

Given Time

Poems

Given Time

Poems

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

Persons interested in the subject matter of this book are invited to correspond with our secretary, c/o GN Press, Inc., P.O. Box 445, La Crosse, FL 32658.

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Given Time

Part One

Wicklow, Ireland

November 1, 1998

Make fun of the
Bhaktivedanta Vedabase from a computer-
illiterate's point of view? As if the spiritual master
can be caught in a byte. No, no, you'll
just show yourself ignorant
and nonspiritual.

November 4

Steal minutes before he
calls me for breakfast. Don't imitate anybody's,
not even your own. Turn to Kṛṣṇa, rest
your head on hand and think—
“Did P. Swami come to me in a dream to
rebuke or approve? Why was I back at
Great Kills Park working for the summer, reading
great literature in my spare time—
of which I had plenty while collecting tickets
to the bathhouse
on a rainy day?”

I could have been reading *Bhagavad-gītā* As
It Is or chanted despite taunts,
but I didn't know. Hadn't met
the pure devotee. Nowadays I might meet
one of his followers. More chance of
being turned off since no one wants an
organized religion or a cult—and I
couldn't meet the Swami alone.

I sure hope I get a pious boost
next life and that I'm willing to
help others door to door, in a temple,
or something vigorous at least while
I'm young and not disabled.

November 5, 6:00 A.M.

Stealing time—cold room
cold heart, cold chest
shadow hand. It's time for
cold fruits-only breakfast.

When is the last time you
had sex-wex, rode a horse
saw Tom Mix and Gene Autrey?
When did you last visit Vṛndā
and feel love pure love
for Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā?

When did you ever sacrifice for
others to give them the best thing?
When will you again serve your
guru as you did (did you?)
in your youth?

I stole this time and I'm glad.
"You can be wild and unorthodox,"
a therapist wrote me in a letter.
I'm not his client and he's
not my disciple. I don't want
to be wild and unorthodox.
I just want to be myself.

6:45 P.M.

Namby-pamby goes to bed
thinking of a few things that could go wrong.
Best not to mention them—don't
keep an old man awake.
Let him live with his vivid
dreams, his half-asleep fantasia,
after which he wakes to see the red digits
on the clock.

Hare Kṛṣṇa, to my heart, that
red Hare Kṛṣṇa heart
I don't have despite
my lineage, the living link
we all have, we followers
of you know who.

You know, I stole this time and I'm
glad. It brings such relief. Tell the girls in
the office, the therapist, the
bus driver . . . by your looks—
tell *me*—turn to God as
you turn in bed.

Yes, I stole a few minutes to
speak to Him in an
indirect poem.
It was actually Him
I wanted in a time eternal
that no one could steal.

November 6, 6:00 A.M.

Kṛṣṇa's flute is out of His hand,
Śrīla Prabhupāda's beads too. Paper towels before
them, they await the porridge plates.
There's no time but I have come in
and stolen some.

Steal time? No, it's given by Kṛṣṇa.
What's this stealing?
You cheat—a word that
applies. Lazy, pilferer,
maybe you steal ideas,
apples, steal time in the
sense that it was meant
for Kṛṣṇa but you hoarded it.

I'm not really a thief. I
just mean I don't allot time
for poems but find a
few moments when Madhu serves
prasādam late and I am too
tired to think
to sit here and unload a
little. Maybe it's not stealing but
giving, sharing, living
time with you.

November 7, 12:30 P.M.

Little fragment while the wind puffs and huffs—
this is the house practical pig built—
on *bhakti* founded.

I'm not in NYC or PA, so I don't think
it will snow.

Fragment before lunch. The copilot me.
My revolution, this. This pen says it
carries "Revolution Ink." Write it then—
People take to KC and the millennium ends.

She says ISKCON has to take in
strangers, make friends fast, stock grains—
doesn't mention guns. Hard crime ahead.
Better get ready. She assumes (doesn't mention)
we must be ready to go inward.
Says it's a great preaching event.
What is she doing
besides telling us what to do?
Forsooth, soothsayer.

As for me, I like to think big trouble won't
happen. Pollyanna wishful.
"We need you safe," one disciple wrote me
from South India. "Maybe Ireland's good for
that." I agree I'd like to be kept safe, so

hide me, lock me in,
but if the snakebird wants to bite
I'll depend on Kṛṣṇa
despite my Pollyanna desire to
be free of pain.

Snuck in this fragment before disaster arrives.
May this poem go out and give someone solace,
amuse them, caress with a gloved hand.

November 9, 6:50 P.M.

Steal time before rest.

It's up to Kṛṣṇa whether I sleep,
eat, breathe, write—and it's already
decided I *can't* forever—I'll have to leave.

So these few lines,
before Peter Pan comes (make-believe),
before Lord Śiva comes,
before Sankarṣaṇa dances,
and Yamarāja visits.

Covered-over grace
the hand grips the pen.
I lived long
ago in NYC in a red and white
shirt I stole from Arnold
Constable's department store.
I didn't love God and
still don't,
but I've got a link,
like a man with a credit card.

November 10, 6:30 P.M.

Life on the page the way a mystic
yogī could expand himself—my
hand and feet and the rest,
hairs falling off, the unused parts . . .
The celibate monk
took away his feet.

