciousness. I’m afraid if I don’t regularly read, I’ll drift into mundane psychology or writing techniques to tap the unconscious. I’ll read something else if I don’t read *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

Comment: The quote from the letter by Prabhupada was in response to a letter I wrote to him. I wrote to him that I was reading his books three hours or more a day and asked if that was that too much or was it all right? I was a little afraid to ask him; I thought he might say that you’re reading too much. He wrote me back, “As a GBC and *sannyasi*, your first duty is to read my books. Unless you read, how can you preach? Whenever you get time, read my books.” So it was a green light to absorb myself in reading, not in management.

There’s a difference between preaching and lecturing. Nowadays, to lecture one can go to the VedaBase and punch in a subject and get all quotes from Prabhupada on the subject from various places in his books, and you can assemble your lecture. It’s made easy. People even bring their computers into class and read from them. But preaching is a more from-the-heart realization and way of life, expressing and sharing Krishna consciousness. I have to read Prabhupada’s books and study the *Bhagavatam*, not punch into the VedaBase. I’ve never used the VedaBase, or had secretaries use it for me.

What is the difference between memorizing and realization? One can memorize and pass the Bhakti-sastri tests and the Bhaktivedanta tests, but that doesn’t mean he has realized the subject matter.

Realization means to actually imbibe the message of Prabhupada in your heart. I went through a period when I was practicing prayerful reading – what the Christians called *lectio divina*. That’s a practice where in monasteries they select ahead of time a small amount of reading matter and they read it slowly and try to pray as they read it, and meditate on it, chew on it, and ask God questions, and then they thank Him. I practiced that for awhile, but here in 1997, I had dropped that and I was reading at not such a slow pace. I was reading at a regular pace. I wanted to be with Prabhupada and with the *Bhagavatam* and cover the subject matters and read chapter by chapter, just to always be near it.

I wrote that letter to Prabhupada in which I get the answer to always read his books when I had time, at a time when he was alive and writing books and the BBT was producing books. It was very exciting. You would get your latest section of the *Bhagavatam* in the mail, and you hadn’t read it ever, and you read it for the first time and you could share it with others. At that time in my life it was all fresh and new. How wonderful it was when the new books arrived and you read them. That was behind me in 1997, and I was reading again.

I had read through them a number of times. I don’t know how many. This was a different project, as we’ll learn as we read this book.

I’m sometimes reluctant to make a reading note. It seems too student-like. “Anyone could do this. It won’t provide interesting reading. Where is the creativity?” I hope to gradually, even imperceptibly, gain an art of mixing the reading, the notes from reading and the other writing. But whether it’s art or not, or whether some readers don’t think it’s so interesting, it will have *Bhagavatam* topics in it. And for that we may all be grateful. It can save us at death from the greatest fear.

Comment: I was always reading the books. This time in 1997 was a particularly concentrated sacrifice. With long-term desire and long-term practice, now I'm mixing it with writing in my journal *Every Day, Just Write*.

Divine student. Read your religious studies. You know which book I mean, the *Amala-Purana*. It's *bhakti* all the way whether you know it or not, prepare you for the Tenth Canto. Krishna in His original form. Get yourself ready, qualified. Detached, learn it. Obedient. Trained – accepting what your spiritual master spent his best moments preparing for you. He could have translated more intimate *gopami* literature, but he gave us *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Learn it and you can develop real taste. I'm still attached to the material modes. Get me free. Let's hear how Lord Kapila speaks of how devotional service is conditioned when you don't do it right.

The word “sacrifice” is a noun or a transitive verb. I mean it both ways. I don't sacrifice everything in an all-out marathon free writing. I go with a more measured life of reading throughout the days. I believe in it. I'm not doing it merely to be renounced or obedient. I feel that it is the best thing to do. Therefore, there is a giving up of some of the right to lead activity, but it's also a *yajna*, a festival, a sacrifice. It consists of no rituals except sitting down before the book and reading. Then you write a little. Read, and then write.

I say I am sacrificing for the *Bhagavatam*. I am doing the prolonged sacrifice known as *bhagavata-katha*. How to express all that in one title? You could drop the word “sacrifice” altogether

and just say “by serving the *Bhagavatam*,” or writing while reading . . .

The sacrifice is for the *Bhagavatam*. You elevate your speech. I said if you have a tinge, you’re not a pure devotee. It’s called *niskama-karma-yoga*, or something like that. You are dovetailing your propensities, but it isn’t the purest and highest. There are forms of *bhakti* – we usually count them all as transcendental, the beginning, middle, and most advanced. But there is another way to estimate *bhakti*, according to the modes of nature. Get out of those lower modes, raise yourself and just work in a temple or do something that’s Krishna’s service. Those devotees who have captured this idea . . . serve Krishna. People are trying to stop devotees. They are envious. You fall at the feet of the Lord, and He protects you.

Comment:

Someone could say I’m hiding behind the books. Just a bookworm. Not going out to face the demons. But I have paid my dues in the act of preaching fields; now I am also sidelined with an illness. This is the best I can do. And Prabhupada has authorized me to read as much as I can, so I don’t fear being branded a bookworm. Somebody accused the devotees of being bookworms, and Prabhupada said they are “stoolworms.”

Now I’m dictating a poem from *Every Day, Just Write*. It starts on page 14 and continues on page 15.

Swami, I confess I’ve been a bad boy
I used to make confession in church and you blasted
that church, saying they can’t answer two
questions –
why God has only one son and why they are
killing so much although Christ says

“thou shalt not kill”
He got their number.

Swami, please forgive me for fault-finding
when you speak it is a ferocious attack
and yet you are quiet as a young Prahlada.
Bhurijana said that.

Swami, you are the memory of you
where are you where am I going
will I be with you and other devotees
does everything change
from one life to another
and if so where is the continuity of ourselves

How will you be my spiritual master in the next life
are you the same Abhay Charan De at 26 Second
Avenue
or is that just for this life
I don't want to pretend to get gopi-manjari-
bhava
but I'm just throwing out these questions
Is it fair? where will we go
will I lose my individual nature

I know I won't be Steve Guarino
but does that mean it's all forgotten
and if so, then how am I an individual eternally

June 11, 1997

12:05 a.m.

The Supreme Lord is present and the Supersoul and all living bodies. The individual soul is also part of the Lord, so in that sense also He is present. “Therefore, persons who profess to belong to some religious sect but who do not feel the presence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in every living entity, and everywhere else, are in the mode of ignorance.” (*Bhag.* 3.29.22, purport) Don’t unnecessarily commit violence to any living entity, however insignificant he may be.

I know that’s easier said than done. The notebooks of absolute truths jotted down while reading need to be followed too. That’s why you like to write in your own experience. I dreamt of yoga feats being done nowadays by devotees of Krishna as preaching, to convince people of God’s power. I thought that power can enter me so I can believe in God and the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I can attain *bhakti*. I am studying with that purpose. It may happen in a non-sensational, non-magic way, but I do seek it – to enter the reality of what I read, not just in principle but in detail and specific context.

...

Now Kapiladeva is speaking to his mother and ultimately to Krishna in Vrndavana.

Comment:

I had a dream that the devotees attained *yogic siddhis*, and they were using it to preach. The reality nowadays is that devotees are becoming certified yoga teachers, entering the yoga field where people come for *batha-yoga asanas*. They are being accepted in that field, and they are teaching *asanas*, but they are also injecting *bhakti* into it. The primary example is my disciple Gopi-manjari. She gets people to chant Hare Krishna mantra in *kirtana*, and she straightforwardly preaches *bhakti* along with the *asanas*. She’s right there with the *asanas* for sure, but she doesn’t

leave out *bhakti*. So, she gets the crowd. She brings them with her own retreats to India, and into Italy and elsewhere, and gives them the full experience. She is using yoga as a preaching tool.

4:40 a.m.:

I was on the verge of ordering Teresa of Ávila's *Interior Castle*, but I've looked at it several times over the years and it never becomes practical. Why not use the system of the *Bhagavatam*?

You say it doesn't teach a way to pray, but I say pray simply by reading it, whatever it offers. Then go to chant your *japa* and pay attention to the sound of the mantras. So there is prayer. In writing, too, that is a form of prayer. You can incline yourself to the Supreme Lord Krishna, ask Him, petition Him, and pray to Him.

June 24, 1997

12:10 a.m.

Sacrifice to *Bhagavatam* also means to accept whatever it's saying in each section you read. I'm not selecting a group of prayers to read from a favorite devotional text, but I am reading whatever is current in my go-through, now nearing the end of Third Canto. At a peak midnight hour, I read verses against demigod worshipers in the purports. What is it my soul is hankering for? I say, "To be with my master in this form, hear whatever he says." Be assured it is most nourishing, preparing you to be a scholar and preacher of his books. Reading in his books begets more of the same. That's the attitude.

Yes it's good. Be alone. Be as simple as possible. Mostly read his books. Then you will be able to appreciate them. They are

not easy to read. Superficial, but real, obstacles are the fact that he repeats himself and stays often on basic topics (although with implicit messages always for the topmost stage of surrender in pure Krishna consciousness).

Some devotees satisfy intellect with Sanskrit study, study of *acaryas'* confidential books. Some go back to the university for academic studies connected to Krishna consciousness, for preaching. Some fill their days with varieties of preaching in management duties. For them, reading his books may not be a central daily activity. Thus, one lives *for* his books and his cause, but not *in* the books. Some do read them a lot. I want to be like that. It's not easy, one hankers for other things. One doubts if this is enough service. One even doubts if it's pleasing to Srila Prabhupada, although he told me it's my first duty.

Despite declaring oneself free and simplified for this task, one still doesn't read several hours daily. But my stake is there.

You entered the deathless worlds (by reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*). You hear of the death-bound worlds and aspire to avoid them. How slow we are to give up the path of *prakṛti*, the path of forgetfulness of God.

In our morning management meeting, I'm going to read to Madhu today some snippets from Elizabeth of the Trinity. I don't want to overdo this, but I don't want to deny it entirely. My interest is mostly the inspiration of one who has gone alone to worship God in that exclusive mood. Some comments by the editor of her letters reminded me of my own pursuits, in particular how I am aware that my diary contains outwardly simple events in a little life.

What was there to relate, then, in the 69 letters and notes that Elizabeth addressed during this period? The various events are

hardly sensational: Her first contact with her new cell and rough straw mattress, the unexpected visit Mother Maria of Jesus made, a bat at night during the Grand Silence, the wash done in common and the little tasks and choir ... A letter received, and frosted window panes in the cloister in her cell.

The editor goes on to say how Elizabeth experienced difficulties, “prayer became dry,” but she did not complain. That is the difference between her and myself. I complain and even think it may be healthy, or even inevitable. Her editor writes:

After her clothing, taking on a nun’s habit (her letters speak especially of her joy at being at Carmel, living in community, in a silence, in the presence of God, listening like

Magdalene to her Master, surrendering herself to the life of “The Three” within her.

Comment: How do I relate to silence? The barking dog. The kid bouncing his basketball. The cars going by. They are just white noise or little annoyances. I like to get up at midnight, or before midnight, when I know I can begin my *japa* in silence and write my website poem in silence. I like silence in which to read the book, in which to chant. Prabhupada said silence means not talking nonsense, but we talk *krishna-katha*. Prabhupada wasn’t a *mauni baba*, one who practices silence and doesn’t actually speak. He spoke, but he spoke about Krishna and Krishna’s service. I write, I speak, in that way.

In the past I’ve had little cells, or little shacks or sheds in which I went to study and to be alone. Even while I was living alone at Manu’s house, I was alone in the part of his house which was my own, and I went through silence. But still, he built me a little shed in the field where I went to concentrate and do more writing and reading and painting. And then in Wicklow I had a house to myself while Madhu was in his own

little house. But they built me – well not built me – but I used another small building for a writing retreat. At Saunaka Rsi's house I was alone in my room, but he built me a shed in the back yard in the little forest where I went for retreats. Now I take it all in my room here, my *bhajana-kutira* at Stuyvesant Falls, and my concentrated *bhajana* in the early hours of the night.

June 14, 1997

4:26 p.m.

One has to accept the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* purports in toto. The *acaryas* and *sastras* do the research and investigation; we simply accept it. “Study” means to hear submissively the science of God spoken by the authorized representatives of God. One is allowed to question in order to clear things up, but not with a challenging attitude. There is no second opinion. What Krishna and *sastra* say, that's it. Some revolt from this, on principle, some may find it easy or even lazy, but aside from that ... it is what it is. Accept it or not.

I have been accepting it for 30 years, and I continue to. It's a labor to do so, to fight off the old doubts. But your intellect tells you that you really do prefer the absolute truth, enunciated as perfect, rather than the independent speculations of individual *munis* in the history of religion and philosophy. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* seems to have their number – the faults of the *karmis*, *jnanis* and *yogis*. I go along with it.

I am also slow to experience the Divine. I can't speak of experiences of Krishna in a very strong way from my readings, but enough comes through to me so that I keep trying to follow the path. I am prepared to give a *Srimad-Bhagavatam* lecture on almost any verse with a purport. I remember something relevant Srila Prabhupada has said or written on it, and I repeat that. I figure that I have as much faith in it as other members of

ISKCON, so I repeat it to them. I am capable of lecturing to nondevotees also, although I am out of practice in that.

O Krishna, I can't even cry to You with feeling, but I write it here, O Krishna, I wish to read this book and write these notes. It hurts to be so dry and uninspired.

Comment: What did I mean when I said some may find it easy or even lazy? I meant the opposite of a challenging attitude was to just read and not be alert. To be lazy. We should be alert, and if there is something we don't understand, then ask about it. And then there are the other kinds of people – the challengers who come up with “guru-stumpers.” They are trying to ask some question that the guru can't answer. I remember I interviewed one girl who wanted to take initiation from me. I gave her an initial interview and her first question is, “How come the first birth that we take in the material world is as Lord Brahma?” I didn't even know if that was true, but that is what she asked me. It wasn't relevant to her position in Krishna consciousness, but she just came up with an obscure question to stump the guru. It's a sport. Some devotees indulge in it. They ask questions to get answers from some obscure *Purana*, but it's speculative. You should just accept what Prabhupada has said in his books than have to refer to other *Puranas*.

The same day, 5:45 p.m.

I'm doing a lot of writing. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna . . . The early morning hours . . . It is not how much you read, but the moments of getting close, of adoring, welcoming, worshipping . . . The *darsana* moments in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, that's the real fruit of the reading. I read the Kapila chapters and the blessing was that you will become a devotee and go back to Godhead. Keep at it and don't think that you know it all, or that

you’ve seen it all before. This is another new time. There’s a crude painting here of a house with a chimney. It looks like Manu’s house, and it says *maha-mantra* on it. Nice painting.

Aside from arguments in my favor, while gremlin attacks upon me (quoting from scripture to do it) – there is what I feel has become so strong by taste that you know you have it no other way. If by associating with the best of persons like Lord Siva and Lord Vishnu and the Vaisnavas in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, you do more than “reading for the sake of reading,” then you will not want to leave it. You will tear yourself away from this taste only so you can share it sometimes with others, just as Srila Prabhupada kindly came to America to share Krishna consciousness with us.

Comment: Did I ever feel that Prabhupada was missing Vrndavana in coming to the West? No, I didn’t. Once he caught on at 26 Second Avenue, he was satisfied. He wanted devotees to come from India to join him. He was pioneering in the West, and he was enlivened. And he liked his boys and girls who, as he said, were not very purified and not educated in Vedic culture, but they weren’t offenders and so they took to Krishna consciousness. Let me try to understand my spiritual master who is always in blissful Krishna consciousness. Let me meditate upon him being enthused just as he enthuses us, we say in the *guru Gayatri mantra*. He was enthused. And yes, in his heart he missed Vrndavana, but he said a preacher can leave Vrndavana and go around the world to preach and then he can come back to Vrndavana in the end, which is what he did. No, I don’t think he missed Vrndavana; he had Vrndavana with him in his heart.

Daksa cursed Lord Siva not to have his share in *yajna*. Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura says this was indirectly a blessing for Lord Siva. It's not fit for the greatest devotee of the Supreme Lord to sit with materialistic persons, so Daksa relieved him of that social obligation. Prabhupada writes in the purport:

There is a practical example set for us by Gaurakisora dasa Babaji Maharaja, who used to sit on the side of a latrine to chant Hare Krishna. Many materialistic persons used to come and bother him and disturb his daily routine of chanting, so to avoid their company he used to sit by the side of a latrine, where materialistic persons would not go because of the filth and the obnoxious smell. However, Gaurakisora dasa Babaji Maharaja was so great that he was accepted as the spiritual master of such a great personality as His Divine Grace Om Vishnupada Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Maharaja. The conclusion is that Lord Siva behaved in his own way to avoid materialistic persons who might disturb him in his prosecution of devotional service. (*Bhag.* 4.2.18, purport)

Comment: Gaurakisora dasa Babaji was unique. He shouldn't be imitated. Prabhupada kept an open door and was willing to receive most persons. We should be ready to talk to people about Krishna and not be cranky that they are interrupting our air space.

June 18, 1997

11:50 a.m.

There's always competition between the modes in this world. Siva sent a demon, a representative of *tamas*, to attack the *brahmanas*. Be glad you can read and write this. You are a student. Just as TKG studies books, writes papers, and takes exams at SMU (he's got a straight A average), so I have taken a summer semester home course on *Srimad-Bhagavatam* study. I am

graded by how many pages I write? How many hours I read? Not exactly, yet I am expected to do both, read and write. Keep at it rather than do something else. That's the sacrifice.

Lord Siva pulled a hair from his head. Crackled like fire. He threw it to the ground, laughing like a madman. This created a tall black demon Virabhadra who Lord Siva asked to go kill Daksa and the *brahmanas*. I used to be afraid or put off by this description. Madhu tells me he likes it because the so-called *brahmanas* are going to get their just rewards. Let's see what I think of it this time.

3:10 p.m.

Mount Kailasa is described, full of natural beauty, hills, waterways, birds, animals, trees . . . In this connection Srila Prabhupada discusses *tirtha*. He refers to Narottama dasa Thakura <http://vedabase.net/t/thakura> saying there is no need to travel to holy places if you can take shelter of the lotus feet of Govinda.

Anyone who is fixed in the service of the lotus feet of Govinda is called *tirtha-pada*; he does not need to travel on various pilgrimages, for he can enjoy all the benefits of such travel simply by engaging in the service of the lotus feet of the Lord . . . Who is engaged 100 percent in the service of the Lord can remain anywhere in the universe, and that part of the universe immediately becomes a sacred place where he can peacefully render service to the Lord as the Lord desires. (*Bhag.* 4.6.25, purport)

I may consider making my place in say, Ireland. Not that I am a great soul and wherever I stay is a *tirtha*. But you can find *tirtha* wherever you are by executing devotional service. Often when I go to the *tirthas* of India they appear covered. It may be that they are influenced by materialistic people, or that I am unable to see

under the cover. But in either case, making a pilgrimage in India often leaves me cold. It's just troublesome, Indianized, and I feel alien. I do better in any quiet place, preferably in an isolated country atmosphere away from the hustle-bustle of the city, and even away from the busy community life of a big *asrama* of devotees.

"Materialists get incited by sex desires when they go to a beautiful scenic spot, but in the spiritual world, although the residents and the place are extremely beautiful, there is no impetus for sex life." (*Bhag.* 4.6.31, purport) I also can live in a nice atmosphere and not get agitated. It will calm you or inspire you to chant and hear and remember Krishna in *bhajana*.

Comment: In the early years of ISKCON, it was considered spiritual sense gratification to go to a nice place. You were expected to stay in the hellish city and pound it out and preach. Then, we started to get our New Vrindaban places which were beautiful, countryside communities. That was considered *maya* by some, but Prabhupada liked it because they were taking care of cows and farming and living a simple life, and he went and stayed there and enjoyed it. So, he liked those communities, too. What I was doing was radical, but some people were glad that I was doing it as an example. Now it's become more acceptable and others are doing it. And Narottama dasa Thakura says you can stay anywhere in the universe, and Prabhupada says you can stay anywhere and it's a tirtha. You can serve Krishna peacefully and not be disturbed.

June 19, 1997

12:10 a.m.

It seems far off that I could love *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and become absorbed in it all the time. You need to take breaks

from it, do active preaching, etc. But still, I always gain by trying. Who can say it was ever wasted time when I read? Yesterday, after reading, I thought of the descriptions of Kailasa and the situation with Lord Siva there. I'm constantly being educated when I read, and my life is enhanced even without my knowing it. Lord Caitanya ordered Raghunatha Bhatta Gosvami to pass his time in Vrindavana simply by reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Raghunatha Bhatta's reading was outlived, and he lectured on it. Let me simply read now and write my notes of appreciation, gloss, and objections and distractions. I hope the day will come when, 1) I will always be absorbed in this; and 2) naturally I will speak it to whomever I meet.

Comment: What I was doing could be taken wrongly by people who aren't mature. One can take it as entitlement, thinking "I've done my work, now I deserve this." I always remember that I was forced to stay alone by my headaches. But aside from that, I take it as a boon that by the grace of God I am allowed this lifestyle, not that I worked to earn it.

June 19

12:10 a.m.

The *lectio divina* spirit is very important. Even if I don't use any of their specific techniques, I think it's helpful for me to read about it and, by osmosis, I'll think of some of it:

- 1) Pray before reading;
- 2) Enter the spirit in which the book was written by its divine author; and
- 3) Treat the reading not as time for thoughts *about* God, but as direct, personal encounter with Him. I translate this to mean, "Read thoughtfully. Always ask yourself, *Am I reading with attention?*" Pause and appreciate. For example, when Srila Prabhupada quotes a verse within his purport, this is a chance for me to hear that verse; it's like a little

memorization drill, an opportunity to consider the verse in a particular context. This, itself, will provide novelty in the reading. Be creative as you read.

Comment: When I was reading was I thinking it was just Prabhupada, or was I thinking I was communing with all the *acaryas*? I guess the answer is both. I was always under the guidance of Prabhupada and the Bhaktivedanta Purports, but I was aware that he wrote his purports by consulting a book with 12 different commentaries by the *acaryas*, and he drew from them to write his own purports. When he was speaking, it was a timeless thing. He was representing the *parampara*, and you were getting everything through him, so you accepted him as a bona fide spiritual master. *Guru, sastra, sadhu*. You were getting *sastra*; you were getting *sadhu*, meaning the other *sadhus*, and you were getting your spiritual master's particular touch on it.

Brahma is asking Siva to settle things up. He directly asks that Daksa be given back his life. The sacrifice for the Supreme Lord should continue. This volume of *Every Day, Just Write* is called "Sacrifice" in the verb action sense. I am sacrificing other things I could do in order to read *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. But it is also a sacrifice in the noun sense of the word. I sit for performing the *yajna* each day. If there are discrepancies, wrong motives, faulty priests (sub-persons) in my *yajna*, let it be corrected, settled up, and let the sacrifice continue.

"One should work not for his own sense gratification. Everyone should work for the satisfaction of God. That is called *yajna*. (*Bhag.* 4.6.53, purport)

All the demigods must be invited to the *yajna*. If even one is neglected, he may get angry and ruin the *yajna*. The *yajna* costs much money. In this age such *yajnas* are not possible.

Yes, I am a priest at an inexpensive *yajna*. I must do it as much as possible. I am preaching this way. I am praying. I am trying to improve the quality of the *yajna*. This will please the demigods and contribute to peace and prosperity in the larger society, somehow.

Every Day, Just Write, Volume 11, Sacrifice for Bhagavatam, Part 2, Ireland, June 20–28, 1997

Now, in the unedited volumes that were produced in three copies, we are reading Part 2 of *Sacrifice for the Bhagavatam*, Volume 11. On the front there is a picture of a man writing and it says, “Krishna gave it to you, be happy. Just write.”

June 20, 1997

My hope is that I can increase service without increasing the varieties of service. Can I be satisfied mainly with the simple activities of reading, chanting, and writing and living a simple “retired” life? I ask myself whether Srila Prabhupada is pleased, and to some degree it may remain a mystery. You pray for it. I also may ask myself if I am pleased by this life: *yenatma suprasidati*. I want to do this more. I hope that Krishna will reveal to me when and where to preach more outwardly, if He desires that of me. At present, it seems good that I work at increasing my absorption in reading. I know many ISKCON devotees don’t read much. I want to prove that I can read steadily and that it can develop into a genuine liking for his books. I really want that. I want to banish the doubts that I need something more than his books. I need to be satisfied and then I can preach with confidence and conviction and represent ISKCON and please Srila Prabhupada.

June 21, 1997

Midnight

In the purport where Vedic *yajna* is ascribed, Srila Prabhupada states that in the present age the only acceptable *yajna* is *sankirtana*. At first glance you think, “Oh no! I’ve read this hundreds of times.” But I looked at it again. Sometimes I have to read obliquely, even condescendingly: “All right, dear mind, I know you’re impatient. (For what? Novelty? Higher *rasas*? Do you deserve?), but let’s give the purport a chance. Read it with some care. He may have something to say to us.” When I approach it this way I saw the assurance that I am doing *yajna* daily, directly. Sure I could be doing it more actively, but I am within the fold anyway. The Eleventh Canto verse *krishna-varnam ... sankirtana-prayair / yajanti hi su-medhasah* affirms that “this *yajna* is offered before the form of Lord Caitanya as other *yajnas* are offered before the form of Lord Vishnu ... Lord Caitanya is Vishnu Himself ... appeared in this age to accept our *sankirtana-yajna*.” (*Bhag.* 4.7.41 purport)

The whole appreciation of Lord Caitanya opened in these words, with practical application for my reading and worship. I should be focused on Lord Caitanya by reading. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* can strengthen my connection with Him. Lord Caitanya recommended reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. He’s the Ideal Preacher of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and so is Srila Prabhupada. By my “sacrifice” to *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, I am performing *sankirtana-yajna* in the footsteps of Maharaja Pariksit who attained perfection simply by hearing it from Sukadeva.

Gently pray for the presence of Krishna as you read. Don’t flirt with skepticism. Pray that the scriptures will come to you in their intended meaning. You have achieved this positive Krishna conscious state many times, at least in part, so ask to re-enter and redevelop it further. *Extend the time in which you live in the scriptures in the faithful attitude.*

The preacher has conviction in the potency of *krishna-katha*. I want to preach to myself more and be converted again. I want to taste conversion, renewal, transformation, “because we know that if one simply chants and hears the topics of Krishna, one’s life will change; he will see a new light, and his life will be successful.” (*Bhag.* 4.7.44, purport)

Expose yourself to it
 turn it on,
 stand under its rays.
 Take off your “protective” covering . . .
 Let *Bhagavatam*’s rays
 bathe you.
 It’s not so hard, not at all
 harmful or painful.
 And the gain is very great.

Any one purport is filled with possibilities depending on how you receive it (*ye yatha mam prapadyante*). Take a “simple” statement like, “As far as the spiritual entrance into the material world is concerned, all beings are parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord, but under the covering of different material qualities they have different names.” (*Bhag.* 4.7.51, purport) That could blow your mind, make your hair stand on end – or if you’re not awake and receptive, you may think, “Same old stuff, Vedic truths,” and not be interested.

Or consider this: “For the purpose of creation, Brahma is manifested, and for annihilation there is Lord Siva.” Brahma and Siva are inconceivably great persons, and the acts of creation and annihilation are beyond my understanding – great, great acts in the universe. Don’t try to measure these or compare it to what scientists say. If you take any of these statements from the privileged viewpoint of a *cela*, you’ll be

astonished. As Krishnadasa Kaviraja says, “It is wondrous, *camatkara*, the *amṛta* of Lord Caitanya.”

4:50 p.m.

“Face it, this is your guitar-picking. You are not a jug blower, a Jewish harp player, or guitar slammer. Not a lute player or cymbal-and-harp or tenor saxophonist. You are not a telephone user or prompter of trouble on the political and military fronts. Don’t know how yet to plant the garden or plant children in a woman. Unless you want to start a new career at age 59, I advise you to push on with this easygoing thing you learned at five years old. It’s called writing. You read about Tony and Mary. Tony throws the ball. Mary catches the ball. You learned it in school, and at first you just wrote out what they asked you. You never dreamed that one has his own life and that you can write it down. Or that anyone would care to read it. I learned that around age 17 and started it. This is my song, continuing down as it goes.”

Comment: I said I started writing about myself at 17. Prior to that, I just wrote for school. I didn’t know you could write about your life. Then I started keeping a diary in a loose-leaf binder.

Devotee: Did you read about someone else’s diary in a book?

I don’t know. It just began. I can’t remember why.

I was under the influence of novels I was reading: *Catcher In the Rye* and *Look Homeward Angel* and listening to Jean Shepherd on the radio. Then, I’d created my little self-realization or interest in the self, of who I was. I started writing, usually in bed, at night, when I would come home from beer-drinking. My tongue was loose.

Devotee: Drinking beer?

(SDG laughs and laughs)

I didn't write *only* when I drank beer! I wrote on all nights. . . . It looked good.

"I came under the influence of so many other things along the way. Now I want to stay in the shelter of the Vedic teachings. I don't want to stand on my own, because for me that means just eventually coming under the influence of somebody else, even though that person may claim that he's not guru, that the way is to be eclectic, and so on. But in accepting "the Vedic thought," I do it through Prabhupada's books. And I have to do it on my own.

"Even these words I write are under the influence of reading Kierkegaard's philosophy. Vardy says, according to Kierkegaard:

"Faith is the highest that any individual can attain, yet modern speculative philosophy mocks faith and makes it out to be nothing. This, Kierkegaard refused to accept. If faith is the highest, then reason has no right to cheat people out of faith – it is not possible to go further than faith. Faith is the highest and most difficult demand. It is not something that one can achieve and then move on, it has to be lived out hour by hour, day by day, month by month, and year by year for the whole of one's life. It is totally demanding, challenging, uncomfortable, and lonely.'

I think Krishna consciousness is more positive than this. It is such that the spiritual platform is not one that could possibly be wrong, which makes one uncomfortable and lonely. *Brahma-bhuta prasannatma*. One rises above all the modes and miseries. This is, of course, the perfect stage. I think it is also within Krishna conscious philosophy to admit that there *is* anxiety in the intermediate stages. It is "spiritual anxiety." And there is anxiety even in the highest stages, caused by separation from

Krishna. One might say that the *gopis* are also living a life that is “totally demanding, challenging, uncomfortable, and lonely.” But it is much more ecstatic than that. They are fully aware of Krishna’s beauty and love for them and personal dealings with them – but they are aching now because He is no longer before them, except in the *bhava* of separation.

But the *gopis*’ ecstasies are, for me, just more doctrine. Where am I at actually? I must admit that I do feel some of this demanding nature of faith, and I’m willing to take it up as my fight. I know that spiritual life means working hard and fighting. I can’t do it in so many outward ways. It no longer appeals to me, and I haven’t got the physical strength. But I can fight this fight, day by day, hour by hour, to keep on reading Prabhupada’s books, to keep my faith.”

Comment: Do I ever have a problem with blind faith, just accepting something because Prabhupada said it, even though reason balked. I struggled, but I accepted most things on faith once I surrendered to Prabhupada. Jiva Gosvami says you have to accept that spiritual knowledge is inconceivable. So you can’t know it by your intellectual speculation. You have to know it by submissive aural reception. Once I accepted that principle, it wasn’t blind faith, it was enlightened faith.

Inconceivable became relishable. You accepted the wondrous inconceivable things that were being taught in the *Bhagavatam* and the Bhaktivedanta purports that defied rational thinking. They weren’t difficult for you, you relished them.

Once you accept this position, it puts you 180 degrees different from all the nondevotees. So we’re advised not to associate with them, except in trying to teach them, making a rational presentation of Krishna consciousness. Telling them

why they should accept the inconceivable. But you can't mix intimately with the people who don't accept the inconceivable.

They tell me they are stuck in reading the *Bhagavatam*, and I tell them, "I know what you mean, but I have overcome it. I read every day, and I'm building up my stamina." You say this as if it's a *fait accomplis*. But it's daily try, again and again.

One said, "I read a half-hour of *Bhagavatam* at night. I know that's not much." I told her that's pretty good. Then she hinted that maybe she doesn't always do it.

Become their champion. The honest elder who admits it's tough. He is part of the culture.

There's a place for a person who does read the *Bhagavatam* hours a day even though other devotees don't do it. He's setting the example for them.

"We should also be determined in finishing our duties and executing devotional service in this life; we should not wait for another life to finish our job." (*Bhag.* 4.8.72, purport) That's a high order. Srila Prabhupada says we've been given every possible concession and that we are "absolutely incompetent to do what Dhruva did. But the easy process has to be followed 100%. That's a high order. We say we can't do it. Then how can we expect to finish our duties in this lifetime? Srila Prabhupada calls it, "The mission we have undertaken." That mission is to go back to Godhead in this one life.

But also I may believe in my own sacrifice for Srila Prabhupada. Someone said I gave my youth and health to Prabhupada. I'm trying now to stay simple, and even if I'm not "going out," at least I'm just going within the world of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Thus, I am following Srila Prabhupada's instruction to me to read his books, "whenever you have time."

The famous letter for me: “Whenever you have time, read my books,” came in answer to my letter in which I told Prabhupada I was *already* reading three or four hours a day, and was it okay? I was asking permission for something I was doing. His answer to me was not a letter for everyone, it was a letter for me. Not everyone can do it; not everyone wants to do it. But I was already doing it and wanted permission. And he told me, go right ahead, read to your heart’s content, “or else, how can you preach?”

“Your first duty is to read my books.”

June 28, 1997

“Speculate as you like. The *Vedas* say it is your desire and action that will determine your next life just as it determines this life. Your karma is what you want and do. You get a body and temperament and kind of life. Philosophy itself and God isn’t armchair talk or sitting around in a cafe spinning for hours with wine and women. What you are

“Take the Vedic knowledge. At some point you did. You said, ‘I’ll live my life according to this. I accept this as the truth.’ Srila Prabhupada says (he’s heavy), ‘Don’t add to what your spiritual master teaches or you’ll spoil the whole thing. Just repeat.’

“Yeah, but where am I?”

“You are there, a tiny spark, face it.

“I say I’m okay, and I have to breathe. Writing helps.

“Karma at every moment. You make your choice – you are carried by forces greater than you – choose *maya* or God and guru.

“Swamiji, I choose you again today, this hour. I’m reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* with my faith and taste.

“Purify your desire, employ it in devotional service. ‘I want to serve Krishna.’

“Then our desire of wandering the universe in different forms and conditions will end.’

“You are questioning and doubting still, after so many years?

“I’ve got it under control. I chant. It’s just some mental chatter. I do pray, restrain myself, I want to spend this day in purport after purport.

“Reach a point where the mind stops rebelling.”

Comment: As you can see from the writings in *Sacrifice for the Bhagavatam*, it’s not easy for me. Some devotees take to it like a duck to water. I came to Krishna consciousness after 25 years of being an eclectic. I have mental chatter and doubts as I read. But I’m a mercy case. And I do acquire a taste as I go on.

My writing gives the example of a Westerner with cynical upbringing taking to Krishna consciousness. This will be applicable to many who follow me, who read me. I’m reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* with my faith and taste.

“Reach a point where the mind stops rebelling.”

We see that mercy comes in at the end, at the time of death. Devotees who may have wandered away come back at the lotus feet of Prabhupada in their last days and hours. His mercy is the dominating factor.

That’s the end of *Every Day, Just Write, Volume 11, Sacrifice for the Bhagavatam*, Part One and Part Two of the unedited edition.

THE PRACTICE OF WRITING MEMOIR (PART TWO)

I'm not.

I'm not Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu.

I'm not Hridayananda Maharaja.

I'm not Jayapataka Maharaja.

I'm not Barack Obama.

I'm not Dick Cheney.

I'm not Madonna.

I'm not going to watch the World Series because the games are at night.

I'm not interested in basketball.

I'm not interested in technical debates.

I'm not going to the Mayapura annual meeting.

I'm not looking forward to going to the urologist.

I'm not feeling so much pain any more in my right hip.

I'm not a young man.

I'm not feeling like I'm an old man.

I'm not a Boy Scout.

I'm not sexually active.

I'm not going to eat ice cream.

I'm not interested in Bhakta Gaura's Ukrainian cooking.

I'm not much of a devotee, but I try.

I'm not going to travel next year.

I'm not dissatisfied staying in one place.

I'm not tired of seeing Radha-Govinda every day.
I'm not going to break the four rules.
I'm not adventuresome.
I'm not writing in my journal lately.
I'm not . . .

I am.

I am eventually going to ask Baladeva to change Radha-Govinda's clothes.
I am not so hungry at lunchtime.
I am not fond of having pasta twice a week.
I am in the grip of pneumonia.
I am Prabhupada's disciple.
I am named Satsvarupa dasa Goswami.
I am not interested in reading poets, although I have their books on the floor.
I am having trouble writing my own poems.
I am happy about my schedule – rising early, chanting and writing my website.
I am afraid of Narayana's abruptness.
I am not tired.
I am an alumni of Brooklyn College, Class of '61.
I am a veteran of the United States Navy.
I am able to lift eight-pound barbells over my head.
I am hoping we'll catch the big skunk.
I am interested in rasa literature about Radha and Krishna.
I am what I am.

Write something now that you wanted to say in the past but didn't.

I wanted to say . . . I pretty much said it!
Radish.

We used to pick radishes out of the garden, clean them off and eat them with salt. A spicy little plant. I wouldn't mind eating a radish again.

I don't like the big white radishes in India. I like the little red ones.

I've never known a radish to cause harm to anyone. I bet they're healthy for you.

I'd like to have a radish. Please give me a radish! [How many radishes would you eat at one time?] Three. With a little salt on them.

My sister liked radishes. She wouldn't eat them before going out on a date; she'd be afraid she'd burp radishly.

Children.

I have never been a biological father to any children. But spiritually I've been a father to young men and women, being a counselor for them as a temple president. And then being officially a father as a guru of disciples. I've liked the role.

If I had to do it again? Would I? If I was young, I would. It's good preaching.

[Have you ever become sour about it?] No, I've never become sour about being a father. Many of my "children" have left me and do not keep in touch with me. But those who are affectionate, I'm happy about that, I like being their father. Gopi-manjari, Haryasva, Nitai. So many look up to me as father, and they want to serve me, and they want me to inspire them, encourage them. I like being a father.

Write about a food that you like.

I like pancakes. I remember being at Samika Rsi's house in Stroudsburg, and they would serve them there. They did it nicely, Anartha made nice pancakes with butter and maple syrup, soft, fluffy. It pushed down your fork through two layers of pancakes. Speared onto the fork and into your mouth,

Krishna-prasadam.

[Pancake days? At home on Sundays or something?] Yeah, my father would make pancakes, maybe one day a week. Pour the batter on the grill. He was proud of his pancakes. Kirtan-rasa says he's proud of his pancakes.

Baladeva makes silver-dollar pancakes. First had them from Baladeva.

I never went to the International House for Pancakes. [Did you do that in college?] No.

Mashed potatoes are a nice comfort food (without any lumps in them). Hot.

Comfort food. Makes you feel at peace.

[Anything Swamiji made that stuck with you?] *Capatis*. Swamiji made *capatis*. 1966. We liked them. I tried to make them in my apartment, but they came out like crackers.

[Would you like my *capatis* at lunch or do you like bread better?] Bread.

Halava is a comfort food. *Halava* was served in a temple, not on the road. Delicious.

“Heavenly porridge” – powdered milk, oats, sugar, fruit, banana. Creamy.

“Orient yourself. Make a list of things that anchor you to what you are.”

Pens. I've used so many different kinds of pens. I like to write. Now it's a little painful for me 'cause I write so slowly. I used to write fast. Pens. I still can do it. In the morning.

“I awoke early and began my *japa* at midnight.” That's how I begin my *japa* report. I write it in a red pen. A V-5 Pilot pen.

“My drawing for today is . . .” Then I describe the drawing and make a poem stanza.

“I painted in the basement.” Then I describe what I painted.

“In our *Srimad-Bhagavatam* reading at lunch . . .” And then I describe what we read.

“Radha-Govinda are kind to me. Radha-Govinda reciprocate with me.” These are springboard lines for my poem on Radha-Govinda, and then I go into something.

These are anchors. These anchor me to my identity as a writer.

I don’t have to give up my identity as a writer because that’s my devotional service, that’s my means of surrender. There’s no need to renounce that.

[You did that once before, it’s . . .]

It’s not good. Don’t renounce my means of surrender.

Japa . . . I’m anchored to saying the Hare Krishna mantra. I say it with relish in 16 words, 32 syllables. I was known for my *japa* [pronunciation, using a mirror, right?] Yeah . . . I would look into the mirror at my mouth moving. People made fun of me . . . I didn’t care.

Keep a notepad handy, ready to take notes.

The word “radish” came up in this writing assignment, and I asked Baladeva to serve me radish. So, after many years I ate a radish today. It was very hard to bite through with my dentures. I thought I couldn’t do it. But then I finally got through, and there was the taste, with a little salt on it. And it was nice. Fresh, from the earth – a radish. I ate three of them . . . Used to pull ’em up from a garden, yeah.

My father had a garden, he grew some radishes.

“Goodbyes in your life.”

I said a joyful goodbye to the U.S. Navy when I left the Saratoga on my discharge day. I remember living on the Lower

East Side and then meeting the Swami. And then I went to see a friend, Ritchie, and took a taxi back to the Lower East Side, and I felt I was leaving that life and returning to the transcendental life of the Swami. I was saying goodbye to Ritchie and the old life of hippeddom – marijuana apartments. It was a very sensual, tangible thing, leaving that world, saying goodbye.