Christians call it corruption,
meaning the body dies, rots.
We call it “disappearance,” and then
we cremate. We call it “going
to the Yamunā.” Flowery words, but
the hands fly up when the flames
roar (he said), so tie them down.

While we still live please
produce. A tree produces fruit
and nuts and Kṛṣṇa in me
makes poems come forth. But
not at my command.

The life. I’m addicted to that
which brings them out. A
shout? A silence? An emptiness . . .
It used to be colored
pens, big sheets, other
poets . . .

I write of sheep, whatever I
see and feel in a day—*Navadvīpa-
bhāva-taraṅga* read today,
and imagined Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
writing there, as in the *Abhay* film,
seeing visions of the holy places we
believe in. The Ṭhākura sees Rādhā
and Kṛṣṇa where everyone else sees
thorn bushes and overflowing rivers.

November 11, 6:25 P.M.

Today the intruder came in a drawing, I made him red and purple with jagged teeth not as powerful as Śālva whom Kṛṣṇa killed but he'd be pleased that I made him with a big arm and that he interrupted the innocent goings-on. Two young persons look up at him afraid and the guru-type figure with *jñāna-mudrā* stopped.

So you had your day. That's given to you because we want to protect saintly persons and I don't mean to include myself, but . . . They say you have the blank stare of someone who may be a violent fanatic, thinking God is on your side for sure.

I have to write this because it has come to me, an unusual dividend: alone in the house tonight I feel less frightened because compared to you, intruder, I doubt anything will happen here. I know you can't come here. I'm safe.

But . . . courage . . . should be . . .
shelter is in Kṛṣṇa, *āśraya* for all.
I still need to learn that.
Whether an intruder comes and I go out like
Gandhi crying, “*He Rām!*” or
peacefully, I need to
learn that Kṛṣṇa is *poṣaṇa*,
protector of His devotees and
how He does it is up to Him.

November 12, 5:25 A.M.

Get up and write despite head.

Karāndhara in dream said we are glad you are coming to NY (he meant L.A.) to give us your personal shopping list and give *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class.

But when Śrīla Prabhupāda appeared and from a distance asked me to say something about the form of Kṛṣṇa, I said

“He’s *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*.”

First I had to risk my body climbing down pillars on a sheer-faced building, stretching and reaching with more daring than I’d ever attempt on my own but I was going to him so I did it and thought, “This is unusual for a sixty-year-old. He might think I’m younger.” I said *sac-cid-ānanda* so he could hear it, then silence, then muttering because I wanted to say something *realized* and wanted to feel the fact that I wasn’t.

Woke up a little proud
at least of this dream. Head
still hurt after all-night
struggle with minor pain.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, Kṛṣṇa is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*.
Help me come to you. Those were sweet
days when I would visit Karandhara's
temple. Now ISKCON is threatened with
law suits and deterioration but
they claim . . . I had better not speak. Just
let me come to you—reach over from
that pillar, drop my body down one
floor at a time, do what I never
did to reach you in those days.

12:47 P.M.

Jamming letters. Why not poem writing?
Wild whistling of wind—on a wire?
A wacky, long, messy letter I wrote you,
says a young devotee. I agreed. He
gave me a deadline to initiate him
in six months. Random. My monotone voice
dictating the letter. Postage stamp, the woman
pioneer aviator, \$10 Bob Marley, “Protect our
environment.” I’m tired, jamming, why not
with poems?

I tell them, “Good that you read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.
I do it myself and if I miss I feel like I have
not eaten.” Is that so? Pile
diminishing. Wait till you’ve got more strength.
Everything from Him in time.
Sincerity runs low and we have to step back
while it rises again.

5:28 P.M.

This is stolen because he's going to leave soon and talk to me just before then, tell me how they took the news that we're not coming.

It's stolen because I didn't first turn up the light or put on the heat—my body is uncomfortable, and I don't have enough time to develop it.

I'm still thinking of the *Atlantic Monthly* cover story of Jack Kerouac—those photos of his little pocket notebooks, how he scribbled for his own joy.

I'm not composed or empty of all else, but intimate with Kṛṣṇa in me and in a relaxed (not false) humility, I ask Him please come home and please take over what is Yours—my heart and body and mind.

Time He gave me I use for Him, I claim.
Am I like the temple president who bought a Mercedes and fixed up a room regally for Śrīla Prabhupāda's two-day visit to his temple and then later claimed it as *mahā-prasādam*?
Am I like that guy?

I hope ISKCON doesn't go to ruin.
I don't want to be one of those militants out
to attack it, drain it, take
its last wealth until they say
we're bankrupt. We're no Catholic Church.
Please protect and forgive. What's this
poem doing? Clearing away.

November 13, 5:50 A.M.

Go in and take your Baskar Lavan I tell you.
You do have to steal time for poems,
it's not given, not assumed, presumed
that someone came and did it before
you like laying a table with places,
knives, forks, and linen.

Napkin. Quick, the Baskar and be back.
I'll wait with the child,
bear cubs. Is Prabhupāda okay?
Is he warm?

Must I be consigned, confined
to this room? They put her back in
prison. I'm free to come and go.
Make your choice.
I decided to stay here and save our
lives. I decided to eat fruit only for
breakfast. Put my false teeth in
although it hurts. Leaning on my left elbow
although it's a strain, collapse, I see
a human profile in the radiator's
shadow on this page. He has
thick lips.

I decide I must be governed by a power
beyond mine. God moves us
about like pieces on a chess board.
Some say it's just a personality cult how
we worship Śrīla Prabhupāda but we do it
anyhow.

John Glenn at 77 went up into
space for one last shot while
Congress voted in favor of impeachment
proceedings against Bill. At least he
got his national budget through—
more military spending than ever.
And I'm all right with my
assortment of pens.

12:30 P.M.

Poem cold room/ friend hurt going to
hospital, maybe his tendon cut not real
bad . . . Lunch for me who is
well. Each dwells in his own body
pain and pleasure and
Lord Kṛṣṇa knows all.

You don't like me preaching to you?
Sorry. No music in my head. My
fingers press a pen on this page. Given
time I could become someone different
or maybe just this . . . more
of it.

Lunch of hot *dāl*. Took off Śrīla Prabhupāda's
hat and beadbag. Offered to him. Keep
the bright-day flow. You got a
sound heart? Then use your life to
help others in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
Start with yourself.

My friend makes music,
Irish traditional. He was running to
a gig and didn't see
an iron rail. He broke his leg or

the tendon. “Kṛṣṇa is
telling me slow down,” he says.
“Yes,” I said, “but will you listen?”
His passion is
his life. He’s got
the music, whistles even now en route to the hospital
and I’m here pressing this pen.

6:50 P.M.

Get to bed. Tinkling rain. A servant
in a separate house. No mouse I
know of. Safe in another country from
the mad blank face.

All His mercy I take—asked for
hot tapioca with milk tomorrow,
Ekādaśī. Is that wrong?

A Christian book says you should fast
when you say the Jesus prayer but Lord Caitanya's
followers were not used to
eating small amounts—up to the neck.

I'm sorry, love . . .

I couldn't come see you on a gallant horse, airplane
into JFK. I don't even know if I'll
come next year because they say this
millennium bug will create chaos and
I may have to stay here.

My line of defense is not so
great here, no soldiers, just an
empty lane. If someone wanted to
get me . . . But they don't . . . Don't
know where I am.

I like that!

I thank You. I want to bless
everyone as good or
at least not as getting venom from
me. These poems have no
theme because my life is
just doled out that way
Given Time
removed from the race
Hare Kṛṣṇa. Yearning for
a midnight brief dip
into *Śrīmad*.

November 14, 6:30 P.M.

My own song,
good night head weak
stuffed with meds.
Forgive me for my pretense of
K.C.

November 15, 5:55 A.M.

Pee Wee Jones ran out of time
fell in rhyme in a
cold room. Took herb of
feverfew for headaches
frequent in the age of Kali
where only the holy name
can give us peace.

The *śāstras* recommend this short
concentrated call for service
unto the Lord and Rādhā.
Say it and you're lucky even while
talking to someone or insulted or
threatened, when you have to wait,
when you get a moment's break
in a busy pace. Call to Kṛṣṇa
by His names.

1:30 P.M.

Winter planting. November. Now is
the time to decide. And act. Put
those little trees in, bulbs in,
stand back and let the action of nature take place
beneath the earth. Growing, writing
waiting for the outcome.

6:30 P.M.

I couldn't decide where to live
what to do—to travel or
reside in Ireland.
Then I decided to stay for the winter.
Will that decision last?

I've got heater, servant, house,
walk, bed—why leave it? Everything
is just right. Prolong my stay until
the cold weather is gone,
a *sādhū* on the backroads heading
to Lord Caitanya, wanting to make his children
happy, but not by attending
gala parties anymore.
How come my rounds
are getting so slow?
White-haired *japa*. The way of all old
sādhūs in Vṛndāvana. I think of that holy
place from here.

November 16, 12:25 P.M.

I guess you heard we're going to travel
not incognito but quickly so as
not to make a big scene where an
irate fanatic might attack me.

You may be surprised I'm leaving such
a paradise of self-expression to go
to America. My reason is to
get it done and then return.

Our literary mag came out today,
Discovering Our Voices. Mine is not
better than theirs, but I'm the elder, the
encourager. Some are good . . . each
a voice.

These poems could be transformed into
something dramatic or make-believe
so they'd stand out better. Or I could
wish for inspired vision
but at least this
cold clear sky,
branches etched,
and prayers.

November 17, 12:20 P.M.

I've got nothing special/ no one is
coming to see me/ the rain is raining.
“Glad to hear you are writing poetry.”
Where?
They say you have to suffer and be grateful
to be qualified.
And I know you need
to hear the *Bhāgavatam* thoroughly to speak
with *buddhi*, *bhakti*.

Hare Kṛṣṇa—waiting
for Madhu's tomato-sauced
kicchari to offer to Prabhupāda.
He's wearing his magenta *cādar*
made by Lalita-māñjarī in Australia.
Prabhupāda who loved us,
who spoke like a tough guy it sometimes seemed
to knock down those Māyāvādīs.

Offer that *kicchari* with old bread from the shelf.
Just glad I'm here. O Rādhā-
Govinda in red—any minute
now he will creak up these
stairs and in less than two weeks
I'll have to leave.

November 18, 6:00 A.M.

“Glad to hear you’re writing poems”
and willing to go out
to help others. Glad to hear you’ll
endure pain and remember Kṛṣṇa
even at the time of death.
(You will, won’t you?)