I remember my first meeting with Brahmananda. I had been a devotee for a few weeks, and he just came for the first time, Bruce. And so we sat and talked and introduced ourselves to each other. And he told me he was from NYU, and he was on the wrestling team. And he looked like it! Big guy.

And then . . . He understood that he was into something, meeting the Swami, and that we were going to be friends, and so he embraced me after the talk. It was nice.

[You already took a protective stance?]

Yeah. He took a protective stance. Yeah, he protected the devotees.

[Big, big Brahmananda?]

Yeah. Once we were on *sankirtana* in downtown New York City, and a guy came up to Brahmananda and slapped him on the face. And another man came up and said, “You’re such a big guy – why did you tolerate that? And Brahmananda just said something – that it wasn’t appropriate to fight back.

Yeah, he told me about fights he had at 26 Second Avenue with his brother. I mean his brother and he against others.

When we were chanting on the Boston Commons, and the Hell’s Angels broke up our *sankirtana*, we didn’t fight, and I wrote a letter to Brahmananda about it, and he chastised me. And he told me how I should fight and how he and Gargamuni fought with some Puerto Ricans outside the storefront. And the guy said, “Hey, these guys are religious – we better leave them alone!”

[After they had gotten smashed?]

Yeah!

I remember meeting Karandhara, at first from a distance seeing him using a jackhammer to break up the cement, for it was going to be Prabhupada's garden in Los Angeles, in Watseka.

But then when I got to know him, I admired him a lot. He was very strongly built, and he was protective also.

His brother was a wrestler.

[On sankirtana?]

Yeah. Kesava.

[How did he focus that brute force on *sankirtana*, did he intimidate people?]

I don't know. I think he protected others who were doing *sankirtana*.

I remember at New Vrindaban, at a festival, somebody came and let out the horses . . . or let out the cows, and Kesava went up to him and slapped him on the face. Real hard, and he went and got the police. And the police came out and they were trying to arrest us, but there were just hundreds of devotees chanting Hare Krishna. And the police went away.

I remember meeting Sivarama. I went out and visited his temple. He had a temple in Canada. And I regaled them with story after story about Prabhupada. And they were thrilled. He mentioned it in his next Vyasa-puja homage.

I remember meeting Gopala Krishna. He was a kind of a timid worker. He had a job with Colgate. I performed his wedding to Ekayani. Just him at the Boston temple. He was a gentleman. He was a nice gentleman.

[Was he living at the temple and going to work?]

Living outside the temple, and visiting.

[In Boston?]

No, I don't know why we had the ceremony in Boston. He didn't live there.

[Did she live there?]

No, she didn't live there either. Yeah, in New York.

Gopala Krishna was the one who told me many years later that after the scandal with Bali Mardana in New York he asked Prabhupada if Satsvarupa Maharaja could come and take charge. And he said Prabhupada said, "Satsvarupa is a perfect gentleman, but he's not a good manager." He told me that story. Yeah! Brooklyn. Brooklyn Temple. Henry Street.

Yeah. I remember meeting the group in the Santa Cruz mountains. That was my greatest preaching success. I went there with a few *brahmacharis* for a couple of weeks, and they were hippies living with their girlfriends. And we started having meetings. I would tell them stories about Lord Nrsimhadeva and everything that I knew about Krishna consciousness, and about Prabhupada, and they became real interested. So much so that after two weeks I convinced them to come down to L.A. and join the temple. And . . . there were three couples that came!

[Where did you meet them? In town? On *harinama*?]

On *harinama*, yeah. And then we told them, we invited them to come to our place, to our lectures, to our *kirtanas*. And they told me they were going to go to a meeting of Maharishi while they were at a meeting with us. And then we went on the highway, and we came to a sign that said "WRONG WAY," and they were laughing.

They were really sweet. Tirthapada was the name of one initiated devotee.

[Did they all get initiated at the same time?] Yeah.

Once Tirthapada wrote to me, he wanted to come out to the East Coast to see me, but I was too ill, I had to defer the visit.

[Too ill?] With headaches.

[Oh, that way.] Yeah.

[Who did the girls end up marrying?] Vaisesika. Still she's married to him. He's a guru with a wife . . .

I met Bhagatji, Prabhupada's friend in India. He gave me an orange once. I visited him at his house. He was very affectionate to Prabhupada when they met, and he would give advice on how to manage, how to deal with Vrajavasis, so they wouldn't get cheated. He was a nice man. He showed me his Deity, a picture of Balarama. The picture was under a blanket.

Yes. I went with Prabhupada the first time to Sridhara Swami. He introduced me as the headmaster of the *gurukula*. Then I went, after Prabhupada's disappearance, with devotees to hear from him. And for a brief period I became very interested in him. Sridhara Swami, Prabhupada's Godbrother.

Sridhara Swami was living and preaching very differently from Prabhupada. He mostly stayed in his temple. He had a little apartment on the second floor of his temple, and he talked to devotees there. But he didn't go out and preach, and devotees began to record his talks, make books out of them.

He admitted that he wasn't a bold preacher like Prabhupada, but he was very philosophical, and he was Prabhupada's friend. Prabhupada once referred to him as his "*siksa-guru*" in the early days when Prabhupada was a householder. He gave him a rent-free apartment. He and another man were part of the broken-up fragments of the Gaudiya Matha. They lived a block away from Prabhupada in Calcutta. And Prabhupada would meet with them, and they would talk Krishna consciousness. So, he learned from him.

He was very philosophical. He spoke in good English.

The three couples who went to England stopped in Montreal. I was not a part of that . . . I was impressed with Syamasundara, he was so tall and handsome and so worldly, doing big things for Prabhupada. And his pretty wife, Malati.

And Michael Grant I knew from 26 Second Avenue. I met him in a very early stage before he was even initiated. He wasn't one of the regulars. He was into his music; he didn't come often. And then he left, he went to San Francisco, not to open a temple, but just to go to San Francisco and then go to India, and he asked Prabhupada for some contacts. Prabhupada, when Grant was leaving, said, "It would be nice when you are in San Francisco if you could open a temple." He just made a suggestion, and Mukunda took it to heart. He went out and met Sam and Melody (Syamasundara and Malati) and told them about the Swami, and they were very excited. They wanted to open a temple. But he wanted to go to India.

But he spent a day in a rowboat thinking and thinking about it. He decided to open a temple.

[Had they been friends before?]

Yes, they had been friends before.

I think I saw him in Boston when he came with Prabhupada. Syamasundara. On his own he did big things. He wasn't very regulated. But he was very charismatic. That's how he got to meet George Harrison.

When I went to India to see Prabhupada, he had an inner circle who were caring for him. Upendra was his servant, Bhakti Caru Swami was his servant, and Abhirama was upstairs with Prabhupada often, too. And of course, Tamala Krishna Maharaja was his intimate personal servant. I got to meet all of them in a friendly way, intimate way, over our spiritual master, who was departing.

Kirtanananda was always like a guru, right from the beginning. A little bit, he treated us like his disciples. But he was very respectful to me, very warm, when I visited New Vrindaban.

Well, in the early days he wasn't suspicious, so I would visit him as a friend. I would visit all of New Vrindaban as a friend.

Radhanatha remembers me coming and inspiring all of the devotees.

They were isolated geographically. New Vrindaban was the only rural community, so it was really austere there, you had to take a bath from a bucket, and it was cold, but it was filled with much *bhakti*.

[Hayagriva?]

Yeah, that's how it started. They split from ISKCON and got a farm, and then they came back to Prabhupada. And he accepted them. Hayagriva and Kirtanananda were close friends. Hayagriva sometimes disagreed with him, but they were friends. Hayagriva took shelter there at the end, when he was dying.

The first devotee I met was Rayarama when I went to the storefront, he broke the ice and introduced me to the devotees and welcomed me. And then when I opened my apartment to the devotees, he became my roommate. We all considered him an advanced devotee. When Prabhupada went to San Francisco, he started giving the lectures Monday, Wednesday, and Friday nights. And Madhusudana wrote to Prabhupada that Rayarama is preaching like a lion. He could fend off the Lower East Side audience. He was brilliant.

He encouraged me to take first initiation. He said, "Take a gamble." So we were shocked when he left.

[When Rayarama left, was that a quick thing or a gradual process?]

He published something in *Back to Godhead* that Prabhupada didn't like. Prabhupada met him in New Vrindaban and chastised him strongly, and that broke his faith, that meeting. He didn't like being reprimanded. And then they met a second time in New York, and he was disrespectful to Prabhupada. That was the end . . . He couldn't take the chastisement.

[How were Prabhupada's servants chosen?]

Usually by Prabhupada. Srutakirti was given to him by Kirtanananda. He chose me out of all his disciples when Srutakirti got married. He asked for me, and Karandhara called me to come. That was Prabhupada's choice.

Other servants . . . Other servants got chosen in other ways. The devotees tried to give Prabhupada a good man to be his servant.

Upendra became his servant, I believe in the early days in San Francisco.

[How long did that last?] Just for a while. Prabhupada remembered him and called him back.

[So, it was quite some time, right, between that and . . .]

Yes, many years. There was Hari Sauri.

Prabhupada had a system where a GBC man would be with him for a month, rotating. And he was in addition to Prabhupada's servant. That GBC man was a secretary and typed letters and got Prabhupada's association. I really looked forward to that. I was with him in '73 and in '77. Both in India.

[Which one did you get?]

That was when I was his personal servant in '74. I had jaundice in India, and then we went on a European tour, and I still had it. I was lying down instead of attending the classes in Rome. One time he walked by and said, "If he's not better, I'm going to leave him here." I somehow rallied and got better and went to Geneva. But then I got a cold, got a boil . . . I had so many illnesses when I was with him. Purification.

I was massaging him in Germany, and my hands were so hot. He remarked about it. He said, "Get someone else to massage me, you have a fever." I went outside the door and Sacinandana, a young *brahmacari*, was there. I told him how to massage, and he went in. And I went to my room and lay down. I had a fever. Sacinandana was very grateful to me for giving him that service. What a massage!

[Was there always a line of people waiting to serve Prabhupada?]

Sure. There was always a lineup of people wanting to do something for Prabhupada.

No, if people were consistent, I would accept their services. I worked with Palika dasi in Bombay. She was very good. She got Prabhupada's clothes ironed, and she did the cooking. She was good to work with. And Sridhara dasa Brahmachari in Bombay was good. He took me downtown and helped me buy the tickets for the European tour.

[So some people were actually helpful to your service.]

I had to keep people away from seeing Prabhupada. They couldn't walk in. I kept Indians away. One Indian man, I kept him away and then he finally got in and he told Prabhupada, "This boy kept me away!" and Prabhupada reprimanded me. And then when the man left I went to Prabhupada and I pleaded, "Prabhupada, I'm confused! You wanted me to protect you from seeing people and this man wanted to see you, and then you said that I did wrong. What's up?" And Prabhupada said, "Don't worry, don't worry, you didn't do wrong." He assured me. I was almost in tears because I thought I was doing the right thing by keeping him out and then Prabhupada chastised me for keeping him out. But then Prabhupada told me I did the right thing, but he was just being polite to the man. And he was so reassuring, "It's all right," he said.

Well, I tried to keep out Guru-krpa and his buddy, but they just went and sat outside Prabhupada's door in Los Angeles, and when we came to the door, they were there. I couldn't keep them out, they were too persistent. They came to complain about somebody. Yasodanandana and Guru-krpa, they came to complain about somebody who was complaining about them.

Prabhupada had to deal with disciples like that. Once when Prabhupada was talking about getting solitude, we suggested he could move far away to Hawaii or something, but then he said, "Well, but then Tamala Krishna or Jayatirtha will just fly 10,000

miles and come to me and complain about the other one.” Rival siblings.

Prabhupada wanted the GBC to manage and he could write books, but we couldn’t do it. We argued amongst ourselves, and he had to step in between and manage. He had to settle fights. Ramesvara and Tamala Krishna Maharaja. A devotee Urjasvat told me he was in Los Angeles, and Ramesvara was on the phone with Tamala Krishna Maharaja, and Tamala Krishna Maharaja heaved him out so much that when the phone call was over, Ramesvara Maharaja punched his fist through a glass pane. They were competitors: “I’m going to beat your party!”

Prabhupada had to listen to both sides of the siblings in their rivalry. They couldn’t settle it once and for all; they would keep coming back and fighting.

It’s getting late now. Good session.

Things I’ll never know (Things I’ve missed):

I’ve never been a published author by a prominent publishing company. I once went to *The Atlantic* magazine and asked them to publish an article about Hare Krishna, and he said first I’d have to become a famous author and then I could be published. I wrote an article about it and said I’ve opted for being an author for the devotees.

I don’t miss or resent not being a published author. I actually don’t miss being in Barnes and Noble, having a bestselling book. It would be nice, but I haven’t tried for it. I have deliberately tried the path of Rupa and Raghunatha Goswamis and written books for the devotee audience.

I’ve missed out on all the affairs of my family because they cut me off, they disowned me when I became a devotee. I don’t know the whereabouts of my sister, or whether she’s alive. (She’d be 76 years old). And . . . I dream about her a lot, so there must be some unconscious feeling of incompleteness there. No closure.

I don't know that I wrote about it – Madeline, my sister.

[How much do people know about her?]

I don't know. I missed out on her family growing up. Missed out on visits to her. But that's renunciation – no entanglement. Prabhupada wouldn't regret it for me.

People talk about closure, that there should be closure to relationships. And when it's not there, then something's missing. Yes, there was no closure to that relationship. She never told me that she disowned me, but it was just assumed. She never tried to get in touch with me. There was no closure.

But . . . I don't think it's important for spiritual life. I think renunciation means you leave these things behind and you don't think of them, family relationships.

I've missed out on so many things of material life. I've missed out on going to baseball games in major league stadiums. I've missed going to concerts, I've missed going to the movies, but I don't regret it. When I took *sannyasa* Prabhupada told me that, "As you are a preacher, you'll meet rich men and their beautiful wives, but don't think, 'I once had a wife like that, or I could have a house like this.' Don't resent becoming a *sannyasi* and becoming civilly dead."

Then why do I write about my time before Krishna consciousness? Um . . . I guess that's a good question, if I say I don't care about it. It does live in me. I have memories, and I sometimes in the course of free writing allow them to come up to spice the writing . . . I don't go back there, actually, I just write about it. I don't try to find my roots or try to go to the concerts, but I might just write about it in words, thoughts, what might have been . . . no regrets.

[Several devotees really go back to it . . .]

They go back to college, or . . . It seems to fan the flames if you go back. . . . Leave the forest of material enjoyment behind. Don't go back.

I have enough memories in ISKCON, telling Aniruddha not to pick the wildflowers in Geaglum because there's not many of them, and I'd like to see them growing. He was picking too many.

The worst winter of my life . . . I had pretty tough winters up here in New York, one with pneumonia, being in the hospital. "The winter of our discontent." (laughs) Dark night of the soul.

I never got mentally depressed about my migraine headaches. That was a long winter, you could call it, of decades of illness, but I didn't get mentally depressed. It was coming from Krishna, karma or whatever, token reaction. I just dealt with it. Kept trying to find remedies or not trying to find remedies. For ten years I didn't try to find remedies.

Living in California, living in Mexico were estranged times. I didn't have concentrated *bhajana* and . . . I was kind of adrift. But I wrote. I was writing, as always, my anger. And I wrote novels or autobiographical books. I kept busy by writing – not in Mexico. Mexico was kind of frozen – no headaches, no nothing.

In Delaware I wasn't writing "dark night" stuff. I wrote in the Yellow Submarine for the website.

But I don't remember a "worst winter," being very cold or lots of snow, lasting forever. [No heat?] No . . .

Am I writing for my life? About my life? Or of my life?

Sounds like word jugglery.

Some writers will live certain things so they can write about them. I did that with *Lessons from the Road*. I bought a motor home, and I traveled around the United States just to write *Lessons from the Road*. That was a literary arrangement.

It seems like I have to write, so it's my life. Write and die, not write or die, write and die. I'll keep writing as long as I can of my life's experience.

Narayana complained that he saw one website, and he thought it was too superficial, that I'm well-known for writing about the inner life. And he thought it was just a surface thing, like a blog. I took it to heart, and I'm trying to write more from my inner life on my website, but still writing about the little life.

[About that scenario . . . suppose you have a stroke . . .]

That's what happened to Ram Dass. Then you can't write anymore.

I'd find some inner resources. I'd pray. I'd feel, "Well, I've written enough, Krishna's taken it away." Thoreau writes something that if you are a writer, plumb the depths now, these things that are coming to you will not last forever, drink the dregs. Because they'll soon dry up, he said. So, I write every day.

What if I had a stroke and I couldn't write? I would take it that Krishna was taking it away from me, and I would find inner resources, and I would pray . . . not able to communicate.

Have I lost, have I dried up in different areas of writing like poetry and serious *sadhana* books or wild writing – fear of censure?

Maybe some areas have been cut off to me, but I still have a current like the Ganges, a good current – the daily poem – and my autobiography.

I'm not writing prayers. I wrote two volumes, *My Dear Lord Krishna*, and then I felt it was enough. Or Krishna took it away. I can still write poems, I still do. But not so frequently.

Free writing seems to have stopped because I can't write fast anymore, and because I find it distasteful to write nonsense.

Serious honest writing? That's what I'm doing . . . I don't know, people may say that I'm not writing seriously about inner life. But I'm trying when I write about my Deities and when I write about *japa*.

I write my daily poem. The sections are repetitious about *japa* and the Deity, but that's where I'm at now, and I'm happy in my *bhajana*. And people are getting nourished by it too, they tell me. They like to read it before they chant *japa*. Or they get inspired by the Deity worship, even though it's similar entries . . .

There's my drawing and painting life, that's similar too. Narayana came over, looked over my painting today. He dryly said, "Cows," because for three days in a row I've painted cows. Krishna and Balarama twice and once, cowherd boys and cows. And every day I draw either four people chanting or three people chanting. But it's nice, it's like Rama Raya going out every day in Union Square. Same chanting of Hare Krishna, same people jumping up and down, but they're a little different all the time. I asked Krishna-sakti to make me some more pictures of my dancers inserted in places in New York City, marching down Fifth Avenue and Union Square, chanting in Tompkins Square Park, chanting at 26 Second Avenue. My people.

I can't go out and chant and dance myself, so I dance on the page.

DEFEAT

I was always defeated in sports, and my high school was always defeated in sports. Never won games, and the teams I

rooted for never won . . . Well, the Dodgers won the pennant, but they never won the World Series. Except once.

Personal defeats – fall down, censure, dry periods, illness – those have been defeats.

I didn't feel defeated – not irreparably. I have a good fighting spirit.

Some things I can't go back to. I'm not going to go back to Ireland. Eras end, and you can't go back there. "You can't go home again," Thomas Wolfe said.

My stay in Mexico was sterile. I was free of headaches, but I had no spiritual life. We tried to start a community, and it quickly failed. And the people left, and I was left behind. I watched DVD television, chanted my rounds, but didn't do much else. I was glad to leave after 11 months. A dry period. At high altitude. In a country where I didn't speak the language.

Sounds of retching in the morning, India in Vrndavana. Early in the morning, all of the men retching as part of their hygiene to get up their mucus, tongue scraper and retching. It is familiar sound, not very pleasant.

Prabhupada's voice, you can hear him in his lectures. In his 1966 lectures as a great sense of urgency in his voice, almost strident as he tries to give knowledge out to the people who knew nothing. At 26 Second Avenue above the interruptions at the doorway. His voice over good recording systems in LA, very pleasing to hear. His voice on the *bhajan*s very devotional. I heard him shout at devotees: "Don't go to Radha-kunda and become a monkey." He was shouting at the disciple. But he'd be soft too. Well, in one of his lectures he said: "Krishna is the controller, Krishna controls everyone," and he said, "but there is one who controls Krishna. That is Radharani." And devotees laughed and sighed. But that is out of love.

Prabhupada's lecturing voice was different than his conversational voice. He was a public speaker, but on his own

he was more relaxed, but similar, always talking about Krishna, always to defeat the Mayavadis. He was strong. Rascals . . .

He was just talking to the pupils, disciples. His voice wouldn't be up in volume or projected. He would just speak gently. It wasn't casual being with him.

I heard Prabhupada sing the *bhajan*s on the *Radha-Krishna Meditations* album with Hamsaduta playing the drum, and Himavati playing the *karatalas*. *Krishnotkirtana-gana-nartana-parau*. They did it in a room. I was in the next room, I heard them singing.

Hearing the recordings is just as good as being with Prabhupada – live.

SEX AND MONEY

I never had much money and so couldn't buy my way into sex. After the Navy I had no money to rent a decent apartment, and I was too shy to start up a relationship with a girl my age. Then the swami came into my life, and I first became a *brahmacari*, then a *grhastha*, then a strict *sannyasi*. Then I became a guru with many female disciples. What advice did I give others about sex and money? I told them to give part of their money to ISKCON, if possible. I asked them to have sex only for children. I knew most of them didn't obey that, but what could I do. A guru Godbrother told me he was lenient and forgave his disciples. I thought he should not tell them that. Tell them it was wrong. They didn't need to be encouraged in it. Sex life is the bond that keeps one in the material world. Jayadvaita Swami preached sharply and strongly from Prabhupada's books that *grhasthas* should accept the *vanaprastha* order of life at age 50, period. He was very unpopular with that among the *grhasthas*, many of whom were still responsible for their children in their 50s.

As a guru I had access to money, and I had female disciples. But I restrained myself from misspending money or exploiting my disciples.

Prabhupada told us when we took *sannyasa* that we should not regret renunciation. We should never envy householders and think I once had a beautiful wife, I once had material riches. Don't envy them. Never regret you have renounced these things.

Prabhupada expressed different attitudes towards *sannyasis* who fell down and went back to *grhastha* life. In the famous purport in the Gajendra section he described how Gajendra was fighting in the water where he was not at home. The crocodile had an advantage over him. He said we should fight where we are strong.

If one is in *sannyasa* life and he feels weak he should take to *grhastha* life and fight *maya* from that position. In that purport Prabhupada was liberal toward a *sannyasi* who still had material desires. He encouraged him to stay and fight *maya* and become a *grhastha*. But another place in his writings he describes that a *sannyasi* who goes back to household life is *vantasi*, one who eats his own vomit. He expressed both the liberal and disgusted attitude.

PRABHUPADA'S BOOKS

"If you want to know me, read my books." The first time through was the best, the thrill and excitement of all new. But successive passes were also good, deepening, remembering, becoming convinced. The old truths ring true. Certain portions were not interesting: the dynasties 'so and so begot ten sons named, etc. who begot 100 sons, the chief of whom was . . . calculation of time from the atom.' Further sections were always good, the story of young Narada's enlightenment, Vyasadeva's dissatisfaction, the prayers of Queen Kunti, Brahma's prayers for creative energy, Ajamila, Prahlada, Dhruva, Brahma's prayers

in the 14th chapter of the tenth canto, the five chapters of the *gopis* in the *rasa* dance. More and more you began to appreciate every chapter, almost. It's the *amala-purana*, the spotless *Purana*. Prabhupada wanted us to get free of the repetition of birth and death. No, people who want to get free from birth and death shall take shelter in this *Purana*. I don't study systematically to take Bhaktivaibhava or Bhaktivedanta degrees. I live and breathe in the *Bhagavatam*. Hear it and have it read to me at meal times. The eloquent, philosophical prayers, describing Lord Vishnu and devotional service. Mother Yasoda chastised Krishna. The songs of the *gopis*, the *Bhagavatam* can only be understood by pure devotional service, not by *jnana* or mental speculation. Accept it as it is, with faith. The events in the *Bhagavatam* may not correspond with human life on this planet. It describes activities in the higher planets and the spiritual world.

I began to read the first canto volumes that Prabhupada brought with him to America before I was even initiated. I plunged into the world of the *Bhagavatam* in the imperfect Indian volumes with their mistaken grammar and misprints. I read about the fantastic things and accepted them because Swamiji was with us, and he was teaching the extraordinary nature of the spiritual world. I read with faith as a new convert.

I had already access to Prabhupada's literature in the *Bhagavatam*, and I also typed up the *Bhagavad-gita* in version. When Prabhupada went to San Francisco Rayarama started giving classes at 26 Second Avenue. He was expert and could fend off the lower east side cynical audiences. I was shy and was slow to give lectures. I don't think I started lecturing much until I went to Boston, and then I gave regular classes and became a proficient lecturer. I would go to work on the train, and all day at the office I would prepare class, and I would come back to the Boston apartment and give a class to Jadurani, Hamsaduta, and Himavati.

In the early years there were different styles of Krishna consciousness in New York and San Francisco. The East Coast and the West Coast. On the East Coast they were more

conservative and at least I was more philosophical because I was typing the *Krishna* book and *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*. On the West Coast they were more into distributing *prasadam* to the hippies at lunch and chanting *harinama*.

I expressed my learning of the *Bhagavatam* which I heard through the tapes by writing articles for *Back to Godhead* magazine on the different sections of the *Bhagavatam*. Prabhupada liked them and encouraged me to keep writing.

Even before I was initiated, I read in the *Bhagavatam* how Vyasadeva was dissatisfied even though he wrote so many Vedic literatures. I expressed this to Prabhupada that I was very fascinated by this because I was a writer also and was dissatisfied. Prabhupada looked at me wide-eyed and smiled that I had asked such an advanced question as such a beginning devotee. He hadn't lectured yet about Vyasadeva's dissatisfaction, but I had read about it in his book. In Boston where I was temple president, I didn't have a conflict with studying Prabhupada's books and my desire to be involved with the philosophy and managing the temple. I did both things, and Prabhupada trained me not to neglect the incense business or the management.

In the college preaching we did in Boston, there were challenges from students and even faculty, but we stuck to Prabhupada's teachings and were not stumped by the academic intellectuals who in one sense had more knowledge about Vaisnavism from a secular academic point of view than we did. We knew what Prabhupada had said, and we repeated that as *sisyas*, and they understood our position.

I gave lectures in the early years in Boston, and sometimes Jadurani would give lectures. She had a kind of photographic memory of what Prabhupada wrote in the *Bhagavatam* and would speak over the head of the audience sometimes.

At a certain point I experienced dryness in reading Prabhupada's books. I persisted in reading anyway. I realized

that even Catholic mystics and saints experienced dryness. Even in the advanced stage of their consciousness, God withheld his favors from them. The great young Saint Thérèse of Lisieux in the last year of her life experienced even doubts in the scripture, but she felt that Christ was still her lover and was withholding himself from her, and then just at the end of her life she had a break through again. I never had serious doubts in Prabhupada's books and persisted through the dryness until I could read successfully again.

Sickness: Tell about someone who was suffering with sickness and how you were with them. How they were suffering and what you went through. Don't spare details.

I was present for several visits to Vrndavana in Srila Prabhupada's last days when he was fasting and wasting away. I was not part of the inner circle of caretakers who sponge bathed him, took him to the bathroom, etc. But I sat at his bedside in shifts and held the quiet *kirtanas* he requested. I got under his mosquito net in bed at midnight and scratched his back. I patted his legs with baby powder. I sat for long hours while he lay in bed silent during the day. On his disappearance day I stayed all day at the foot of his bed until he passed away at 7:30 p.m. I stayed for the final ceremonies and watched him being buried in the pit. I grieved in a numb sort of way, not with tears and wailing but in numbness. I haven't cared for any other sick patients that I can remember. Baladeva has been on hand as a hospice worker for a number of terminal patients, including his father and mother and Kusakratha Prabhu and many others in Vrndavana. He changed their stool and changes their bed and talks with them and listens to them. He is a steadfast hospice worker and is always called upon to do that service when he visits Vrndavana. He goes to Vrndavana for pilgrimage and association with advanced devotees, but they always have some dying person for him to work with.

Driving: What impressions do you have while driving? You decided not to drive, how did that influence your life?

Baladeva is a good driver. He can drive for long hours and, when possible, at high speed. He had a few accidents but those were under circumstances, and he hasn't had one in years. Madhumangala was an excellent driver and took me for several seasons all throughout Europe. He used to pass by every vehicle that was in front of us, and we never had an accident. While driving, we would discuss travel plans and sometimes cut short a visit to a temple and rent a cottage and take a writing retreat. While with the library party, we would travel. I would take out the road atlas and decide which colleges to go to and decide who would visit the most likely professors. I decided not to drive. My father gave me driving lessons, but when I was actually driving in traffic, I became too nervous of other drivers in merging situations. I couldn't trust them not to give me the right-of-way when they were coming out of a side street. I thought they would smash my car. I lost my nerve and stopped taking lessons. Living in New York City I suffered no inconveniences. I traveled by train, ferry, bus, and taxis. In the Krishna consciousness movement I've been always able to get someone to drive me somewhere.

I have not felt a lack of independence that I cannot drive.

Window. People often dream while looking out windows. What windows have you looked out and where have they led you.

My favorite window was the one above my desk in the cabin at Gita-nagari. It was big and had many panels, and it directly overlooked the Tuscarora Creek. I could see the bank of the creek and the water flowing by from right to left. The view changed according to the seasons, but it was always soothing and peaceful. People rarely passed by, and it was part of the pure world I engaged in in the cabin. I wrote many pages of the *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta* sitting at my desk occasionally looking at the creek and the sky. I wrote some poems about what I saw out the window and what passed through my mind.

Another good window is in my room in Manu's house in Northern Ireland on Geaglum, the peninsula facing the lake strait at the island of Radha-Govinda, Govindadvipa, Inis Rath. I stayed there for many months and always liked the view of the shore's edge with the tall palomino weeds and the channel to Inis Rath. I watched the devotees coming and going by the primitive method of rowing boats. I watched the devotees at Geaglum stand ringing the brass bell calling for someone to send a rowboat to them and take them to Inis Rath. When the moon was round, it created extraordinary effects like a lantern in the sky and reflected in the waters. In the early morning I would open the curtain and watch the first rays of light as the sun rose over the treetops on the island, come up first as an orange ball and then expand throughout the sky. There was a big window, and the view of nature was panoramic.

Staying at the guest house year after year in Vrndavana, I observed through the screened in porch. I was on the fourth floor and saw the towers of the Prabhupada Samadhi of white marble in the sunlight. From this perch I could see the monkeys scampering around the temple roof, and I could see the devotees walking in the lanes of the campus. I saw *sannyasis* and others pacing the roof of the *gurukula* chanting on their beads in their bead bags. I could hear bells from other temples and *bhajan*s and *kirtan*s just by staying in my room and looking out the screen window. I thought that was in the midst of the Vrndavana atmosphere and yet protected from the rough exposure of outdoors.

Looking out from the windows provided me inspiration for writing poems. At Gita-nagari I wrote a poem called, "Dawn in Layers."

Memoir: How do you feel about writing memoir, is it pleasurable or painful? You'll be guiding others in writing their memoirs, how do you feel about that?

I like telling real stories from my life. Maybe I didn't plan it so much, but Visakha wrote a memoir in her *Harmony and the*

Bhagavad-gita. She was preaching lessons from the verses of the *Bhagavad-gita*, but her book is filled with transforming experiences of her family's move to the wilderness of Saranagati and the great peace she felt there. I have already written of my pre-Krishna conscious memories and something of my career in ISKCON. But by the process of doing writing exercises, I can dig up new experiences and new angles of various things I have already discussed. I tend to be reticent so it's hard, opening up details of my life. Also in volume one, I don't want to find fault with devotees I've met and lived with. There are stern injunctions about criticizing devotees. But I can write about other devotees including difficult times we've been through. I was very close to Ghanashyama, but I denied his request to take *sannyasa* the year he asked me at Mayapura. I thought he was too much into austerities and mysticism, communing with spirits and beings from other planets. And he performed extreme austerities, getting up at midnight and thereby dangerously sleeping while driving a car. He hit a pedestrian in Soviet Union and was jailed. I asked him to wait a year. I was his GBC authority and the one who was supposed to give him a recommendation for *sannyasa*. But he approached Kirtanananda Swami who became his *sannyasa* guru and gave him the name Bhakti Tirtha Swami. This chilled our relationship for years. But when he was dying from cancer I approached, and we had a heart-to-heart talk, and we became close friends in his remaining months. That's something that I can talk about because it had a happy ending, but I have many distant but respectful relationships with other devotees whom I find overbearing. When I was a GBC man I would let them dominate me or sometimes I would have a give and take with them or peers. Both kinds of relationships do not allow for frequent intimate exchanges. I became something of a lone wolf with only a few friends, but I truly respected many and was respected in return as a loyal follower of Prabhupada and ISKCON.

As for training new people in writing memoirs, I will recommend books for them to read and ask them to write

passionately and honestly without pretense or offense, or an official persona. I will read their memoirs and ask them to fill them out more, although this is exactly not the advice I need to follow. I hope to chip away at my reticence and be generous in telling stories that are entertaining and enlightening especially with the desire for spiritual development. I will recommend people to keep journals.

It may sound strange that I describe myself as reticent since I write so much about myself, and some people say I do it too much. But in working with Baladeva, he finds me reticent and feels that I treat a subject in a perfunctory way and don't dig in and say more.

And I think he's right. I'm willing to give up my privacy and talk more. I appreciate it when he provokes me into further discussion. It fills out the memoir.

I have shown my capability to write in many genres. I've written expository essays on the philosophy, I've written the biography of Prabhupada, I've written books on *sadhana*, and I've written fiction. But now in my later years, I've chosen the autobiography. In writing *Every Day, Just Write* I kept a very long journal and published it, writing daily the valleys and peaks of my experiences.

Quiet: Silence can be both a friend and an enemy. Tell about both.

Silence is my friend from 12:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m. Our house is completely silent, and there are no sounds from outdoors. I chant silently for over an hour and then I write for an hour, and I chant for another 45 minutes. That quiet is all very friendly and conducive to meditation. I offer incense to Radha-Govinda and write a poem in my mind and then I write it down. During the day I also have periods of friendly quiet life sitting on the porch for an hour before the open window. Up in my room drawing colored pictures. I'm silent for an hour and a half. No disturbances. I may read or prepare my materials for the next day's website. But all this quiet and alone work is good for me.

It nourishes and brings me peace. When I have a guest, and we're talking and it suddenly goes silent, that can be uneasy. You try to think of something to say or wait for them, and it's not so easy. You stumble on some conversation, and it goes on, but it's not an enjoyable period. The silences grow painful. "Why don't we read something together," you say, and they approve. The silence while waiting in the doctor's room: they play a television to create "white noise" which is unfriendly. You're waiting for the time to pass so you'll be called to see the doctor. You can't read a good book. You glance at a magazine. Finally, they call you, but you have to wait in the inner examination room. Unfriendly quiet is a long plane flight. It's not exactly quiet. There is engine noise and people talk, but you spend hours talking or resting. You avoid looking at the in-flight movie, but you can guess it's a mystery or western movie with sexual violence and you don't like it.

When we have guests at lunch I tend to be silent and don't engage in much conversation. I don't know why this is. I feel that some of the talk is frivolous, and I don't want to engage in it. That's why I like to have scriptures read while we eat.

I've become reticent perhaps because of not liking the dynamics of social talk in ISKCON. Topics tend to range all over the place, and you get presented with a guru-stumper question, and it becomes uncomfortable. I prefer to eat in silence. But I am capable of talking with a guest and asking him questions about his life.

I tend to be a slow thinker. I can't think on my feet so quickly. People ask questions and by the time I give an answer they're already on to another question. I like to process my thoughts, and I like to write things down rather than speak them.

Kaleidoscope: Choose five well-wishers and write briefly about them in a "gesture" of description and choose one and write about him. Have him tell him as secret.

A gesture of Yadunandana Swami: His short height, his deep growly voice with Spanish accent. His caring submissiveness and service attitude. He's into academic education and ISKCON education. A true preaching *sannyasi* who lectures a lot. He reads my daily website.

A gesture of Suresvara: He's always light and plays with words in a comic way. He's finally found his niche, giving seminars on Prabhupada. He travels to different countries, finds new audiences and makes his presentation. He borrowed from my own presentation of Prabhupada in the VIHE seminar. His face is growing wrinkled, but he's so fun and boyish. He plays a tamboura when he sings "Jaya Radha Madhava" before giving *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class. He's a well-wisher and told me in a Vyasa-puja gathering for me that I'm in better consciousness than I ever have been in my life.

A gesture of Haridasa dasa: He's hard working as a counselor of students at a community college. He's been married for a long time and has three grown-up offspring. He chants his *japa* early in the morning before going to work. He likes poetry and has some of Robert Frost's and others memorized. He phone calls me once a week, and we touch base. This started years ago when he had a case of paranoia, which he has since overcome with the help of a Native American sage and doctor. He is supportive of me and does some part-time typing and research. He's a loyal disciple of Prabhupada, and he visits the Potomac temple. He likes to talk with me, and he quotes me.

A gesture about Jayadvaita Swami: A senior disciple of Prabhupada and a powerful preacher. He is outspoken and doesn't like dealing with the GBC. He's found a career in Africa, working with the BBT, preaching and speaking and listening to the devotees to start book distribution as much as possible among the blacks. He travels to many African countries. For years he has been paying me an annual visit wherever I live. He's a good friend and an ally when I've gotten into trouble with the GBC. He's affectionate and witty. He's writing a Krishna conscious commentary on Ecclesiastes.

A gesture on Bhurijana: He's an old friend. He loves Vrndavana and lives in Vrndavana for many months of the year. I don't get to see him, but recently he came to the U.S.A. and visited me. He reads Prabhupada's books systematically with commentaries from the great, past *acaryas* and writes his own "overviews." He did one on *Bhagavad-gita* and on the first four cantos of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Now he's on the eleventh and twelfth cantos, providing deep reflections and analysis for the devotees. We talk heart to heart. When he was here I talked to him about aspirations for the next life. And he expressed his innermost desires. We have been through a lot together with the changes in ISKCON, and now neither of us is interested in the GBC or managerial problems. His favorite thing is to wander in Vrndavana with a camera.

Now choose one. He tells me secrets about himself that I'll hold silent forever. He told me how he went to a retreat in a Buddhist monastery. He was interested in some of the disciplines and the practice of silence, but he missed the sweetness of Radha-Krishna in Vrndavana. He also had some experiences in Israel visiting places that are sacred to the Jews and the followers of Jesus Christ. It broadened his outlook, and he chanted alone and chanted at the lotus feet of Radha-Syamasundar in Vrndavana. He is also interested in Carl Jung's concept of the "shadow." How we each have a side that's repressed but needs attention and a healthy person controls his shadow and finds an expression for his shadow. He is a deep thinker and a systematic student and teacher of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. He gives seminars and *japa* retreats in Vrndavana. He wants to know what I'm thinking and where I'm at, and I gave him my latest book.

Saying it: You've done a lot of digging in your writing, so writing "what I really want to say" isn't new to you. What is fresh and new to you today?

Fresh and new to me today was getting started writing my poem and not knowing what to say. Then, I turned to somebody's writing to me that he liked my drawing, and he

wanted to read me more so I could keep at it. I wrote . . . you like it; there are many who are confused and think it's not Krishna conscious. But then Baladeva encouraged me to do them so I considered whether to try it again. To music. I did quick Radha and Krishna and *gopis* and *gopas* and it was fun and acceptable, though crude. It was fresh and new. Having passed through, I stayed with the barbells and lost my wind on the heavy punching bag. I'm still recovering.

What I really want to say is I liked the film biography of Mark Twain by Ken Burns. He was the most famous writer in the world and the wealthiest. But he went bankrupt and his wife died and his children scattered. He knew trouble and he wrote with humor to keep alive.

What felt fresh and new? Pushing through the exercises, hearing Saci say I have a day off tomorrow because he has to leave early morning to coach his basketball team. It will be a pleasure to rest. It becomes a chance to contemplate. "What's the difference between a man and a *something*. A man has higher consciousness, and he can develop it to know God. Sitting by the open window in the fresh cool air. A bag of tomatoes and a jar of applesauce and a container of bird feed.

Fresh and new: another day to live and not die, not yet. I'm not so deep. I say Radha-Govinda are my friends, but I chant before them. I'm like a little fly or an ant crawling across the page.

My father's dresser had a box of Dutch Masters cigars and a pipe rack including rows of smoking pipes, a Meerschaum, a corncob, some fat bold pipes, a stiff black one. My mother put his shirts and underwear in a drawer. One drawer held mementos from the war, big empty gun shells and conch shells from Hawaii. He kept my book. Picture of him as a handsome young man working on a Navy ship. Once he took *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and kept it in his drawer. It was my book and I lent it to my sister, and he took it away from her. I made him

give it back to me. I bought it with the \$25 prize I won for my story in *Landscapes* magazine at Brooklyn College.

That was written in 2011, now it's 2013. What's fresh and new today?

I'm compiling Volume Two of *The Story of My Life*. Volume One is published, and it's a success. I really think it's a good read. Big publishing plans in India with Nitai working with Radhanatha Swami's disciples. Narayana is trying to give over the management of Gita-nagari Press to Saci, but he said this is a delicate thing.

Baladeva is coping with his illness, seeing a counselor, having trouble sleeping, can't get the right equipment so that he can sleep with his mask. It's a big ordeal getting the right equipment so the mask doesn't cut his nose. They're putting him through the process with social services, getting permission to get the equipment.

Also new today is my health. Five days ago I was diagnosed as having pneumonia. They put me on antibiotics. Today, I visited our nurse practitioner, and she confirmed that I still have pneumonia and she gave me new antibiotics. I still have the rasp in my breathing, but I think we're getting it under control with this new medical regimen.