Don’t be afraid.
Kṛṣṇa will protect.
Prepare to bless your enemies and
if you have to come down
with a serious entanglement, He’ll
always protect you. Even
more. That’s our philosophy.
I’m glad to hear you’re committed
to write it even if it hurts or
if you just don’t feel like writing it down.

6:30 P.M.

'Fraidy-cat. "Even a paranoiac
has enemies." Stay in the safe zone
and you'll never know. Fly low and
drop bombs—of love. Great teachers
dared. Dug out.
Now I write in my diary, "Good night."

I know God is not my bodyguard,
but He is, too. My guide, guide,
my Lord whose form . . .
As Bhūrijana was saying, this boy who wanders
around Vṛndāvana without shoes, holding
yogurt in His left hand is God, in control of everything.

'Fraidy-cat, dovetail it, hide your face
in the Lord's lotus feet . . .
O spiritual master
may you exonerate this fellow.

November 19, 6:00 A.M.

Caitanya dāsa said he wants to *hear* from me
but I didn't understand. He said not only
lectures but *japa*. He seemed to be com-
plaining (smilingly, still in his twenties) that he
is not *hearing*. Whose fault is that?
I apologized for living the way I do,
not lecturing, much, I mean.

But is it my fault if I only paint and talk
about calligraphy and water and hot water
bottles and servant duties? Is it my fault
I stay silent and write?

People want me out in traffic,
talking, making noise so people can
hear me. I imagined being interrogated by
a police sergeant like the one who talks to
James Dean in *Rebel*. I am quiet-mannered.
I say, "I know I didn't do it and that's
the truth. Eventually you'll find out. I
just hope it don't take long."

I want physical comfort and admit it.
Otherwise I have a natural ease for
life—no malaise. Maybe it's my Italian
blood. Life is good! Kṛṣṇa consciousness is
good! Our spiritual master has given us great
relief. The waves at Purī, the waves in
my ears—the sounds of Wicklow, Rathdangan, the
wind, and myself
to bed.

6:20 A.M.

Meet with Madhu. Does he have
any good news? “Yamarāja has
come for you.”

When? I’d be surprised:
“I thought he only took the sinners
averse to the honey of the Lord’s
holy name.”

Time has come in the form . . .
Some shape menacing my security
has to break the news.
I wanted to always ride the
subways? The ox-cart? A poet-in-residence
in Wicklow.

Here he comes, up the
wooden stairs.

12:38 P.M.

Oh well, you make your plans and feel good about them—I shall be a writer, live alone, people take care of me even when I live only a couple of weeks in a foreign country, America. In return for setting me up, I deliver prose, seeds, more needs—“Give me 18x24 cheap sketch pads so I can write poems and applesauce would be nice and a warm bed and some quiet.” Who is this guy who thinks his karma deserves him such brahminical treatment?

He reads in *Kṛṣṇa* book—hears his master speak on tape about skinny beloved Sudāmā and how he entered the Vaikunṭha palace and was treated with affection. “Surely you must have some presentation for Me,” Kṛṣṇa smiled, after they’d talked for hours. “Your wife gave you some edible for Me?” Kṛṣṇa knew. He was pleased with Sudāmā’s devotion.

When Sudāmā
left the next morning, he thought
of Kṛṣṇa's kindness to the *brāhmaṇas* and
how He never gives them stuff
that would puff them up. Sudāmā
was in for a surprise.

6:52 P.M.

Bedtime for one. It's enough.
Me and Kṛṣṇa, I'd like to say.
In spirit, true. He's in my body too, my
best friend.

It's November—well into—
almost Thanksgiving. I'm scheduled
to travel “over the ice and snow
the horse knows the way to
carry the sleigh . . . ”
to where He leads me.

November 20, 5:50 A.M.

Unsure of date and you're crazy.
Unsure of faith, unsure of your
spiritual master? Is that craziness or
just fresh honesty? One said he was
"over my head in naive idealism."
He meant he could no longer keep up
serving the mission if it meant denying
his own needs. And not from a
selfish point of view—but what
kind of guru and mission,
he asked,
neglects the individual? It should not—
he protested,
in rage, in silence.

As for me, maybe I'm simple. He keeps
me under control with a small stick.
But I too want love and explanations,
more advanced teachings suitable to
my physical and mental age,
want food and drink and
rest. We demand
as if the guru is a welfare state
and we are on the dole.

6:50 P.M.

He saw me speak into a dictaphone,
didn't know . . . "You write first and then you
speak it?" Yes, I said, that's my process.
Then he realized he'd walked in on
my most private, innocent act.

November 23, 6:30 A.M.

Given time, take time—
all is His. Do you feel His
presence in your body, in your life?
Nothing? Something. Fall asleep.
Pray to Him. Give me *buddhi*.
Let me serve You.

5:40 P.M.

Save food, store food,
get a fuel supply, you never know . . .
Everything can be taken away including the
privilege of writing a book and printing it.
What about the people who can't
publish, or who can't write? What about . . .
the people?

What about the heat in the radiator?
The last hour before taking rest at night?
Thank You, thank You—
too many letters arrived, but I'll
get to them . . . Grateful. Dutiful.
But tonight I couldn't summon the voice.

Tomorrow our last day
until travel. I'm
okay because I ascertain God's
presence in my heart.
How else could I live and
breathe or die?
All of us, how else?

Given Time

Part Two

Geaglum–Inis Rath, North Ireland

December 4, 1998, 9:20 A.M.

Given time, I'd
be here without a headache not
a sputtering clown. Giving nine years in youth,
Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura chanted one billion
holy names. I couldn't do it.
I read about it, look at his picture,
slender, full Cāturmāsyā beard . . .

Give me time and I'll lecture, I'll ride in
the rowboat to Rādhā-Govinda's.
Give me time but I need a
clear head. Are these petitions to
God? I want to read some possibly
helpful book on prayer, the shadow,
poetry, muse . . . Better you don't ask.

We are given a set amount of breaths.
Maybe you can increase them by yoga
or God's grace. Not worth much in the mortal frame.
Full moon, early December.
I locate myself by the stars.

11:45 A.M.

At this rate, I don't know—
it doesn't look so good, these pains
and the age of you. People in their
sixties . . . die, you know.
One woman wrote me that her husband thinks he's
got a life-threatening disease but she's not sure.
Hypochondria is a subjective thing.

In your skin. Everyone's got pain and some
sing it in a way that eases our pain.
Call them entertainers, healers . . .
the best teachers give the spiritual
medicine that actually cures the
soul.

I like to give out *hari-nāma* in jar,
in a book. Sometimes I caterwaul it,
or sing a sweet melody, just to induce them.
Take it myself and cure my
pain through immortality.

December 4, 10:04 A.M.

Don't ask to ring a big brass bell
just speak a little.

Don't complain—*I hurt right here.*

Don't point to it. We all hurt.

He had a successful hernia operation and sent the
message, "I'm stiff all over." He can
bring me something from America but I can't think of
much I could bear. How about no letters
of complaint or demand?

December 5, 3:00 A.M.

We were reading of how *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*
contracts to four verses and expands to
billions. My mom packed my lunches—two
sandwiches, one meat, one peanut
butter and jelly, and something like a cupcake.
Little did I know
I'd grow up and grow down
as a Vaiṣṇava aspirant.

4:35 P.M.

Put a cracked head to rest.
If you cannot lecture on BSST
then still you didn't study his life
for nothing.
The mango, the *ratha* cart, our
master's meetings with him—his
great vow.

Cracked head, cracked dreams
do not allow poems or lectures or
walks and certainly no meetings.
I no longer think the headaches
are psychological. That's old-hat theory.
Migraine is a bio-chemical disorder, probably
inherited from birth. I am simply more prone
than others. It's in my system.

I have done a day's half work and
the swans are still at it. Six speed
boats filled with boys and girls scream-rip
past. Saturday night fun, I guess.
As you can imagine, I prefer the calm ripples.
O Kṛṣṇa. I can't even
read Your book.

December 6, 4:45 P.M.

Better today. I got to the temple room
before almost anyone else. Slowly
they came in and I spoke. Now
dark night. Paint a pic., don't
claim yr. an artist leading this
ISKCON society, but

no dead fly or nonexistent
telescope either. Three dreams
in a row though—all heavy stuff
with no K.C. except me batting away
tigers with my *daṇḍa*.

Endorphins, give them a chance. They
sent some Reiki vibrations from Trinidad
to improve my health, but I wonder if they'll make
it all the way here through customs.
It doesn't matter, I said, because we are all meant
to have some pain. Cheap talk
spoken after the fact—what I thought
sounds good.

“I *demand* a relationship with you,” he said.
“You seem to treat me as inconsequential, a botheration.”
No, it’s not just *you*, I said. I see *everyone* that way.
But I liked the millet at lunch, and Śrīla Prabhupāda did too.
With all the other preps. A nice day.
Except I couldn’t shut the door to the shed
and it got cold in there.

“You are living so quiet and ill and remote I wonder
how it is relevant to me.”
But it is, she said. Yeah, I’m a living
example of what you can do in confines.
This truth in the room. M. left his bouzouki and
little accordion here. No wonder
he’s anxious to come back.
Fingers itchy for his music.

December 7, 9:30 A.M.

On floor in here, tourist
folder for islands of Ireland. I don't
want to take a currach to get to one.
Just stay in that house in south
or here. Quiet. Examine your mind—
empty of emotion.

Me, me, O little twinge. Read
Bhāgavata, then *Migraine*:
Everything You Need to Know, written
by a conservative, up-to-date RN who says
never overuse meds but doesn't say
what to *do*. Little
paragraphs on alternatives,
one on T.M., one on yoga (not *bhakti*).
That Indian eye doctor asked me, "Do
you meditate or pray when you get a headache?"
What could I say? No, I didn't think
I should. I just
strum, strum
Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa and fall silent.
I depend on His mercy
to take me.

3:40 P.M.

Walked to the shed in green
rain paints—they will see that this
sannyāsī doesn't always wear his
official orange skirt.

The door was locked. I leaned
against the shed awhile and felt
pressure (like atmospheric clouds?)
in my head. Then walked back.
A *mātāji* outside her camper—
can't help her but
praṇāmas.

Back here with a stiff neck.
The quiet grows with the awareness
that I have no
prayer, not even any awareness but
to read. Bhaktivinoda Thākura's purport
to *atyāhāraḥ*—so sensible, "Don't do too much
or too little, and do it all for Kṛṣṇa." Yes, I say,
that I can do.

December 9, 11:40 A.M.

What, man, next? What, man, what? I have to follow
my own schedule propped up with med.
“There’s no R (relief) without D (damage),”
wrote one migraine sufferer.
Well, I feel pretty good now
on my way to a hot-cold shower and
lunch while hearing *kṛṣṇa-kathā*.