Baladeva went to his counselor who specializes in sleep. They got to talking about *brahma-muhurta* as the best time to do meditation and to be up early, an hour and a half before dawn. Then Baladeva researched it and found out that it's good to get up even earlier. He had been nagging me for getting up at midnight, but now he says he realizes it's a practice of advanced devotees and that it's good for my circadian rhythm. I'm happy that it's authorized. I love getting up at midnight.

I'm afraid that I'm gaining weight. The last time I weighed myself I was 193 lbs. That was an increase. I was down to 188 and then 191. I'm afraid that maybe from eating Green's chocolate energy bars. I don't even eat one a day. I eat about a

half of one a day. Could that be the cause of gaining weight? I'd hate to give up eating them, but I may have to.

Mind: What's brewing beneath the surface? Bring it out and let it speak.

What's brewing beneath the surface of my mind. Thoughts of mortality. These are my peaceful sunset years. In my 70s, in good health, exercising, productive at writing, but at rest. It seems like I could go on like this forever. But that's not a fact. I will eventually have some health breakdown and finally die. I wear a "lifeline" around my neck, a button to press to get immediate help for medical emergencies. Everything is going along smoothly. I could, however, contract Alzheimer's Disease or some terminal condition at any time. This has to be recognized. Why should I worry? It will come when it does, and I should be able to use my resources to respond to it and try to be Krishna conscious. Keep fit. Keep hearing and chanting. Beneath the surface of my mind I also consider what my next life will be. I consider this Lord Krishna's will. I would like to go back to Godhead, but I might have to depend on Krishna to see what is best for me, seeing my qualifications. I would like to take a spiritual body and not have to come back to birth, death, disease, and old age. But I don't know. I don't know what is in store for me.

I am affected by the other minds in my world, by the minds of those around me. I interact with the devotees in this house and elsewhere. Sometimes there is conflict and sometimes there is harmony.

I am trying to leave a legacy in my books in the form of e-books and printed books. Devotees are helping me to organize this. This is on my mind also. I am seeking their cooperation.

Close: Who are you right now?

I'm Satsvarupa dasa Goswami the author of one volume of *The Story of My Life*, now compiling the new volume. I work with the men who are my coworkers and assistants and ask them to help me put out my books. They are willing to do it, but it has

to be organized. I am at the center of it motivating them. I want to see my books left in the world so that readers will have them.

I have lingering pneumonia, but I'm treating it with antibiotics and prednisone. Someone wrote on Facebook that pneumonia is a killer and that I should be very careful. A word of warning. I'm not so worried.

If I am my legacy what happens if I start dying before my legacy is produced? I will trust that the devotees will carry it on after I'm gone. That's all I can do. I have to turn my attention toward the end and the next life.

The attachment to the legacy is a good attachment. I don't think it's egotistical. I want to make my brand, my contribution. I want it to be lasting. Books are powerful, they can preach after you're gone. They can circulate around the world and help people come to Krishna consciousness and sustain their Krishna consciousness. I'm in correspondence with people who say my books helped them, so I want to make them more available.

Who am I right now? I'm a devotee who has not reached perfection in Krishna consciousness. I have very little time left in which to make advancement, but I don't know what to do to reach *suddha-nama* or final purification. I believe my health limits me, and I don't want to travel.

I am a guru. I am not making new disciples, but I have many disciples who are practicing Krishna consciousness. I feel a loving relationship with them, and they are reciprocal. I ask them to read my books, and sometimes they can come and visit me. We correspond. There is a bond between us. I like to think the best thing I am doing for them is setting an example in my own life. I write my daily website for them and tell them what is going on in my little life and give them *rasa-sastras* to read and my meditation on my Radha-Govinda Deities. I tell them about my *japa* and try to help them in theirs.

I don't know if I'm "ready" to die. I haven't had to face it as an imminent reality. Prabhupada says philosophy means to keep

death always in front of us. I prefer to live and work at my projects and keep death in the back of my mind. But it is a more immediate reality than that. I hope I will rise to the occasion when I get the clear signs.

What's brewing beneath the surface of my mind?

I'm sitting here peacefully, but different considerations are underneath my mind. I'm waiting for the typing of the early sections of *Every Day, Just Write*, Volumes 2 and 3, so I can include them in my compilation of Volume 2 of *The Story of My Life*. Today, Krishna-kripa told me that Ramila has them, and so she is going to start typing them. I will wait for them to arrive and put them in the book instead of the other things I'm using.

Beneath the surface of the mind I'm brewing about my lingering pneumonia. Last Thursday, for the second time in a row, the X-rays revealed that I have pneumonia, water in the lungs. Our nurse practitioner, Susan, does not seem very worried by it because it's been lingering but it hasn't been getting any worse. It's been diminishing. So we're getting another prescription for antibiotics and a product that's called Mucinex to break up the mucus. I hope these will do the job. She says that even after the pneumonia clears up I can expect to feel weak for some weeks. They say pneumonia is a "killer" of old people so I have to be cautious. But I seem to have the upper hand on it, and it's nothing to get very worried about.

I'm not thinking about it much, but we're trying to organize our Gita-nagari press with Sacisuta taking over duties and with Nitai printing books in India. Both of these things are evolving slowly. We don't want to overburden Saci with duties that he may not want to do. And Nitai is so busy that I become doubtful whether he can get his 15 books printed in a year as he promised. I try not to micromanage these things. When Saci asks me every morning, "Is there anything I can do for you?" I say, "No." I don't ask him how the photographing of the paintings is going along. I don't ask him if he's producing the books. He doesn't know which books to produce yet, because

Nitai hasn't told us which books he wants to print. And when is Nitai going to tell us? Also the typing is still out, the earliest typing dictations. I spoke with Krishna-kripa today and he still has to find them. He says they're in archives in the computer, and they will have to search for them. This is an ongoing thing that pieces of my earlier dictation are missing. He has Volume 10 to the end of *Lessons from the Road* but not the first ten volumes.

Sacisuta told me that tomorrow he has seven basketball games to coach. With a schedule like that, where is there time to manage the press? But they say if you want something done, go to a busy person. He can delegate things to his other workers.

In the summer many guests will come. I have not been thinking ahead about it, but it will be stressful. I have written on this topic, but I can't read my handwriting. As I look at the page I see a phrase that I can make out: "...but a scandalous past." That would be a reference to my fall down and the fact that my reputation is stained as a *sannyasi*. That's not brewing beneath the surface of my mind. I have made peace with it. But I realize the upper GBC authority doesn't want me to become very prominent or to do any big management or high profile guru activities. That's not my inclination anyway. I'm at peace about it. I'm doing what I want, and they're not interfering. I have my wide audience of readers on my website, and I'm publishing books and I'm not traveling and preaching. That's what I want to do for my health. I have repented and resolved my "scandalous past," and if the scar remains it does not hurt me. I believe Prabhupada has accepted me back. My friends accept me.

I think about the fact that my disciples have diminished. We used to have big Vyasa-puja ceremonies with 100 people attending. Now we have 40 people coming. I'm not considered so relevant in the lives of many of my disciples even if they respect me. They're not going to make a trip to New York to be with me on Vyasa-puja. I accept that and don't worry about it much.

Brewing beneath the surface of my mind is Narayana saying that he was going to write outlines for the management of the press for Saci and outlines for the management of the house. Now I don't think he is planning to write them anymore. I could bring it up to him, but he would probably get angry. He had said it takes him a long time to think of things, but that he was thinking of it a lot and was going to do something. But now I think he has backed off on writing to Saci and backed off on writing about the management of the house. It would be good if he did something, though.

On the other hand, there's not really much going on in the house that has to be micromanaged. A long as Narayana is not angry about things, then that is good. We can have monthly meetings with Saci and discuss things, and it will run on in that way.

This piece that is illegible to me, I think I wrote on the porch. I can make out some sentences that say, "I hear sounds from somewhere on the street, someone is working with wood. There is a mechanical sound coming from the house next door. It is too close to make deep reflections. I want to go back into the house." I have stopped writing on the porch because it is too cold, and I don't have writing assignments. I think there may be some assignments for me in *The Practice of Writing Memoir*, but I haven't been doing them. I'm not doing any writing on the autobiography. Mark Twain had a process where he would dictate regularly what was on his mind at the time until the inspiration paled. Then he would write on something else. But I am not doing that anymore. I want to do summary studies of the books I have written. I have one book I have recently gone through and marked places: *Begging for the Nectar of the Holy Name*. When I get time I can discuss that book with Baladeva to provoke me into further questions. But we've got so many Dictaphone machine tapes here that are not being given to typists to type. Narayana says we have enough typists, but I question this. I have two requests for typing: from Nitai in Vrndavana and Jaya Lalita in Trinidad. But he's asked me not to

follow up on these. But why don't we give these people typing? There are a lot of tapes untyped, and they could be doing them. There are some technical problems about unloading these Dictaphone tapes. Narayana doesn't know how to do it, and I think he said he has to consult with Narottama, but he's not doing that, so the tapes sit here in the house. The Dictaphone recordings sit here in the house. There are about four of them now, and this is another one running now. When are they going to go into the assembly of typing? This is beneath the surface of my mind. But I don't know how to push it.

I am concerned about Baladeva's recovery. He is on a several month program to recover from exhaustion and burnout. But he sleeps for long periods of time and gets up late, which is not a pattern that I'd like him to continue perpetually. He should be getting up at an early *muhurta* and chanting his rounds and being active. But for now he says he has to rest. And even that he cannot do because his sleep machine isn't working.

JOURNAL (PART TWO)

April 22, 2013, 5:36 p.m.

Reading *A Walk Between Heaven and Earth* by B. N. Holzer.

It's a journal advocating journal writing and teaching the creative process. You need idle dream time to gestate. Sometimes one thing might seem not to come into another, but the trick is to write them down one vision at a time. If you wake up anxious in the middle of the night, get up and write in your journal. Lots of good ideas come in her book.

Yasoda ate a lot. Baladeva kept feeding him. This is a practice workbook which Baladeva got me with thicker paper, where the ink won't leak through the page. Tomorrow I go to see the nurse practitioner. I have a problem and hope that I am not among larger problems.

Problem with the prostate gland. He already checked it once, and it was swollen but apparently not so much. They will run me through tests. You are gradually dwindling, then death. Get a shot for your crippled ankle. I call out to Krishna in the morning. I write a *japa* report and affirm that I controlled my mind and hear the mantras, but I mostly raise the numerical count and don't pray much. Trying to write in a larger hand. I've answered my mail. Finished a drawing today, but immediately there's a demand for another. We publish one a day. I'm waiting for the milk to come, but I have an hour to start my journal.

The journal is my voice in written code. Holzer says the paper is divine, and you write down your own take on the universe. Of course I am a mouthpiece for the *parampara*, but I have my own voice. I created a commentary magazine in Ireland and called it *Discovering our Voices*. It was good. Those devotees all forget me, and I'm not connected to them. They have ambivalent feelings. My fall down occurred in Ireland, and I fled. I can't go back there. I'm satisfied to live in New York with Saci, although he doesn't chant all his rounds. You can't have everything. He's a good soul, very dharmic.

My journal records the moment, sitting at the desk. Yesterday's web posting on the iPad didn't contain my picture of the Deity or my poem on the Deity, which was extra good. I hope he posts it on the internet. The computers are disappointing. I'll ask Gurudasa to send me that Deity poem again. I'm breaking into larger handwriting and print. Your repertoire in drawing is mainly liveliness. I don't create new figures or bold worlds. Maybe I could give myself permission to try something new like strokes or furry creatures that may not be obviously Krishna conscious with *tilaka*. Give yourself permission to draw something radically free. Don't be confined by what you think you "should" do. A giant man with stick arms and legs and a woman and a dog, have them romping on the page. I'll try it tomorrow, something new and different. A gangly man with sharp angles, an angel from your imagination. I have four months to go.

April 23, 5:06 p.m.

I visited the nurse today. Tomorrow I have to drink a lot of water and then pee and see how much I retained. Bala wants me to drink all the water in the lab, because he doesn't think I can hold it in. Then I have a heart test. Then in six weeks, I see the doctor. All this attention to the body. Srila Prabhupada writes that the vast majority of souls are liberated in the spiritual world. We are a minority here. I believe in the scriptures. They tell that

we can't know by speculation or by contact with the senses. I want to go to the spiritual world, but don't know if I have the qualifications.

Dhanurdhara Swami is here for a week. We should have him come for lunch, not tomorrow. I did two drawings today. I have picked new music to listen to during the massage. April is in its third week, and I'm wearing a lighter jacket. Rama Raya will be leaving soon for New York City. Our *asrama* will be quieter. Yasoda is painting in the basement. In the spiritual world you serve Krishna with no anxiety. Some pure devotees come back to the material world to preach. They have compassion for the conditioned souls. Which would I rather do? Should I pray to go back to Godhead or just leave it up to Srila Prabhupada? It's up to Krishna where I go. Go back to Godhead and pray for the mission of saving souls or just come back to do it? I made mistakes. I am not completely pure. I may have to come back for further purification. Krishna married all the *gopis*, Jiva Goswami says. He says the marriage of Radha and Krishna is written in *Lalita Madhava*. Yet there is *parakiya rasa*. I don't fully understand it all. What is sure is that Krishna loves Radha as He fulfills Her desires.

6:21 p.m.

I told Gurudasa to select pictures of Krishna with Radha and the *gopis* in a loving mood. This will insinuate He is their husband. We don't need pictures of a wedding ceremony. You selected realistic photos of the bombings in Boston and an aerial photo of the Hare Krishna temple to go with my dream. The world is a horrifying place.

Subas Candra Bose started the Indian army to fight the British. I'm not aware of what I should write, I'm just trying to write in larger script and use up the pages. I will talk with D.D. Swami, he's a fired up preacher. Travels around lecturing. I sit in one place and think of stanzas for my daily poem. I remember Srila Prabhupada saying that when it is said that the

spiritual world is 75 percent and the material world is 25 percent, this is not an exact calculation. It's just to give us the roughest appreciation. Actually the situation is inconceivable. They treat us very nicely at the Chatham Medical Center. We are poor people on Medicaid, so tomorrow you have a big test. I hope I can come out all right. Krishna is protecting us. He is my best friend and well wisher. Krishna is the original Personality of Godhead. He is known in other religions but not as fully as He is in His original form. Aindra was a great devotee of *kirtana*. R. R. knows his tunes and sings them well. I didn't attend the nightly *kirtanas* here. I'm in bed. And the blood test showed sugar is high, so I'll have to take less of it in my morning porridge and milk at night. I try to keep healthy for as long as possible, but some of my habits are not good. No exercise tomorrow. Saci works me out. I row for five minutes. When did you last make a good act of contrition? We don't do that as a formal ritual, but I should always be contriving to confess my sins. I could chant better. I will ask Saci on Thursday about the typing of the preface. It is long overdue. Don't be afraid to ask. I pray the Lord my soul to keep.

April 24, 2013, 6:10 p.m.

I do not do well at the medical test. I drank two containers of coconut water but was not able to release a drop of urine. I don't know what this means. I will have to undergo some invasive procedure.

In and out of medical buildings I search for the link to Krishna. When Aniruddha was arrested by Bhaumasura, the Yadus led by Lord Krishna attacked his city. Lord Siva fought on the side of Bhaumasura and directly combated with Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna used all His weapons. Rama Raya read it to me tonight. Baladeva is out on service errands. Look at your heart, what do you see? I see attraction to *Gopala-campu* and chanting Hare Krishna. I see my conversation with my own affairs, my books, why can't they print them, "A Lifetime,

SDG.” My hands in my spiritual body, offering my books way down below Vyasadeva’s feet. Hearing the mantra silently in your mind. I don’t live with my peers, but somehow they visit me. Printed 200 books of *The Story of My Life*, and they are slowly selling. That’s alright. I’m at the last stage of my life and living accordingly. Not much action other than daily poem. I like it this way and say I can’t do more. I can’t walk a straight half mile. I don’t want to fly to India. I stay here and play the *brbat-mrdanga*, go online and see my website. Improve the website. Please guys, can we do it? The Metropolitan Museum of Art received a billion dollars worth of paintings by Picasso, and others and will go on display in 2014. I do my little drawings. Yasoda works on his magnificent bas relief in the basement. I could not produce such a thing. The same thing happened last time I traveled. Lord Krishna will defeat Lord Siva with His yawning weapon. I simply cannot write in much larger script. I try, but I cannot seem to do it. My air humidifier has run out of water, and Baladeva is not here to refill it. He’ll get back later. I hear a bass beat in the neighborhood. I don’t like it. The cars are going by on the road. This is not Vaikuntha. I have an old, material body and a spiritual body of *sac-cid-ananda*. Although that’s my essential nature, it’s now covered up. Don’t ask me to go to Trinidad or Guyana or Italy or even Philadelphia. Baladeva just gave me a new pen. It writes large and clear and doesn’t leak through the page.

April 25, 2013, 5:56 p.m.

Yasoda-dulala is having a grand opening of his art exhibit in the basement. He had all the children sit around in a circle with a few of the mothers, including Keli-lalita, and he told the pastime of Lord Caitanya floating in the ocean, and he had them smash coconuts on the ground and he performed *arati*. He’s having them paint birds to put on his banyan tree. I had a private *darsana* of the project. My spiritual form in orange *dhوتي* is bowing beneath Vyasadeva with my hand on his foot. My other hand is held blessing, and three of my books are there. There’s a

black book, which is world literature I have rejected. And a white book: the words “A Lifetime” are written on it and my initials SDG. I’m honored in this way. Saci said he would give me back my manuscript this afternoon, but he hasn’t come. Tomorrow I have a 2:00 p.m. appointment to receive a steroid shot. My inner man is peaceful. There is a demand on me to make drawings from a limited repertoire. I slave at it trying for varieties. Nitai-Gaura Haribol. I heard them chanting in the basement. Yasoda-dulala is fired up. He’s going to paint Haridasa Thakura.

R.R. leaves tomorrow for New York City, Baladeva is helping him find rooms for his *harinama* men. They need apartments to keep the devotees in. I am bereft of sincere *bhava* for Radha-Krishna. I’m concerned with comforts for my ailing body. I take the stairs one at a time. Nitai-Gaura are dressed beautifully, I want Their picture on the website, Hare, Hare. The future is saying “Jaya Radhe” in Sanskrit. Yasoda is taking liberties in his painting. That’s alright. He has many fish swimming around Lord Caitanya, and he is going to place Lord Jagannatha in his arms. Someone is hammering in the neighborhood. The dogs may bark. My caravan is passing. Yasoda made reference to my fall down. It somehow incorporated into the art. I don’t know how. The Ganga is splashing on my ankles. I search for myself but cannot find. I dream back to before I was a devotee. I have a heart. I love my friends. The people in the medical buildings are courteous. I don’t meet with challenging or rude persons. I can’t write big with this pen. My anchor is dropped at Srila Prabhupada’s feet. I obey him and believe in him. The spring has finally come to Upstate New York, but it’s still cold at night. The yellow bushes and trees are blooming. Spring has arrived. I look out at the world through my spectacles, I see a man within praying to Hanuman to be spared pain. I haven’t read the “Hanuman Calisa” in two days. He protects those who evoke him. Today is his appearance day. I don’t know the story. Keep writing your journal of the self, your concerns, events, and maybe visions.

April 26

5:50 p.m.

I got a shot of cortisone in my ankle. No change yet. Baladeva cooked again for Jagannatha's teachers' training group but for higher fees. Ramila and Yasoda helped him. I am continuing to draw. There was a rude patient at the medical building. We had to fill out a lot of forms. They have sophisticated X-rays. Two big pictures of skeletons. They look fragile. I am inside myself, can't get out to Krishna. They want me to paint in the basement. I have to draw. Yasoda wants to paint with me on the same canvas. I'm willing to try. You can't write larger. Push yourself.

Everything should be done to please Krishna. Don't enjoy yourself. But devotional acts are enjoyable. He will be up with the milk shortly. I skipped my afternoon nap. Hanuman had his birthday yesterday. Baladeva told me to call him on the radio at 7:00 p.m. He'll be napping. R. R. has returned to NYC for *barinama*. The pen doesn't work large. I am an old fool. Doctor Giovanni had a scrungy brown mustache. When Baladeva told him his tattoo was of Radharani and Govinda he said, "I hope I don't meet them soon." Weird. But he was efficient with his injections. The X-ray technician was black. I'm an old fool. Krishna spared the life of Bhaumasura, but He left him with only four arms and no soldiers. Krishna showed them who was boss. He brought back Usa and Aniruddha to Dvaraka in great opulence. Anyone who hears the great battle of Lord Krishna and Lord Siva is blessed. The proofreaders can start reading the second volume soon. I was coughing. The woman with the rude man was reading out loud his questionnaire, "Do you think you are pregnant?" "Stop," he said. Later I saw them, and they were both smoking. Yasoda-dulala and Ramila saved Baladeva by cooking preparations for the teacher training program. I need old clothes to paint in, you wear painting gloves. Tomorrow evening is temple training program. I am not a geek or a jock. I

am an old preacher who writes a poem in the mooring. Say the truth about yourself and turn to Krishna. Prabhupada quotes *Bhagavad-gita* 5.29 and writes how he prescribed the peace formula for Krishna. I am glad I met Krishna through the Vedic scriptures. Look out at the world. Your health insurance will pay the bill. The inner man loves Radha and Krishna. He writes as early in the morning and finishes up late. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Look at the radar screen of the coming world. Write bigger.

April 27, 2013

5:58 p.m.

Any moment caught is a gem. The small spaces between the bushes. Take your journal with you wherever you go. In the washing room. Your little man speaks out. Haribol antics. I'm waiting for milk. Then I'll write again. Where is Baladeva with the milk? Okay, make a short journal entry. Yasoda wants to paint with me in the basement. First we'll paint separately, then on the same canvas. I drew four stick figures dancing. It's peaceful here. I don't move. Volume Two is finished and ready to be sent to the proofreaders. I have my copy but not in a binder. I need painting clothes. Ramila cooked a nice lunch. She had a dream. Bhurijana initiated her and she asked what to do. She is older now. They have two weeks left here. I'm all right. Monday I'll go for my heart test. Your ankle feels better. There are so many false reports. Prabhupada wrote that the scientists admit it would take 40,000 years to reach the furthest star, but if an astronaut went there he would find that all his contemporaries were long dead and could not celebrate him as a great astronaut. Yasoda-dulala broke up laughing when he read that. Then he read that a man built a hospital for the aged but then he died. Dry humor. The phone rings insistent. I'm a plain Jane, a retired monk but still writing. How much further do you have to go? Nohar and Advaita were here from Queens. They

were supposed to paint, but Baladeva had the wrong paint. They come up briefly and said goodbye to me. Advaita asked me about my health, and I said I was all right. What is this “all right?” I drew without music. I’m an old fool. I will miss the visitors when they leave. It is all autobiography. I don’t watch television anymore.

April 28

6:25 p.m.

Late start. I was drawing and then Yasoda came and talked about an art exhibition at TJ’s. Tomorrow I start painting in the basement. I have canvases, coveralls, and gloves. Haridasa was concerned about my urination problem. I said I hoped the treatment wouldn’t be invasive. He told me Garuda lectured at the Potomac temple. He says Krishna loves us, that’s the main point of *Bhagavad-gita*. He was wearing a full grey beard. He liked his professorial talk. I am engaged in Krishna consciousness. Keli came up to my room. She wanted *prasadam* for the devotees. It’s busy with activity here. I’m going to ask Lalita if she would like to proofread volume two. You have to know what I’m talking about. This is a journal for myself. I air my beliefs and tell what’s happening. I believe in Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He’s the source of Maha-Vishnu and other *purusa-avatars*. The cowherd boy is the cause of all causes. Brahma creates under His order. I read a BTG essay by Indradyumna Swami, “Preaching in Macedonia.” It was good. Gurudasa sent yesterday’s poem to me to approve of the illustrations, but Baladeva isn’t here to show me. He received \$500 for cooking three meals for the *yogis*. That’s more like it. I’ll have to break into painting tomorrow after a long hiatus. I have to cover the surface with paint, unlike drawing. I have to stay up late to review the poem. Something reading and writing. And when I feel hungry I eat *prasadam*, and when I’m tired I sleep.

I used to play baseball and liked it, but I wasn't very good. Haridasa roots for the Washington Nationals. I don't watch TV. I'm glad I got the journal. Keli will mow our lawn today. I'm on a sabbatical. I keep a tight schedule. My inner man expresses himself in words in the morning poem. It is free association, the tip of the iceberg. I have a high sugar content in my blood. I'm an old fool. I am vaguely aware of the structure of the *Bhagavatam*. We can hear the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* every day. Leave me alone to express myself.

April 29

6:37 p.m.

I painted today, three typical *sadhus*, two with arms upraised and one with a beadbag. I even did a sketch of it upstairs before. Baladeva challenge me to paint wildly without a theme, as I used to in Wicklow. I'm willing to take up the challenge. Usually monster faces come out. I can try harder. Just mix the paints and look for something. Don't use your usual acceptable forms with *tilaka* on. But why should I want to do non-devotional art? I don't understand. I would like to do something new, childlike forms, indirectly spiritual. I'm writing so late because you brought the milk up late, and it was too hot to drink. Two figures like these? Scattered around the canvas? I'm rehearsing. I like to paint, and I want it to be more original and spontaneous.

Krishna is the judge. On the way to Krishna. Krishna killed the demons. He spared Bhaumasura.

April 30, 2013

Yasoda decided not to do the art exhibit at TJ's. He wants to spend his remaining time supporting Baladeva and helping me to break out into new territory in outsider art. I'll try for it. We'll paint together tomorrow. Break through! Return to the way you were painting in Wicklow. Be brave. Express yourself more. Spontaneous nature.

6:32 p.m.

I will create new works out of my inner mood. Exaggerate, extenuate. Leave behind dogmas. Find your inner child and let him paint. I want to be part of the universe. Get me graffiti sticks. Let me be free. It will take time to find that vision again. Find the broken heart, find the place, the heart beats. Krishna will not abandon me. I will find Him in new ways. Jean Dubuffet said art was best created by the insane. Not by trying to control technique and make pretty pictures. I will venture into new areas. Bala feels I was hurt by the banning of my books, and I retreated. I will come forward again. Let the animals and birds come out. Let the raw vision come forth. Outsider art. Krishna will let me return in the privacy of the basement. Lalita, I have passed beyond my fall down. I am a new man. How can I tell you? How can I heal your hurt?

May 1, 2013

I did a wilder painting today: a provocative woman, a man, a furry tan black creature that Yasoda said looked like Hanuman. Baladeva wants me to paint faster, not stop, and paint from the heart. Paint from the chest, he says. I will try to go further out. The first painting was more simple with curio figures. Have B take photos for the website and write about it. B sets me up to paint. He is a great helper. I should phone Narayana in Mexico. Ask him how he is. That provocative woman was well painted in red dress.

6:24 p.m.

I'm slowly losing weight. Hope it doesn't go up. I'm a quiet old fool. I don't talk much around Yasoda. I let him do the talking, and he does. Yasoda told me Pankajanghri in Mayapur got into trouble. We each have our trials. Rise up and shout brother. Praise the Lord with a deafening roar. With a sweet alto sax squeak. The neighborhood is pretty quiet. I have nothing to say. I am writing this journal with cramped hand writing and no process for self awareness. The sun is shining on Saci's front

door. We worked out in the morning. He read me the *Bhagavatam*. It is sinful to take a *brahmana's* possessions. I don't remember what he read at lunch. Krishna is God. The Islam radicals are terrorists. They set up bombs in Boston. Prsni writes me from Mississippi. Please help me make coherent cries. The inner child is hidden away. The Navy man is left behind. I am bearing the burden of theism, the need to preach and glorify and help conditioned souls. If you don't preach you are like a leaking pot. Have mercy on this sinner. Give him shelter at your lotus feet. Help him to rise up and practice the ways of *saranagati*. Sing a *bhajana* in your spare time. The leaky pants from incontinence. Why wasn't it me? That's the real complaint. I don't pray to the Asvini Kumaras but to Hanuman and Radha-Govinda, please change Their dress. Lumpy mind is subdued. Paint with an inner eye waiting to see what comes. The bold strokes, the dripping columns of ink, the silver drops. ISKCON is an institution. I am part of it, but I don't attend meetings, temple exchanges. I do everything from here in Viraha Bhavan. I face Radha-Govinda, look for a new poem every day. They are the *yugala-kisora*, and I am Their *pujari*. I wave my incense stick, hello. Lords of beauty. They are spiritual forms, although appearing in brass. I dreamt a settlement was made between two warring camps.

May 2, 2013

6:15 p.m.

Yasoda looks forward to more “joyous” art from me, free, like I was doing in Ireland. It's getting warm. I'll need my electric fans and air conditioning. I can't write in flowing penmanship. The pen is too tight, and I can't make it in large writing. I'm sweating as I write this. Baladeva has brought in colored ink and sprits bottles for the art. Just drawing many figures rather than three. Next I do a “surreal” one, prompted by music. Make it good quality. Go beyond yourself into new expressions. I used to start abstract and then make it a form. Now I go direct to form. Try the other. Poems and painting.

Going through *Gopala-campu*. I'm losing weight. You do a picture of a cow. Your painting in Ireland was free and evolved. Five spontaneous paintings in a day. Now you do two. Mother Surabhi is taking Gurudasa to a vein specialist. Yasoda is painting a wooden Jagannatha for Lord Krishna to hold. I move through my day tired. Put color in your drawing. I'm a lucky boy. I have my Guru Maharaja. He guides me on the path. In the reading we are hearing of the *lila-avatars*. The Lord saved Gajendra and Prahlada. He favored Bali Maharaja. Hearing of the *avatars* from the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and the faithful *acaryas*. The sun is beating on the front of Saci's house. Mornings start with *japa* and a poem, then I dictate it. Indra was forgiven. I'm uncomfortably warm. The socks are too heavy. I look to paint freer. Make a joyous picture. I don't want to paint seductive women and horny men. Go transcendental. Draw the vision of the soul. Make spiritual art. With *sadhus*? Yes, but in other ways. Paint the heart, paint the winning trait. Your truth as you struggle with old age. The crippled man doing his best carrying his physical baggage. But his soul is light and carefree. Show that. Be free and happy. Paint your way out of the corner. Free yourself from the chains. It is beautiful to make art. Paint a picture. Your memory can give you total recall of your mistakes and sufferings too. They rioted in India about the government's poor response to the raping. The government turned their hoses on the protesters.

May 3, 2013

6:30 p.m.

I painted in the basement, three multicolored iconic faces, and random lines and doodles after Miro. It was alright, nothing new or radical. Tomorrow I meet with Radhanatha Maharaja, and give him my latest book. They are printing in India. I am not traveling. Radhanatha Maharaja is a world famous preacher and leader, guru. He has organized massive programs. My urination problems continue. I won't paint tomorrow. Symbolism? A tall

man in auto. A squat woman. Then my drawing of Hawaiian dancers. Typical. What can you do that's new? Figures on the page. The next door dog's ferocious barking. The inane melody from the ice-cream truck. Tulips blossoming. My ankle hurts less but no miracle. Leave the hunchbacked to themselves. Draw a simple man. I just reviewed Gurudasa's illustrations and approved them. Yasoda-dulala dresses in a *gamcha* as if he were in Mayapura. There's an electric saw buzzing.

May 4, 2013

Radhanatha Swami came for breakfast and a morning meeting. He scanned through the pages of volume one of the autobiography. I phoned Narayana in Mexico. He suggested I look at my old paintings and make copies of them. I just did a typical drawing. Narayana has finished his book. Now he'll produce it and start another. He hopes it will be well received. My milk will be up soon. I stained three pairs of pants. Tomorrow I will paint again. My heart is open to receive Krishna. The king of Jaipur told Radhanatha Swami that ISKCON had never done anything for Jagannatha Puri. Radhanatha Swami wrote sweet words in our guest book. You can write in a bigger hand but not faster. I don't read Christian books anymore. Going through *Gopala-campu*. Two boys are narrating the pastimes of Krishna in Narada's assembly hall in Krishna's presence. I will never write my journal by talking to myself.

How are you doing?

I'm doing okay, receiving visitors, spending my early morning on *japa* and writing a poem for the website. I don't waste my time. Copy some of your old art. I wake at 11:00 p.m. and start *japa* by 12:15 a.m. Quiet rounds uttered silently in the mind. I pray to please Radha-Govinda. Toward the end I slow down. *Entering the Life of Prayer* with Christian influences. I'm saying in one place by preaching. Radhanatha Swami is going to Ratha-

yatra in Jagannatha Puri this year. The *panditas* are outraged that we hold Ratha-yatra on different dates in India. Radhanatha Swami argued back that we can't take you seriously because you don't let us enter the temple. Upfront seeing the Deities in procession. I rooted for the Brooklyn Dodgers when I was ten years old. Write an e-mail to Satyaraja. Praise Krishna in your journal. He is the dearest friend. He's selling confidential knowledge, "Because you are very dear to Me." He wanted us to give up all varieties of religion and just surrender to Him. He will protect us from sinful reactions, do not fear. When I'm repeating these words, what am I thinking of? Krishna is real, lightly covered from my eyes by the dust raised by the calves' hoofs. I know He's within the cloud.

May 5, 2013

6:19 p.m.

I used spray bottles on my painting today and thick Sharpie pens. It was good, but I'm still doing simple things and not taking on any new themes or chances. Anytime you can write, you can find your voice. What time will he return from Jersey? I do a simple Srila Prabhupada and a boy and girl holding hands. The graffiti sponge drippings. I'm a man who has written many poems. I will do stanzas for the website. I have found my creative voice. But not for the journal. You make an entry and tell your thoughts. Yasoda helped me in painting. He carved a wooden Jagannatha. He purposely made Him rough and imperfect. He's a wonderful artist. Ramila changed Radha-Govinda into black and gold. The dogs have stopped barking for now. Heard about Libya in the news. The president doesn't want to start a costly war. I keep a distance from the news. Even ISKCON news. Baladeva will be here any minute. I will hear from him how the party for Anartha went. I have nothing to say. He read that Krishna is the independent Supreme Personality of Godhead. He killed Putana when He was three months old. She expanded to 12 miles long, but Krishna kept

His baby form because He didn't want to disturb Yasoda's maternal affection. He killed the cart demon: When He was crawling He uprooted the gigantic *yamala-arjuna* trees in courtyard of Nanda Maharaja. Anartha's party was a great success. I'm walking on hallowed ground. Yasoda praised Ramila's cooking. Old friends in Krishna consciousness gathered in New Jersey. I wanted Baladeva to put my face in here. The Pracetas practiced austerities and Lord Siva taught them a song, to Vishnu. I'm an artist and an author, but I am incoherent. The time is almost up, but I am glad I used it in writing.

May 6, 2013

6:11 p.m.

I painted a Radha-Krishna and an outright abstract with no personal forms. Every day I am incontinent in the basement. It is trying. He read about Krishna punishing Kaliya, putting out the forest fire and lifting Govardhana hill. All His adventures are superhuman. He is always like a fresh youth, even in old age. One who knows the nature of His activities goes back to Godhead. I believe in Krishna from guru, *sastra*, and *sadhu*. Krishna is a person. He is also the impersonal *brahmajyoti*. We had apple dumpings. I am a sorry case. We are painting pictures of *krishna-lila*. Next is the *rasa*. They will be beautiful and esoteric. I will post them on the web. Krishna is the cynosure of all eyes in Vraja-bhumi. Dina-bandhu knows all the *lilas*. He is a walking fountainhead of *bhava*. He lives in Vrndavana. Many devotees live there and pass their time in *bhajana-sadhana*. I too, do, living comfortably in New York. My eyes strained from drawing and painting. Visitors will come here, and we'll talk. Let no one come to harass me. I want to be peaceful. Saci's 80-year-old father wants to move. Where will he go? I look out through my glasses. I stick my used brushes in a bucket of water. I work a half hour doing exercises with Saci. I really don't like lifting the eight-pound barbells. Then at the end I punch. Hare Krishna

comes straight from Krishna-loka. He will be back soon. Staring dumb at the white page. Hemingway didn't like Tom Sawyer. He's hoping, by his activities in helping Jimmy Stewart, the angel can earn his wings. At the end he does. I just want an honest exchange. When do we see the website? Do your best. I like seeing Jagannatha. The book manuscript has to be in by November. They had a funeral ceremony for mother Isa in Boston. I look out at the world and chant and write my poem. Shadow is barking. His dog life. This evening spot for my journal writing is not the best.

It's my niche, 6:18 p.m., for making words. I painted another abstract with rollers, a minimum, ungainly figures on *harinama* "in the rain." That is, I splashed them profusely with spray paint over their heads and dripping down. I didn't do much brushwork but mostly sticks. They were all right, a little bare. We get much medicine from Prabhupada's relentless purports. God is a person who can only be known by devotional service, not by speculation. No one can estimate the powers of the Supreme. Many devotees went to Anartha's birthday party. I have no voice, not metaphor or legend. I finished a simple drawing. He constructed a sculpture, "A Rastafarian waiting for Ratha-yatra to come to his town." Assembled by parts of art he found around, and he finished black Lord Jagannatha who will be held by Lord Caitanya. I have mail to answer. The birds are chirping, and the sunshine is beating on Saci's front porch. His son plays basketball and baseball, and Saci attends the games. We gathered for lunch, but it wasn't very good. I'm aspiring to transfer to the eternal spiritual world. Take the mainstream of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* which describes the credible events which we accept as true on the authority of guru, *sastra*, and *sadhu*. Every day we read the extraordinary. Lord Siva is "the king of the atheists," and he also is the greatest Vaisnava. The thick little Lord Jagannatha he has painted nicely, black in face.

May 8, 2013

6:12 p.m.

I didn't paint an abstract, I painted two stocky men and wrote "I like the two men." Behave yourself, but you are no saint, a writer of sorts, an introverted fellow who doesn't travel. Don't come looking for me. But they do. "The *keirtana* series," N says, looking at my drawing, "is the same old thing with some variations." In the journal you spend time with yourself. The pope is irrelevant the magazine said, "...ordinary and ignoble." The President is trying to charm the Republicans. I look out at the world from my secluded *bhajana-kutira*. I keep away from the people. There are some successes for me. I painted the men out of solid color. Help me please. I need assistance. I don't have life skills. He rubs my chest at night. I'm losing weight. Look for your shelter to Bhagavan. Private correspondence. It rained a little bit today. The trees are blossoming at their peak. I rowed today, as slow as 3:40. What's going wrong? He prays but not enough. Talk with Krishna. Hear Prabhupada's medicine. He said hearing about the Lord's activities in the external potency is as important as hearing of the internal activities such as *rasa-lila*. Hare Krishna mantras, I say them silently in my mind and chant them quickly. I am a laggard. But I accept myself and am satisfied with myself. I took LSD about 15 times. He saw it in my book and said, "You are writing very honestly, mixing the pre-Krishna consciousness with life in ISKCON with a diary of the now." I've got a lot to say, the summary studies of my books. Help me please. And the lady dropped her bag, and Haridasa picked it up for her. "Don't get old," she said. Poor Baladeva splashed red paint on his pants. Yasoda-dulala is working on art projects. He wants to come back in a year and do an art exhibit. His paintings are on Krishna subjects. "Dear Bhurijana, I am painting. I wonder what you think." But I can't care. Doing it to please myself, and I hope that means exposing Krishna.

May 9, 2013

6:00 p.m.

Doctor Subudhi decided not to do anything about my enlarged prostate gland so I'll have to struggle with my old age problem and just tolerate it. I'm relieved there is no surgery. I spoke a half hour on the phone going over proofreading changes with Krishna-kripa. In the journal I ask myself where I am going. I want to go back to Godhead. The nurse practitioner suggested the urologist take a biopsy (for cancer), but he said he didn't want to do anything, and he wanted to see me again in six months. I am painting, but it is so primitive, naive art. A man's paintings were abstract, thrown in a dumpster, but now they are selling for \$500,000. I'm pleased that Krishna-kripa is proofreading. Baladeva mowed the lawn. My heart is basically okay for my age. I take meds for pain prevention of headache. My soul is pure but covered up. So many trips to the doctors. Waiting rooms. We didn't have to wait so long today. Stopped in the car driving through the beautiful scenery of the green, leafy trees. God's picture. A nine-story building collapsed in Bangladesh, a garment making factory like Nitai's. Hundreds of people died. It's a backlash on his industry. And the fundamentalists are making strikes. When there's a strike he drives to work in an ambulance. Shadow is barking loudly. So much turmoil and suffering in the world. Prabhupada writes that people shouldn't deprecate God for the suffering. Just as the state makes a prison house...the world is for the rebellious creatures. It's hard to reconcile. I don't want to go back to this material world. I want to go to Krishna. But do I have the love, the qualification? Krishna-kripa goes on *harinama*, now in England, then Ireland.

May 10, 2013

I painted Krishna lifting Govardhana with Nanda, Yasoda, Radha, and a cow. Then one semi-abstract with three stick figures. I dreamed stupidly of being with a bully. No need to stay with him; get away. Hello, I have no vision. The neighbors

are talking, and the dog is barking. It's becoming a warm, overcast twilight. I want to go to the Lord in the suitable spiritual body for eternal blissful service. The *rasa* dance is being described in one chapter, and then it ended. But it lasted for a night of Brahma! I sat quietly at the table and watched Yasoda and Ramila eat. I said nothing but enjoyed watching them and a little conversation. Bhurijana gets around Vrndavana on a bicycle with his camera. Baladeva made veggie burgers then put them in the refrigerator. He said that when he loses things they turn up later. He found his wallet in the freezer. In the hospital he lost my dentures and found them hours later in a bodega where they had slipped out of his bag. "That was a near death experience, an out of the body experience," he says.

6:47 p.m.

The dogs should go to hell. My diary is a *cul-de-sac*. I cast my ego to the ceiling on one of the yoga *asanas*. "Offer it to the Supreme," says TJ. Tomorrow I'll do exercise with Saci. I gently reminded Nitai of the deadlines. He made it seem like he would print at least one book, but even that wouldn't be ready. Nitai wants four books by June when he meets with the printer. In May I got told by the urologist in effect "live with your urinary problem." I don't want to do anything invasive with your enlarged prostate. Take vitamins.

May 11, 2013

6:18 p.m.

Kirtana-rasa says maybe I should get a second opinion on the urologist, but I am not inclined. Live with the incontinence and restricted flow. Yasoda has made a friend of Jody who likes Lord Jagannatha. Yasoda calls him Jyoti "spiritual light." He says he's like an Aussie, rough and simple. He took a photo of Jyoti holding Lord Jagannatha on his Harley motorcycle. Holzer writes of the death of her brother. There have not been many close deaths in my life since Srila Prabhupada, not really close. My own death. Don't write a book for your students, "only in

the private journal,” says Holzer. I sing to myself in my head. Not Bengali *bhajan*s. Jody lent Yasoda his tools.

I’m not very much into writing the journal, but I do it dutifully. No more TV. My life is simple and quiet. I go to sleep at 7:20 p.m. and get up by 11:30 p.m. Then a two-hour nap after lunch. Write larger please, don’t be so cramped. But I can’t help it. Holzer’s brother was run over by a snow machine while he was on his way to a patient. I write my poem after chanting 12 rounds. The urologist didn’t want to do anything, and G says I should have questioned him as to his logic. But I just looked into his eyes and believed him. I am a just man. I certainly can’t travel now, not with my urine problem. I do my daily exercises with Suci. I didn’t prepare for the next section of *Gopala-campu*, maybe I should do it now.

May 12, 2013

6:17 p.m.

In journal writing there are no judges, and you can’t fail. It is your private scribbling, but this is the best form. Someone is hammering, and I have a headache. I painted two peaceful *sadhus* in a house and a witch in a red dress trying to break in. I liked it. I was too tired to start a second painting. Yasoda-dulala’s art treasures are in the basement. I am at the feet of Vyasa-deva in his bas relief, “SDG, a lifetime.” A wonderful piece of art. They leave in two days. I wonder what I’ll paint tomorrow. The journal begs the questions. I have an enlarged prostate gland and K. R. sent me herbs. Dairy and sugar are not good. I pose like a silly ass for photos with Yasoda and Ramila. I’m self-satisfied, that’s okay. I didn’t chant Hare Krishna on my hands and knees. I’m finishing late each morning. I slow down, getting tired at the end. I can’t expand myself into two forms. I’ve mastered no mystical arts. But like a child, I depend on Krishna. Tomorrow we will read of the *vrajavasis* going to Ambika for Siva-ratri where a large python starts to swallow Nanda and Krishna saves him. Gurudasa picked great

illustrations to go with the *rasa* dance. My heart is with Krishna. There is a *manjari* of Tulasi and a flower branch over Radharani's hand. They are my worshipable Deities. I chanted today, but the magic didn't come. But gradually, as I write, it will become all right. That is the value of poem prayer. It enables me to approach Them, write bigger, you fail. Write as big as the Empire State building, write like Niagara Falls and Grand Canyon. The 25 girls are going on a bus trip. Claire and Bhaji are going. They are both second generation devotees. I am an ISKCON dinosaur, class of 1966. I have fond and shameful memories. I gave my life. Vijitmatra wrote me an apology for a letter I didn't receive. He said it is okay I am brahminically independent and don't have to tow the ISKCON line. But I thought, "I do tow the line." The journal is a graveyard, an empty postage, a jazz tune, a drive to the doctor's through scenic countryside.

May 13, 2013

6:15 p.m.

Holzer says the journal of scribbling, fragmentary entries written without planning or fear of failure will emerge as a whole with themes and is a mystical path, the creative flow. I painted crudely today, abstract markings on a self portrait and Srila Prabhupada. Then over paint spray I did a generic man and a pink elephant. Still not breaking through wildly. I keep at it but return to the familiar personal forms. Yasoda and Ramila leave tomorrow morning. I did not speak any philosophy or *lila*, but I write it in my website every day. Baladeva is my caretaker, my medical proxy. He has a big tattoo of Radha-Govinda and a Sanskrit one that says, "Sri Radha" and a private one. He wears a knee brace outside his pants and an ankle brace. The quiet life of Stuyvesant Falls. Ramila read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* at lunch and loved it so much that she did not want to stop. I had a dream where I was young and my relatives were imploring me to sing this song, "That song," then we all burst out "Heart of my

heart/ I love that melody/ too bad we had to part/ I know a tear would glisten/ if only I could listen/ to that gang that sang heart of my heart.” I had completely forgotten this song, but it came in a dream as important to remember. A pure devotee like Maharaja Pariksit is not afraid of anything. I’m afraid of many things, tigers, muggers, earthquakes. Ramila asked me if she could accept Jananivasa as a *siksa-guru*. I said yes. The Personality of Godhead Sri Krishna is the cause of all causes. We come into the material world out of a desire to lord it over.

May 14, 2013

Don’t expect praise for writing a journal, but put words down, observe. Yasoda and Ramila have left. He left behind a lot of art, and she left sweetness. My work is productive. Baladeva was just here doing a rambling comic monologue about all our neighbors. It cracked me up, and I couldn’t drink my milk. Do I have fun when I paint? I guess so. But I paint the same old subjects and like a child. When Rupa-vilasa comes will I paint? He’ll take up my time, two days, and I won’t be able to keep my drawing production, which I need to do for the website. People coming and going. Can’t play music while they are here. A man’s got to be alone. Draw the surrealistic dancers to music. Sounds of a powerful lawn mover, two of them. I’m a bit fed up with grilled cheese sandwiches. My eyes are a bit foggy. Read *The Week* news magazine, how President Obama is in battle against the Republicans in Congress who are against anything he does. He couldn’t pass a gun control bill, although 90 percent of the Americans are in favor of it. I’m glad I don’t work in politics. Someone wrote me a letter criticizing my frequent praise of Kaulini Prabhu. Then he wrote an apology.

I’ll write back and tell him how I write of my “little life” in Stuyvesant Falls. Say if he and his wife were here to visit I would praise his dedication to book distribution. Sunshine falling on Saci’s front porch and long shadows. In *The Brothers Karamazov* they plan to escape from a prisonment of the brother who was

found guilty but didn't kill his father. We are led to assume he escaped and goes with his wife to America. Hare Krishna. I didn't finish my morning until 5:10 a.m. Too late. Write your letters. You write in your journal each night, it is good to do.

May 15, 2013

6:16 p.m.

I drew *harinama* people instead of painting. Then I drew men reading *Krishna* in bed. Rupa-vilasa gets in tonight. Why is he coming? To renew an old friendship. I have to rise to the occasion. He's staying two days, lots of talk. Talking heads sitting in chairs. Where is my freedom? I love to be free. But I want to serve Krishna and guru. I serve them according to my limited capacity and inclination. My limits are becoming more pronounced. Haribol, eat what you can. My medical emergency button is worn around my neck. I don't want to use it, and I'd rather not have it, but Baladeva insists. The North American GBC discourages ISKCON devotees from associating with Tripurari Swami. I see their point. Maybe people should be told not to be with me. Each person has to keep healthy somehow and communicate through spiritual writing. How I can be healthy may be different from you. Where were you when they crucified my Lord? I was lucky. I saw the little piece of paper stuck in the window of Matchless Gifts. I have been unlucky too. It rounds out. I behave in an exemplary manner and try to help the devotees. I post *Gopala-campu* with illustrations. I'm too tired to pick something right now. Forget it. I'm not making sense, my mind is distracted. Walk along the path I wrote.

Say something clear to Rupa-vilasa. I print a book a year, 365 entries a year in the open session of website. Why is it taking everyone so long? They will notice me after I'm gone. "Krishna, Krishna," Jayadvaita Swami injects repeatedly in the middle of anything.

May 16, 2013

6:27 p.m.

I spoke with Rupa-vilasa this morning. He was very friendly. I'll paint tomorrow and talk with him in the afternoon. I'm dead in the water with this journal. A big gathering at lunch. Suresvara is coming for the weekend June 23. He wants me to set up a seminar for him, but I don't think we have an audience. I'm drawing bugs at the bottom of my *sankirtana* journal. "

Rupa-vilasa is reading my autobiography. He's a proofreader. Holzer says, "saw many birds at the bird refuge." Rupa-vilasa remembers my past service and how I helped people in Krishna consciousness. Now I don't do that much. Hridayananda Maharaja wants to publish his novel with a major publisher, but so far no one is interested. Why bother? Rupa-vilasa likes Hayagriva's poem "Chant." Tomorrow I'll give up my journal writing time. You don't eat much at lunch. What do they think of me? I know he loves me, but does he want me to do more mixing? I say I can't. I don't watch any television. I keep on drawing, the same subjects. Do Radha-Krishna, Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Lord Nityananda. The incarnations. Yasoda is a fabulous artist. I paint like an awkward child. The journal lifts its head in a cobra pose. Huck Finn floating down the river with Jim. I look out at the world quietly.

May 17, 2013

I just read the *Caitanya-caritamṛta* aloud with Rupa-vilasa. Baladeva is not here with my milk. I didn't paint today because Rupa-vilasa tired me out with talking in the morning. Baladeva mentioned I had an option for some invasive procedure for my urinary problem. I'm stuck on doing the next drawing for the website. They are so repetitious. I look out at the world through my glasses. We read that Svarupa Damodara was a "second expansion of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu." I like the section of Lord Caitanya's return to Jagannatha Puri. I am a *kṣetra-sannyasi*. I have taken a vow to stay in one place, Stuyvesant Falls. I'm

content here. I am isolated, but I receive visitors. We had spinach for lunch. I like jazz music, and sometimes don't think it's a deviation from Krishna consciousness. Now that Narayana is back we're having exchanges. The journal is where I express myself in private without judgment.

This is the last page in this volume of the journal, a 30-page art pad. The writing is only a small effort each day. I use up paper. I have some letters to answer. I am a *ksetra-sannyasi*. I don't watch baseball on TV. I am not much interested in it. I am numbering the volumes in my journal. This is volume two. Hare Krishna. Often I awake at 11:00 p.m. and get out of bed. I take a nap later in the day.

May 18, 2013

6:20 p.m.

I broke through and did a wild painting today, elongated intermeshed bodies with spray paint on it. Oh, I am tired. Reading *Cc.* with Rupa-vilasa. I was self conscious of my dentures and my neck. He is very friendly and not an imposition, but he's staying long. I played jazz while I painted. Rupa-vilasa told me a nice story. I'm brickbats in my journal. I'm lockjaw. I don't follow the journal teachers and make it a journey or instrument for self-awareness. But I can write fragments. Rupa-vilasa ate so much of Baladeva's asparagus. It was a pleasure to see. I am a serious person. I don't joke much. I sit silently at the dinner table. The trees are all green leafy. But we haven't been getting much rain. Who am I? I write of the self but ultimately don't know who I am. I am pure spirit soul. Rupa-vilasa said he is not as much interested in Krishna and the *gopis*, but I am. I like to hear about Radharani. I have my Radha-Govinda Deities. We are posting *Gopala-campu*. We read about Govinda coming to serve the Lord. They said I was like Govinda after my first few weeks as Prabhupada's servant/secretary. But that didn't last. Jahnavi painted a picture of Prabhupada, and when Rupa-vilasa saw it he began to cry and

bowed down. He said she is very faithful and loves Srila Prabhupada. The Lord likes penance. He wants to see how painstaking one is in his Krishna consciousness. He awarded Brahma his post, and He shook hands with him. Brahma has a relationship of friendship with Krishna. Self-awareness, know your post. Let it live in you. It is what has made you what you are at present.

May 19, 2013, 6:14 p.m.

I spoke on the phone to Haridasa for the first time in two weeks. He's a fan of my website. He said on Facebook it says over 7,000 people recommend my site. I painted today three tall bending forms touching each other with my signature man and woman between them. Next I painted two big busts of men with big beards and long hair. I applied spray paint to both of them. It was fun. Rupa-vilasa asked me the connection between painting and writing. I said it was just another creative outlet. Haribol. Tomorrow is Rupa-vilasa's last day here. I commented that six-year-old Oliver was a naughty boy. He said, "He's indulged in." Kirtana-rasa gave me some medicine to shrink my prostate gland. Baladeva is not keeping me on a strict fat free, sugar free diet. I am a man within myself. I want to get out. He wants to serve Krishna and Prabhupada. He wants. He is. He serves. He practiced a full *dandavat* to draw it. I dreamt we had two strong wild creatures we were transporting in boxes, but it was too hard, so my uncle Sal decided to fly them by plane. It's an overcast day. I didn't watch the baseball games which Saci and his son attended at Yankee Stadium. I had no time. Rupa-vilasa has given me chapters of his book to read. I'm an old man, but I don't feel old. My body is defective. Hare Krishna chanting is very good. I don't take part in *kirtana* just *japa*. "For a long time I used to go to bed early," Proust's book begins. I go to bed by 7:00 p.m. There's a power mower going. Kirtana-rasa is proud of his wife. She teaches from *Bhagavad-gita* before her yoga class. People look up to her. Haridasa took his wife out

for Mother's Day. My chest has a pain. Time is up. I discovered my self-awareness.

May 20, 2013, 6:18 p.m.

Just read for the last time with Rupa-vilasa. My vision was blurry. I painted Krishna and Balarama confronting the wrestlers Canura and Mustika with a worried Kamsa on the throne. I did three elongated bodies intertwined. As usual I splashed with spray paint like Holi colors. Rupa-vilasa makes interesting comments about Srila Prabhupada's purports. It's the end of the day for me and I'm tired. Prabhupada wrote that the preachers are *nitya-siddha* devotees. I am a deadhead. I wind down in my journal with a headache. I took Excedrin. My handwriting is laboriously slow. We follow *madhurya rasa*, the gift of Lord Caitanya. It is very pure but you have to be cautious. We are reading the second canto. Oh, I am beleaguered. No, I'm at peace. I just need a little rest. Krishna is infinitely kind. So is his pure devotee, although he is sometimes stern. Rupa-vilasa is writing a good book. I am writing on my website, nothing else. I haven't begun the third volume. I'm on a journey in the journal. I just close down my day's activities and take a look at myself. I am not splayed out. I am regulated and follow a schedule. I love getting up before midnight and chanting *japa*.

I have not exercised in five days. A man on a radio call-in show asked me about quantum physics. The radio host came to my defense. I said chant Hare Krishna. You have to surrender to a spiritual master. Srila Prabhupada is still living in his instructions. He reasons ill who says that Vaisnavas die. The devotees of Lord Caitanya were on the spontaneous platform.

May 21, 2013, 5:16 p.m.

Be here now. There was delicious thunder and then a downpour of rain. I am sitting in the breeze of the electric fan. I don't have to go anywhere. I am present in my body. My heart is beating, and I am breathing involuntarily. Shadow is barking mightily. I'm wearing my pajamas. I finished drawing. Part of it

was from a dream, men coming down and carrying fruit. I tried to go up stairs, but I had to back down. Their mission was more important. Sometimes I get afraid I have to break through not involuntarily. It's a mental thing, and it goes away. I am a foolish man. No one is going to attack me. It is Ekadasi. The thunder and rain now is wonderful. My head is held up by the thin column of the neck. I have scholar's stoop. The kinesiologist pressed down on my hands, and I resisted. I thought of the mental image. When I thought of a certain person my resistance grew weak. He said the unconscious would overcome the conscious. He was right. I believe in Srila Prabhupada's books. Faith in Vedic authority. It was wonderful. I am aware of Krishna and Srila Prabhupada in my life. The batteries have run down on my walkie-talkie radio, and it is "chirping." I'm not going on *parikrama* or attending the morning program in a temple. I don't feel a lacking.

6:12 p.m.

More intimate Krishna's pastimes. He had 16,000 wives. He lifted Govardhana Hill. He is not formless. It will be hard to convince many people of Krishna consciousness. I'm reading the departing of Nanda for Mathura. Krishna is always happy. The *gopis* are unhappy in separation, but it is a kind of ecstatic bliss. It is inconceivable. I did not paint today. I said goodbye to Rupa-vilasa, a wonderful friend. I will stop writing and read *Gopala-campu*. My head hurts again. I spoke with Nitai Gaurasundara but didn't tell him of my writing problem. We won't do the invasive procedure. The dictionary is not interesting reading. I took Excedrin. Now I will get ready for bed. I'm not lonely or unhappy, but I could think of original novel things to write about *japa* and Radha-Govinda and original things to paint, just some difference in my drawings, otherwise I'll proceed as best I can.

May 22, 2013, 6:11 p.m.

I did two drawings today instead of painting. My false ego is mostly diminished. I am not proud, yet I write my autobiography. It's hard to eat chocolate energy bars in the warm weather. My vision is fixed on the here and now. I have aspirations for the future life, but I don't dwell on them. I look forward to getting through the day. Ain't misbehaving, saving my love for you, Lord Krishna. Look in the mirror. See the fat man. He's losing weight but still fat. Kapila's vegetables were too spicy for me. The website is coming out well. I'm happy to be living in Stuyvesant Falls, working out on exercise in the morning. I like myself, but I know I am a neophyte in surrender to the Lord. Write your journal of fragmentary entries. Man didn't go to the moon. What is the importance of it? Obama is in trouble. Baladeva is dyeing six pairs of lightweight diabetic socks. Krishna acts as an ordinary householder and performs all the religious functions. I have opportunities and appointments. I am a docile man. I don't know what to write. Tell me of a time you were frightened. When those tough guys ran after you and threatened us for mocking their rock 'n' roll singing. We chickened out and denied we were mocking them. I was afraid when the canoe capsized and when the jeep ran off the road in Mayapura. I climbed out to safety, and Bhavananda was stuck under the jeep. I have been afraid for my life in the water in India. Now I think I am safe, living in my comfort zone. Free write: neophyte shepherds run in the plain, Nanda goes home to Vraja without Krishna. Men in tights dancing high. Guys with the right stuff join the U.S. Marines. NCIS. LA crime. TV with violence. Tulasi shed many leaves. The Yankees are in first place. The time has run out.

May 23, 2013, 6:13 p.m.

Nothing preconceived, taking the moment as it is. Tomorrow is the 41st anniversary of my taking *sannyasa*. My record is tarnished not stainless, but I am working to follow the vows,

wear saffron, and keep the *goswami* title. I pray to Lord Nrisimha to remove the *anarthas* from my heart. He does that for sincere devotees. I pray to Prahlada for fearlessness and compassion. I did yoga today and drawing. It was raining. Sit in the same spot each evening and write. Krishna-kripa phoned with proofreading queries. He's a good man. Kapila's cooking is somewhat boring, and it is too warm to have an appetite. I was drawing and listening to Ornette Coleman.

Freewrite: he played on the wires of the piano. Swamiji was in the audience at Town Hall. Brahmananda was with him. Satyaraja recorded the life of Brahmananda. The flowers are broken from the rain. Tulasi is dropping leaves but getting new leaves. The body is a burden. For the devotee, it is an instrument to be used for Krishna. The boy becomes a man. The disciple becomes a guru. The poppies are blooming for Memorial Day. I had a John Deere cap I wear while painting. When the Titanic sank, hundreds were drowned. I can't go for a long walk. Maharaja Praiksit inquired from Sukadeva Goswami in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* we're told. Those who hear it today can be attracted to Krishna and their sins removed. Polish the apple. Read the book. Watch the video. Sleep with the fan on. Mind your manners and thank Srila Prabhupada for giving you *sannyasa*.

May 24, 2013, 6:15 p.m.

Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He lives in His own abode Goloka Vrndavana. But by his expansions and energies He is present everywhere in the spiritual and material world. Don't forget this. Always remember Him. He is not like a material lord. I'd like to hear the *Krishna* book. Mundane rascals. Free write. I went to Ebbets Field two times. One time I saw Don Newcombe pitching. When my father took me, we had lousy seats in left field. Cheapskate. Srila Prabhupada is my spiritual master. I am following him. I will turn to him at death and ask for a better next birth. We keep hearing in his *Srimad-*

Bhagavatam purports that we should strive to go back to Godhead. I want to do that. I have little time to use. Use it in the right way. Write your website. Be happy and transcend and think of new things to paint. Paint a king being mocked and harassed. Pakistan has a new leader. Goswami is doing a *kirtana* tonight at the yoga society in Hudson. Baladeva cooked for it. Krishna asks Uddhava for advice. Uddhava is the best devotee in Dvaraka, but he had to learn *krishna-prema* from the *gopis* in Vrndavana. I am functioning high on a low platform, as Chuck said. It has been raining and chilly. I don't eat so much. I eat to live. Hare Rama means Radhika Raman. It's a *yugala-kaisora* mantra. Rupa-vilasa has nice appreciation for Srila Prabhupada. I appreciate him too, but I don't listen to his lectures. I read his books. We have friends coming to visit us. I write of my life at Stuyvesant Falls, this house where I stay all day, except for morning exercises. I punch the heavy bag with light punches. Saci encourages me. He's a good trainer. We work out hard for a half hour. I am no longer interested in sex life, but I draw pictures of women. Today, I painted a queen with subjects bowing and a king with men angry at him. Keep the mobs away from the president. I say my prayers rapidly, but I hear them clearly in my mind. Try to say something new about *japa* and Deity worship. Hare Krishna means O Radha, O Krishna, please engage me in Your service.

May 25, 2013, 6:15 p.m.

I haven't written in the journal in several days, arranging my letters to Bhurijana. I'm very busy. Have to answer letters. Haryasva is here. The journal should open up. I don't preach much. I don't give classes. That's okay. I write my website. I write my book. I'm an OK guy. I dreamt I was down and out and desperate to return to my parents in their home. That's not true. I'm safe with Krishna and the devotees. Haryasva is sober and sincere. The journal is an open space. I fill it slowly with lines, my heart. Be a good man. Nine acorns fell. I saw photos of the unborn. Do you believe it? I believe Prabhupada's

purports. Faith is a decision. The moon will be full, and Baladeva will be affected. I don't much like lunch. Worship the Panca-tattva. The journal asks, "Who am I?" My lamp fell down, and I'm writing this in darkness. Three blind mice, see how they run. The family tales are sinister. Krishna wanted Yudhishthira to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice. First, they had to kill Jarasandha. Krishna told Bhima how to do it. We're reading of Kalayavana. Gurudasa did good illustrations of Radha and the bee. Radharani *ki jaya*. He wants to hear from me. I did two paintings, one of Radha-Krishna and one of three interesting persons, an orange-faced man, a black man with teeth, and a blond haired woman with a bosom. It takes hours. I went wild yet controlled. The journal is homage to Prabhupada, a *dandavat*. Baladeva and Allegra repotted Tulasi devi. We have many heavy plants and give many away. Bala takes care of her. Ravi talked at lunch of smuggling Prabhupada's books into the Soviet Union. Exciting stories of the revolutionary and brave devotees and protection by Krishna.

May 30, 2013, 6:12 p.m.

I dreamt a *sankirtana* devotee decided he wanted to write down his adventures. I became envious. I wanted to write my life too. I feel pressured to produce the drawings and pressure to paint. Pressures aren't good, but I work under them. *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers* by Anne Lamott. I watched Haryasva and Baladeva eating. I told the story of Bhima killing Jarasandha by Krishna's indication. That was the extent of my *katha*. I played Ornette Coleman and drew a free picture. The journal speaks of my day, what of my inner life? I was a little restless today. I want to do different things, a conflict of interests. You want to write your life. I would like Baladeva to prepare assignments based on *The Practice of Writing Memoir*. Read my letters to Bhurijana. Be up early chanting rapidly in your rounds. It's a habit I've gotten into. I'm old, like an old tree. My dreams are given. My leaves are green as summer approaches. My systems don't all work properly.

You are a *bhakti yogi*. Your *ista-devata* is Radha and Krishna. Krishna consciousness is sometimes technical. He ripped him in half. My incomplete self. Haryasva says he aspires to reach the clearing stage in chanting. What stage am I at? The peacocks dance when they see the cloud when Krishna plays the flute. The universe is enchanted, but I can't hear it. The "Venu Gita." Think about what you want to do. I am a fool. I fell down, and it was exposed. I wrote my transparent letter. I survived. Am I offensive, out of line? I was reduced in stature, but I bounced back. We ought to have a press meeting. Are the dictations getting typed? Is Saci getting the files of books ready for Nitai. What about the Dragon system. SDG should phone Rasesvari about fundraising. Saci should be in touch with her regarding the status of typists. Keli-lalita should read Krishna-kripa's manuscript.

May 30, 2013, 6:14 p.m.

Haryasva is serious about chanting the holy names. I told TJ each of the *asanas* is demanding for me to do. He sympathized. Baladeva gave two Tulasi plants to Haryasva. My inner man is deliberating. He wants to go back to Godhead, but he's not ready to die yet. The state of his mind at death will determine his next life. Krishna says if you think of Him you go to Him. Prabhupada writes that this is done by chanting the Hare Krishna mantra. I hope to do so. My inner man is not so bold. I stay in the house all day except for going to the gym for exercise. Tomorrow we have a press meeting. I'm not so interested in painting as Bala is. He wants me to paint wildly. I don't seem to have it in me. I paint predictable forms, not abstract. I will keep trying. I have to read my letters to Bhurijana. Now I lay me down to sleep, and if I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. A nice simple prayer. We have more complex prayers like *Brahma-sambhita*, the Tenth Canto Chapter 14, the prayers of the *gopis* and *Stavamala* and *Stava-vali*. In Narottama dasa Thakura's two prayer books are wonderful prayers. I should read them. I pray to Krishna in my own word

in two volumes, *My Dear Lord Krishna*. Give that book to Godbrothers. I am not interested in baseball or TV, good. I'm writing in the journal instead. Think lovely thoughts and you can fly, said Peter Pan. I wrote my letters. I ate my lunch dutifully. I am a hedgehog of free writing. You write about what comes to mind. I read of the South Pole expeditions when I lived alone. I weaved it into my personal mythology. I was a lonely artist.

June 1, 2013

Sweat from my hand marred my drawing. Jayadvaita Swami and I read *Caitanya-caritamṛta* about Lord Caitanya permitting the son of King Prataparudra to visit him and how He embraced him and transformed him into an ecstatic devotee. When the king embraced his son, he felt he had embraced Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Prabhupada writes that one should not think with the logic that if a woman is naked in her childhood she should remain naked as an adult. In other words it was quite possible for the king's son to be one day an ordinary prince and the next day to be transformed. Jayadvaita Swami said, "In a sense Prabhupada changed all of us in this way." I sat silently at the lunch table and don't add to the conversation. I am a nerd. My inner man is the Mad Hatter. I don't realize much. I talked to JS about the next life. I said I aspire to go back to Godhead. He said sometimes it sounds easy and sometimes difficult. He said he had no compassion to come back and preach. He wants to help some people in this lifetime and then get out of here. I agreed. But it's all up to Krishna. We don't want to be *bodhisattvas*. I want to use the Dragon System. I am a cipher. Krishna controlled the six bulls to win his bride Satya. I am a nonsense. I am a pure spirit soul trapped in a material body. When I woke up I fell down and couldn't pick myself up from the floor. I radioed Baladeva and he came and picked me up.

June 2, 2013

It's busy here, JS and Kaisori and the Queens men. I am drawing. Haridasa is sending me books. I'm on the lookout for a good time. There are many memories. I play the greeting card record of Louis Armstrong singing "And I say to myself, what a wonderful world," every Sunday over the phone to Haridasa. I am not a deep thinker. I don't like rock 'n' roll, rodeo, politics, the fourfold miseries of this material world. I like JS, many devotees, my early rising and chanting. I have not prepared the *Gopala-campu* for tomorrow. I will stop the journal and do it. Baladeva just brought up Tulasi devi. I like Mary Oliver's poems. She's 78 years old. Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He spoke to the many kings, and told them they were fixed up in devotional service, and they would gradually go back to Godhead. The monsoon season brings the rains. It is summer in New York, and the air conditioner is on in my room. Free write: In winter I went in the morning and skated on Jack's Pond in Great Kills. Memories. I'm not going to the New York Ratha-yatra. I'm staying here. We read the cleansing of the Gundica Temple. A Bengali Vaisnava drank the water from Lord Caitanya's feet in the temple. The Lord called Svarupa Damodara and said, "Your Bengali Vaisnava has implicated me." Dina Bandhu built new stairs down to the basement. Hare Krishna comes from Krishna-loka, and with chanting I have a connection. Saci tells me about the Yankees and his ten-year-old son's baseball playing. I work out in the gym. I'm a *sannyasi* whose destiny is to be a writer. The time has come, the walrus said, to talk of many things.

June 3, 2013, 6:19 p.m.

I met two-and-a-half hours with Kaisori and Kaulini. It was exhaustive but all right. JS is living in our house now. I am drawing. Krishna is kind. Kaisori proofread the entire *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. There is so much to do. I am not on any committee. I stay in my house. I am incontinent. Kaisori used to walk ten miles. Now she can only walk a mile and a half. I broke Ekadasi today. I like Prabhupada's books. He is our ever well-wisher.

Krishna married the 16,000 princesses imprisoned by the demon. There is an easier way to reprint the books. Kaisori told Saci, “I hope they can get it together.” So many delays. I am finished. I wrote the books and want to keep them in print. Monarchy is dead. Democracy is demon-crazy. Where is enlightened government? Where is enlightened me? This pen goes slow. I stubbed my toe. I quoted Lewis Carroll. I could ask JS to read *Alice in Wonderland*, but I won’t. We’ll read *Caitanya-caritamṛta*. We sat together at the dining table. I’m a fool. I draw funny pictures. I want to be alone. Baladeva is tired. The fire station siren just went off. We live in a quiet town. Five minutes late. Krishna Krishna Radha Radha. Gopiparanadhana and Sadaputa and TKG were great losses. I will not be a great loss. I have already done my major work.

June 4, 2013, 6:20 p.m.

JS jokes that I will start painting “the little creatures” once he leaves. Lalita-sundari wrote to me that she’s delighted I’m painting again and can’t wait to see my work. I just received Richard Rohr’s book, *Falling Upwards*, recommended by Rukmini. JS and I read *Caitanya-caritamṛta* today about Lord Caitanya honoring *prasadam* with his devotees and Advaita Acarya and Lord Nityananda mock fighting. Then we ate lunch together, spinach and soup and asparagus. JS spoke the speech from *King Lear* by Edgar, “Now, gods, stand up for bastards!” He was going to read from *Hamlet*, “Tis now the very witching time of night,” but I stopped him. He leaves tomorrow morning, and I may paint. We chanted Hare Krishna together. Sivarama Swami was ill, and he told JS he thinks his death will be difficult. I can’t focus on it. I am living and dying. The author knows his books will become public domain. He wants to be read. Krishna is the supreme youthful cowherd boy who controls the universe. “He’s very Krishna conscious but he’s not fun.” I have failed and made mistakes, but I have picked myself up and learned from them. I’ll tell you more later.

June 5, 2013, 6:11 p.m.

I saw Dr. Schaffer today. He asked me if I had ever been in a psychiatric hospital and if I had suicidal thoughts. Then he told me I was staring at him. Unpleasant. JS has left. There are only three of us in the house. I'm not much interested in Richard Rohr's book. Narayana has to punctuate his poems, but JS likes his poetry. Sparks fly. Gaurapriya picked lots of flowers from our garden for a function at her school. I'm drawing. I get ideas from dreams. The doctor described himself as "a backsliding Buddhist." Free write. I'm not a big brain, not a conversationalist. I don't go walking or swimming, but I work out in the gym. Sagittarius the archer. Obama will use less drones. "The world won't end, but it will get worse," Bala told the nurse. My weight isn't increasing, and the swelling has gone down on my ankles and hands. Bala told the doctor I went to the ER for pneumonia. I wrote my poem in the morning. The doctor didn't know what *japa* was. We assume. Free write. I'm put off by shapely women who wear skin tight jeans. They should wear skirts. I'm not interested in eating. I drew a bus driver and two passengers. I'm beating around the bush. Sivarama Swami said death will be difficult. Don't listen to me, I only work here. "I'm from Trinidad." Apes. Myths. Everyone dies. No one escapes. One hundred percent mortality rate. You can go to the spiritual world where life is eternal, blissful, and full of knowledge. Most souls are there. Serve Krishna, serve Radha.

June 6, 2013, 6:16 p.m.

The journal writer wants to express himself with his slow pen. I am drawing for the website. I have a puppy brain, but I accept the Vedic conclusions, so I know a lot. I accept it on authority in the descending process. This is the best way to receive knowledge. I have to realize by practice and introspection. I am honest about my level of realization. I follow Srila Prabhupada. Krishna Kshetra asked me to write a forward to a book of his

appreciations of Srila Prabhupada. I am honored to do it. He is an Oxford scholar. I am writing this at a compact desk in the twilight. My funky prosy poem tells the events of the day. They posted a nice photo of Kaisori and Kaulini. The website is lively. Good things are happening. They are producing the second volume of my autobiography. I want to read my letters to Bhurijana. Bhanu Swami is a prolific translator of Sanskrit texts. Hare Krishna mantra. I chant faithfully. The dictionary. The alphabet. The war on terrorism “Keep those drones flying.” He says one thing, but what does he do? I am not an eccentric. I am a senior citizen. I have health insurance. I’m a Hare Krishna member. There are 26 qualities of a devotee. He is fixed in the Absolute Truth; he is poetic, sane, silent, etc. I drew a picture to music. The journal is a collection of fragments. I am drawn to express myself. I had a good time at the state fair. I don’t attend the ecstatic festivals. We celebrate Janmastami here. I tend to say the same thing every year. Maybe I should try to think of something different. See what Prabhupada spoke on that day. I am filling a page. I don’t want to die, but I have to. I will get a better next life. I pray to go back to Godhead.

June 7, 2013, 6:13 p.m.

I did two drawings in the time it took to play one CD by Ornette Coleman. I drew the men freely and creatively and colored their faces and hands and left the rest of their bodies uncolored. Still reading Richard Rohr. I am in need of God’s grace. I have lessons to learn. I hope I am not static or too quiet. Heck, I did those drawings fast. I can still move. Saci worked me out without my ankle brace. I rode slowly. I will paint again. This is the forest primeval. All those references to world literature and scripture. My own life. What was it like before I met Prabhupada? And after—and then after his disappearance. Gurudasa had great illustrations today. Tribhuvanatha said cheerfully, “I’m going to die!” Krishna loves us all. He acts in inconceivable ways. Right now I don’t think I’m doing anything very wrong. Maybe I am complacent. *Krishna Krishna Krishna He.*

I am not dead yet. I read all my letters to Bhurijana, and I'm ready to dictate them. Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Devotional service is the only way to learn Him and please Him. I make mistakes. I cheat. I am in illusion, and my senses are faulty. Narayana has to lie on his back to get relief from pain. I have mania. I am sane, poetic, and silent. I chant *japa* rapidly in my mind, but I pay attention to all the mantras. The birds are chirping. A snapping turtle eats chicks. One living being is food for another. But the human being should not slaughter animals for his food, and he should offer what he eats to Krishna. Smart people are celibate and avoid a lot of grief. Kirtana-rasa's daughter is going on a three-week bus tour for young girls. He is a good guy and devotee and lawyer. He went with Baladeva to the police station where Baladeva surrendered his gun. Chirp, chirp, it is raining. Rain is predicted for tomorrow for the New York Ratha-yatra. Those drones are very effective in killing top terrorists, but they kill civilians also. Obama is considering limiting their use. It's summer, that is very nice. Duryodhana was evil. Yudhisthira was dear to Krishna. The puddles are tinkling with rain. My journal is not a big self help tool. I observe. I speak to myself. At the end of the day life is worth living. I like myself, and I worship my Lord and guru.

June 8, 2013, 6:08 p.m.

I finished Richard Rohr's *Falling Upward*. I recommend it. He even mentioned "Hindu Krishna consciousness" as seeing joy everywhere. I did two drawings. I'd like to get back to painting. Rohr writes of the second half of life in which we are supposed to be somewhat enlightened. He quotes Jesus a lot, but he is broadminded. My own writing is so less intellectual and spiritual compared to his. But I have to make my contribution. The journal is poverty stricken. I hear Saci on his power lawnmower. It probably didn't rain on New York City Ratha- yatra. Syama dasi is coming here tomorrow. I'll meet with her. Rohr says you have to leave your home to grow. I did it. I met the swami after several years of living alone on the Lower East Side. What great

fortune! When your books become public domain anyone can publish them, however they want. I'm trying to keep my books in print while I'm still alive. I want to talk on the phone with Rasesvari.

Myths and symbols and poetry. I like reading some good outside books in addition to Prabhupada's books. His books are my staple. I'm on a diet to shrink my prostate gland. Life is good. I don't hate anyone. I know the world is filled with hate and violence and poverty. I write for likeminded people and give them good fare on my website and a book a year. I have failed and fallen. I have bounced back. I live with my failures and my tarnished reputation, and it brings sadness. And some bitterness. Yet I am at peace. I worship Govinda in His silver crown and Radha standing by His side. We believe in the *arca-vigraha*. I take their *darsana* in the morning with incense. I did so many crazy, self destructive things. Now it is over. I am free, I'm retired but I'm creative and productive. I need to help people who come to me. I need to nourish myself on the Hare Krishna mantra and Srila Prabhupada's books. I get sick in the winter, pneumonia. Narayana said I would live to 95, but I don't think so. "When five are gathered in my name, there is church. Not in the big institution."

June 10, 2013

I will always be sorry about my fall down. How could I have been so infatuated? It was clearly *maya*, and many devotees have fallen under her influence. I lost my good reputation, and I'm scarred for life. I am no longer a high profile guru. Only a handful of devotees attend my Vyasa-puja. As a result, I have retreated as a public figure in ISKCON. Partly it is my tendency.

6:14 p.m.

Holzer says when she began writing her journals, she was afraid to reveal her sadness and trouble. I want to be more open too. I printed the picture of Garuda. He's on the flag on Krishna's chariot. When Krishna entered the battlefield to fight

Salva, everyone could see Garuda. I don't dwell on my troubles. I am a recluse by proclivity. I have no desire to take part in the festivals, seminars, or meetings. Nor am I obliged to attend them. I have my daily preaching on the website and my books and my art. I am a happy camper. I am acting appropriately for my age. Gurudasa had good pictures for Dvividha the gorilla. I have responsibilities. I discharge them. No more monkey business. I am relaxed at home in my *asrama*. Syama dasi is a simple devotee. She says she doesn't understand the complex nature of the academic institution that is Oxford. She dresses her Deities. I like her. Nick was here today; he loves to read my books. Baladeva gave him a stack.

June 11, 2013, 6:17 p.m.

Just met with Syama dasi. I painted in the morning, Krishna and Balarama, Govardhana and cows. Tomorrow I have to answer letters. Oxford sounds like a beautiful place. Saunaka Rsi is working hard. Anuradha sent me a letter. Write to them. Syama got a little tearful. She said her mother always told her she wasn't good enough. Kaulini Prabhu came with her. She told her that Krishna loves her. They have been having nice *kirtanas* in the evening. My paintings are innocent and primitive. I told Syama I like Picasso and Miro. She is a sincere devotee. Eight times two is 16. Eight times three is 24. Eight times four is 32. I chant 432 mantras and make four checks on a piece of paper. When I've done it four times it equals 16 rounds. I can control my mind when I chant. Bhurijana wants me to show him things in my letter that might make him "red." I'm going to plead for no censorship. We should be open and honest about our struggles. The whole correspondence is filled with sensitive incidents, issues, and vulnerability. It's not a matter of dropping out a few sentences. Please let me publish it as it is. If anything is too negative he can trust me to leave it out. Krishna is the Lord. He smashed Salva's airplane to pieces with his club and beheaded him with his *cakra*. Baladeva wants a few more naps. Syama decorated Radha Govinda's altar with many flowers.

Krishna is all attractive. Only the devotees appreciate Him. Other religions are also good. *Krishna Krishna Krishna be. Rama Raghava raksa mam.* I'm writing this journal as a tool for self-awareness to help in my spiritual quest. Yeah? I don't see you talking to yourself and working things out. Well, I tell what's happening. My inner self is wounded. But I am presently content. Living in a nice little community. It's been raining a lot. Syama dasi is almost a vegan and feels great about it. I'm not vegan, but I'm cutting down on fat and dairy products.

June 12, 2013, 6:20 p.m.

It's late. I had an accident in the bathroom and rushed through my *Gayatri*s. Krishna appeared grief stricken when Salva came and showed Him His father had been arrested. It was just a pastime. I am a naughty old man. I didn't make it to the bathroom on time. It is hilarious. I drew two pictures today, almost finished. I quoted a Mary Oliver poem on my website. Krishna is kind, all knowing and all powerful. I am a sorry human being, but I have been picked up by Srila Prabhupada and taken to safety. I have some years to go, it seems, before death. The journal is for self-help and exploration. I dictated f15 letters today, good work. Badrinarayana wrote me about Prabhupada's statement "Your love for me will be shown." I told him the quote in *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta* is authoritative. I played Charles Mingus while I drew. He is a great musician. Narayana came by and liked it. I am operating out of a calm but lively consciousness. I can't travel at all. I don't lecture. I write and paint every day. I'm satisfied "as time goes by." Humphrey Bogart in "Casablanca" asked that the tune not be played in his tavern. Hatred and violence in crime in the world. I'm sheltered from it in quiet upstate New York. The beautiful summertime. I don't go swimming. I exercise with Saci. We do new things. Chanting the Hare Krishna mantra early in the morning is my main *sadhana*. Radha-Krishna Deities. What's in your heart? You want to go back to Godhead. Kesava was a good man. Pictures of him on the website, excellent. The spider builds its web out

of its own saliva. Krishna creates the universe out of his own energies. I have made it near the bottom of the page. I want to say more tomorrow.