Bored, excited . . . Mādhava told me
what books of mine are coming out.
I’m grateful. I don’t like cynical,
godless poetry. It would be nice if
we had Kṛṣṇa conscious poets and artists and dancers and
could mingle like we did when young,
and feel we were authorized although
daring, free, experimenting . . .

But Kṛṣṇa knows best. He’s fast and slow.
We have to die anyway. My brain can’t function
unless He wills. Got the philosophy
straight. But I skipped a
morning reading of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—
just too demanding—so
I wrote to you saying the grass out
my window and the peninsula of

Geaglum is delicious to see. It's my
speed just to sit and sit
until my piles itch, unsentimental,
but spiritually inclined.

4:55 P.M.

I just drew, with oil crayons from Japan,
a woman, a man, devotees I
know, a star stolen from Miro, an echo
from Donald Hall, in less than
an hour taken and borrowed.

I work under the aegis of my Swami and always
hope some subtle propaganda value
will come out of my spontaneous art scrawl.

Given time and many pages I might
be a versifier, a student of *bhakti*.
The books say many lives both
you and I have lived. We have always existed, each
of us and God. I read outside *Gītā* but
come home to Him, our Lord,
our pure devotee, and me alone performing
for their pleasure.

December 10, 10:10 A.M.

The idea is to sneak in some
lines, a vignette, between head twinges.
O humming electric heater,
mental conscience, I throw away the obscene,
the jest, post, even names—Suhotra, Tamāl,
Genevieve (Thérèse's sister). You can't know my private life and
it takes too much to transcribe it—it's all lost
by that time. But if I throb and thud what
counts to me, maybe . . .

Romapāda, footgear. A Brooklyn nightmare stole
my passport (again), and I was barefoot in winter, displeased.
Approached the police, "I'm a Hare Kṛṣṇa!" but who could care
with so many bums and Dangerous Characters roaming about?
Written on the floor, in solitude, in Northern
Ireland, in my own room amid poems and drawings,
Kṛṣṇa in my heart alive.

Given time, stitched together.
A pen runs out, I start with another.
Rādhānātha's
making glass crafts, on the island
serving Govinda, a
few days more then, you won't find me
here.

4:02 P.M.

Am I on time? Cars. The sun goes
low, fast, even by three it's heading down
to the horizon. I don't worry that
I can't write erudite poems, and
don't worry much that I don't love God.
I depend more on my good
fortune and my father's mercy.

What I've done, what's left to do—
to walk in mud. My heels have
worn out, but they'll get me new boots
if I ask, and a Maine Game Warden's
parka for the cold and wet.

So don't worry, Alfred E. Neuman.
My body aches but
I complain so much you'd think the pain was
always severe. The up-dangling
branches of winter trees from this window . . .
Just give me Kṛṣṇa conscious tea, biscuit I say,
any words . . . I don't eat after lunch—
any words to tap the unconscious.

Be mindful of Kṛṣṇa,
He says, and bow to Him, be His devotee. I
do in some preliminary way. But the
ocean of my disqualification doesn't seem
to bother me just now. I don't know
why. It seems enough to do what I
can each day.

The sun goes down. I don't make it happen
but I participate in it, and
in darkness climb into my bed,
after putting Rādhā-Govinda into Theirs.
Teachers of Zen and Christian prayer can't
teach me much. They
don't know that Kṛṣṇa lifted Govardhana.
Because I know—
is that why I'm complacent?

December 11, 9:50 A.M.

What could a writer do that would
please the almighty God who has
everything? He who is all-attractive has
already garnered great Sanskrit writers
although He keeps hidden
from the masses. Maybe He'll like it if I write out
my little life and share it with friends.

If I rid myself of doubts and
unnecessary self-hate, declare I am
the servant of the servant of the Lord and
really mean it. Kṛṣṇa also doesn't
need a writer who is some kind of
hypocrite or malicious person.

All right, man—ISKCON
is behind me, is in me this quay
land is ISKCON, Śyāma is ISKCON
and his wanting to leave the island and make a
dancing and drama career in Dublin and
my advice—"Keep early morning
reading and *japa* your bedrock."
This is my ISKCON.

I'd like to tell about it.

But I'm afraid.

Not interested.

Wait and look.

3:45 P.M.

Hare Kṛṣṇa. You don't always have to take
a pill at the first sign of a headache.
You can lean forward and write.
The room is dark. I float off.
Come back. You'll never make it
without a *bhāgavata* guide.

But you need yourself too,
each line. Tomorrow I agreed to be at
the phone 6 A.M. to hear
Madhu and U.S.A. I'll ask how
he's mended from his operation,
ask him to buy me a stopwatch
(for wild driving-writing) and an
eight-ounce spray bottle of lens cleaner.
"When are you coming back and when
am I leaving here?"

You may not be able to paint but
once you start, out comes a man
like a warrior stanced on the
ground full of shooting colors.
I call him a devotee, then sprinkle
him with words from Prabhupāda's *bhajana*.

5:45 P.M.

From the shed I counted nine geese or hens,
nine rowboats, ten military helicopters, planned
forty volumes, assumed twenty years,
transmigration, one God, partridge in a
pear tree, quiet Christmas meal as
usual, don't eat after lunch. I can't
say what will happen next, but I
plan to write it down.