June 13, 2013

Holzer says when we go on our quest, when we're writing our journal, we don't meet only beautiful things but pain and danger and beasts. The other day I wrote about my fall down, but I don't usually encounter ugliness or lost wilderness. I am humbled by my incontinence from my lack of control. It robs me of dignity. But my caretakers and I deal with it in a practical, efficient way. I am in a safe harbor. I write out of quietude. It has been raining all day long. I did yoga with TJ. I did a drawing. Bala is bewildered about what kind of diet to serve me. Syama is coming back here in two weeks and will cook for two weeks. She is on a gluten free, no dairy products diet but doesn't cook that way. She serves her husband bread and ice cream. She made nice baked *samosas*. I don't have much to say. In *Gopala-campu*, Jiva Goswami is proving by scriptures that Krishna is the eternal husband of the *gopis*. He never leaves a step out of Vrndavana. But what about the separation, *viraha*? It's a paradox. I don't understand it. It's inconceivable, but I accept it. Gurudasa does excellent illustrations for the website. Krishna is the supreme. Paramananda and Kim broke up. She's pregnant by him. Who is to blame? I sit in my renounced seat and watch the world go by. In baseball if the ball hits off the foul pole it's a foul ball. I dreamt professional baseball players were telling me otherwise. Six times ten is 60. Four hundred and thirty-two mantras is four rounds. It sometimes takes me 20 minutes to do them. She said it is like a dark knight, writing in the forest meeting pain, sadness, and danger. At first she didn't write it out, then she called out in despair to her dead brother. Now she is more compassionate and even loves the beasts. I am not so embattled. My ship plies through the water smoothly. Prabhupada came to America on a long sea journey on the *Jaladuta*. He suffered two heart attacks, then had a vision of Krishna rowing the boat in

His different incarnations. For a year nothing much happened in New York. Then at 26 Second Avenue, I came to him with a dozen others. We formed ISKCON, and he led *kirtanas* and lectured day and night. “Those were happy days.”

June 14, 2013, 6:09 p.m.

Holzer says beginning journal writers sometimes use the language of western psychology to chart and map their journey. This can be limiting. Recently there have been many spiritual books and writings which make a rapid conversion to this kind of language but it often comes out as platitudes. Also people who are working under various self-help programs use the language of the program and not their own voice. ISKCON-speak can also become hackneyed. I remember Hayagriva being concerned about this in 1966. He hoped we wouldn’t become like Marxists who used the language of communism without the spirit of their own voices. We have so many built-in phrases like “spirit soul,” “the three modes of nature,” and “taking *prasadam*” that we have to be careful we don’t parrot the philosophy or imitate Prabhupada even with his grammatical mistakes in English. I met with Professor Sheridan Baker, the author of a book on writing. I showed him a *BTG* and he liked it, but he said we should be creative and not always use the same terms. For example, instead of “spirit soul” one could sometimes alter it to “spark of spirit,” etc. In the introduction to one of his books, Thomas Merton wrote that he might not always use the vocabulary of Catholic theology. He said something like, “I may be permitted to use my own language about my soul.” I’ve tried to keep my American (New Yorker) voice in my own writings while staying faithful to Prabhupada and the *parampara*. Prabhupada himself wrote differently than his spiritual master, and we may also. Enough said.

I painted today for two hours, and again I was incontinent. Anne Lamott writes that incontinence is one of the sufferings of life. Some people take it very badly and are upset that they have

lost control of their body in such a basic way. I have the Krishna conscious philosophy to keep me sane. I painted Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Lord Nityananda and a *mrdanga* player and *kartala* player, all very crude but innocent. Then I played like a child and painted three persons I drew in the afternoon. I am accumulating Hare Krishna mantras. Four rounds in 25 minutes. I hear them, but I don't cry out like a child for its mother, like a lover for his beloved. Speak in your own voice. Hello, I am not so Krishna conscious. I don't chant more than 16 rounds. I don't experience bodily symptoms of ecstasy like tears, hairs standing on end. I don't see the whole universe as void without Govinda. Please make me dance.

June 15, 2013, 6:13 p.m.

Why do you keep a journal? To talk to myself, to preserve my present thoughts to look at later, to be read eventually by someone else. Because I'm alive. I can write something of Krishna. I can kvetch. No one is looking. I avoid watching TV. I'm a writer.

Balarama killed Romaharsana Suta. Romaharsana dasa, Sisupala dasa, Kamsa dasa should not be given as initiation names. Krishna dasa, Govinda dasi. I am confident to be mostly alone with support from caretakers. I punch uppercuts at blackboards that Saci holds in his hands. Doing the exercises in *tapasya*. I am a piece on the chessboard. The first pitch of the game that Laksmana played was hit for a home run, but his team won the game. Mahanidhi Swami lives at Radha-kunda and is deep into *bhajana* and *tapasya*. I take it more easy. Krishna is pleased by Uddhava and Vidura. Uddhava is sad that Krishna has departed and left him in this world, but He gave him a mission. I like Anne Lamott's book *Help Thanks Wow: The Three Essential Prayers*. She is down to earth and funny but definitely God conscious. Holy moly and a holy cow. We say "Radhe Syama, bow down mister." Salva hit Krishna on the head, but it didn't hurt. I keep a journal to fill the page with ink words. It's a

practice. I want to help myself. The journal builds muscles, leaves a trail like Hansel and Gretel made with seeds. I can find my way home. I had a nightmare I was walking alone in New York City, and two men came to mug me. I forced myself to wake up. Krishna is the seed giving father, the cause of all causes, the protector of His devotees. I am one of his devotees through Srila Prabhupada. Six hundred acres is Gita-nagari. New Vrindaban is much bigger. They are having the 24-hour *kirtana*. Nitai Gaurasundara spoke to me for only four minutes on the phone. I was born 73.5 years ago. I have survived. My time for today is up, 7:00 p.m.

June 17, 2013, 6:10 p.m.

I painted Krishna playing His flute and many animals running toward Him including a unicorn. Then in the afternoon I drew four men on *harinama* and started one with creatures from *Alice in Wonderland*. There was a brief thunderstorm, but now it's clear and Laksmana's championship baseball game may be played. It is peaceful. Shadow was barking wildly, but they took him inside. Maharaja Pariksit asks Sukadeva Goswami to speak more on the valorous deeds of Krishna. *Jnanis* get tired and cease hearing, but pure devotees want to go on hearing continuously. In our reading of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, Uddhava comes upon Krishna near the end of His appearance on earth. He is in a four-armed form sitting with His back against a small banyan tree. He tells Uddhava that this is his last birth in the material world; He will go back to Godhead. Maitreya Rsi was not a pure devotee and comes by due to *ajnata-sukrti*, past accidental devotional service. Krishna spoke to Uddhava, and by hearing, Maitreya awakens his love of God.

I am a slowpoke. Lamott says we should always be taking on something new. I see new every day in my regular *sadhana*. I had a nightmare that a big authority was denouncing me for having a puny service attitude. It was quite shattering. I'm glad I woke up and dismissed it, and then started drawing men on their knees.

In the second canto Sukadeva Gosvami said that those who don't take to Krishna have tongues like frogs. The original artist for *Alice in Wonderland* is delightful, "Four score and seven years ago . . ." When I was a kid our family drove to Washington, D.C. At the Lincoln Memorial the Gettysburg address is inscribed in the wall. My father tried to impress me with the importance of it. I was innocent and ignorant. Srila Prabhupada took me to Tirupati in 1974 for *darsana* of Krishna as Balaji. He chanted *govindam adi purusam*, and that was nectar. We didn't have to wait in long lines. I couldn't persevere as Srila Prabhupada's intimate servant. I served him on the Library Party.

June 18, 2013, 6:10 p.m.

I painted Lord Siva and two ghostly associates. Then in the afternoon I started a group of four dancers in a drawing. I lost track of time, and Haridasa suddenly appeared with 6:00 p.m. milk. He began reading from the wrong section of the book, "Lifting of Govardhana Hill" whereas we are actually up to Sudama Vipra visits Krishna. Sudama was so skinny his veins were showing, and his clothes were torn and dirty: "*avadbuta*." But Krishna honors him, and Rukmini fanned him with a *camara*. I am 17 years old. I dreamt boys and girls were holding hands and dancing in a huge circle. Just imagine, he was reading Govardhana *lila* whereas we are almost at the end of the book. I am satisfied living in this house doing my *sadbana*. What more is there to say? Narayana ties my *sikha* in a tight knot, and it lasts all day. I don't experience physical symptoms of ecstasy, but a steady symptom of *bhava*, such as I am very careful not to waste time, and I am attached to chanting and hearing. Baladeva and I hand wrestled. Sometimes you can't think of what to write so you do free writing. Birds come to the feeder. Saci mows our lawn. You bring lunch to Kaulini Prabhu. Muktavandya brought it today. Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady*. Eight times 20 I can't figure out in my head. It's 160. There you have it. I asked Haridasa to get me pictures by Joan Miro and Kandinsky. I may copy their styles. I am no longer interested in women or getting

high. I want peace and service to guru and Krishna. I have a roaring good website. The time is almost up. I'll go to sleep peacefully for a few hours.

June 19, 2013

I dreamt I was in a sports car with two other people. They were thrilled with the car, but I thought the seats were uncomfortable. I thought, "Three is a crowd," so I departed from them and I was walking in a big coat, but the buttons weren't lined up properly. I tried to fix it. I tried to go to our old house on Staten Island. I hoped my father would be home. I wanted to tell him that I had been threatened . . . but by what? He was supposed to interpret your dreams, but to me they are a gamble, a jumble. I am introverted and want to be alone. But what is the wrongly buttoned coat? Why am I at 17 years old seeking protection from my long dead father who rejected me? I will continue to write down my dreams as strange messages from the unconscious, but I can't understand them.

I painted Srila Prabhupada and then a long-armed man reaching out toward a woman. There was a cow between them. Baladeva's comment, "Saved by the cow." I am not interested in women, but I paint man-woman as a commentary on the basic impulse of material life. How can I paint men only and leave women out? I just did a drawing of two men and a woman painting pictures. My spiritual life is progressive, and alone. Haridasa read tonight about Krishna and Sudama Vipra, but he skipped the important part where Sandipani Muni finds them in the morning and speaks verses praising and blessing the boys. I made him go back and read it. Haridasa took four devotees to India. They spent a month and a half in Chowpatty to learn *brahmacari* training. He is very concerned with devotees in Guyana, giving them a good foundation. He said the temples in Guyana are in a crucial state. I love to chant *japa* at midnight, 16 rounds. I received a letter from Krishna-sneha. He has a lot of respect for Nitai for staying so long in Vrndavana. I do too. The

other Nitai is not keeping in touch with Saci. Not good. I will write him tomorrow. Holzer says write through your pain. It's good to read later. Stuyvesant Falls is a good place. Gurudasa printed a photo of our house with a sign in front: ISKCON Viraha Bhavan. I thought it was OK. Write through your pain. Hare Krishna makes you transcendental.

June 20, 2013

I painted Krishna, Aghasura, and the boys. Crude. But Bala said, "Great." Then I drew four dancing devotees to music, left one uncolored. My left eye is inflamed, red. The white paper is waiting to be filled. Acyuta is a good proofreader/editor. He changed my language, but it was okay. Haridasa is coming with the milk. The paper takes my thoughts and words without judgment. *Gentle Power. Writing in Gratitude, Soul Eyes, Can a White Man be a Haribol? The Waves at Jagannatha Puri, Songs of a Hare Krishna Man, When the Saints Come Marching In, Voices of Surrender, Calling Out to Krishna, Pictures from the Bhagavad-gita, In Praise of the Mahajanas* – titles of my poetry books. Will I publish another poem collection? Mary Oliver published at 78. I am posting a poem daily. I told Rukmini I measure the lines by breath. I do it arbitrarily, keeping them short. Lyrics of pop songs. Bob Dylan and Frank Sinatra. Tomorrow is yoga day. I bluff the cow pose. Narayana is up to interrupting me. Now he's changing batteries. He shouldn't come up during writing time. It takes your breath away. The stigmata. Christ wounds, his terrible suffering on the cross, according to the Christians. I had a dream a bunch of us were captive on the second floor of a building. Ghosts visited. They exorcised a demon from a man. I acted as "mentor" and forbid the people from eating too much from our limited stock of food. The apple of his eye. I have written over a hundred books. Human beings have the capacity to get out of the cycle of birth and death and go back to Godhead. I want to go and so does Jayadvaita Swami. I still haven't heard from Bhurijana, whether he'll let me print my letters to him without him censoring them. Poets, painters, musicians. *The Diary of a*

Traveling Preacher in many volumes. Free write. I have to go for an eye exam and dental cleansing. Joan of Arc heard voices. They burned her at the stake and then made her a saint. Fourteen volumes of Henry David Thoreau's journals. I wrote of him in my preface. I wrote that Kafka had a full-time job. Acyuta added "as a lawyer for an insurance company."

June 22, 2013, 6:15 p.m.

I can't learn much from the journal writing teachers, but I appreciate their dedication and faith in the process. Suresvara just gave a good lecture from his seminar on Srila Prabhupada. He took this lecture from my classes. Prabhupada is everyone's *siksa-guru*. I recognize the previous *acaryas* too. And I am a guru by his desire. The "Guruvastakam" is not only Srila Prabhupada, says Jayadvaita Swami. TKG disagreed. Daily *guru-puja* to Srila Prabhupada is certainly only to him. I haven't written in the journal because Suresvara is here, and today I didn't paint because I went to the Little League game. Write of external subjects says Holzer. Write about a chair. My La-Z-boy chair is broken in, is very accommodating and comfortable. I live in it. I like it. It kicks back, and you can even nap in it. It's a little old. The Poland Springs water bottle has less plastic and a smaller cap. The pens are not so great. I'm a silent type. They conversed at lunch about indexes, and I didn't say a word. ISKCON is not Srila Prabhupada nor is the GBC. Srila Prabhupada is not the last *diksa-guru*. My body is not functioning properly in urination or bowel movements. I live with it. It is hot today. Laksmana pitched well but not the girl, Gabby. They got badly beat. Hare Krishna. Srila Prabhupada. This is our life. Suresvara is doing a good thing stressing the foundational importance of Srila Prabhupada in all of our lives. I need it. I remember an intellectual TV show called *Omnibus*. I remember walking the boardwalk at Rehoboth Beach. I remember going to India. Don't write nonsense. We are posting a new book by Jiva Goswami. It was a bad, sad day for Gabby. Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is one of Srila

Prabhupada's *mahavakya* utterances and "devotional service." I'm filling up a page. It's almost time to go to bed. Dubuffett can teach me. Draw gross primitive *artebrute*.

June 23, 2013

Suresvara gave his last class. It's Sunday. It's warm. Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Srila Prabhupada is the founder-*acarya* of ISKCON. My loyalty is to the institution. I live only with devotees. I don't associate with nondevotees, although I went to the little league game. I am an old sort of person. I hope I never get tired of living at Stuyvesant Falls. Suresvara says his seminar is "foundational" and "everyone should hear it." I agree. I read a little from *Alice in Wonderland* today. Joshua Bell played violin in the metro station incognito. I am not a hypnotist. Neither have I ever been hypnotized. I did the painting today, three people but lots of decoration. What is your service Prabhu, what is your mission in the mission? I am a writer of a daily website. I do not have big service. I am a secret agent. I'm not a Buddhist monk. I am a Hare Krishna with a *sikha* and saffron. Please read my website. Nickel and dime and a hundred dollar bill. Sivarama Swami is a very powerful person. He lives in Hungary. They used to say, "Forty million French persons can't be wrong." I am fooling around. I don't have any issues to print. I am naked in the shower. I wrote my autobiography. Let us praise famous men and ladies. We are all pure spirit souls, part and parcel of Krishna. I have an eternal relationship with Him. Krishna *dasanudasa*, the servant of the servant, a thousand times removed. Give yourself in wild abandonment. Trust that Krishna will protect you. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. I hope my assistant sent out all my letters. My correspondence is slow.

A day of Brahma is a long time. The *rasa* dance lasted a night time of Brahma. Each man is dependent on others. We live protected lives. Krishna is our ultimate protector. We had spinach for lunch. I ate a little. I don't eat much. I'm not a

politician. I don't walk for exercise. Jayadvaita Swami wrote a book on Ecclesiastes. Very good. Bhakti Tirtha Swami was a dynamic preacher. He passed away. Srila Prabhupada initiated 4,000 disciples. There are many more devotees who accept him as *siksa-guru*. He was an *avesa-avatara*, empowered to spread the holy name all over the world. Women are allowed to join. They are equal. I have run out of time. 7:00 p.m.

June 24, 2013, 6:10 p.m.

I won't describe my dream; it's too inconsequential. I painted in abstract, but I put faces and eyes in, creatures and little people. That is nice. I even put *tilaka* on two faces. Then I drew three dancers and started one of four dancers. Sudama Vipra. Hare Krishna. Suresvara is gone. He teaches a seminar on Prabhupada. I sweated during the exercise. The photo of little Radha Kalachandji is on my desk. A 24-hour *kirtana*. Biographies are being written on Aindra and TKG. I am writing an autobiography. Eggplant parmesan. I am a journal writer with no program. I write painfully. I am constipated. There is thunder in the sky but no rain. Tell me something. I dreamed I joined a date with my sister and a man named Martin, as in Martin Luther King. We were going to a local movie, but he suggested driving to Alabama. "Why so far away?" I asked. He said, "Do you think I want to jeopardize my family members?" So we went to the local movie. I wrote my journal, "A grade B spy movie." Cliches. Martin bought me a toy, a set of forks you could set in the ground to resemble a train. We got home at 11:30 p.m. I thought it was late, and I would have difficulty writing my entry early morning website. I said, "Good night, Martin." I didn't see my sister in the dream.

Now a heavy summer rain has come. I'm sitting in a comfortable chair. I'm swami's *cela*. He is my mentor, the main person in my life. I hear his books daily. Maitreya congratulated Vidura for asking questions about Krishna. Maitreya was a contemporary of Vyasa, and he knew the secret of Vidura's

birth and how he was formally Yamaraja. Maitreya is explaining the *catur-sloki*. The *Mayavadis* screw out a false interpretation from them. Thank you Srila Prabhupada, “Impersonal calamity thou hast moved.” I know Srila Prabhupada is great, and I am dedicating myself to him in my own way, painting, and writing, *The Story of My Life*.

June 25, 2013, 6:11 p.m.

I did two paintings today that pleased me. I am into my painting career. Got a book by Joan Miro. I’m a painter for Krishna! May I keep it up. Don’t forget to fix your clocks. I drew men looking at time pieces and started four wild dances. *Vishnu-sahasra-nama*, the thousand names of Krishna. I heard it being chanted from a temple when I was in south India, Varkala. I am an enthusiastic person and content. I live a life of seclusion, productive in writing and art. I am a happy monk. I am an ex-hip young man who lived on the Lower East Side and wrote under the influence of marijuana. Meeting the swami changed all that. I became his sober, responsible, devoted son. He always said nice things about me. I adored him although I couldn’t serve his *vapu* long term. I transferred to serving his *vani* in the Library Party. Can we have a press meeting? Gurudasa, turn over my tape lectures. I am unsure what to write. Six times two is 12. Twelve times four is 48. I was not good in math, dropped out of Algebra and hated science. Excellent in English, philosophy, French, and Spanish. I’m not an occultist. I’m not a snob. I’m a physical coward. I drew and listened to Charles Mingus. *Memories* was a good book. I enlisted in the Navy under the influence of my father. Two years of imprisonment. I recently dreamed of my PIO Lieutenant Commander Richardson. Krishna-kripa is quoting from my autobiography in his blog. I have an internal life. I listen to *krishna-katha*. Hard section about the *maha-tattva*. Everything is activated by the glance of the Lord. He impregnates the living entities with His eyes. I have no hobbies, just passions. I don’t get headaches anymore, thank God. The living entities are given a chance to

enjoy matter, but they suffer. If one is fortunate by the mercy of Krishna and guru, he receives the seed of devotional service. Watering the seed by hearing and chanting, he advances in love of God.

June 26, 2013, 6:10 p.m.

I painted two surrealistic pictures which I liked, and I finished two drawings. The work is going on. I look at the world from inside my fragile body. Eruptions of joy. Pictures of happiness. Baladeva wants me to paint a bird. I will, tomorrow, several birds. Maybe with Krishna and Balarama. Make a colorful shout. The diarist described the ice skating styles of Thoreau, Emerson, and Hawthorne. At Kuruksetra, Mother Yasoda held Krishna and Balarama on her lap as if They were eight-year-old boys. Tears pour from her eyes and milk from her breasts. Krishna and Balarama didn't seem to even recognize Devaki. I am at a loss for words. Vishnu is the maintainer. Krishna controls the material energy. Srila Prabhupada constantly criticizes the impersonalists and atheists as having "a poor fund of knowledge." Talk to your psychotherapist about your problems. He will charge you a big fee. Krishna-kshetra sent me the PDF file of his book. I wrote back and asked him for personal information. W. B. Yeats wrote of the Celtic twilight. Joyce wrote of the harsh realities of Dublin in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. I'm not writing the thoughts that come to my mind. Sesa Prabhu sent his respects. He is the GBC for Alachua. Kalakantha is initiating. I am not allowed to. I have committed a grave wrong and was punished and diminished. I am still kicking and creating. Thus spake Zarathustra. I don't go anywhere except across the street to the gym. I lift the eight-pound weights and row and punch the heavy bag. I sweat up. Don't be a pretender; don't find faults with Vaisnavas. I have that bad tendency, but I can check it. The heat is with us. I dreamt of so many things. I can't remember. I painted a cow over the moon and a dog with a smile and a small orange fox. Please support our *asrama*. We need donations. Prabhupada

studied Charles Dickens and Sir Walter Scott in college. He didn't accept his diploma because he was a Gandhi follower and protesting the British.

June 27, 2013, 6:10 p.m.

I drew four dancing men. Maitreya teaching Vidura about the *purusas* and the universal form is rough going. There was a brief shower. I did yoga. Gurudasa did good illustrations on the website. I am content to do my service. Baladeva doesn't harass me when I don't finish my lunch. I mostly sit silent. I write about Krishna's flute, said I cannot hear because of my separation, but in my inner ear I can hear. I hear the invitation. I want to respond. We award you the wooden medal for good attendance at early morning *japa* and writing. Alphabet soup and animal crackers. The *gopis* don't like Krishna's lessons to them about *dharma* or Uddhava's message on *jnana-yoga* and Krishna speaking the same at Kuruksetra. They want to embrace Him. He speaks secret messages through His lessons on *dharma* and *jnana*. Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura tells us what he means. I am not a playboy. I am a played out old man. I may live some more years and keep writing and painting. Leave a legacy. Leave books to be read by the devotees. We have Jehovah Witnesses as our next door neighbors. Baladeva has attended their meetings. We believe in *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I like to read the *rasa sastra*s of the *acaryas*. I worship Radha Govinda with incense and a poem. I don't remember my dreams. I never went to Africa or China or Russia. I stay put and go to the spiritual world by hearing. I drew a man, a lady in a *sari*, and a slim man, all dancing and chanting. I am hesitating to write three poems in a row. "Twas brillig, and the slithy toves/ Did gyre and gimble in the wabe; . . ." "I thank You God for most this amazing day." He wrote *Kaddish* all about his crazy mother. I am not in active *sanga* with many of my Godbrothers. I see some who visit me like Jayadvaita Swami, Rupa-vilasa, and Suresvara. No heavy sorrow or pain. I am living in a comfort zone. He called him "ease loving." Srila Prabhupada was not ease loving. He pushed himself and his disciples to spread

Krishna consciousness. He is our spiritual master asking us to surrender. Work hard for Krishna. Go into town and whoever you meet tell them about Krishna. Radha and Krishna, sublime lovers.

June 28, 2013, 6:10 p.m.

I am impressed with the Joan Miro. I drew four figures very different for me without eyes or mouths, but I can write the word Krishna on the page. Be responsible for what you do. I painted birds and three men. Reject the impersonalists and voidists. Put Krishna in your heart. Label it if you have to, “Some men of Krishna in disguise.” “Lord Caitanya’s *avadutas*.” “Krishna conscious art.” You are going into a new phase. Influenced by Miro, but it comes out in my own way. I chant rapidly, but lovingly. The alarm is set for 11:30 p.m. I wake up earlier and go back to sleep. Syama is here cooking. Baladeva gets relief. They are wearing costumes. No eyes or mouths. I love the way Miro paints. He titles a painting, “Woman and Birds,” but you can see neither in the picture. “A Star Caresse the Breast of a Black Woman,” but nothing resembling it. He is a poet surrealist living in his own world. I chant rapidly, but I’m attentive to the whole *maha-mantra*. Birds at our feeder. Baladeva fighting the Japanese beetles who are attacking our roses. Miro paints very neatly and precisely. I can’t do that. I’m too primitive, *artebrute* realistic figures up until now. Now I will depart.

Srila Prabhupada wrote that the Ganges is the most sacred river, but he usually says the Yamuna. One is associated with Lord Caitanya, and one with Krishna. I take a shower in the water of Stuyvesant Falls. I take the *prasadam* cooked by Syama. I wrote a letter to Krishna-sakti. She says she knows her eternal relationship with Krishna but doesn’t like it. She is intense. Krishna is going to take me. He will place me according to my desires and level of advancement. Vasudeva told Krishna, “We are all playthings of Providence.” What is that? What is destiny? Giriraja Swami says, “I am a mercy case.” He is humble, feels he is made of Srila Prabhupada’s mercy. I am quiet. I am aspiring

to go back to Godhead. I don't want to come back here, and neither does Jayadvaita Swami, but it's all up to Krishna. He will place me as He likes. I will pray to remember Him and serve Him, make friends with devotees, and be kind to all.

June 29, 2013, 6:17 p.m.

Radhanatha Swami is coming to breakfast tomorrow. I imitated a Miro painting, but it will be the last one I do. I did three figures and titled it "Lord Caitanya's Avadutas," but it was too indirect. I did a drawing with strange creatures with no eyes and no mouths and captioned it "Krishna's Men in Disguise." Then in reaction, I did another drawing with three devotees holding iPads. One said "Miro copycat failure." One said, "Dishonest and not Krishna conscious." And one said, "Back to the drawing pad." I honestly don't know where to go next. I like the semi-abstract and not always black dots for eyes, but I like painting devotees and divine forms. I'll have to see where it goes.

"Radhanatha Swami is the spiritual guru for all *yogis* in America," said Baladeva. Baladeva cooked a prep which was the favorite, and all the women *yogis* hugged him. He said, "You guys are too much. This is no place for a *brahmacari*."

Holzer speaks of the benefit of a writing group where you share each others' writings. I'm alone. I write out of a sense of duty. My *sikha* is long and in a knot. I like to write about the paintings and the creatures. I like applying color and making shapes, but I don't know where to go until I get there. It's all improvised and variations on themes. Heavens to Betsy. Fancy tales and movies and tarts. I ate two. My first date was a square dance with Alice Erickson. Very young. My ankle is acting up again. Srila Prabhupada is writing purports, and I'm imbibing them. Krishna at Kuruksetra with the *gopis*. I can tell you about my tired bones. Be careful you don't fall down. Eight times ten is 80. That was easy. What is Narayana doing? Punctuating his book. Haridasa bows down to me full *dandavats*. I am not

unhappy with my lot. I have a lot to do. Radhanatha Swami is coming to breakfast. The time is up.

June 30, 2013

Today's the last day of June, it's summertime and the living is easy . . . the journal writer has tumultuous dreams. I lost all my belongings and had no books to read. Don't want no bad stuff. Tell us a story. The cow jumped over the moon. Krishna is not mythology. We follow the Vedic scriptures and the Vaisnava *acarya sampradaya*. Krishna is real. He is inconceivable but can be known to some extent by hearing from authorized sources. I believe in You. You are my favorite person. Haridasa is reading the transcendental lecture of Srila Prabhupada. Srila Prabhupada's purports assert that devotional service is the only way to know Krishna. Krishna says the same in *Bhagavad-gita*. Jayapataka Swami spoke at Potomac. He was surcharged despite his physical handicap. I am in one place living a quiet life. I do my preaching on the website. Radhanatha Swami told adventures of attending Ratha-yatra at Jagannatha Puri. I have nothing to say about the inner state of my life. I like my daily schedule of rising at 11:00 p.m. and going to *japa*. I am unorthodox in some of my habits. I'd like to deepen my Krishna consciousness. A man did that when he got very ill. What does it take? Syama is cooking every day. They dug up a power line and removed it because Balarama's cart had wandered and was up against it. After He passed, they put the power line pole back in the ground. It got so late they had to stop the procession and begin it the next morning at sunrise. Radhanatha Maharaja and his followers were there early chanting *japa*. Many of the pilgrims had gone home. They gave the Hare Krishna devotees their own rope, and it was like their festival. They led the chanting. Jayapataka Maharaja told stories of Ratha-yatra at Jagannatha Puri, how the pillows actually break under the weight of Jagannatha, etc.

July 1, 2013, 6:14 p.m.

A journal writer tells of his journey through life with day by day fragmentary entries. I tried my best. I was not good enough. The teachers used to write on my report cards, “Could have done better.” Radhanatha Swami came for a great breakfast. I am here in Stuyvesant Falls, and we get rain. They walk by the falls, impressive. I lifted the eight-pound barbell and the other strenuous exercises. I pass over thoughts and don’t write them down. I started a drawing of four dancers while listening to Bird and Diz. I said my Gayatri in a hurry. Supreme Court ruled in favor of same sex marriage. Maitreya is teaching Vidura. The wives of Krishna are telling Draupadi how Krishna married them, usually involving fights with foolish lusty rascals who He easily defeats. The wives consider themselves humble maidservants of Krishna. A word can ruin a career. The new magazine is *maya*. I pay no attention to the baseball season or the TV. Krishna is in my heart as Supersoul. I heard that for pure devotees He’s present in the heart in the two-armed form.

It’s starting to rain. That will cancel Laksmana’s baseball game. A beautiful girl came and gave Radhanatha Swami some almonds for his airplane trip. He is transcendental. I am dragging my feet. Write what comes. I finished my Miro imitation “Lord Caitanya’s *avadutas*,” and went on to a painting of my own with abstract objects and a dog and people. All night, all day, carry on. Switch your gait to a limp again. Tomorrow I will row again. With low energy they read to me. I can’t grasp or relish the talks of Maitreya and Vidura except when Srila Prabhupada breaks through in the purports and writes on *bhakti*. He mentioned *vaidhi* and *raga*. The *purusas* are interesting in their own ways. I should absorb it all. Not one drop is unnecessary. The time is almost up. 7:00 p.m. I didn’t reach Vrndavana.

July 2, 2013, 6:11 p.m.

I had a very comic dream, like watching a theater. I am alone with my routine. Parmananda and D. Swami came by separately

and ate lunch after we had finished. I finished a painting with people and started one that was abstract. I'm not working on volume three of the autobiography. My journal tells my day's events and reading from the books. Draupadi asked the queens how Krishna married them. Rukmini said it was a settled fact that she would marry Sisupala, but Krishna came and kidnapped her like a lion takes a lamb from the flock. She just wants to go on serving Krishna life after life. I am reaching many people with the website. Krishna is the supreme controller, *Srimad-Bhagavatam* asserts it. *Bhagavad-gita* asserts it, all the Vaisnava *acaryas* assert it, and Srila Prabhupada asserts it.

I was very short when I was a young boy. Grew taller in high school. I lifted a nine-pound weight today. Boxing gloves exhausted on the heavy bag. Very slow rowing. Baladeva is going to New York City for *harinama*. I don't get the sunshine. My mind is not fixed on Radha- Krishna. I do other things, like paint. I paint and draw men and women. Mostly they wear *tilaka*, and many they are chanting and dancing. I don't wear a turban. Sixteen rounds I chant, and I write. Eating is not a highlight in my day. I have nothing to renounce. I was thinking that is the service of Krishna. I am surrendered to Srila Prabhupada. I am involved in broadcasting the glories of devotional service. My inner life is my thoughts, my prayers, my aspirations. I have some wrong reverses. I stop them. I honor all Vaisnavas in my mind. Krishna married His queens by force. I am waited on by two caretakers, and I receive a small amount of donations. My head has no memory of Sanskrit *slokas*, but I know the philosophy in English. It is 7:00 p.m.

July 3, 2013, 6:28 p.m.

I'm starting late and won't be able to finish this page. My mind is not settled. We had a flurry of activities making me late. We looked at the home page of the website. Janardana is going

to improve it, but it's already good. I am tired of those oppressed, negative dreams. Narayana took pictures of Radha-Govinda in Their new outfits. Syama dressed Them nicely. A photo of Radhanatha Maharaja dancing gracefully at Ratha-yatra at Jagannatha Puri. Good illustrations by Gurudasa. Has he handed over all the tapes? I'm a simple person. I ate Ekadasi lunch while Syama watched. I know snatches of Sanskrit. I am tubby. My vitals are okay. I'm running out of time. We live in an *asrama* of three. *Ananda* means bliss. Real *ananda* is devotional service to Krishna. Not the other stuff. Krishna is the reservoir of pleasure. I'm Nobody! Who are you? Emily's wonderful poem. She was a queen of poetry, recognized only after her death. "The Metamorphosis" by Franz Kafka is a good story. I light incense and wave it before Radha Govinda. Today I wrote that They don't move, and I prefer it that way. *Sac-cid-ananda vigraha*. I gave the Mayavadi swami a copy of *Back to Godhead*. The *gopis* have no loving affection for Krishna's queens. I've run out of time.

July 4, 2013, 6:20 p.m.

We had a press meeting. Saci and Janardana said they didn't like the many big pictures by Gurudasa, but I like them. I will tell them so. TJ and Melinda brought their babies to lunch. I am all right. Sweating today. Did a drawing of four devotees while listening to music. Yes, I want to keep Gurudasa's pictures. Nitai Gaurasundara likes them and other readers. Stick up for your rights. Now is the time . . . throw the magazines in the trash. Chant your mantras. Go through the day. Melinda carries the twins. See the mirror of the mind. Wipe it clean with the Hare Krishna mantra. I am going to dictate the journal in the Dragon system. Our proofreader works for the BBT. I am at a loss for words. Drones will become domestic. I draw the men the same way, but there is always variety. It's okay I will paint tomorrow, but Baladeva isn't here. We have Syama and Haridasa for another week. I am a dork, a nerd. I am a humble devotee. I rode in an ambulance in 1968, when the plate glass

window fell down on my face. Krishna saved me. He is so kind. Krishna honored the sages, but they addressed Him as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. People don't know Krishna because of *maya*, either *mahamaya* or *yogamaya*. Gurudasa showed pictures of my schedule throughout the day. It was good. You are a senior citizen. You are a disciple of Srila Prabhupada. Energy is slow in the summer. The time is almost up. She was a barefoot poet, unpublished.

July 5, 2013

Journal writing teachers usually avoid “religion” they prefer “spiritual.” I have bought into a religion. Am I a mystic? Am I a spiritualist? I am deeply committed to the path of *bhakti*, loving service to God. I follow the nine principles of *bhakti*, especially the first two, hearing and chanting. I preach by writing. And now I express myself by painting. I did two paintings today, abstract with persons. The second was largely abstract with small men. I could go on like that.

That's enough for now. My inner state is calm and peaceful. Touch the picture, and it becomes larger. It is like a flowing river. I am not interested in *sankhya* philosophy but Krishna-Balarama and the stories and prayers in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I like *rasa sastra*. Syama made outfits for Radha-Govinda. I'm going to paint in the morning. Drawing accepted loss. Accept your spiritual master's blessing and his order. Do your duty. We have to fight out. Everyone dies. No exception. One who thinks of Krishna at death goes to Him. I want to go to Him. I am a Krishnaite with a *sikha* and saffron clothes. We are at the last portion. I made my confession again.

July 6, 2013, 6:09 p.m.

Baladeva promised to stay only two days in New York City, but he's returning at 5:00 p.m. on the third day, the rascal. Things are being neglected in his absence, like the paint and the

plants. I did two Miro copies, one with my own addition with a cow and fox and one with an addition of two inked sketched men and a painted ballerina. I have a book on Kandinsky. He speaks of painting from inner spiritual needs. I don't do that yet. I draw people and animals. I copy Miro. Maybe I can find my own expression. Kirtana-rasa was here today. The paint is drying up. Baladeva should be here. How do you do an improvisation? How do you make real art but make it Krishna conscious? Give them *tilaka*. Give them hats. I did a drawing of four extra tall men dancing. I like my schedule. The website is my life. No exercise today. Kandinsky did a good rendition painting of Judas and Christ. I have painted Krishna and Radharani. Publish books, print them in India. I have a private life. My journal records it. Improvise with colors, with shapes and forms. Sing your song. Write your poem. I'm stuttering and stumbling. Correct the words. Nanda told Vasudeva at Kuruksetra that if he couldn't bring Krishna back to Vraja, he and all the *vrajavasis* would drown in the lakes. Vasudeva diplomatically said he would take Krishna back to Dvaraka and the next day send Him to Vraja. He was lying. Poor Nanda and the *gopis*. I am running out of time and thoughts. Lord Brahma is praying for creative energy, a wonderful section of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

July 7, 2013

Holzer writes about dreams. When she wakes she stays in bed and is gentle with them, thinks over the main images and makes a sketch of them in her mind. Then she gets up and writes about the dreams and maybe draws a picture. I would like to do this. She also talks about metaphor and asks her students to write metaphors. I'm not even sure how I could go about that, but I'll think about it. I wrote of the waves of Jagannatha Puri. That was a metaphor. Think of the journal as a precious receptacle ready to receive all. Be confident that the one-half hour of painstaking penmanship is worthwhile. The fragments are a collection of broken chips like shards or pebbles at the beach. They are all pieces of a mosaic of your life. I improvised in

painting and was lucky. Out of a beginning of abstract shapes came a good picture of Lord Caitanya reaching out for the red flag atop the temple. The second painting was not so lucky, but I will try to salvage it. It's incomplete. Syama said I am a God conscious painter, but I do not always paint holy icons. I have been dealing with abstractions and adding the personal touch. My Lord Caitanya painting was sheer luck and devotional intuition. The elongated form of Lord Caitanya even drew from an elongated horse by Kandinsky. Gopala Krishna Maharaja has opened 12 temples in Delhi. Mary Oliver writes about the ocean tides and says every day if anyone finds her there, she will be walking casually. I couldn't draw to music because Haridasa phone me. I'm listening to Charlie Parker. Maybe I'll draw tomorrow. Yasoda-dulala inspired me to paint. He is a great artist. Think of the journal as a big hamper for your dirty laundry, as a cookie jar.

I dreamt I was bereft of possessions and lost. I will try to remember them. Do I have any visions? Do I think of Krishna? Krishna told Brahma, "Don't be depressed. I have given you the empowerment to create." Srila Prabhupada writes that anyone who has taken executive duties for Krishna is empowered to create as long as he remembers he is subordinate.

July 8, 2013

6:18 p.m.

I dreamt I was with an acquaintance, and we were waiting for a flight to arrive that had athletes who were military men. One of them was supposed to be my brother whom I had never met! My acquaintance gave me a thousand dollars in pennies. This information was received with resentment and threat by some tough guys in the cafeteria. While waiting for the plane, we had been walking around and saw actresses in a show. There were very friendly people and knew some of the athletes who were arriving. I was wearing a military uniform and anticipating meeting my brother.

Having trouble getting my manuscript sent to me on computer by Krishna Kshetra. Narayana and Baladeva are fighting about it. Narayana says take it to Staples. I painted Krishna killing Kesi with His broad arm down the horses throat. I made a little pencil sketch of it at first, and it came out all right. I also finished a painting from yesterday, a man and woman reaching for each other over barriers of abstract objects with a dove overhead. A woman wrote me encouraging me not to be hard on myself that my drawings are repetitious. She said they were lively and full of emotion. Krishna-sakti wrote to me. I don't have their addresses. The phone keeps ringing. Syama is getting relaxed with me, told me the plot of a movie. I wrote in metaphors. I dreamt I was meeting my brother for the first time. What would he be like? What would we have in common? There's a little blond bug crawling in my desk. I wish they wouldn't fight and give me the print out. Angels of mercy, the invention of anesthesia, who invented it? Krishna should get the credit. He tells Brahma his penances and prayers, "Are all My mercy." *Kvacit*. Yamuna's cookbook is a masterpiece. Hoist the flag. Change your pants. Remember your past. Henry Miller, Vulgar American.

July 10, 2013, 6:14 p.m.

This is Baladeva's pen. He said it works well. I dreamt a comedian was producing a show. He dominated us, and we couldn't get along but then a bellboy escaped, and I did too by thinking of the comedian. I was being seduced back into his presence. I reached home and was watching a different TV show. There were bears in the house, but they turned out to be ghosts so it was okay. There was graffiti against cats. Many caged pictures of cats portraying them as the source of evil.

Haridasa leaves today. He took 12 copies of the *Story of My Life* to give to devotees. Syama leaves tomorrow. I feel affection for them both. My journal is a horn from a boat in the fog. It is the lonely sound of the train horn I hear at 3:00 a.m. It is the

smell of the skunk that lives under Saci's house. It is my reluctance to eat lunch. It is the readings from *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. My journal is my empty cupboard. It is all the meds I take, the ache in my ankle. I have written the forward to Krishna Kshetra's book. My journal is my mother in a dream asking "Where have you been?" It is the volunteer fire department working on their roof. It is the peace of summer in the small town. It is Haridasa crossing the border into Canada to attend the Ratha-yatra in Toronto. It is Syama carrying two extra boxes of my tape cassette lectures onto the plane to London where they will convert them into digitized form. Tomorrow I can paint—an abstraction, a man and a dog. *Harinama* in Union Square; all the boys and girls are there. My journal is delicious desserts Syama has been stuffing me with. Sorrow leans on your shoulder. Vasudeva said to Krishna, "You are not my son, You are the Supreme Lord." Don't be anxious if you can't find your page. We appreciate what you can do. Every little bit helps. It is a march of dimes. Give us a little more. Tell us how you chipped your tooth on your Radio Flyer wagon and how you have full dentures now. Death has his eye on you; even Lord Brahma has to die.

Dream: I was on the Staten Island ferry boat. I stopped going in one direction and started going in the other direction. I was high and saw everything in a weird, amusing non-threatening way.

July 11, 2013, 6:24 p.m.

A journal writer doesn't write fiction. He or she just reports the fragments of experience. I am happy with that. "How many roads must a man walk down before you call him a man? How many seas must a white dove sail before she sleeps in the sand? Yes, how many times must the cannon balls fly before they're forever banned? The answer my friend is blowin' in the wind . . ." You just write your journey. Saci and Keli are taking care of me. I sweat up fiercely in the exercise. My journal and I stay in

this house. We don't travel, but I am not stagnant. I flow everyday in my website. I walk. I dream. I draw. I rest. I cycle, I gargle with Listerine. I get up from bed at 11:30 p.m., at the latest, and hurry through my morning ablutions to reach *japa*. I drink a big glass of water. I don't take intoxicants. Rama Raya is here. Let us have peace. Nathan Hale said, "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country." But with attachment like that he would transmigrate to again be born in his country. I don't want to come back to the material world. I want to go back to Krishna, "And live in the house of the Lord forever." I want to play with Krishna, or serve Radha . . . man proposes and God disposes. Not a blade of grass moves but by the will of the Lord. Hare Krishna. I am running out of time, four minutes left. The journal is a bridge over troubled water. It is me setting Krishna's flute in His hands, and then saying Srila Prabhupada's *pranama* mantra and eating a cookie.

July 12, 2013, 6:16 p.m.

I painted two *sadhus* mixed with abstract elements and left incomplete, a man and woman with abstractions. Baladeva called it "A Reverie." I never know what will come until I do it. I don't plan in advance. I'm happy painter. Painting on cardboard, all we can afford. Make a design. Kandinsky and many others went completely into abstraction. I don't think I can do that. As a disciple of Srila Prabhupada, I need persons or animals or temples, trees, flowers, waterfalls. The woman I painted today was not a chaste devotee but a blond bimbo, a commentary on life in the material world. Nabokov wrote *Lolita*, and I threw it off the boat into the water in disgust. Free write. I can't. The journal is composed in daily fragments. They are chips of wood. They fall on the floor. They are paintings on glass, embroidery work, apple cider with your meals. "Like sticking a straw in a coconut." My journal is a horse and wagon, an electric saw which I hear right now. It is the breeze of the fan, my colored drawing of four men dancing with upraised arms. There is a variety in each drawing. The painting I do in the

basement. We have no dog or cat, no woman in the *asrama*. Radha-Govinda are my worshipable Deities. I approach Them each morning and beg for a poem. One comes by the mercy of Supersoul. I beg for a living, to print books. I beg to be spared. BT Swami wrote a series of books, *The Beggar*.

July 13, 2013

The journal is acid-free paper. Yamuna and Baladeva power washed the outside of the house. I looked at the Kandinsky paintings and tried to absorb them so I could be influenced. Go and look at the falls so you can paint them. I did my blob and cow and a man with *tilaka* over the moon and a lady with *tilaka* on the right. Fingers with a small brush and toes. Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishnaloka, and with the chanting I have a connection. Good *kichari* today, but I didn't eat much. Thoreau's journals are in the basement. There is a video of Mary Oliver reading a poem which I will watch. Spray paint the board of the man and the bimbo. Esoteric messages to the universes. My first story written at age 14, "Frank Andrea Private Eye." "Frank had a license to shoot and he did," and illustrated boxing matches with surprise knockouts and red crayon blood. Cowboys gun fighting in the rocky hills: "Puck-a-bing!" *Sport* magazine plastic cowboys who rode horses bowlegged.

July 14, 2013, Sunday

I painted monkeys stealing yogurt from a jar and a tall *sadhu* chanting *japa* and the Celtic spiral and stars. I spray painted for fun. Gurudasa has some strange illustrations. I approve them. I hope they don't annoy people. First corn on the cob of the summer. The journal, the journal. Be alert and choose your words. I drew four *sankirtana* dancers to music, the same but different, happy men. Paint each day if you can. The cardboards are not an obstacle. I was a tenderfoot Boy Scout and never rose in the ranks, but in Cub Scouts I received the highest honors, "Webelos." I took part in a native American dance, dressed in

costume. Roy Rogers and his horse, Trigger. I can't ice skate anymore, and I'm afraid of deep water. I lived through the 60s. I met Swamiji in the summer of 1966. He's my mentor, preceptor; I give you my little blessings. I received acupuncture and took Ayurvedic medicines, and they never helped. I made a big commitment to Naturopathy, and it only made me skinny. I go for an eye exam tomorrow. Little Radha Kalachandji, the Deity of Dallas. You weigh 188 pounds, big protruding belly. Time is up, 7:00 p.m.

July 15, 2013, 6:13 p.m.

Holzer's dedication and enthusiasm for journal writing is admirable. I wish I had it. Someone in the workshop asked "What is health?" and she thought of her writing, "The flow, the flow." She's content that many entries will remain as fragments. She doesn't like fiction with its insistence on the plot. The most important thing for her is to feel alive in the moment. I drew a picture of two devotees reading books and a nondevotee watching TV. Krishna went to Mithila to visit with two great devotees, a poor *brahmana* named Srutadeva and the king Bahulasva. Krishna brought great sages like Vyasa and Sukadeva with Him. He expanded Himself and the sages into two and simultaneously entered the homes of the two devotees. Both received Him with great joy and devotion. The king offered Krishna opulent food and the poor *brahmana* offered Him simple things, but He was equally pleased with both.

I'm getting new eyeglasses. The weather is warm. We are near the end of the *Krishna* book. Read *Caitanya-caritamrta* next or *Bhagavad-gita*. Krishna is especially inclined to His devotees. Radha-Govinda give me *darsana* all day long, but I should be more attentive. Ravi Shankar is dead at 92. Abstract painters. I am not one, but I like abstract elements with personalism, no violence. Saci didn't give me exercise time two days in a row. The journal is a happy medium. He praises his preceptor very nicely. I can't think of what to say because you are going to do

and propose yourself. Leave a legacy. Talk with Baladeva about my letters to Bhurijana. Bhurijana wrote me to submit sensitive issues to him for approval. I'm writing it down.

July 16, 2013, 6:14 p.m.

I painted a dog facing a blob, a farmer with a pitchfork above him and a man on the right with a broom. In the afternoon I did drawings, one with four men and one with three. Good drawing production. The journal is a fanciful farce; it is not a serious work. I write in metaphor, but it's not Krishna conscious. Muktavanya is a trooper. We all are. Narayana went to the clinic. His back gives him much pain. Baladeva wears a knee brace. I have an ankle brace. Saci's sister-in-law came in second among the women in the triathlon sprint, and received a big trophy. I didn't enter the race. I can't swim. I can't bike. I can't run. I can paint and draw and write a morning poem. There are things in my head, but I don't write them down like *The Education of Henry Adams*. Tattvavit was reading that when we first met him.

So what's the point? KB is going over what was already read, and Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura so I have nothing new to write. I can't remember the lunchtime *Srimad-Bhagavatam* reading. Oh yeah, it was about Lord Boar. People who don't listen to the transcendental pastimes of the Lord are less than human. The Boar incarnation came out of Brahma's nostril and quickly grew to the size of a huge elephant. He grew even bigger and flew in the sky. He roared so loudly Lord Brahma and the sages recognized Him to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

He dove into the Garbhodaka Ocean where the earth had sunk and picked it up on his tusk and took it out. Varaha one of the ten important incarnations sung about by Jayadeva Goswami. I can write about Him. The water flipped off his hair, purified the sages just like the Ganges. He is inconceivable. My handwriting is horrible. Next, we are reading about the pregnancy of Diti in the evening. I can write about that. You

think of Krishna, you hear the pastimes, read on. Maharaja Pariksit and Vidura are not satiated nor am I. I xeroxed pages of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* at the welfare office in Cambridge, and they caught me. The supervisor transferred me out of her unit, and they asked me to work with the eccentric supervisor in Medicaid.

July 18, 2013, 6:11 p.m.

“Your devotees are more dear to you than Lord Balarama or the Goddess of Fortune,” said Bahulasva. While listening to Charles Mingus, I painted triangles and circles and two men facing them. I drew four men dancing. Read a disturbing memoir by a Vietnam veteran, who was involved in the killings at New Vrindaban. In the present, writing after the death of Kirtanananda, he forgives him. Grisly descriptions of war in ‘Nam. I escaped all that. Stay out of it. The weather is warm and sticky. Good illustrations on the website by Gurudasa. I can’t think of what to say. Diti approached her husband for sex. She wanted to have children like her co-wives, but Kasyapa was in meditation and it was evening, an inauspicious hour when Lord Siva was out with his hobgoblins. Kasyapa could have said no, but he was not strong like Vidura or Haridasa Thakura. He tried to pacify his wife with speech, but she was too agitated. We are reading the third canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* because Vidura wanted to hear how the demon Hiranyaksa was born, who was killed by Varaha. Yes, I painted triangles facing circles because Kandinsky said they are as significant as God touching Adam as painted by Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. God touching down. Baladeva is walking around without his shirt. The “village” in Great Kills was lined with retail stores. I will write more of it. My mommy baked lemon meringue pie and chocolate pudding pie with whipped cream. Tell us about Srila Prabhupada or Krishna. Prabhupada is the founder-*acarya*, the *siksaguru* for all his followers, and Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

July 19, 2013, 6:08 p.m.

The Story of My Life submits the whole correspondence to Bhurijana. Nice man here, Anandaloka. He was raised as an orphan at Mount Loretto, Staten Island, near where I went to high school. He loves to listen to *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Srila Prabhupada's 1960's lectures at 26 Second Avenue. The stories in the journal have no beginning, middle, or end. Baladeva comes up the stairs and sticks his head above the banister. I'm listening to music and drawing. He says he has come to do "a little early pleading," but he'll come back later. He means he wants to take money before the first of the month. After he leaves I turn the music off, eat a half of a Cliff bar and say my *Gayatri*. I've got the essence of the drawing under control. Anandaloka is initiated by Hridayananda Maharaja. He said he went to Cuba and performed some initiations. I heard he wrote a letter that he had stopped traveling and lecturing and was just writing. I don't believe him, that he had stopped the traveling and was just writing. Pick up a pebble from the beach. I don't go out. Thunder in the sky. Indra's bolts. Capture the living moment. Two hands at work. The rain has come, bringing relief from the day's heat. That is very alive. I can see it dripping out the window. I am not in prison. I'm free to go out, but mostly I stay indoors. Now it's raining harder, but it will stop soon, just a shower, a thunderstorm. The Big Dipper and the Little Dipper. I have seen it at night and a shooting falling star. The natural world is shrinking on earth. My moment is at the tip of my pen. Cars roll by outside. I can sense my moment is at the tip of my pen. Auspicious. Lord Krishna told Srutadeva "My four-handed form of Narayana is not as dear to me as the *brahmana-Vaisnava*." Worship of the Deity in the temple and visiting a holy pilgrimage can purify me slowly over a long time. Just by seeing a pure devotee one can be purified immediately. Srila Prabhupada came on time to us on the Lower East Side and worked his magic. Thunder very loud and close, makes me tremble in fear. I'm alive! Big rumble like huge boulders tumbling in the sky.

July 20, 2013, 6:10 p.m.

It was 93 degrees in the kitchen. My face is sweating now. I did a painting of three devotees smiling, facing forward with outstretched arms. Two triangles facing circles. Two drawings in the afternoon, good work. Anandaloka chanted 32 rounds and observed Nirjala Ekadasi. I actually broke Ekadasi. I should be more careful. My soul is pure, but I am covered. Look into the future, and see your death. Will you be brave? Will you be very Krishna conscious or afraid and crying? I am going dour. Krishna is the *Vedas* personified. We are reading Visvanatha Cakravarti's commentary on the "Prayers to the Personified Vedas." The journal is searching like a groundhog digging holes in Saci's backyard. I hear a power mower. My handwriting is agonizingly slow. I break into print. Print the form. List the meds you take. I don't have a flow of sustained subject matter. My mind is satisfied with my schedule at Stuyvesant Falls. Anandaloka asked what I was working at as a writing project. I told him I had written two volumes of an autobiography. He made no comment. It sounds strange. And planning a third volume. I write about my books. The hole in the head. Are there unicorns? I did exercise today. I am sorry I have nothing to say. He's observing Nirjala, and I enjoy drinking water. Your diaries have a . . . you don't open up. You go to the canon and speak of Krishna. Kasyapa told Diti her sons would be condemned. They would give great trouble to the world, but Vishnu would kill them and they would be liberated. And her grandson, Prahlada Maharaja, would be a great devotee. Prahlada is described. He always remembered Krishna and forgave those who tortured him. When Nrisimha asked him to take a benediction he asked for the liberation of his father.

I wrote Bhurujana and told him I won't publish my letters to him in my autobiography. The letters were a confidential exchange of minds and are better kept private. I wouldn't want to strain my relationship with him. Everyone is so private. Krishna-sakti's letters are private. I am not so private. I agree

with Robert Lowell: “Why not tell what really happened?” But sometimes you can’t; it hurts other people. Tell us about yourself. Tell us how you climbed the cherry tree. Don’t tell us those things you are ashamed of. There is beautiful breeze blowing in Vaikuntha, but the residents don’t like it because it disturbs their service to Narayana. They only want to please His senses. The journal is spinning wheels, is stuck in the mud. Haridasa Thakura is *namacarya*. He chanted 300,000 names daily. Rupa-vilasa has written a book about him. I go to Hanuman in prayer and ask protection. I keep his *murti* on my altar. My memory for Sanskrit *slokas* is erased. My eyes are weak. You drove into the jungle. You climbed the mountain. You flew in the sky many times, and now you are at rest. The residents of Vaikuntha are four-armed as is Lord Narayana. The scientists can’t fly to the spiritual planets, but you can read about them in authorized literature. I remember Swamiji asking an Indian visitor, “Mr. Patel, would you rather be four-armed or two-armed?” He was smiling, and his head had just been shaved. He sat on a thin mat behind his battered trunk which served as his desk. I thought, “He is amazing. Maybe he could fly in the sky on that mat.” Our own swami spiritual master came to save us on the Lower East Side.

July 21

You meet yourself in a journal. Hello, old fellow. I hope you are feeling well. You are very low profile in ISKCON. No initiations, no travel to temples or festivals, no lectures. You write and post your daily website, you publish a book a year. Haridasa asked me about my plan for selling sets of my books and placing them in libraries. I said it required fundraising, \$35,000 and that not much had been done. He implied that even if we had the books libraries might be unwilling to take full sets, and we should offer them smaller amounts. The original plan seems out of reach. It’s discouraging. Why should you expect them to take a hundred books? Mahabuddhi has placed ten to 15 books by Srila Prabhupada and Narayana Maharaja in many

state prisons and institutions. He said it was easy, and he did it on his computer without leaving his room. But then he had to ship the books.

The Dragon System is waiting for me to use it. Haridasa went to an exhibit of Joan Miro's paintings. He liked it. He attended a seminar on book distribution by Vaisesika, and then he went out and distributed books. Lord Vishnu is above all the demigods. The *Vedas* are not polytheistic. Don't complain, journal writing is fun. All the grains slip out of your hands before you reach the fruit vendor. You have no currency.

I had a dream of an evil man going around the city killing people with a super powerful rifle.

It's been a warm summer. Krishna is God. The *gopis* see Him as a handsome lover. They don't care much that He is the cause of all causes, the source of the *brahmajyoti*. The *gopis* are not *jnanis*. I am able to speak much about myself, because I have already said so much. You can look me up on Google.

July 22, 2013

Those who hear the pastimes of the Lord rid themselves of karma. They don't have to practice austerities like the *jnanis*. Just diving in the ocean of topics of Krishna they become mature, unaffected by old age, and they are able to control their minds. How amazing and nectarean is the process of *sravanam*. Externally I am two-handed, but I paint with one hand. Did Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityananda and *mrdanga* player and paint to spray on Them. Three drawing persons dancing. Impressed by Dubuffet's childlike paintings of persons in "Sites." I would like to discover a style like that. I make my persons simple but realistic. Keep at it, and you will develop. You will find your way. A truck laboring by on the road. It's heavy engine. You don't hear the engines of the cars, just their tires passing on the road. I'm in good shape, although failing. I am healing. I don't go out walking. In these fragments, some themes are reoccurring and some stories may emerge. In these

daily fragments I take potshots, I make raids on the inarticulate, unrevised confessions of what really happened. I wake at 11:00 p.m. and take two naps later. I love to start *japa* at midnight. Twelve rounds by around 1:20 a.m., and the final four by slowly finishing close to 4:00 a.m. Then you dictate your poem, prepare the selection for tomorrow's *sastra* and write a little stanza to go with tomorrow's drawing. Narayana is in pain with his back. I walk like a zombie. No sprightly gait. But my mind is active. Write your life story. Tell about the books you wrote. Have Bala prepare writing assignments from Natalie Goldberg's *The Practice of Writing Memoir*.

July 23rd, 6:10 p.m.

I did two paintings after Dubuffet "Sites with Three Personages." I titled mine "Sites with Five Persons." They were lots of fun. Then I did two drawings in the afternoon. Write your way. Your journal accumulates. I walk into a maze. The summer rain suddenly came crashing down in torrents. There were streams in the gutter, but it was over in 20 minutes, and the sun is shining at 6:20 p.m. Mark it, note it. This is your life. Too much to eat at lunch. He bought a new fan. The electric lights are on. I don't watch TV. The *yogis* meditate on the abdomen, then to the heart, then the top of the head, then they go to that place where there is no death. *Bhakti* is most direct. I'm getting used to my new eyeglasses. I can see all right, but it's strange. Chota Radha-Kalachandji here on my desk in full color. Yes, I painted up a storm, ten crude persons in colored, felt pens wearing *tilaka*, surrounded by paint designs. Holzer went into the wilderness with a group of people and an old Indian guide. They saw fresh bear tracks. The old man got up in the middle of the night and went off to sing to his dream. I love Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, and of course, Srila Prabhupada. Writers have gestation periods. But every night I fill the blank page and find something to write. I won't repeat the Dubuffet thing. Go to your roots. I am afraid this summer will end, and eventually we'll have to face the long winter. Risk of pneumonia.

The old man has longevity. He cooked strange things. I won't ride a horse, even on a carousel. Prabhupada is the founder-*acarya*. He wrote that the members of ISKCON, even in one lifetime can be living in Vaikuntha. The four Kumaras wanted to see Lord Narayana. They were stopped by the guards at the seventh gate. The boys became angry and cursed the guards to go to the material world.

July 24, 2013

I felt-penned Radha and Krishna over a background of speckled color we call "sprints." It was very simple but okay. Then I started a more ambitious painting with a woman in the center which I'll finish tomorrow. In the afternoon while listening to music I did a drawing of four harinamers and started one of three men. For the third week in a row, TJ won't come for yoga. I didn't care for lunch but ate it out of duty. Write the details of your day in the journal even if there is irritation. I was invited to eat the lunch menu. Rama Raya and the devotees are singing in Union Square right now. Saci's family is on vacation. I napped and dreamt about a football team. The star quarterback let his girlfriend play, and she threw two winning touchdown passes. Other adventures of the close knit players on the team, how they overcame austerities. My handwriting is irritating, and the next door neighbor's dog's loud barking. Don't panic, stay cool. It's cool man, it's cool. Remember that expression? Everything was cool or not. A bummer, a drag, getting fried. I live in different language now. Nitai is phoning me tomorrow morning. He'll give me a report on the book printing in India. I want people to read my books. That is my legacy. My day was peaceful and productive. Don't be afraid to write your pain and irritation. Don't have writer's block. The road and neighborhood is quiet. I haven't seen a news magazine in weeks. The time is up.

July 25, 2013

I want to continue my dream, living in the magic land of England with devotees. But I have no money. Can I continue by magic to commute to Great Kills, and then go back to England the next day? I so much want to return to the devotees in England. The girl tried to trick me and say Mount Meru was moving in the sky. There was an astonishing piece of literature to read. I want to keep writing about it even if I can't dream it. I want to go back to England and do magical things with the devotees, have visions, and meet extraordinary people. I have to have my financial security and solve my commuting status and where I live. I don't want to live with my parents. I'd like to continue living in the protection of Saci-suta and community, commuting daily to England by some easy mystic power. The girls were trying to fool us saying, "That's Mount Meru in the sky," but I say you can't trick me. I'm an old master of wizardry. I walked by the docks and looked at the boats, but that wouldn't be the way to commute nightly to America. You could do it by time machine, and surely you'd be in your chair at Viraha Bhavan. In the morning after midnight you're writing your website and eating breakfast and painting. You could go to England for lunch.

The other girl is Mary. You just talk to her and give valuable pastoral counseling. These are some of the adventures you had in England. You also had *kirtana* in Prabhupada's room. Then it's late and by time machine you commute and come back to New York. They want to feed you, but you tell them you already had *prasadam* in England. You'll talk for a while and then go back to bed.

The next day you go to England for lunch and by time machine, you play tennis with the devotees in Oxford and attend a lecture by Anuradha dasi. They give you a tour of historical Oxford. Then in London you meet with some wizards in the Harry Potter books and teach the *Bhagavad-gita*. You visit the cows at the Manor and nap after lunch. They ask me to go on *barinama*, but I can't walk. They say you can sit down with us, so I go out and sit in a park with 20 devotees and chant Hare

Krishna for two hours. I don't get a headache. I return to the temple and read the absorbing piece of literature. I mix with the devotees and remember some stories about Srila Prabhupada. And it's late, and you have to go back to New York.

July 26th, 6:09 p.m.

I finished a painting and started a new one. Drew four men. I ate an orange bar without saying "Sri Vishnu." Matsyavatara said in the place he lives, he would like to print a big book of my paintings. That used to be nice; maybe after I've kicked the bucket. I'm not entirely Krishna conscious. I don't always remember Krishna and never forget Him. You wrote to Bhurijana that you want to be a servant of Radharani, but where is your *bhakti* inclination. You are a runt. The internal energy. The beach season rolls on. Lysol kills, and I haven't watched a game, and don't follow. Lysol kills 99 percent of virus and bacteria. The killer of the soul must enjoy the regions of darkness. There are dynamic preachers in ISKCON. I painted a lady, a boy, and a fox. Don't be puffed up, be humble. Write your journey. I go to sleep at night for a few hours. I chant my *japa* silently in the mind. I don't chant too fast.

The devotee doesn't even want any of the five kinds of liberation. He will refuse them if offered. He only wants to glorify the Lord. The *narayana-parah* doesn't care if he's in heaven or in hell; he just wants to chant Hare Krishna. As for me, I want to go back to Godhead and play with Krishna in Goloka Vrindavan, not India. Radhanatha Swami is a dynamic preacher.

July 26, 2013, 6:11 p.m.

I painted Maha-vishnu, a pretty ambitious endeavor, but it came out all right with planets emanating from His body and waves of the Causal Ocean. It was done to a "sprits" background, and His bodily hue was a monsoon cloud gray. I

am happy today despite incontinence. It's no big deal. I just change my diapers with help. A baby and an old man can't control their bladder. Everyone is up in the Adirondacks vacationing at a lake. Baladeva is mowing the lawn. They used my book *Prabhupada Appreciation* in seminars in India. The books are preaching. They sold 90 copies of *Prabhupada Smaranam* at the gift shop in Chowpatty. Printed that book with help from Radhanatha Swami.

I drew three men dancing; same old thing but a little different. I keep going. Out of the womb comes a baby. I wrote a presumptuous letter to my sister and said my writing was similar; I was under the influence of Rilke speed sniffing white powder and writing in my furnished room on 72nd street near Central Park. The swami came and saved me. The four Kumaras were praised by Lord Narayana. Calling Him the praiseworthy one. Visvanatha Cakravarti creates conversations between Vishnu and the *Srutis*, "But Lord Narayana might object, I have senses how can you say I am independent." I did good services in Boston in the old days. We were all surrendered to Prabhupada's orders. The three volumes of *My Letters from Srila Prabhupada* are a good series. Hip hip hooray. They made fun of us. Krishnas with their "Prabhupada *ki jaya!*" I don't like to be mocked. I'm a monk with a long *sikha*. TKG got mellower with age and academic experience.

I painted a cowherd boy and a cow and began another, so far abstract. Gopi Manjari, Lalita Madhava, and their kids visited me. She's going with a group of yoga students to Italy, Assisi, Tuscany, and Rome. Nice family. I am their guru. Radhanatha Swami gives her association. She invited me to stay in their house in Vrndavana. It's not likely I'll go. I'll stay in this house and journey through the day, starting by waking up at 11:00 p.m. most nights. I travel to Vaikuntha in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* readings. I hear the *Srutis* and Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura argues against the *Mayavadis*. I ate a little lunch. My doctor told me to eat fruits with cereal as an aid to constipation. Family life is complicated, I see. She loves India and would like to retire

there in the future. Not me, I like it here. Things go slow with the press, but I paint and draw. I listen to jazz when I draw my four *kirtana* men. Pope Francis will be in Assisi the same time they are there. They will stay out of town on that day. I would too. I'm a fat man with flabby breasts and a protruding belly. My ankle gives way, threatening to fall. My vision is corrected. I'm a follower of Srila Prabhupada and Lord Caitanya. We are going to post "The Book of Radha" by Prabodhananda Sarsavati, translated by Dasaratha-suta. I like Radha *katha*. Navigate your way back to Godhead, maybe not in one lifetime, Lalita Madhava recommended a book by Bhakti Tirtha Swami, *Surrender*. He emphatically states in it that Krishna will never put you in a situation you can't handle. Maybe I'll read it. I think I'll put two people in my abstract painting flying in the sky. My journal takes fragments, and I join them together for myself and some reader, who reads my books. I talk to myself. I say "Bonjour," how are you? He says he's steady. They say he looks good. He's accountable.

July 28, 2013

I finished two paintings. In each there were three separate abstract elements at the bottom and two *sadbhus* floating or flying in the sky. One had his arms forward, as if he were swimming, and one had his arms thrown back like wings. One looked like he was jumping high with upraised arms, and one had his legs folded up, as if he were experiencing weightlessness. I'm so sorry I didn't show them to Kirtana-rasa when he came for lunch. In the afternoon I finished a four-man drawing then quickly completed a three-man drawing. Haridasa didn't phone me, so I put on music and started another four-man drawing. I almost finished it before Narayana came up with milk at 6:00 p.m. Pretty productive art day. I think I'll do some more flying *sadbhus*. Anandaloka cooked his last meal, excellent pizza with good crust. Kirtana-rasa volunteered to buy me canvas. He came for lunch. I'm happy with my life. I don't want to see Ratha-yatra at Jagannatha Puri or even in Gita-nagari. I stay put

and hear from Srila Prabhupada and *Srimad-Bhagavatam* about Vaikuntha, and I hear from Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura that the *jiva* is the size of the tip of an arrow, or one ten-thousandth the tip of a hair, but it's very powerful. Krishna says of subtle things I am the *jiva*. How wonderful is the science of Krishna consciousness. I am playing the *brhat-mrdanga* on the internet. Obama spoke on race as a black man who knows how he suffered prejudice. The editorials criticized him and said more black men commit crimes.

It was a bonanza day for art. Speak on yoga. I'm reading *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* in the morning. Baladeva said Narayana showed Jayadvaita Swami his punctuated poetic rendering of *Padyavali* and he approved it. I'd like to ask Kirtana-rasa to get me canvas. Swift lines and shapes and colors. Free write. I don't want to write another book. I'm satisfied with the website.

July 27, 2013, 6:14 p.m.

Holzer talks about finding your own voice. Each person has his or her own drum, and we have to find how deep it sounds. Write with your heartbeat, your breath, your lungs, your vocal cords, your whole body, your pain, and your joy. Don't imitate someone else. Your own thumbprint, how it resonates with me. I so much want to write my own voice.

I painted for the first time in about ten years on canvas again today. I did four abstract elements on the ground and three *sadbhus* floating in the sky. I put pale blue moon, two big stars, and I spray painted it with four colors, yellow, blue, green, and red. I'm thinking of asking KR to become a patron and buy me paint and canvas. It's expensive. In the afternoon I drew three men dancing and then while listening to music four men dancing. There is always variety.

Bhakta Trevor is here. He dresses like Aindra, and he has lots of Tulasi necklaces. He spends half his year in Vrndavana with the Krishna Balarama Mandira 24-hour *kirtana* and six months out of India. Now he's with Rama Raya in Union Square

barinama. Jayadvaita Swami is visiting the Bhakti Center and took his room, so he's staying a few days with us. Baladeva would like to put him to work, but he's talking about practicing *mrdanga*. Someone told him to practice every day. He has since been initiated as Tosana Krishna by Janananda Goswami. He eats with his hands. No utensils.

My own voice. I suppose I have been working on that for 35 years. Writing sessions, pouring out first thought with quick hand writing: *Churning the Milk Ocean*, *The End of the Year*, *Loch Der Diary*, *Passing Places*, *Eternal Truths*. Yes, I've been playing my drum. I steal little abstractions from famous artists, but the people are all my own and the colors. I dreamt I was about to have a reunion with my mother, all my Jewish friends, all my ISKCON colleagues.

July 28, 2013

I wasn't so satisfied with my one painting today. I carefully painted four abstract elements below but quickly sketched four persons in black felt pen with *tilaka* but no color. I started another with abstract elements at the top, and tomorrow I'll paint little people at the bottom.

In the afternoon I drew three men sitting and got a start on a four-man painting. Gurudasa is way behind in posting the paintings. He sends in for approval. Dhanurdhara Swami came for lunch. He praised my use of *rasika* literature on the website and said that a *sadhu* in India named Fakir told Srimati that for concentrated *bhajana* you have to stay in one place. D. Swami encouraged me about that in my schedule. Yes, I love me schedule. "Sites With Five Persons" was copied from Dubuffet. I just received a book of Paul Klee's work. I'm excited to see it. Now I'm listening to my Coltrane collection, *Well Away* and *Tender Ballads*. Bhakta Trevor is a nice person, but I see he has no interest or much respect for me. He doesn't know what I'm doing.

What am I doing? As D. Swami said, “Concentrated *bhajana*.” I’m in a powerful creative flow. Baladeva made the TexMex menu today, and it was nice seeing D. Swami and B. Trevor eat a lot. Baladeva ate so much that I love to watch him honor *prasadam*. I’ll get a book of Marc Chagall. Lots of people he paints. I love to paint. My journal is a slow moving train. It has many cars and little daily installments, fragments. I am piling Govardhana stones, cow dung patties, imperfect *capatis*. There is euphoria over the new royal baby in England. Free write. Anandaloka’s notepad is filled with devotee signatures and comments. How far behind is Gurudasa? Narayana suggests I find a relief pitcher, like Mariano Rivera, one day a week. But who would do it?

August 1, 2013, 6:12 p.m.

I did yoga today and no painting, but I started and completed a four-man drawing and started a three-man drawing. I had silly dreams about parents being surrounded to put their six-year-old daughter in a beer commercial. They righteously refused, later changed their minds, but it was too late. The priest wrote a letter about the purity of the girl. Why don’t I have Krishna conscious dreams? My unconscious dream director keeps cranking out these mundane scripts. I’m getting a steroid shot in my ankle tomorrow. Gurudasa excerpted my book, *Alligators Says and I Say* on the website. It’s a little too personal. A lady wrote me that she doesn’t feel close to me and wants to take *siksa* from another guru. It gives me a pain in the heart. Two days in a row I won’t paint. I wrote about Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura praising residence in Mathura and said I seem to have no inclination. I live in separation from Goloka Vrndavana. I never take a step out of Stuyvesant Falls. O’ Henry, please pass me the grapes. I’m a free writing again. Back in the past, the anxious years, the wide travel, and lecturing and managing. Rupa-vilasa was kind to say I was a good manager. I tried. My wife was a hindrance. Then I was free. Then I got ensnared again. Now I’m free for good. Got my own turf at 909 Albany Avenue and

SDGonline.org website. Six messengers left for New Jersey and Jiva Goswami's books. The eunuch goes and gives Radha a report on Krishna's wondrous activities. She is pleased to hear but suffers in separation. Baladeva and Narayana are my caretakers. A picture of a man chanting *japa* and having a vision of Radha and Krishna, I didn't like it. Come and meet me, or write me, and let me read my books and talk about me with my disciples and those who fail to come close to me. I had a wonderful dream about a preconscious boy. His mother and his friends. He is very bright and funny, but he gets into trouble. For example, he's present at a big social event. A woman there has her breast somewhat exposed, and she's nervously fiddling with the buttons on her blouse. It threatens to become a major scandal where her breast would fall out in public. The boy is watching her. In the dream, you don't see what happens, but you know that *it* happened. In the next scene, the boy is being punished for his somehow being involved in the scandal. His mother restricts some of his rights, and they are talking together and their relationship is very charming. Next, an adult black lady becomes a kind of "buddy" to the boy. She loves his sense of humor and precociousness and they hang out together. He teaches her how to mix paints to get a more subtle shade of red in a production I'm trying to work out in my own life. Both the black lady and the boy are hip, but at one point the mother warns the lady that she is getting too intimate with the boy, and it's not proper. The lady backs off, but then she re-enters the relationship and teaches the boy how to play baseball. He turns out to be a good athlete. I kept waking up and re-entering the dream. It would be a wonderful movie or book, but I'm not going to attempt it. To capture his precocious nature at ten years old would be very difficult, but it was a great dream and I drew a picture of her boy on *harinama* to honor it.

Painted today a boy and girl and cow and underneath it, abstract statements. Then I began copying the Paul Klee painting "Head of a Famous Robber." I'm going to stop the journal early and watch a video of the poet Sharon Olds. It is

her talking about her book *Stag's Leap*, every poem of which is about her husband leaving her after 30 years.

Visvanatha Cakravarti says living in Mathura is so beneficial that even if one commits sins it is beneficial, and he's better than a strict impersonalist *sannyasi*—just by living there. Yet I can't seem to muster up an inclination to live in Vrndavana, India. I live in separation from Goloka Vrndavana. I can't take the covering that's over the *dhama*. I read about Radha-Krishna and worship Radha-Govinda in a *kunja* of potted plants. I chant Hare Krishna and gaze upon Radha-Govinda, but I don't go a step out of Stuyvesant Falls. I eat my fruit in the morning, none left for Saci. When are they coming back? I normally eat two cookies a day and one energy bar. I chanted my rounds at a rapid speed. I prayed to Radha-Govinda by alternately repeating Their names in my mind with respect and devotion. Oh angel of mercy, Oh angel of light, please protect me and guide me.

August 2, 2013, 6:11 p.m.

How do you feel about your journal?

Considering that I only allow 45 minutes a day and write so slowly, I think it is okay.

Why don't you allow more time?

I hadn't thought of that. I have a pretty tight schedule, but I might fit in ten or 15 minutes somewhere.

Do you think you are talking to yourself internally in the journal?

I read what the journal writing teachers say, and I don't think I'm doing that.

Why not?

They say things like review your beliefs, grieve for something else, and I can't relate to that. I don't want to change my beliefs. I grieve over the aftermath of my fall down, but I've written enough about that.

What about saying, “Thank you?”

I definitely like that. I could write about the blessings I’ve received. I liked how the doctor was polite when she gave me the Cortisone shot. I was amused when Narayana said she probably thought we were a gay couple. I was proud how Baladeva acted at some of the serious accidents. I thank Lord Vishnu before eating an energy bar. I’m thankful Krishna lets me do two drawings and one of them different than the usual.

Do you think you could use the journal more for a tool of self-awareness?

I’m willing to, but I don’t know how to go about it. I can’t relate to the teachings like writing to the inner child and writing after “meditation.”

What *can* you do?”

Come to the page with random thoughts. Say something about Krishna. He says His favor on the devotee is to take away his material possessions and then, when he’s rejected, he turns to Krishna. Srila Prabhupada thought that was true in his own life, and Rupa Goswami wrote in *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* that when one takes to Krishna consciousness, his karma is taken away. I like to put quotes like that in my journal.

That’s nice. Really what about your own voice?

I try to beat my drum. I sit here, and the phone rings and no one answers it. They leave voice messages. Baladeva doesn’t wash the pots. He puts them in the “Kitchen annex.” I have a voice but not always something to say. I can’t sit silently in my comfortable chair for an hour not doing much, but generally I keep busy.

What about death?

A priest said he was not afraid of death, but he was afraid of the pain of ending.

This ends this 30-page journal.

August 3, 2013, 5:40 p.m.

I heard from D. Swami about Parthasarathi Goswami's practice of *bhajana*. It is very sweet, humble, and too confidential for me to write in my journal. He has only six "up" hours in 24; otherwise, his poor health keeps him in bed.

I had a dream I had a covering over my head, but I could see through it. I was with a companion who helped me walk. We were in a restaurant, and there was a bar with people drinking next door. Then we walked into the sunshine. A beach and boardwalk. There was a girl there. It became sensual. As if to protect me, I woke up. Kirtan-rasa agreed to become a patron for my art. He will buy me canvas and paint. Now my painting will be preserved. He came for lunch, and D. Swami joined us. We ate *idlis* and corn on the cob.

Vrkasura got a benediction from Lord Siva that whoever's head he touched would die. He tried to touch Lord Siva who fled to Vaikuntha. There, Lord Narayana appeared as a *brahmacari* and tricked the demon to touch his own head.

My journal is not a spiritual quest. It is just some time I spend talking to myself. My life is not in crisis. I am not experiencing despair. I am not searching for my shadow, my unexplored self. I was turned off by Coltrane. I may not be in the mood to listen to him. Try a little more.

The power went off for several hours last night. Kirtana-rasa is a *ksatriya*. He owns a gun and is giving his 17-year-old son lessons in how to use one.

My soul wants union with Krishna. I want to go to the spiritual world and never return. I want to cut the cycle of birth and death, play with Krishna and serve Him, serve Srimati Radharani. That's the most important next thing in my life: death, and the future after death. Will I be able to remember and serve Krishna even if I have to come back to the material world? For the soul there is neither birth nor death. He does not die when the body dies. Krishna orders Arjuna to fight because he is a powerful warrior. He cannot give up fighting, but he

should fight for Krishna, who wants to restore a good rule in the world, Bharata-varsa. I am using my propensity to serve Krishna, free write. Devotees are dying, and calling out to Srila Prabhupada.

In my morning nap I had a deep nightmare that I was lost and had no money. I saw strange and threatening scenes. I didn't sense that I was dreaming, but that it was actually happening. It seemed to last a long time but finally I woke up.

Sunday, August 4, 2013, 6:09 p.m.

I finished a typical painting of a boy and girl dancing and a fox underneath, abstract objects including a pale blue moon. Spoke on the phone with Haridasa for half an hour. The mode of goodness does not attract the Lord. You have to enter devotional service. Haridasa was explaining *Bhagavad-gita* verse 10.7 about the greatness of God and His being Yogesvara. N. wanted me to sit outside for this journal session. If he gets a desk and chair, I'll try it. Crazy dreams. I can't record them. Funny incidents. I perform my *bhajana* starting at midnight and write until about 4:15 a.m. Then I take another nap. The *bhajana* consists of 16 rounds of *japa* and writing and dictating my website. Exercise work for half an hour and almost two hours for painting is good. Nohar Singh is getting initiated next week by Radhanatha Swami. My letter of recommendation helped for getting it so soon. I don't have something to say from my inner man. Tomorrow, Gurudasa starts posting "The Book of Radha" by Prabhodananda Sarasvati, translated by Dasaratha-suta. My inner man is what you see.

August 5, 2013, 6:11 p.m.

I'm in the backyard in a chair on the lawn. Sunlight is on the page. I see a yellow bird at the feeder. I see the shadow of my *sikha* hairs moving in the breeze. It is wonderful. An orange flying bug lands on my desk. Little birds, children's voices in the

distance. Shadow and light. It is a bit cold A cardinal! A white breasted bird. Birds drink from the bird bath. I began a painting of a jazz band. It will be tricky to finish it. The birds are picking at the seeds. How peaceful this scene is. One tan bird is just starting. Now she's walking. It's nice to sit here writing, but I can't think of anything significant to say. Now I'm in the shade, and I'm cold. How quickly the ideal situation changes. Baladeva said he would bring me a sweatshirt, but he's forgotten. Christina Baldwin packs her book with quotes from authors and general writers. Cars pass on the road. The birds are all gone. It must be too late for them. I have the same spirit soul I had as a child, a young man, and a middle-aged man. I am less covered now, but I am not "old."