Green . . . water . . . island. Saturday
no one in sight. Did they go to a
bombed North Ireland town for *harināma*?
Expect me to go? I'll say, "Oh, I'm lucky to go
from the shed to the house." From the shed to the house.

December 13, 4:30 P.M.

He lectured in the morning. One girl in
the back moved excitedly to catch a better
look at his excited delivery of the
ancient wisdom—why we should live
in Vṛndāvana-dhāma.
Then in the rowboat, they saw him off.
Ah, I ain't got much in me
tonight.

Read a T.M. pamphlet on Āyurveda—
says we *vātas* ought to have cookies and
tea in the afternoon: “Think of the British
4 P.M. teatime.” But I don't experience that
sharp decline usually. Besides, I couldn't digest.
And no T.M., no sesame self-massage,
no *vāta* scruples or I'd be watching
every moment—“Is it humid enough? Greasy enough?
Warm enough for me, a child of air?”

Spirit soul under the mask. Sees the world,
we each. I didn't have to travel or even
walk to my shed this afternoon—it was
raining. The collie is wet and muddy
so I didn't touch and he didn't press in.

They keep a life preserver in the boat
just in case. Row me across,
it's done, another Sunday.

In my lecture I joked. She said,
“I heard that one round at Rādhā-Dāmodara temple
is worth a hundred elsewhere.”
“Where did you hear that?” I asked. Then—
“One round at 26 Second Avenue
is worth two at Rādhā-Dāmodara.”

December 14

Īśānī opens the door, puts my clean
laundry there. I'm left alone.
No one to talk to. The way I want it.
I made a good Confession in the
shed. I live alone to do that.
Now I hope to follow it up.

“Say ten Hail Marys and five Our Fathers.”
What did you confess?
That I don't love my spiritual master but want
to again, as I used to. Keep it
simple here. The actual wrangling goes
on in prose and mind, in shower,
during *japa*, and can come in dreams. I only
hope it can be resolved—some
problems actually do get solved—before
I die.

Then I went out smiling, fixed, assured of
my attraction and connection, my willingness to
serve him next life. I'm grateful I was
saved from materialism. Saw
the beautiful *Bhagavad-gītā*'s teachings as
truth—the soul and the Supreme.

I'm a fool who doesn't know the
first thing of Kṛṣṇa science although I
want to learn. I know it comes
by serving guru—typing, giving
money was an auspicious start.
Writing desperately, calmly is now my path.

December 15, 9:00 A.M.

I have a peaceful life for now, so
I churn myself on the walk, ask,
“Do I *really* believe in God and guru?”
As if the Tempter were asking me to desert my post.
“Get thee behind me, Satan.” Another
voice tempted me to get off
this autobiographical diary trip.
But what would I do instead?
If I’m going to be true to guru,
then why not to self?

Almost 4:00 P.M.

I'm not a materialist. I believe this
life is just a jumping off point until the next
and eternal is our desire (in view?).
So why look at *this* lake
in *this* time, in *this* body?
Because it's here and it's *beautiful*,
and I know from reading and hearing
where and from whom it comes.
I also know that I'm an olding,
diminishing man, that my pains
are destined, and I can glimpse
a sunset
from a perspective of
Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

December 16, Noon

This is the day Madhu landed in England
and transferred to Ireland. He will be here
tomorrow—in a passion—and we'll
load my books and
Deity stuff and go off.
It was quiet here while it lasted.

Looked out and saw Kṛṣṇa
in the lake and sky and
trees. The Swami invited everyone in
San Francisco in '71 to see Kṛṣṇa everywhere.
Why not me?

Then gave time to this separate poem
before I returned my whole
life to my one big book, looking for
a moment of consciousness of
Kṛṣṇa and His
devotees. If I could only be
better.

The Real Thing

Part Three

At Least Admit It

Lord Kṛṣṇa, what's the use
of studying modern poets? Better to
call out, "*Please save me!*
Make me Your devotee!
Crush my material attraction.
Give me strength to preach and study
and do all You want me to do."
For You are the Lord
proclaimed in Vyāsa's *Bhāgavatam*,
the Lord of all.

I order my assistant,
"Bring my breakfast on time."
For 20 years I've been
accepting service from underlings.
What has it done to me?
Is this spiritual life?
I couldn't get out now if I tried.
I'm old,
need help opening doors,
recovering from headaches.
I've lost all my teeth
and my reputation has
narrowed and lowered.

Tell it, man:
you can't even refrain from
remembering jukebox tunes
and being envious of
critical Godbrothers.

Some say I'm no good
because I'm a Hare Kṛṣṇa—
I have a weird hair cut.
I write poems.

Worms

You can't taste the same moment twice.
It's too dangerous
because you have to look deeper
right under the welcome mat
where the wet, moldy slime
and juicy worm curls.
Who wants to know?
Aren't worms for magpies and crows?

Solstice is Coming

The clothes are revolving
in the washing machine, he's stirring porridge and
in another pot stirring milk,
it's for guru first,
but you can't help but *think* of smelling it . . .

June is teeming with wildlife,
hiding in woods and wet fields,
badgers, possums, snakes, toads,
deer leaping, teeming fish, soon
gnats and flies and mosquitoes and waves
of wildflowers from white to red clover and
yesterday two ISKCON boys and a girl
swam the narrow channel accompanied by
a man in a rowboat.