I had a dream I had an RV vehicle parked in the Manor in England. I wanted to leave, but the gate was locked. When I return to the RV, it was gone. My sister had taken it. Then she was driving.

August 6, 2013, 6:15 p.m.

In the backyard again. I can hear the neighbors on the other side of our high wooden fence. I went to the dentist today. I was incontinent while sitting in the dental chair, but they didn't notice. A little bird is pecking at seeds in the feeder. Haribol. Krishna enjoyed water sports with His queens. Vidura is a great friend and devotee of Krishna. He has been on pilgrimage and now he is inquiring from Maitreya in Haridvara. The queens will speak the *prema vaichitra* prayers. D. Swami is walking in the street, talking to himself. A jet plane overhead. My inner man is at peace. The mourning dove. That tan bird is back walking in the driveway. Now a small motor plane overhead. The brilliant cardinal is back eating off the ground. Saci's car pulls into his driveway. My inner man craves solitude, supported by caretakers. He wants to be working. The poem in the morning is enough since I painted and drew. My creative life. You write to yourself for your own benefit. At the dentist's office, a big

spread of magazines but I didn't look at one. Birds in the feeder, a pleasant sight. I had to read wait 20 minutes before they saw me. N. has ordered a new computer. My inner man . . . he wants to always remember Krishna and not forget Him. But he's not so intensely Krishna conscious. Lots of birds. My inner man doesn't want a woman. He wants to go to the spiritual world after death, but how is it possible. I lack the qualifications of intense greed (*lauhyam*), yet I wish. I wish in the morning as I write my stanza to Radha-Govinda.

Friday, August 9, 2013, 6:15 p.m.

I painted a careful Radha-Krishna. I will offer it to Kirtanarasa. I finished writing my Janmastami lecture. It's a little daring—having Krishna appear in your heart on the appearance day—but I think it's okay. “A Quiet Revelation of Krishna.” I had nice *prasadam* cooked by Nrisimha devi and assisted by her daughter Braja. Bala went to Gita-nagari to ensure Nohar gets initiated by Radhanatha Swami. I am doing all right. Did a four-man *kirtana* drawing. Radha and Krishna are my *ista-devatas*. A nice picture of Radha selected by Gurudasa for the logo of “The Book of Radha.” My fingers are old but nimble. I'm not about to die. I will probably live a few more years then go—to where? Krishna will decide, and I will accept. I may not become a *manjari* of Radharani, but I can serve here in service capacity. I am a fool. I am a guru. I am retired in a sense but still active. “My talk today will be short but it is special, so please pay attention.” I painted yellow auras over the head of Radha and Krishna. On Vyasa-puja I will read my homage. They pleased their parents. Vyasa is in the basement carved in the wall, and I am at his feet. The journal is a private record. The inner man wants to serve Srila Prabhupada and Krishna. He does it by his proclivity. Three more minutes then we are going to watch a video. The dentist shook my hand with an exaggerated clasp. The inner man lacks *bhava*. I have a free write message. Kardama no more.

Saturday, August 10, 2013, 6:09 p.m.

I painted Krishna, Balarama, and two cowherd boys. I read my book, *My Relationship with Lord Krishna*. It is nice, but I don't know how I can use it in my Janmastami lecture. It's mostly positive, but I admit to a lack of surrender. I'm afraid Krishna will force me to do something I don't want to do, so I hold back. It's filled with many sastric quotes and quotes from Srila Prabhupada. I definitely have a relationship with Krishna. Baladeva goes today because of his long hours driving and hard work at Gita-nagari. Nrisimha dressed Radha-Krishna in red and yellow. Oh, I wrote that book in five days and said I was a writer. The Lord appears before the devotee in the form that he or she wants to see. Kardama Muni practiced yoga meditation for 10,000 years, and he saw the Lord in His four-armed form, yet he wanted a wife. Devahuti became his wife. Kapiladeva appeared as his son. In *My Relationship*, I have faith that steady and increased practices of Krishna consciousness will bring me to the goal, but we haven't progressed further after all these years? Causeless unwillingness to fully surrender. My inner man, he wakes up at the alarm, but makes up for lost time. I chanted my mantras in the mind. Krishna is the cause of all causes. Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura is a great devotee writer. I am dazed. My mind is all right. I stay put and write my memoirs. Sukhada wants another guru besides me. Steven Hero. The ice cream truck drives by with its looney tune. We are going to watch another video tonight. My inner man is choked up.

Sunday, August 11, 2013, 6:12 p.m.

I answered letters this morning and didn't paint. In the afternoon I memorized my Janmastami speech and didn't draw. I gave Kirtana-rasa two paintings. My inner man is nervous. He is not heroic. I have news from the spiritual world. One should get initiated by a bona fide spiritual master who is a representative of Krishna. We didn't read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* at lunch today. Gurudasa remains a week behind in posting the

website. I wrote letters to disciples. A 57-year-old lady wants to marry a 67-year-old man. I gave her permission. If I have to give a talk on Balarama's appearance day, I'm not prepared. Should I prepare? Navayogendra Swami gave the Sunday lecture at Potomac. "Help me," she said. And he directed her where to go to catch the plane. "I, who have no sense of direction, ran exactly as he told me." Yes, I read *Bhagavad-gita* in the morning, a few verses and purports before I grew sleepy. Don't disturb the minds of the ignorant, Krishna says. Practice Krishna consciousness silently, but the devotees are more kind than the Lord and they know His intentions. They approach ignorant people and try to give them Krishna consciousness. Write your message of Godhead. We need to reconnect with Krishna. Hear about Him. Preach about Him. Remember Him. Hare Krishna mantras at rapid speed. They have gone to Cape Cod for another vacation. The neighborhood is quiet. I am nursing a wound. I want to surrender to Krishna, give Him my love.

Monday, August 12, 2013, 6:16 p.m.

I painted an ordinary picture of a man and a cow and a girl. In the afternoon I drew two men and a woman and halfway completed four men dancing. We see little of the two women here. They just cook and go away. Gurudasa is slowly catching up. I painted a pink-faced man and a tan girl and brown cow and shining sun. No abstract. I'm running short on imagination. I'm not so daring as I was in my heyday in Ireland. Confined to a small repertoire. Why don't you break out? Paint Radha and Krishna embracing. Paint all abstract. Let your hand go free. And writing your journal, tell us more about the stories of Krishna consciousness. Tell how you chipped your tooth and broke your heels. Tell us the pain you felt when the cast came off and you tried to move your legs. Tell us of your lonely life. How you walked out of Mednick's apartment when you felt bad vibrations. How they followed you to your Staten Island apartment, and you had a jam session. You played the bass very fast, but then the bridge broke, and they laughed hysterically.

You were hurt by that. You had no girlfriend. If one would have come to you and surrendered, you would have accepted her. Are you too shy and unaggressive to conquer one? You listened to jazz, and you still do. Why aren't you writing in the backyard? Where do you get your kicks? I can remember everything if I want to. The years of terrible migraines. Decades of chronic pain. Now you are free. Why did He put me through it? I never complained. I just endured terrible pain in the right eye. Just lie down and let the hours pass. You tried every remedy for relief.

Now I sleep a few hours and get up by 11:30 p.m. I begin my rapid *japa* in the mind. I write my poem. Radha-Govinda, the stanza eked out. Search your heart for something candid.

Tuesday, August 13, 2013, 6:12 p.m.

I painted Radha-Krishna with one arm around each other and two hands touching the flute. I think I will do it again tomorrow. I did three drawings. A strange dream. I was in Ireland on a street with a program to sell Irish lore to the tourists, and I was in a building with Prithu and a woman. He was showing me an authentic Irish table. I said I had to go to see Maurice, but he said I should stay. And I looked into a room and Prithu and the woman were kissing and embracing. It was very realistic. They saw me and became embarrassed, but they acknowledged the relationship. I ran down the many flights of stairs to get away. I hoped the front door wouldn't be locked. It wasn't. I ran toward Caton Avenue. I know Maurice was staying down the block at Galters. I hoped to see him.

You come out of these dreams dazed by the visions and seeming reality. You go to your art table and start to draw. My heart is clear. I play Coltrane and make bold moves in the drawing. Black only figures for two drawings. Then a girl with elongated neck and spiky hair. My head is clear. What do you want to say? The lunches are a challenge. I don't eat much. I prepared a lecture on Balarama just in case. I rehearsed my short Janmastami talk. I relate to devotees of Krishna. I don't like to

talk with anyone else. I lead a sheltered life. He blew his horn for half an hour, just he and the drummer. I don't have much to say. Baladeva stayed up late talking on the phone with Rama Raya. "Trevor is an air space violator." It's a wonder the place doesn't blow up. Krishna is in control.

Wednesday, August 14, 2013, 6:07 p.m.

I painted Radha and Krishna and drew four men dancing. I had a dream I went with a few devotees by rocket ship to another planet. There were living beings there, and they took us under custody. They spoke a language we couldn't understand. They put us on stage and expected us to speak. I thought of uttering "Aum," but realized I wasn't practiced in it. I started chanting the Hare Krishna mantra in a slow melody and the devotees joined me. It was thrilling spreading the Holy Name for the first time on this planet. I woke up and then re-entered the dream several times. It wasn't as good. We found people who spoke English, and I asked for food. He said, "What kind?" I said, "Vegetarian." And he replied that vegetarian food had stopped on that planet for a long time.

We are going to have an observance of Balarama's appearance day. I will speak how Balarama expands in the three *purusa* avatars and how he played as Krishna's older brother in *Vraja-lila*. I will tell how He killed Pralambasura and Dhenuka and how he dragged the Yamuna to Him and how He killed Romaharsana Suta and Balvala and Rukmi. Vishnu asked Durvasa Muni to ask forgiveness from Maharaja Ambarisa, and He said, "Saints are my heart." I'm reading *My Relationship with Lord Krishna* a second time and taking a few notes. I examine myself, whether I'm bored or dissatisfied, and I say no. I'm still content staying here in this house doing my *bhajana*. I'm alive. Oh, Krishna is in my heart, and on Janmastami the devotees should be introspective and have a quiet revelation of the presence in their hearts. The inner man is a painter and a poet. I hear from Srila Prabhupada's purports every day. "As long as

you are with him, we don't want anything to do with you," my mother said, and they cut me off. I can't dance, but I draw vigorous dancers.

Thursday, August 15, 2013, 6:15 p.m.

I had a bizarre dream about being in Guyana with many people in a house. I read two versions of a story "The End of the World is Coming." One composed by me, and one a written text. Indulged in some naughty diversions in the dream. A power lawn mower is roaring as I write. The journal is picking up pebbles on a beach. It's hocking its wristwatch for five dollars. It is standing holding on the back of a fire truck. It is falling over on a bicycle and breaking its shoulder bone. It seals its lips from indiscreet comments. It doesn't know what to paint tomorrow. Mercury reigns on winged feet. New sneakers make little boys want to run down the block in glee. Kardama addressed the emperor. The sage looked like an unpolished gem. Prabhupada wrote that the students in ISKCON have improved their health, and they have a luster. Anxious moments aren't a good improvement in their health. Hand down the American flag at dusk, and fold it properly. We post a new picture of Radha-Krishna Deities every day. The journal is climbing up the side of a cliff. It is packing on the Appalachian Trail. It defies the impersonal philosophy of the *Mayavadi*. It loves Krishna and His devotees.

I have no bad habits. I say my Gayatri mantras three times a day. Lord Caitanya speaks on *kaitava*, cheating religion which has material goals. Devotional service is performed for the pleasure of Krishna. It brings the devotee to *ananda*. My journal is immigrants coming to America. It is ginger, turmeric, and cinnamon. It is black-eyed Susans and red roses. It is thorn and blood. It is me working up a sweat.

Friday, August 16, 2013, 6:13 p.m.

I painted three rough people and captioned it “Can We Be Initiated?”

In the afternoon I did four men in *kirtana* and one with two women and a man. That’s a lot of drawing. My journal I describe in metaphors. It is an arched rainbow. It’s a Mickey Mouse watch. It is a serious face breaking into a smile and then laughing. It is a tightwad; it is a spendthrift.

I dreamt I was on an airplane in Los Angeles bound nonstop for Boston. I had two seats to myself and was stretched out as in bed. But the jet engines didn’t turn on. A woman came by and said the delay was due to baggage being loaded. Then, we finally took off. The captain began speaking over the loudspeaker. He said the plot of the movie . . . a woman was swinging on a door, and they were afraid of her. They wanted to come to her house and make rice, but she called her husband who appeared and squelched her plans. The plane was mighty and majestic. It flew all the way to Boston with no turbulence. Everyone made their appointments on time. At one point I realized I wasn’t lying down on airplane seats but in my bed.

My journal is Sagittarius. It is Krishna conscious, devotional service. It wants to please guru and Krishna. It wants to help the suffering conditioned souls. It is hearing about the two brothers Lord Caitanya and Nityananda Prabhu, who appeared like the sun and moon simultaneously on the horizon of Gauda. It went to Jagannatha Puri and was denied entry into the temple of Jagannatha. It quoted *Isopanisad* mantra 18 “O My Lord powerful as fire. Omnipotent one now I make my obeisances and fall at Your feet. Please lead me on the path to reach You. And as you know all that I have done in the past, please release me from the reactions to my past sins so there will be no hindrance to my progress.” My journal is a Japanese beetle; it is a ladybug. It is a prayer to the Lord. It is Levis. The northwest guided by a Native American woman. It is Nrisimha devi dasi cooking devotional lunches. My journal is a plea for human kindness and transcendental knowledge. It is a kick on the head to anyone

who blasphemous Lord Nityananda. My journal is racing against the clock.

Saturday, August 17, 2013, 6:19 p.m.

Writing in my journal. Be peaceful. Try to please guru and Krishna. I take a lot of meds. I painted three boards today and did some abstract effects. I drew a picture of two *brahmacaris* and a lady in a *sari*. I know my short Janmastami speech pretty well, and one for Balarama's appearance day. Nothing for Radhastami yet. My journal is a choo choo train. It's me writing in an ideal place. I'm not bored, I tell myself. I have enough action. My journal is in low gear, low profile, under the radar, you need a microscope to see it. It takes an expert to make out the handwriting. I don't use a word processor. I use a G2 Pilot pen with an arthritic hand. It sings of glory. It's happy. I'm at the fag end. Paint some beasties. He sealed his lips on indiscreet comments. She prepared some dry cake for Ekadasi. I ate it down dutifully while she sat on the cushion. My journal is a balsa wood glider. Be careful you don't break its wing.

Sunday, August 18, 2013, 6:26 p.m.

It takes "chutpah," bold action to break through in writing. I want to do free writing lessons in which I would write whatever came to mind. Keep the hand moving, don't think. Now I'm more sober and wanted to have Krishna conscious content. In our *Srimad-Bhagavatam* reading Svayambhuva Manu tells Kardama Muni, "Accept my daughter. She has her mind fixed on you since she heard about you from Narada Muni." Kardama says, "Yes, she's very beautiful." He accepts her. I pray to Hanuman every morning. I write in my journal every night, at least a few lines. "You've written a million words" said Haridasa. It was hard to find words in my journal. Outside art, you write some words on the canvas. You loosen up. I painted a

brahmacari holding hands with a woman. He won't be a *brahmacari* for long. Paint a picture of a dog, of a man writing. Paint Krishna. We ran out of soft blue paint. The Supersoul is in the heart. Balarama expands as the three *purusa avatars*. He plays with Krishna in *vraja-lila*. Dinabandhu gave a dynamic "Vrndavana" lecture at the Potomac temple, sprinkled with Hindi for the Indian audience. I pray to my Deities. I have a long *sikha*. I don't get headaches any more.

Tuesday, August 20, 2013, 6:07 p.m.

I painted Lord Vishnu standing on Garuda. Baladeva had nicely mixed the paints, and they were drippy so it was not so neat. I wrote the names of the persons in my picture near their bodies and the word "Hare Krishna," typical outsider art. I drew three men dancing. Did you look at Radha Govinda today? *Isopanisad* Mantra 17: "Let the temporary body be burnt to ashes and let the air of life enter the totality of air. O my Lord please remember all my sacrifices and as you are the ultimate beneficiary please remember all that I have done for You." Srila Prabhupada remarks that even if the devotee doesn't remember his devotional service, the Lord never forgets. I will put this in my Janmastami talk. Lord Caitanya is Krishna Himself disguised as a devotee. I am on an even plane. The sea is calm but breezes fill my sails. *Isopanisad* Mantra 18: "O my Lord powerful as fire, omnipotent one. Please lead me on the right path to reach You and as You know all that I have done in the past please release me from the reactions to my past sins so there will be no hindrance to my progress." My Krishna has a short *dhoti*, and He stood on the wings of His bird carrier. I like Him. You painted with your heart. Seal your lips from indiscreet comments. I dreamt my sister and I attended what appeared to be an ISKCON concert where they were playing crazy, incomprehensible rock music. She said she marked out the words "Bow down," but I didn't hear them. Introspection means to examine one's thoughts, feelings, and impressions. I am waiting for my book of Marc Chagall's painting. I am

inspired by his work. In almost every painting I put the Celtic spiral. The sage Kardama Muni was renounced. He wants a wife, but he would leave her after she got a son. Kapila dasa remembers the Personality of Godhead Krishna as black with yellow effulgences over his head, but He didn't wear a crown or peacock feather. I'll paint them in an hour when I wear gloves, and I'll paint a crown and peacock feather on Him. I'll paint Him with possible feathers and flowers facing Srimati Radharani.

August 21, 2013, 6:15 p.m.

Nitai is here. He's under great pressure in the business, but he's printing my books in India. I ate lunch alone upstairs. I'm doing the proofreading of 150 pages of volume two of the autobiography. I have to write the proofreader. I painted Maha-Vishnu with two big universes emanating from Him in the water of the causal ocean. Then I drew two women and a man dancing. I'm other worldly. I have love for my early morning *bhajana*. I talk of myself and my memories in the renounced order. Radhanatha Swami has thousands of disciples and well-organized preaching. He is friendly towards me. Nitai's help is good. I don't know about myself. I will have to die and give up my beloved schedule. I will go to a better place by Prabhupada's grace. Where will I go? I don't know my *siddha-deha* or eligibility for transference to the spiritual world. Krishna's kind to His devotees. He's an eternal cowherd boy. Maha-Vishnu is His plenary part. The *gopis* are His dearmost. There is little trust in the political leaders. The world is precarious, but we have the strength of the Krishna conscious process. We are immune to corruption. Begone demons, don't hang around my door. Srila Prabhupada can take us back to Godhead if we surrender to him and work in his movement. He is my best well-wisher. Balarama's appearance day went well. I am not good at life skills.

August 22, 2013, 6:16 p.m.

The Janmastami schedule is posted, 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the yoga barn. Vyasa-puja will be observed starting at 10:30 a.m. at Viraha Bhavan. Hare Krishna. I did yoga today and didn't paint. I drew a picture of four dancers. I wrote to Sukhada, "Please don't think of me as fallen or a corrupt person. I have healed from that episode, and I think that Krishna and Prahupada have forgiven me." I told her I was repentant and stabilized in the renounced order. On the other hand, Damodara Rati wrote me that she was so grateful that I wrote her. Both ladies have husbands that left them for another woman. They have children. Baladeva has a new back brace. He has degenerative arthritis on the lumbar vertebrae. Dvaraka was built on the sea. Krishna is miraculous. He can do anything. Krishna appeared as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Stokakrishna's mother died. She used to chant Hare Krishna on beads before a picture of Panca-tattva after finishing her Catholic rosary. He asked me to pray for her. I asked Jaya Govinda to type my letter. He does a good job but misspells some words because English is his second language.

My journal is a red sports car going 30 miles an hour. There were more earthquakes in New Zealand. Love for Jesus. Ramila's brother died. I wrote Sukhada that I'm fragile, almost 74 and don't travel. Krishna Krishna Krishna *be*. Believe in Him. She chanted Hare Krishna in the ear of her dying brother. Oh, it's getting late. I have my Janmastami lecture pretty well memorized. Waiting for the Tributes book and a book on Marc Chagall. He painted people in dreamlike situations. Boy and girl floating over the city. Ramila said if she could only have one book she would take the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*. What about Krishna book? *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, Canto One?

August 23, 2013

Baladeva suggested I paint with no people, so I did a cow, a bull, an ox, and an elephant all standing with Govardhana-like hill. Under the hill I put a *tilaka* symbol, a Celtic spiral, and

Miro's five-pointed star. In the afternoon I did three men dancing, and while listening to music, I got a good start on four men dancing. Each morning I don't know what I'm going to paint when I get there. These are fallen times. Prabhupada said it, and now it's even worse. But we have the shelter of Krishna consciousness. I suggest they spend an hour alone on Janmastami. Examine your relationship with Him. Have a quiet revelation of His presence in your heart, your life. Offer prayers and surrender to Him. You've got your little talk prepared. Wear your *sannyasa* clothes and *tilaka*. Nitai has an agenda for a press meeting. Sacisuta lost his biggest client. I wrote Sukhada that I'm fragile, and I don't travel. I'm almost 74, but in decent health. I try to wake up by 11:00 p.m. and go to the bathroom by 11:10 p.m. I'm sitting in my chair most mornings by 11:45 waiting until midnight when I could begin rapid *japa*. The clock catches up to me while I'm writing, and I don't finish the last four of 16 rounds until 3:10 a.m. I pace myself. I am fool number one for not surrendering to Krishna. Radha-Govinda are beautiful in Their change of clothing. You have to see it to believe it. Have *darsana* for the public in pictures, my personal Deities. But I post pictures of them on the web. Jayadvaita Swami preaches in Africa to the black Africans. I am in charge of this *asrama*. Narayana and Baladeva are like my two strong arms. I am almost finished with this journal entry. It was brief but worth writing. I preserved a little of my life.

August 24, 2013, 6:19 p.m.

We had a productive GN Press meeting. I am writing on a little wooden table with a Pilot pen. Krishna is God. Lord Caitanya is Krishna. He accepted *sannyasa* at age 24 because he found household life was an obstacle to His mission. He stayed for 48 years in the world. I love to hear His pastimes in *Caitanya-caritamṛta* and *Caitanya-bhagavata*. I drew a picture of three devotees dancing. I am giving a special Janmastami talk, "Krishna Appearing in our Hearts on this Day." I am

memorizing it. *Krishnas tu bhagavan svayam*. Krishna is an enormous subject, but we each have an individual relationship with Him. Nrisimha dasi, Paramatma's wife from Guyana, is cooking selflessly, not getting much of my attention. She is a simple, hard working woman. Lord Brahma appeared and worshiped Kapila and praised Kardama Muni. Then Kardama went to the forest even though God was living in his home. I plan to paint tomorrow. Krishna will tell me what to do. I didn't watch the Little League World Series. God is kind to me. He protects me and lets me do *bhajana*. Nitai remarked that I am withdrawn. I am not outgoing. Free writing allows nonsense sentences: the pepper pots renounced the roses and Stevie fell off the roof. We worship Govinda, the cause of all causes.

I dreamt I was dream walking, and it was wonderful. I came up like a shadow to most of the people I met, and I eavesdropped and they didn't notice me. I sat down beside them for a while and then I moved on. The whole time I walked it was mostly dark, either after dusk or predawn. I wore funny brown shoes, and my ankle didn't hurt much. I walked and walked and loved it. Sometimes I was alone, when I felt lonely, people appeared. I interacted with them briefly, if at all, and kept on walking. Two men with heavy high level shoes talked, and I only partly understood them. When the GBC directly appeared, he wrote the message and went away. I went inside their house, and the mother asked me to take off my outer jacket. I said, "No," but she said, "Later you'll have to take it off." I walked past a place where young men were playing guitars. I stopped to listen, but they all began shaking out their hands to show they were too tired to play anymore. It was a wonderful dream which I kept re-entering. I thought of writing about it at length, "The Dream Walker," but I don't think I will.

August 25, 2013, 6:14 p.m.

I painted Lord Vishnu with Dhruva, but Lord Vishnu's white eyes and mouth and *tilaka* came out messy. I watched some of

the Little League World Series on TV and rooted for Japan over the long haired, blond boys from California. The journal tells you what's going on with me. I chant Hare Krishna at midnight. I stay out of trouble. If you have a computer, visit sdgonline.org. It's the best way to keep in touch with me. We're posting "The Book of Radha" and my *japa* report, *Srimad-Bhagavatam* reading, *asrama* news, and a stanza on Radha-Govinda. I'm a writer, and I like to write down prayers. In recent years I've completed two volumes, *My Dear Lord Krishna*. "O Krishna as You know all that I have done in the past, please release me from the reactions to my past so that there'll be no hindrance to my progress." The Tribute books have been mailed out they say. My journal is a swan song. It is my last word in fragments.

Cheese and cherry blintzes from the Lower East Side. I brought some to my parents in Avalon, New Jersey. It was there they baked them. But then they kicked me out because I became a member of the Hare Krishna cult. Prabhupada didn't think it was a big deal. He wrote me that he was my eternal father. Those were sweet days, working hard in the mission of ISKCON. I burned the candles at both ends. I had a migraine breakdown that lasted 20 years. Now I am free. Many of my Godbrothers have died. They made great contributions to Lord Caitanya's movement. I am peaceful and slow moving. I am on my last minute. Please print my books.

August 26, 2013, 6:10 p.m.

I painted four dual-colored cows. In the afternoon I drew four men dancing. Gurudasa is here. I am free writing. The *pasandis* are crushed by the weapons of Lord Caitanya. I dreamt of a big ISKCON. Everyone was doing whatever they wanted. I was bewildered. I have no direction in writing. The numbers collide. Radharani is glorified in choice poetry. We are getting a super video camera. They will take short videos, and put them

on YouTube. I have given the same Janmastami lectures and talks for the last two years. I'm abandoning the old formula. When you can't think of anything to say, it might be better to shut your mouth.

But I have a duty, an urge. Kardama Muni was a householder, but he had the Supreme Lord appear in his home as his son. Unless you receive the mantra in disciplic succession it will have no effect. When you please the spiritual master, Krishna is pleased. When you displease him, your whereabouts are unknown. Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura comments that the order of the spiritual master should be the life and soul of the disciple. The critical expert student should become the next spiritual master. Srila Prabhupada wanted all his disciples to qualify themselves and become spiritual masters.

August 29, 2013, 6:40 p.m.

Baldwin says to notice the little things with wonder and joy. Baladeva brought a comfortable chair into the yoga studio and insisted that Lila-avatara give up the metal folding chair and use it. TJ looked bright and handsome. Arundati thanked me for giving her the service of typing Srila Prabhupada's dictation tapes when she came to Boston. D. Swami came up to me after my lecture and said it was "fantastic." I didn't much care for the feast, but there was a red Kool-Aid type drink that was very refreshing. Nikol, the young Russian mother, was lovingly carrying her little baby. Narayana cleaned my stool without complaint. Radhanatha Swami always praises me.

August 30

I felt physically protected when living with Srila Prabhupada because I thought Krishna was protecting him. But I also felt responsible for protecting him from rude people. I wasn't a very strong protector, however, like Brahmananda. I am responsible as a *sannyasi* for what I say, so I don't want to delve deeply into my preconscious memoirs, but there is so much there. I can remember my many active years in ISKCON, in the GBC

meetings dominated by the big egos, the big talkers, the opinionated, a larger than life painting of Srila Prabhupada looking down on us. Traveling to the temples in Europe and lecturing through a translator, taking writing retreats with free writing sessions, living in my Wicklow house and painting five canvases a day and a visionary garden. Suffering with migraines. Living alone. Falling down. Being exposed. Recovering. Living now on the website. My rising at 11:00 p.m. Going to bed at 7:00 p.m. Headache free. Old man doesn't like to eat much.

Saturday

Aditi devi dasi is here for three days. I just met with her for an hour with Kaulini Prabhu. She was in the Navy for 20 years. Now she works for the state as a legal secretary. She lives in the Bronx with her brother. Commutes an hour to Wall Street. Chants her *japa* on the train. She sends me \$100 a month. A very nice person. I asked her if she cooks. She said she's not a "cook-cook". She uses frozen vegetables. Her brother is a bachelor, and she's unmarried.

I'm on a quest, trying to live my life and die my death so I can go back to Godhead. Prabhupada is my shelter. Krishna is my God. He appeared as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is in the mood of Radharani in separation from Krishna. We are reading *Caitanya-caritamṛta* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. I chant my rounds quickly and try to start at midnight. Twelve rounds by 1:20. It was rain and thunder while we talked. I liked the thunder and the sound of rain.

The *maha-mantra* is made up of the names of Radha and Krishna, celebrating Their union and separation. Their separation is an intense loving state called *vipralambha*. I like to hear about it.

Aditi said it's hard for her to forgive. She holds a grudge. She thought back to high school and shuddered. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." The thunder is still rolling, like timpani, and the rain is splashing

against the house. I am an old man at peace. Aditi went on a two-week *japa* retreat with Sacinandana Swami. My, how that thunder is prolonging, and the rain is beating hard!

Sunday, August 31, 2013

I could barely hear Haridasa's voice on the phone. Krishna wants many consorts. They all expand from Radharani. She has Krishna in her control. The Gaudiya Vaisnavas aspire to serve Radharani in their *siddha-deha*. There are *gopi manjaris*, young girl servants of Krishna and Radha. They serve Her most confidentially. They call her Swamini and Vrsabhanu-nandini. She's the most beautiful of all the consorts. She loves Krishna the most, and She is the dearest object of affection. These are the points that I put on the website. I painted baby Krishna with Nanda and Yasoda. I think it is the first time I did a picture of Him as a baby. Hare Krishna photo of a painting of Radha. Shall I not talk of Radharani? I have a Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura lecture that he gave on Radhastami. Tell how She's the best devotee of Krishna because She loves Him the most. Then She expands into the forms of His consorts. She's the head potency. The *acaryas* are *gopi manjaris*. Her pond Radha-kunda has many direct persons living there now who don't recognize Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati. I hope I wake up early and chant *japa* at midnight.

September 2, 2013

Use your intuition. Krishna's sweetness is best tasted and appreciated by Srimati Radharani. Lord Krishna hankers to taste it, so He came as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Kapiladeva tells Devahuti He will teach her the ancient system of yoga He formerly taught the sages. When you have a superexcellent process there is no need to introduce something new. I painted

Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityananda and a *mrdanga* player. Two men writing with pens, one falling asleep with his head on his desk. They say they are writing *EJW*.

Radha-Govinda are wearing new dresses, blue with heavy yellow *jari*. I slept until 4:00 p.m. I told Baladeva if Bhakta Gaura comes to see me he has to recognize me as the guru of the *asrama*. I'll paint Srila Prabhupada tomorrow. Paint his beautiful lips. The bolsters of the *vyasasana*. I want to paint people floating in the sky above the house tops. A fiddler on the roof. Chicken and pigs in the yard.

First deserve and then desire. A desire to serve the Supreme Lord. Be careful about that.

September 3, 2013

6:09 p.m.

I painted Srila Prabhupada but didn't finish it. While listening to inspiring free-form jazz I compiled a drawing of four men with exaggerated shapes chanting and dancing. Kapiladeva told Devahuti that association with materialists leads to hell, but the same attachment when transferred to *sadhus* causes liberation. A *sadhu* is not one dressed in saffron with a big beard. He's a devotee of Krishna who likes to hear and chant about Krishna, and he distributes Krishna consciousness to others. I did Srila Prabhupada's face okay. Keep working in devotional service. But sometimes you take the zigzag path of truth. In *The Wizard of Oz* they told Dorothy to stay on the yellow brick road for safety and auspiciousness.

It's still summer warm, but tomorrow is the first day of school in Hare Krishna valley. Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishna-loka.

Give me *krishna-prema*. Rupa Gosvami praises Sri Caitanya as the most munificent person for distributing Krishna consciousness. *Cc.* says Svarupa Damodara was the most intimate associate of Lord Caitanya. If anyone knows about the

confidential reasons for Lord Caitanya's descent, he must have learned it from him. Zigzag cigarette paper. Hold your joint. I dreamt of violent battle between two groups. My group was cutting off the heads of the enemies. We dismantled their buildings. Dedicated to my short, slow chanting journal entirely. It doesn't matter they are short. I want it to be short. I'm thinking I have some years to live before my death.

September 4, 2013

I finished a painting of Srila Prabhupada and two worshipers on either side of his *vyasana* and I did a "timed painting." Just gave myself an hour and went, keeping the hand moving. It turned out a self portrait with an abstract celtic mark with spray paint. The guests are gone, but Bhakta Gaura comes tomorrow. The US is planning to drop bombs on Syria. I'm following my schedule. Chanting preacher peacefully in the morning, starting at midnight and chanting rapidly. Good painting coming out. The leaves are falling. Krishna loves Radha, and Radha loves Krishna.

September 5, 2013

Did two paintings, one a copy of a violinist by Chagall and one abstract. Hemagaura came and was excited by my personal symbol, a blue egg shape with a white circle around it. He said someday someone will write a Ph.D. explaining what I meant by the imagery. I drew three men. It started out redundant and uninspired but ended up unique: a small runt of a man stripped to the waist, red nipples and one-toned brown pants. Then a brown man smiling all in saffron. Then a great-sized man with teeth and multicolored sports clothes, red and white pants, a two-toned blue shirt. A good day for art. I looked at the calendar to pick my Vyasa-puja celebration. Mokshada Ekadasi is December 13, the following day is a Saturday, but we thought it was too close to Christmas, and people may have plans. We

chose December 7th, the day after my 74th birthday. It will be a one-day celebration with meetings at 10:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

My heart is in the highlands. I keep thinking of that sentence. Christina Baldwin says that the most popular part of her journal workshops is on dreaming. They are very fragile. When you first wake up you have to impress them on your mind. I want to make a renewed attempt to recall them, write them down and speculate on their symbol and meaning. I know they are madly bizarre and not directly Krishna conscious, but they are messages from the unconscious, and they say we spend one-third of our life dreaming. I just placed a Dictaphone under my pillow.

September 6, 2013, morning

I dreamt Pancadravida Swami was telling me we are going to a preaching program in Mexico. The people were so enthusiastic that as soon as you raised your hand to ask a question they applauded and even more so when you spoke. We thought it was even too enthusiastic. The dream reminds me that I don't take part in enthusiastic preaching endeavors. I don't do them anymore, but it was nice to remember the previous experience. I don't regret not doing it now, but I'm glad I used to do it and to remember it in a dream. That I "complained" about my inadequate journal writing doesn't mean I don't like to do it. I just don't tackle big agendas like meditations, assignments, etc. Just let me putter along and put down what I can. I know something will come from writing books and my experience in ISKCON, and I spoke on it in my lecture.

I dreamt I was watching a Hollywood blockbuster movie. In it, a demon was harassing the Hare Krishna devotees in Trinidad. A big contingent of them were present as part of a world tour. The demon was so powerful, the devotees could do nothing to stop him. In different incidents, it showed how he fearlessly harassed the devotees and their women. The police finally acted, and a squad of their men and attack dogs went

after him. He ran away, but he disappeared from the police. Then he drove up to me on a motorcycle and proposed I work on a film with him, but I refused. The devotees surrounded him and tried reasoning with him. He brought out his doubts and criticism of Prabhupada. He said there were mistakes in the indexes in Srila Prabhupada's books, since he used them. The devotees defended Srila Prabhupada and expressed their faith in him. They said he was the first guru to come to Trinidad and speak on the authority of Vedic scriptures. The demon had a change of heart and shut himself up and joined with them. There was a great victory. While dreaming I wondered how the new public would take to this movie which was so openly pro-Krishna conscious. It had footage of Srila Prabhupada. Anyway, the film went and the demon was pacified. They spoke of an oncoming meeting with Srila Prabhupada and the Dalai Lama. The film had all the ingredients of a blockbuster movie but had clear propaganda for Hare Krishna.

September 6, 2013, evening

I painted quickly. A *brahmacari* on the left, a bird flying, and on the right, abstract objects. Then we went to the urologist. I picked up on a big Republican magazine in the doctor's office filled with anti-Obama articles. Jeb Bush for president in 2016. I stained my pants when I urinated. The urologist is going to run something up my penis on November 8. I drew four men drawing and chanting. Gurudasa said I didn't dictate my *japa* report for September 5, but I did. I hear the ice-cream truck running in the distance. These are the last days. Last days for corn, too. Srila Prabhupada writes that seeing the *arca-vigraha* of Krishna may be different in the beginning, but gradually he will see that tangible form. Shadow is barking in the neighbor's yard, *voff, voff*. The ice-cream truck passes close by. What is Obama's long-term strategy for Syria? He said he was against the chemical weapons of the genocide madman. Although the policy of bombing by the US, people are also against.

September 7, 2013

I started copying a Chagall painting of a violinist and a boy begging, but it was too compacted to finish. In the afternoon I drew a woman with two men and, while listening to music, did four men in baggy clothes. Drawing until Narayana interrupted me at 6:00 p.m. with milk. Obama is passing the buck asking Congress to decide on whether to bomb Syria. Just don't bomb me. We had the "Indian set" for lunch, spinach and *panir*, rice, *dal* and *puris*. And a *Caitanya-caritamṛta* purport. Prabhupada explains that the soul is more powerful than the sun. You can travel in space at great velocity. Yet people don't care for the soul in this "bestial civilization" of eating, mating, sleeping, and defending. Kapiladeva spoke a verse to his mother how "My devotees always see the smiling face of My form, with eyes like the rising morning sun." Prabhupada wrote a great deal about the Deity worship. The atheists consider Them as idols, but the devotees take great pleasure in worshiping Them as Radha-Krishna, Lakṣmi-Narayana, and Sita-Rama. There are instructions how to carve the Deities in scriptures. At present, we can't see Krishna or hear Him as He is in the spiritual world, but He kindly appears in material forms. The spiritual master teaches the disciple how to dress and decorate the Deity, clean the temple and worship. Sometimes very advanced devotees speak to the Deity. Sometimes the Deity appears to him in a dream. Even a third-class devotee is on the liberated platform, above the impersonalist. They think you can imagine a form of God for the time being, but when you are liberated you merge into the impersonal absolute. All this was good to hear for my worship of Radha-Govinda. They are my *ista-devatas*. At night I take Krishna's hand and take His flute and place a screen in front of Them to sleep. I awake them at 11:45 and have *darsana* while I do *japa*.

Dream: I was lying down alone in an apartment. I felt a deep need to write poetry for process, not for possible publication, but as a vocation. I thought of Rilke. It would be difficult at first

to produce good work because I'm long out of practice in writing that kind of poetry. A lot also went on in the dream. People came into the apartment and disturbed me and then they went away, and I got up from bed and new people, ghost-like figures, appeared and said, "We are your brothers," etc. But what I most want to take from the dream and act on is the desire to work on serious poetry alone, out of my own spiritual needs. I want to make a collection of poems and start writing. Accumulate poems and decide later what you want to keep.

September 8, 6:10 p.m.

I had a dream that I should take up poetry as a vocation. I skipped painting and wrote poetry. The first introductory one was good, announcing the dream of vocation. I wrote two more, but now the intense aura of the dream has passed, and I don't know how to proceed. I suppose I'll just try it at a designated time. I had another dream that Niranjana Swami was hosting me at his house. Jadurani came there and was making propaganda for Narayana Maharaja. She got violent and Niranjana wrestled with her and threw her out. We then realized it was late, 10:30 p.m., and we prepared to go to sleep. He had many beds, and he showed me mine. He gave me soap and a towel. I was about to eat a sandwich, and someone stopped me and said it wasn't good to eat before sleeping.

I would really like to take up poetry writing. I have started a new legal pad for the purpose. Keep writing poems without judging them or thinking of publication, a kind of poetry journal with numbered poems.

I'll go back to painting tomorrow at the usual time. I could try writing poems after my early morning nap.

I have a beginning of a headache.

A poem comes from the heart
you write what's on your mind.

A poem should be useful,
one-to-one with the reader

in his or her lonely hour.

Lord Narayana has energies called *bhu* and *nila*. The Alvars saw Him personally with His energies and Garuda. In His four hands he held club, disc, lotus, and conch. Krishna has two hands, and He holds a flute.

September 9, 2013

I read a few poems by William Carlos Williams. I wrote one this morning after a dream of *kirtana*. I was cold during my afternoon nap. I had many dreams of being with my disciples in Ireland. Maybe because I heard Bhakti Vikasa Swami renamed my disciple Bhagavata dasi as Bhagavati dasi. Rascaldom. I'm not going to Ireland. I'm not going anywhere. I hope to write a poem tomorrow. Do it as a discipline. Finish your paintings of the man writing poetry. I drew pictures this afternoon. The world is crazy. Prabhupada said, "Who is crazy?" Those who take the body as the self. The sane are the devotees engaged in devotional service. I'm a friend to my friends, the devotees. Baladeva and Narayana have much friction. I wish they would get along. I have to prepare a Vyasa-puja talk for December 7, no hurry. I rode a thousand meters today. Write a poem about your dream life.

Too jumbled to sort out,
sometimes one comes clear,
and you remember it.
Hanshan writes of life's quick passing,
the pretty young girl looks soon
like a crushed sugar cane.

I was secretary for the GBC and spokesperson for the committee that met with Prabhupada in May of 1977. It was clear to us that Srila Prabhupada wanted us to initiate as "regular gurus." After his disappearance the *rtvik* sect is nonsense. Too

bad so many gurus fell down, but still the *parampara* continues. Write poems.

September 10, 2013, 6:19 p.m.

I painted a picture of a man writing a poem on a piece of yellow paper. Behind him was the white Muse hitting him with red bolts of inspiration. On the yellow page I wrote these words:

“I dreamt I wanted my vocation
as a poet. I wrote down some of the
details of the dream, and here I am with my pain.”

I painted a second canvas on a saffron background conceived as two *gosvamis*. One was chanting *japa* and the other was sitting writing with a pen. In the afternoon I drew two women and a man dancing and chanting.

The poem writing is going well. I’m drawing from my dream life: two wonderful ones of *kirtana* and *japa* and a horrible nightmare. I’ll have the nine poems I’ve written typed by Gurudasa, and I’ll keep them in a binder.

September 11, 2013, 6:25 p.m.

I slept in the morning and dreamt and wrote a poem instead of painting. In the afternoon while listening to music, I drew four men dancing and chanting. Then I quickly began one of three men chanting. Gurudasa typed up nine of my poems and accompanied them with excellent illustrations. Maybe in the future we could do a book, but it would cost a lot because the pictures are color. Narayana was telling me how hard it is for him to live with Baladeva, but he’s trying to be tolerant. Narayana also lives with a lot of pain. He said I’m also “hard-core,” as I demand everything to be right and on time.

I’m excited by the poems. They are mostly dream poems, but they don’t have to be.

"I dreamt I was sleeping on my back
in a bed in Dallas. A man came
into the room and began building
a base to a piece of furniture.
He came over to me and said
I am happy. You are unhappy.
I disagreed. I was content and in my bed.
Then I realized I was dreaming,
and this person was part of myself.
I went back to sleep and ignored him."

September 13, 2013, 6:18 p.m.

I painted Srimati Radharani and a *gopi-manjari* and a *sadhu*. I slept late in my afternoon nap and only had time to finish a three-men drawing, but I was unable to write a poem. Baladeva said I should not worry or try to fix the drips in my paintings. It's a natural part of naive art. My Radharani looked all right, sort of noble. My journal is tongue-tied. Anyway, they caught the skunk, and Baladeva fed the cleaning lady *prasadam* and preached to her. Baladeva is proud of his act of compassion on Radhastami and freeing the skunk from pain in the cage when its neck was caught. My journal wants to fly, but it's a turtle. They say I hurt my heart when I was smaller. Hanshan has a keen sentence of mortality, "All the past emperors are in the graves, the faces of the pretty young girls will soon look like crushed sugar cane, and he is white-haired living on Cold Mountain."

September 14, 2013

I painted Srimati Radharani with two *sakhis*. Their mouths came out nice. Oh journal, oh languisher. The plant behind the Srila Prabhupada *murti* is dying. Plants die too. Isana is back with Alexi, good news. She sees his good qualities and will be patient with his weaknesses. Together they will distribute my books at the Ukrainian and Russian festivals. No such luck with N and B.

They are disharmonious under the same roof. It is unfortunate. I drew four men dancing. Had a dream too compacted and mundane to write down. Madhumangala shot and killed a criminal. I identified the mugger for the police. “Oh,” they said happily “Satsvarupa did it with his New York accent.” Alexi will carry the books. He is strong enough. Isana has a bad back. Someone said I am in my “little world of preaching,” implying I am selfish, insensitive, and indifferent to anything else. Seamus Heaney is dead at 74. Hanshan’s “Cold Mountain” poems. Poems, a penny each. The prize was awarded to Ezra Pound for *The Cantos*. William Carlos Williams’ *Paterson* was the runner-up. No one knows my poems. God-like creatures strode the earth in the olden days. The *gopis*’ breasts are compared to forehead protuberances of a baby cupid elephant (*Gopala-campu*). What imagery! I’ve painted Radha two days in a row, and what shall I paint tomorrow.

September 16, 2013

I painted Krishna running ahead, with Balarama just behind Him, and others running to catch up—“I shall be the first to touch Krishna!” Then I did a semi-abstract with a sprits background. After the discipline of the *krishna-lila* painting, it felt good to let my hand move freer. I did a blue man, some abstract symbols (Kandinsky triangle and circle), and two colored celtic spirals (and a brown woman). In the afternoon I finished a drawing of a woman and two men. From five to six I worked with Baladeva on the autobiography. Narayana brought me new sheets and a winter comforter. Painting is fun. Baladeva dresses me in my painting clothes. I painted Krishna running! What will I do tomorrow. Memoir. I’ve not been writing poems. Get back to it, a poetry journal with no judging or thoughts of publication.

Tuesday, September 17, 2013

I painted Krishna and Balarama eating off leaf plates with the *gopas*. It took a long time because there was so many boys and plates, but I finished it. In the afternoon I started a drawing of four men dancing. Then I worked on the autobiography with Baladeva. We caught a second skunk in the trap. Went across the street to set traps for Sacisuta's long-term resident skunk. In a *Caitanya-caritamṛta* purport Srila Prabhupada wrote about the Gauranga-nagaris who worship Gaura but do not worship Radha-Krishna. He said their practice was "newly invented" by their "fertile brains" and that they were "playthings in the hands of *maya*." How strong he is to protect us with the right understanding. D. Swami asked, "Does he ever get bored?"—simply staying in Stuyvesant Falls. But I don't get bored. I'm happy in a creative flow, like the falls and the river. I am going to die soon so why not just stay and do concentrated *bhajana*. I'm alive and busy in colors and shapes. Laksmi-moni devi dasi gave class at the Potomac Temple. She was here recently visiting Kaulini Prabhu for a few days, but I didn't see hide nor hair of her. Ten-year-old Laksmana is completely absorbed in sports, in his father's approval and good guidance. He's got clothes and baseball bats. It keeps him clean, but I've never seen him with *japa* beads.

September 24, 2013

I haven't written in the journal in a week. Wrote and read poetry. Read the proofread manuscript of volume two. Posting writings against the impersonalist voidist. "She may get weary. Women do get weary, wearing the same shabby dress. Try a little tenderness." I may get weary. Poets do get weary, trying the same free verse, try a little tenderness. "Shut up and write." Just go ahead into process. Hanuman ate the sun or was he prevented? Illustration of him with the sun in his mouth. He protects those who invoke him. Bounce the ball against the wall. Cough until you croak. I painted Sukadeva speaking to Maharaja

Pariksit and *sadhus*. B said I should have added more detail. Kaulini Prabhu is playing on a viola. Yo-yo Ma on a cello. Memorial Day parade ended at the end of our street at the Veteran of Foreign Wars hall. American flag on a big pole. Soldiers fire their shots from their rifles. March in the parade as a Cub Scout. Free write your way home.

December 2, 2013

I had one of the strangest dreams I've ever had. Other devotees and I were homeless and lost away from the city where we lived. We approached an official who said we were in Arkansas.

Arkansas! How could we be so scattered far away. We paid some money and approached a man who was supposed to know everything. As soon as we told him we were lost and homeless, he said our master had died and all his disciples were homeless. All but Jim, who had taken over the movement and who was enjoying with all the women and trying to take over the world. He said we could go back to the women who had lent us the money to see him. I departed from my devotee friend. I approached a military officer who wore a religious insignia. I asked him, "Are you religious?" He said, "No, I just carry the Bible, but I'm not religious." "You're humble," I said. He ordered an expensive meal. The woman asked, "What will your wife have?" He told me what to order, dry and inexpensive food. I forgot to mention—when the all-knowing man told me our movement was dispersed, I asked him, "If we keep our monk's vows will we be safe?" He said, "No, give up that identification or you will be put in danger. Zen is finished, beatniks are finished, anti-Richard Nixon is finished."

I could have continued dreaming this strange dream series, but I wanted to stop it. The subconscious seems so powerful. I woke up and thought my life could be filled with anxiety, and I'd never get a chance to see my mother or have Krishna conscious memories.

DREAM WORK AND MIGRAINE

In the story *Vishnu-rata Vijaya*, there's an appendix of "Dreams of an Ex-Hunter." This reminds me of the extensive dream work I've done for a number of years. I used to keep a mini-cassette tape recorder under my pillow, and when I awoke from a dream, I would dictate it into the tape recorder and have it typed up. Sometimes when I couldn't remember the details of my dream, I would just speak a story ending in my conscious state, trying to make it similar to the dream-source, to the dream-director.

I tracked my dreams because they were such good stories coming straight from the unconscious, such bizarre, unlikely stories, and also because I wanted to know more about myself.

I published two copies of a book of collected dreams called *Fifty Dreams of a Struggling Sadhaka*. But there were many more dreams that I didn't print, but I just kept privately. I often dreamed repetitively, or rather had dreams of repeated themes. I dreamt that I was back in the Navy under new circumstances. Sometimes in these dreams I would gradually become aware that I didn't have a Navy obligation, and I would awake from the dream.

I also had repetitive dreams of being back in college. I would be going through the hassle of registering for courses, or trying to find out the time or the room of my class.

I read many books on dreams and dream interpretations. I read one by a Christian author who said God can direct your dreams. I read Jungian dream accounts and Freudian interpretations of dreams. These people considered dreams very important and taught you how to interpret your dreams. One method was a simple method called "Aha!" This meant that you just had to review your dream, think it over, and then you would suddenly feel an "Aha!" moment – it would be revealed to you what the meaning of the dream was. But another author said

this was too simplistic, and they all had their different opinions as to how to interpret your dreams.

Srila Prabhupada said dreams were nonsensical things, of no importance. He said you dreamed at night of what you did in the day. But then he said for devotees, dreams can sometimes be very serious. For great devotees, Krishna sometimes speaks to them in a dream. There are many references in the scriptures of reported dreams by devotees. In the story of Madhavendra Puri, there are three or four dreams. At first Madhavendra Puri has a dream that Gopala speaks to him in Vrndavana and tells him that He's buried in a bush. Madhavendra Puri then acts on that dream and gathers the villagers, and they find the Deity of Gopala hidden in the underbrush. Then Gopala appears to him in another dream and asks him to go to Jagannatha Puri to get some sandalwood for His heated body. Madhavendra Puri acts on that dream also and sets out for Jagannatha Puri to get some sandalwood. On his way back, he stops in the Remuna temple to be with the Ksira-cora Gopinatha Deity, who stole condensed milk for Madhavendra Puri, appears to him in a dream, and tells him to stay there and put the sandalwood on that Ksira-cora Gopinatha Deity, and that will be as good as giving it to the Gopala Deity in Vrndavana because the Deities are the same Krishna.

There's also another dream in that story where the Ksira-cora Gopinatha appears in the dream to a *pujari* and tells him to get up and take the condensed milk that was put by the Deity Himself in a hidden place and bring it to Madhavendra Puri, who's out in the marketplace. There are at least four dreams in the story of Madhavendra Puri, and all of them are taken seriously, and all of them come from Krishna.

Prabhupada had several dreams in his life where his spiritual master Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura appeared to him and told him to take *sannyasa*. Prabhupada was a householder at the time, and he thought, "How horrible! How can I take *sannyasa* and leave my family?" But his Guru Maharaja came to him and made a deep impression on him, and finally he took

sannyasa, prodded by his Guru Maharaja. On the *Jaladuta*, after Prabhupada had two heart attacks, he had a vision or dream that he saw Krishna in His many forms rowing a boat, assuring him he would pass over the ocean. So dreams are not nonsense when they appear to a pure devotee.

My own experience with dreams is that I don't usually dream of Prabhupada or Krishna. I have had dreams of Prabhupada appearing to me, and they are very emotional for me. I feel a sense of closeness to him. Sometimes I appear to be his servant, in a servant capacity, and sometimes some unusual things out of character are taking place between us. But they are always very meaningful and create a bond. When I wake up, I'm grateful to have dreamt of Srila Prabhupada.

Dreams can be abused, however. Some devotees have claimed that Prabhupada was appearing to them in dreams and directing them how things should be done in ISKCON, and they proclaimed themselves to be "seers" and asked all the devotees to obey them. This was overdone, and the persons were considered incredulous and making up material.

I have dreams often of Tamala Krishna Maharaja in character, chastising me, being heavy with me, telling me what I should do, bringing up old fears of his dominance over me.

Sometimes my disciples have had dreams of me. But they seem sometimes out of character. Once a devotee in Russia dreamt that I should go see a monk in the White Mountains of Russia and receive treatment from him whereby I would get rid of my headaches. And she proposed that I actually go to Russia and see this monk. But I deferred from that, not wanting to act on her whimsical dream.

Speaking of people having well-intentioned dreams about what I should do for my health, people have also given me a great myriad of suggestions about it. People have suggested that I take certain herbs, that I pinch the bridge of my nose when I get a headache. People have asked me if they could do Reiki, a

kind of mystical therapy which they could do from a remote place . . . from a picture of me, and they asked if they could do it, and I said all right you can do it. And people have been doing that for me around the world. People have tried to sell me products for my headaches: juices, potents, pills, send me to doctors (quacks) . . . One man came and had me wear a leather cap, and then he poured hot ghee into the cap that touched my scalp, filled up around my head, and I got such a reaction from it I vomited. And I didn't get any relief from the headache.

The remedies and the suggestions are a bewildering array. Each one is accompanied by a witness saying it worked for them. They say after years of searching for cure, they finally found it in this place, and that is their testimony. And they ask me to please, please, try it because they believe it will work. But I am beyond the point of responding to these suggestions since I am being treated by a doctor and having reasonable success controlling the headaches with allopathic medicine. I'm not open to the exotic cures.

Other opinions I've received about my headaches: there is the camp of naturopathy, which regards allopathic medicine as from the devil and to take any medicines from the Western treatment is almost ungodly to them.

Well, I tried that. For ten years I didn't take any allopathic medicines, and then for a year and a half I lived with, I brought from India, a Dr. Sharma, who is the grandson of a famous pioneer in Hindu naturopath medicine. Which is western, but he introduced it with a Hindu twist. And you ate only leaves and vegetables, and you did yoga exercises, and you refrained from all medicines with the idea that the body would take care of itself. But after a year and a half I just became anemic, and there was no sign of any cure from the headaches, and he charged me a good deal of money for his treatment. And he used me as a "calling card" to others that he had treated me with success, and he should be taken on by others as a doctor for them.

Some people said I was just suffering due to karma, and that there was nothing I should do for it but suffer, take my due desserts.

Some thought I was suffering from being a guru, either from the sins of my disciples, or the offenses of taking too much worship.

I titled this “Dream Work,” but I have digressed to talking about my medical condition. And this is all right. I am working under the inspiration of Mark Twain’s autobiography, where he just writes life, whatever appeals to him, and as soon as that pales, he takes up an inspiration somewhere else.

I’m continuing to talk about my medical condition, and medical conditions in general in devotional service. We always go to Srila Prabhupada for an example. So what was his attitude towards his disciples’ illnesses? He wasn’t a doctor. He didn’t prescribe Ayurvedic treatment over other treatments. He said, “Do whatever is practical and depend on Krishna.” He was strong on depending on Krishna and chanting Hare Krishna, doing the needful. But he said health was very important and that if someone was ill they should do the needful, they should take some medicine. Whether it’s allopathic or Ayurvedic, they should take some regimen and rest, and if they were ill, they couldn’t serve until they got better. I know from the example of my wife, Jadurani—he told her not to paint anymore when she was very sick. And he gave her a diet and told her to stop painting and just rest. He was concerned for his disciples’ health. But he wasn’t fanatic or even inclined toward a particular line of medicine.

For his own health, which he had so much trouble with over the years, he was not a good patient. He tried some Ayurvedic practices, he tried some allopathic medicine, but he didn’t take it very seriously. He mostly depended on Krishna. He would reciprocate with a disciple or doctor who asked him to take some pills. But then he would stop taking them. Once devotees tried to change his diet from his regular rice, *dal*, *sabji* and

maybe a *samosa* or *pakora*—and after a while he would say about the devotees who were serving him a reduced diet, “To hell with the starvation committee!” And when the doctor prescribed that he not drink coconut water in the afternoon, and he did anyway, and his servant came in and said, “Prabhupada, you’re not supposed to drink this.” He said, “I am Krishna dasa, I am not doctor dasa.”

He was a little ornery and not a patient. You remember, he broke out of the Beth Israel Hospital when he had a stroke and discharged himself against the doctor’s orders.

He was not inclined to doctors and hospitals at the end of his life. He said, “Please don’t take me to the hospital.” He remarked that one of his Godbrothers, Bon Maharaja, was proud to have been hooked up to many tubes and treatments in the hospital. Prabhupada didn’t want to do that. At the end of his life he just stayed in bed and took some treatments from an Ayurvedic *kaviraja*. But even that he didn’t take so strictly. And he did not go to the hospital to extend his life.

My own breakdown and migraine headaches were due to my sacrificing my youth in the fire of the *sankirtana* movement. I worked as hard as I could, in a sense, against my psychophysical nature, taking on so much intense management of GBC zones and disciples and working with temple presidents and GBC men and GBC meetings, which I was not inclined to do. I’m more an introverted brahminical kind of person. But I did my best because I thought that’s what Prabhupada wanted. But I had a breakdown in the 1980s with migraine headaches, and I was forced out of action.

I took to living at Gita-nagari and wrote books called *Journal and Poems* while I was recuperating there. These have been inspirational to people who have also been ill. I’m in touch with devotees who have also been ill and suffer a stigma of not being active, not even being able to chant their rounds. And they live with this. They have to accept their limits, to believe that Krishna loves them and that Krishna accepts them even though

they are not up to par. I encourage them in this. I don't tell them that they're malingerers, but I give them self-esteem and encouragement and inspiration in my letters to them. But they have to live with this social stigma of being an invalid in a movement that demands so much proactive participation.

I myself now live in a semi-invalid condition in my house in New York. I don't travel because travel promotes headaches and breakdowns, and I'm old. I don't know if there's a stigma, social stigma connected with me. There are some people who say, "Oh, he's always sick," as if it's a bad thing that I am doing. But I know that I'm not a hypochondriac, I'm not pretending to be sick. I actually get bad headaches when I undergo stress.

My particular kind of headaches were diagnosed by my disciple, doctor-psychiatrist, Nitai Gaurasundara. He was the first one to find out actually what was wrong with me, and he diagnosed me as having "anticipatory anxiety" migraine headaches. I would anticipate the pain of the next headache and get into anxiety about that, and that would trigger the headache. It would be a trigger for the next headache.

He saw that the most important thing was to stop the pain of the headaches, because the pain of the headaches was worse than anything. It produced patterns of self-fulfilling prophecies of more pain, and so to stop the headaches was the most important thing, more important than any side effects that medicines might produce. We have been working on that basis with Dr. Nitai Gaurasundara. I am indebted to him.

Other stigmas are the stigma that it is mentally caused, which in my case is true. To admit to a mental disease is a stigma in religious society or in a religious movement. One doesn't want to have a mental disease.

Just chanting Hare Krishna is supposed to remove all mental diseases. But one may be hampered mentally, and to take medicine that changes the consciousness is a stigma—that you shouldn't do that, they say. But if it helps your service to take a

medicine that changes your consciousness and makes you mentally better, then that should be done.

Another question in medical treatment is therapy with counselors. There have been many devotees who have taken to academic and professional training to become counselors or psychiatrists, and they treat other devotees. We like to go to counselors who are devotees, who realize the importance of celibacy, vegetarianism, and devotion to Krishna, and who will support us in those values. We don't like to go to counselors who would tell us it's all right to masturbate and it's all right to have illicit sex and to take intoxication. Those are sinful activities, and we don't want to be counseled to do them.

But devotees can take counseling, and devotees have been helped by counseling. I am not receiving any counseling now, but at times of crisis I did take counseling and was helped by it, to sort out my problems during a time of fall down.

The very conservative element in ISKCON might frown on counseling, although that is disappearing in present times. It's widely accepted that it's all right to receive counseling from a devotee counselor.

Another point is Prabhupada's own example and our inability to imitate it. Prabhupada died on the battlefield. He told his friend Bhagatji in Vrndavana that he wanted to be like a *ksatriya*, who with his last movement threw his sword forward in dying.

So, for twelve years Prabhupada came to America and started this war on *maya* by starting the Hare Krishna movement. The devotees he recruited were in their 20s, and they took on this mood. But they cannot be expected to keep it up for their whole lives at that pace that Prabhupada kept up for twelve years.

For one thing, he was very powerful. He was on a transcendental platform; he knew he was not this body. He was self-realized. We're not so fully transcendental. Plus, we have a longer span of life to deal with in Krishna consciousness, and devotees have died prematurely from heart attack, stroke, and adrenaline burnout. They have to be aware that they're not

capable of keeping in that wartime, head-on adrenaline rush-fight to push on the movement. They have to retire and take care of their bodies at a certain stage and be more brahminical.

In ISKCON, if you're not fit and healthy, if you fall by the wayside, you become irrelevant and you're brushed aside. This is not good. We should have compassion for our Godbrothers and Godsisters who become incapacitated, and not let them be stigmatized for being incapacitated. As I said, we cannot be expected to keep up the pace into our 60s and 70s. One reason is that most of us misspent our youth in illicit sex, intoxication, and other sinful habits which made impressions on our bodies and are terminating our lives.

We must remember that we disciples of Prabhupada and granddisciples of Prabhupada are the first generation of Westerners to come to Krishna consciousness. Prabhupada and his Godbrothers were raised in a different culture. They were raised in austere and pious families, and they tended to live a long age as practitioners in the Gaudiya Math. They lived into their 80s and 90s. The disciples of Prabhupada, with their misspent youths, can't be expected to keep that up in the same way. This is an experiment of people coming to Krishna consciousness after taking LSD and burning themselves out in various ways in their youth, but not on the standard of the Indian *babajis* and *yogis*.

guru reform notebook

I intend to publish the entire *Guru Reform Notebook*. I will now speak the background to this book, as it is very important to know the situation in which it was written.

It wasn't written in a vacuum, but in the midst of a very tense situation into which the book exploded like a bombshell into the Society of ISKCON. Here is the background:

Prabhupada was getting very ill in the spring of 1977, and he called his GBC men to be with him in Vrndavana to settle affairs. They met with him and discussed some important topics about the eventuality of his disappearance.

One question was about how initiations would be conducted. Prabhupada said that his disciples would become "regular gurus" after he disappeared. They would initiate disciples, and the initiated people would become their own disciples in disciplic succession, just as he wrote often in his books and spoke in his lectures.

Some months later, Prabhupada met with his secretary, Tamala Krishna Maharaja about the fact that Prabhupada had many disciples waiting to be initiated by him, but he felt too ill to initiate them. What to do? . . . Prabhupada compiled a list of 11 devotees who could perform initiations on his behalf. They would not be initiating their own disciples but would be initiating on behalf of Prabhupada. This list of 11 was published,

and devotees began holding fire *yajnas*, initiating disciples who were Prabhupada's, and added to the list of Prabhupada's disciples.

Then on November 14th of 1977, Prabhupada passed away, and we had to deal with the fact of the disciplic succession. In the next GBC meeting in 1978 in Mayapur, the GBC decided that the 11 names mentioned by Prabhupada as persons to initiate on his behalf should be the first initiating gurus in ISKCON, and there would be no others.

This was, in part, influenced by words spoken by Sridhara Maharaja to the devotees who visited him. It was said that those who were qualified by Prabhupada choosing them should be the initiating gurus.

The gurus were then installed in their various zones in a system of zonal *acarya*. This meant that those gurus would initiate everyone in the area, and no one else could initiate there. Also, the worship was introduced on a very high standard imitating the worship of Prabhupada. Large *vyasasanas* were installed in the temple to be used only by the initiating gurus who initiated in that zone. The Godbrothers who were not gurus sat on the floor while the initiating gurus sat on the *vyasasanas* and gave their lectures.

Then disturbances came as some of the initiating gurus fell down, one after another. Three or four fell down, and there were emergency GBC meetings how to deal with it. Their zones were assigned to someone else among the 11 gurus, and business went on as usual. Some people suggested changing the system, but the system prevailed. At the next GBC meeting, the 11 gurus met to decide whether any more persons should be added as initiating gurus. And they decided no, none should be added. There was a growing feeling of discontent among the devotees in general as they wanted a better example to be set by the gurus, and they wanted more gurus to be initiating.

Years went by and only one or two or three persons were added to the group of the original 11. Finally, after nine years, in 1986,

a grass-roots movement of Prabhupada's disciples who were not initiating gurus began meeting amongst themselves and speaking outright criticism of the existing system by the GBC and the initiating gurus. They had a meeting in New Vrindaban in September of 1986 in which they presented papers and spoke openly against the GBC.

Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu, in particular, wrote a very influential paper in which he compared the GBC's mistakes to the mistakes of the Gaudiya Math after the disappearance of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, and in which he said the zonal *acarya* system was a concoction, and that the 11 gurus had taken over power unfairly. Jayadvaita Maharaja coined a catchy, four-point program he said had to be initiated by the GBC. It called for four "R's." One was realization. First they had to realize that they were wrong and had made great mistakes and offenses to their Godbrothers. Second, they had to Regret and make profuse apologies to their Godbrothers. Next, there had to be Rectification, and the system had to be changed by introducing more gurus. And then fourth, Reunion of the Society could only come by this process. But the atmosphere was now divisive. There was a spirit at New Vrindaban that this was like a Battlefield of Kuruksetra with the grassroots membership against the GBC.

Then, a committee was formed of persons, some of them GBC members and some of them grass roots members which would interview GBC members in Mayapur at the next GBC meeting and would seek for reform. It was in the midst of this turmoil that I went to India at Kartika of 1986. There, I experienced a change of heart by associating with my Godbrothers, who convinced me of my mistakes in holding on to the exclusivity of the 11 — now 13 — gurus in the zonal guru system. They impressed me on the importance of *siksa-guru* in the lives of devotees and said we had neglected to honor the Godbrothers as *siksa-gurus* and had only emphasized *diksa-gurus*.

I came away with a sense of having done wrong and wanting to reform myself.

The history of this era is complex. The takeover of power in the institution of the gurus was not just done by the gurus themselves, it was done by the whole Society. The Godbrothers were the ones who set up the big *vyasasanas* and insisted on the *aratis* and enthused the disciples to worship their gurus. The whole Society embraced the idea of the 11 gurus, and in the beginning it was very productive for book distribution and rallying the enthusiasm of the devotees.

One early note that we were doing the wrong thing was registered by Pradyumna dasa. He wrote me a letter as the Chairman of the GBC, which I was in 1978, suggesting that we use the Gaudiya Matha system of lecturing just from small pillow or seat, elevated seat, which could be used by everyone for *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class and not one elevated seat and that words like *paramahansa ki jaya* not be recited, and there should not be such exalted worship because it wasn't done in the Gaudiya Matha. But his word was ignored by me and the others, because we thought that we should do not what the Gaudiya Matha did but what Prabhupada gave the example of. We tried to fill his big shoes.

When the first gurus fell down, I personally didn't think the system should be changed but that it was the fault of those individuals. Even when it happened repeatedly. I did not think I was abusing the system and worked harmoniously within my zone with the temple presidents. If anything, the fault I saw was that the temple presidents turned me into a kind of figurehead and denied my access to my disciples. I had very strong temple presidents in my zone, and they controlled the lives of my disciples. When I would go to visit the different temples, they would meet with me and tell me which of my disciples were doing well, and which were not doing well. They knew them more intimately than I did. I had to take their word for it and relate to my disciples according to their opinion.

This sometimes created a rift, a crisis of faith. My disciples saw me disapproving of them because the temple presidents

disapproved them. I felt I was becoming a figurehead without direct access to my disciples.

Aside from the flagrant fall downs of the gurus, there were abuses of power by the gurus. Sometimes they fought among themselves over initiating different persons, wealthy persons, and persons who were not in their zone. And sometimes when a guru fell down and their zone was taken over by others, it was not done by consulting the devotees in that zone, but it was just done by a kind of brute force by a prominent, outspoken guru who expanded his zone.

The gurus also began to give themselves titles in addition to their regular names. Names like Visnupada, Gurudeva, Gurupada, Acaryadeva, and so on.

My own experience of the temple presidents having more influence over the disciples than I did was not the usual thing. The usual thing that occurred was that the gurus manipulated their disciples over the interests of the temple presidents, and had them do what they wanted them to do. This created an unfair use of authority, stripping the local leaders of their authority.

They moved people from place to place and collected monies as *guru-daksina*.

My *Guru Reform Notebook* began with diary entries starting October 29, 1986. I mentioned a talk I had with Jayadvaita Swami. He said that some GBC members and gurus are proud, spending too much money on themselves, accepting too much worship, not reforming, not leading, and all leaders bare the shame of not finishing Srila Prabhupada's *samadhi*. I thought that he was right. Some say that for their mistakes the GBC members should resign.

In my *Guru Reform Notebook* I gave some notes while listening to speeches on Prabhupada's disappearance day. Tamala Krishna Goswami confessed that ISKCON leaders needed to

correct mistakes they had made since Prabhupada's disappearance.

He said we had failed to give shelter to all the devotees. In order to correct mistakes he said it required courage and humility. He said it is embarrassing to admit that for the last ten years we had been committing mistakes, but he said it is better to commit ten years of mistakes than to let them go on for another 10,000 years. He said we had to rectify our mistakes—or else.

I wrote of talks I had with other devotees like Jagadisa Maharaja, whom I talked to to help me understand regret and realization. He told me we should regret the zonal *acarya* system with its byproducts because it has stifled our Godbrothers' initiative to preach. The preaching at a certain level (initiation, responsibility for the lives of new devotees) has been monopolized by the few who became gurus. All others have had to relate to their guru-Godbrothers almost as if they were their guru-Godbrothers' elder disciples. Thus, consciously or unconsciously, the non-guru Godbrothers were not encouraged to become fit to take disciples.

For rectification we should fully encourage all of Srila Prabhupada's disciples to prepare themselves to act as *siksa-* and *diksa-gurus* according to Lord Caitanya's instruction that everyone should become a guru by learning and teaching the message of Lord Caitanya.

I was initially afraid that if I introduced to my disciples the idea that I had made mistakes they would lose faith in me as a guru. But I was encouraged to go ahead and admit the mistakes and that the disciples would accept me as humble and honest. It was more important that they knew the truth than what they thought of me. In my *Guru Reform Notebook* I wrote a letter to my disciple Baladeva. Baladeva was feeling upset by the pressure that was being put on the gurus to not hold their positions rightly. But I told Baladeva that I was going to go with the

reform movement, and his choice was to go with me or be left behind.

At this point, my own personal fault was of going along with the system and not speaking against it. I was quieter than most and not so abusive, but the GBC was the watchdog of the ISKCON society. If the watchdog does not bark when there is danger, then it is his fault. I knew well my weakness in being influenced by others and not asserting the truth. It had happened before.

In my *Guru Reform Notebook*, I included meetings I had at Kartika with Visvambhara Gosvami of the Radha-ramana temple and Narayana Maharaja of the Kesavaji temple in Mathura. They both said that our hearts had to change and that we should not have placed ourselves above our Godbrothers and that we should admit mistakes. Our disciples would not think less of us for admitting our mistakes. We should think of ourselves as small persons, not as great persons.

Later, after my booklet was published and I met with the GBC for my interview with them, they criticized me for going outside of ISKCON and getting the opinions of these revered Vaisnavas. Hari-sauri asked me if I had to do it over again would I have consulted with these outsiders. I said no. Actually I was not sorry I had gone to them. They helped me gain my conviction.

I said that I would not have gone to the outsiders to gain their opinion just because I didn't want the grassroots movement to come down on me. But in my heart I did not regret it. It was a weakness of mine not to speak up and say that I would have done it over again if I had the opportunity.

In my *Guru Reform Notebook*, I leave Kartika in Vrndavana and go back to the West. I first stop in Dublin, Ireland, where I was the initiating guru, and tell the devotees there that I am dropping the name "Gurupada," and that I hope the GBC will

make reforms. Prithu Prabhu supports me in these changes and says that a guru's funds should be regulated.

The effect *Guru Reform Notebook* had at the time it was published was sensational. We printed it quickly at a private printer in America and sent copies to all the temples.

The initiating gurus, for the most part, were offended. Hridayananda Maharaja called me to him and told me I was "impertinent." He said he had just preached to the devotees in his zone otherwise than what I had said, and that I had disturbed his preaching. But the reform movement welcomed my booklet as the first statement by a guru to admit mistakes and the first guru to join the reform movement. There was a little feeling among them that I was a "Johnny-come-lately," but for the most part they welcomed my admittance of mistakes and my reformed spirit. And my booklet was a telling blow to the zonal *acarya* system and the inflated worship and the neglect of the Godbrothers and the neglect of the concept of *siksa-guru*.

At the Mayapura meeting in 1986, there was reform. The GBC membership was expanded to include many of the grass-roots members and new gurus were added. But soon some of the reformers took on some of the same characteristics of the original gurus. They allowed themselves to be worshiped lavishly and accepted disciples. The old guard of gurus continued also. And the fall downs continued also.

Jayatirtha took LSD and claimed to be having liberated ecstasies. He performed hours-long screaming *kirtanas* in the temples and passed it off as ecstasy. An emergency meeting was held, and he was chastised.

Another example was Bhagavan. Bhagavan amassed a great empire, taking over after Jayatirtha left England, and taking Jayatirtha's South Africa zone also. He also had the Southern European zone. He attracted the top talent in ISKCON to come to his zone, and he awarded them perks and positions of worship and control over disciples. And he gave them wives.

Preaching that householders should be managers, as he himself was a householder.

He had become a *sannyasa*, eventually, and recruited *sannyasis* to his zone. But in his case he had material power as well as spiritual power. He had control of big sums of money and bought castles in Europe and couldn't maintain them after a while. And his policy was to send devotees out on *sankirtana* for long periods of time away from their wives. He eventually fell down also from *sannyasa* and ran away with a woman. He employed material means in our spiritual movement—he even had his leaders read Machiavelli for guiding principles of management and manipulation.

In 1986, I personally resigned from the GBC, primarily because of my migraine headaches. I would enter the room and after a few minutes I would get a very painful headache in my right eye. At first, we instituted a system where I would go to my room and lie down and have a radio hooked up to the GBC room. They would then come in and send a man to get my vote when they voted. But I wouldn't attend the meeting.

But this was still too much for me, and I handed in my resignation. I also partly resigned because I was tired of the system and ashamed of my faults as a GBC member and wanted to rectify by resigning from the GBC management. No one else resigned from the GBC at that time from the original GBC membership.

I've indicated elsewhere in this autobiography about the schisms that developed in ISKCON, mainly about the trouble with instituting the guru system. One schism was the *rtvik* movement, which began by saying that it was pragmatic to recognize that the gurus were not functioning as gurus, and that Prabhupada was the only guru. This, however, was against the philosophy of Gaudiya Vaisnavism that the disciplic succession of gurus continues and was against the direct order of Prabhupada. However, the *rtvik* movement gained momentum

and continues to go on today as they publish a magazine and write slanderous articles against all of ISKCON and all of its gurus, and they contend that Prabhupada continues to give *diksa* and that no one else can give *diksa*.

The other schism is a schism of Narayana Maharaja. In the 1990s, a group of select Prabhupada disciples, including myself, started visiting Narayana Maharaja and receiving *siksa* from him about *rasika*, *raganuga bhakti*. After a while, the GBC objected to our going to see him, and they made a resolution that ISKCON members should not go see Narayana Maharaja. He became angry with this decision, which was abruptly made without properly communicating it to him, and he made a war on ISKCON.

He began initiating disaffected ISKCON members and giving them new names. And his followers, in particular, created abuses by attacking ISKCON's policies and preaching to ISKCON members that they should go and follow Narayana Maharaja, that Prabhupada wanted the followers of Prabhupada to go and take shelter of Narayana Maharaja after Prabhupada's disappearance. This was greatly exaggerated from the fact—Prabhupada never told us to go take full shelter of Narayana Maharaja as our guru after his disappearance, but he wanted us to follow him [Prabhupada], and to follow the GBC. But Narayana Maharaja created great influence and created thousands of disciples in his own movement, which continues today after his disappearance.

In the spirit of writing what I feel like writing in my autobiography, I will now tell my relationship with Srila Narayana Maharaja. When we started going to see him – it occurred in the early 1990s after visiting him on the occasion of Prabhupada's taking *sannyasa* – he asked us each to speak on *sannyasa*. We all spoke of *sannyasa* as preaching, and then he threw a bombshell in and said that *sannyasa* was not for

preaching but was for thinking of Radha and Krishna in separation.

We then went to his room and he spoke some more about that, and said that this was the stage of greed for Krishna. And we asked what was greed, and he said it's like when you want a *rasagulla*, and you just want it, you have a greed for it, and you go after it.

And I remember Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhu saying that Narayana Maharaja had never spoken like that before. This is the first time he spoke like that.

We began seeing him, and he continued to speak like that, speaking about Radha and Krishna, and he spoke about the book *Madhurya Kadambini*. He spoke about other pastimes of Radha and Krishna. A group of us started going secretly to see him—Tamala Krishna Maharaja, Giriraja Maharaja, Ayodhyapati, who later became B.B. Govinda Maharaja. Later, Sivarama Swami came, Bhurijana Prabhu, Jadurani came later, Dhanurdhara Maharaja came.

We kept it strictly secret and didn't tell others about it. I began writing books about it. I've written about four books — one is called *Pilgrimage*, one is called something else, and one is called *Vrndavana Writing*, in which I write about my relationship with him and asking him questions. I became a favorite disciple of his, and he treated me very kindly. I went on airplane trips with him and stayed with him.

Then I wrote a booklet called *A Rasika Vaisnava Visits a Poor Man's House*, in which I told of a time when he came and stayed with me at Baladeva's house in Vrndavana. His followers still have that booklet. Narayana Maharaja's followers print it on the Internet, showing that I was his follower.

I was like a *siksa* disciple of his. He chanted on my beads and I was very intimate with him and had talks about Radharani and Krishna and looked up to him as a *siksa-guru*.

There was increasing pressure about him and going to see him, but so far it didn't come to a climax. One year I went to see him in that Purusottama-masa, when there's an extra month.

Purusottama – I went to see him in Jagannatha Puri with a few associates. It was a very disappointing time; he was meeting mostly with Hindi-speaking followers, and he didn't have time for me. I went initially to the Birla Hotel. He asked me to move in with him. He was staying at another place. I took a room there in someone's house, I forget the name of the man, a very rich man in India. But even there, being in the same house with him, I couldn't get to see him. I remember one very disappointing time I went in, and he was speaking on the *rasa-lila* in Hindi to a large group. He had me come and sit up on the elevated seat beside him, but he kept speaking in Hindi! And halfway through his talk, I excused myself and left the room because I was so frustrated.

Then, I began to feel a change in heart. I thought, "I'm trying so hard to get to see him, but I'm gambling here—I'm gambling in my relationship with Srila Prabhupada in trying to be the disciple of Narayana Maharaja. What about the time of death? I expect Prabhupada will take me back to Godhead. Am I thinking of him? But if I think of Narayana Maharaja, I'm not so sure what my position will be . . ." I didn't want to take the gamble on my relationship with Srila Prabhupada, I wanted to be more exclusively his follower.

I decided I just wanted to become more of an ISKCON *sannyasi*. I wrote Narayana Maharaja a letter telling him I wanted to go back to my ISKCON duties and leave Puri, and he said, "Yes, I think that's best. This is not a good situation for you

here.” He didn’t know in my heart that I had actually changed in my attitude toward him.

I went back to Vrndavana, and I skipped some meetings in going to see him. And Bhurijana told me that he was asking for me, and that I should go and see him with the others. I did, but I was cold in my heart, I was reserved, and I just looked forward to departing from Vrndavana and not being with him. From that time on, I disassociated myself from him.

Next year at Kartika time, I decided not to go to Vrndavana. I went to Mayapura instead. That was the year that everything came down. Narayana Maharaja had a meeting in which he spoke very openly about his association with Tamala Krishna Maharaja and Giriraja Maharaja, and the other ISKCON leaders were there and they heard it. It developed into a potential split where the ISKCON GBC were ready to really come down on this elite group who were going to see Narayana Maharaja. That year, at the annual GBC meeting, there was outright pressure to stop going and seeing Narayana Maharaja, and a resolution was passed that ISKCON devotees should not go and see Narayana Maharaja. Tamala Krishna Maharaja and Giriraja Maharaja had a change of heart and were forced, and decided on their own not to go and see Narayana Maharaja any more.

I didn’t come under that pressure by the GBC because I had already backed out of my relationship with him by going in Kartika to Mayapura and spending my time with Bhakti Caru Swami and my disciples.

Since then, I never went and saw him, and the years went by. I wrote him a few letters, but I didn’t see him and I didn’t read his books. He always remembered me fondly. When his followers asked about me, he said I was sincere. But he realized, or felt, that I didn’t go to see him because of the GBC’s injunction against going to see him.

Towards the end of his life, I wrote him a letter that I wanted to read some of his books, and he wrote me back a friendly mood that, “After a long, long time you are writing to me again,” and he told me that he was writing books. He told me how I could get some of his books, which I got. I ended on a friendly note with him before he passed away. But I did not enter his camp or his following. There is an evidence of my relationship with him in those books that I have written, of my relationship to him as his disciple. But I don’t think those books will ever be published. Maybe they’ll be published in the future.

(to be continued)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Satsvarupa dasa Goswami is a writer, poet, and artist. He is also the author of Srīla Prabhupada's authorized biography, *Srīla Prabhupada-Līlamṛta*. While traveling, lecturing and instructing disciples worldwide, he has published many books including poems, memoirs, essays and novels. In recent years, his devotional life has evolved to include the creation of numerous paintings, drawings, and sculptures that lovingly capture and express the artist's absorption in the culture of Krishna consciousness as given by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