I'm reading and now talking
of Nārada and his *vīṇā*—3 worlds and
beyond to Brahman-light and Vaikuṇṭhas—
Nārada can enter anywhere. It's
the summer solstice.

Writing on Pada-yātrā

Writing on *pada-yātrā*. I don't actually walk,
but put everything I think and pulse beat
into my book.

Neat, huh?

I'll really put one over on
the *pada-yātrā* folks
and yokels who will expect something else of
this book, printed in three copies
with color drawings made
on site.

We walk, you and I and Gertrude
and Win Burgraff from my
high school years. It's all secret.
They were adopted children of that
Dutch Reformed minister.
"A minister's son and a son of a gun,"
quipped Win. His feet pedaled the
organ. He won an organ scholarship
to Hope College in Holland, Michigan
and I went to the Navy
after Brooklyn College.
This bio data isn't in
pada-yātrā, but it could be.

And the kitchen sink. Stainless
steel. And the birds and the weeds
and Sharon Olds' too-constructed poems
and mine. "O Mein Papa!" sung by Danny Fisher,
I don't remember so well anymore.

Back in Lakeside

Church. Distillery. Chemist.
Oriental café. Hare Kṛṣṇa Cultural Center.
Demolition. Fitzpatrick. Foley. Sick of
Irish.
Give me bread and butter and
Bhagavad-gītā and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.
I'm back in peaceful lakeside after
day of running around Dublin to satisfy
bureaucrats and get our van on the road.

That's Not Bhakti

Bhakti is the way of the lover,
the best.

I'm dry. Are you?

Where is *bhakti* when we
find fault with other creatures
or fight or sniff out rumors
or make e-mail surveillance and
depend too much on the power
of our own laws and authority?

Not *bhakti*, but fundamentalism,
confusion, lack of focus.

I could make a list of
the endless troubles in our religion,
but better I chant and read
Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, take
prasādam and preach,
live a simple life and outlive
the rest.

Offering the Clover

Purple clover hugs the ground, not like the
yellow buttercups. Clover has a head with
many small soft extensions, some a bright
 deep purple, some
faded. They pluck out easily when you pull, and
lie down prettily before the Lord on an altar.
Is it violence to rip it from the earth, from its
stem on a blowy June morning?
I've heard it's good for the
soul of any creature to be offered to God. I hope
I'm not guilty of slaughter. It will depend
on my devotion.

The Garland

I spoke on Vidura
the ladies on one side,
a few men on left
children, four, in yellow,
like at the Vṛndāvana *gurukula*, and
one preschool boy in white—
red-faced, red-haired, and crying.

Vidura is a *person*
I said, stumbling to choose words
to explain myself. “There are
levels of reading and hearing.”

Questions? A few. Then,
“They gave you a beautiful
garland of wildflowers,” he said.
I thought he meant my
Wild Garden or that the *Bhāgavatam śloka*s
I read were a garland but
he meant the actual woods-
flowers picked by a devotee
and slung over my chest as I read.

To Vṛndāvana

Raining and a gray bird lights
on a pine bough, then shifts
in the rain.

I dig for Prabhupāda and
Kṛṣṇa in me
to remember
them straight.

Kṛṣṇa is everywhere
yet dances in His own world
where He's the
center for those who
love Him.

Kṛṣṇa in Goloka
in Vṛndāvana
O Kṛṣṇa
the sand and the *bābās*
the dogs, hogs, monkeys,
parrots, peacocks, mice, flies,
temple towers,
even the politics and
guṇḍas, tourists, money,
wasted time, bodily ills,
our obeisances.

Facing Charges

No hat. I guessed he doesn't need it,
my Prabhupāda. "Is he just sitting
there?" Don't ask like that, "Does
he eat? How sleep sitting up?"
You might as well ask
how does the sun?

I make a defense
against charges of taking it easy,
not preaching.
I'm in the habit
of passing off quiet life
as enough, even say, "I take
a risk by turning a page, I
preach by reading with
my eyeglasses, instead of
by mere travel."

Yes. Faith in yourself. When the
Lord tells me. I don't feel
it yet. What can I tell
them that they don't already
know? That Kṛṣṇa is God?
That I believe it? That I
worship the *grantha* and

give myself to that because
my master said three hours a day
at it is fine and more, do
nothing else if you can
actually read.
How else can you
preach? *Sannyāsi*'s shame.

Real Life

Jagannātha, I went to sleep
for twenty minutes and dreamt
a woman touched me.
A strict Māyāvādī *saṁnyāsī* would
have to do penance for that.
A strict Māyāvādī.

And you guys?/ We are
strict too but a little slack
because the chanting is so
powerful/ Who said?
My Swami.

Is this all Hare Kṛṣṇa stuff
you write about?
Yes, he said (who's talking—
Do you have a woman
in here?) No, no woman.
I'm just making dialogue.
Yes, I write Hare Kṛṣṇa
stuff and real life as I
try to be a Kṛṣṇa.

Then she said
I read this in a poem by
Ray Carver—it was about
him, a writer and the girl
he picked up.

I don't want to hear that.
Okay, here is a devotee poem . . .
You just pick out some
scripture, is that it?
No I told you it's
scripture *and* real life.

I don't get it.
You will. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare
Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare.
I thought so!
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma,
Rāma Rāma . . .
There you go.
Sounds like blasphemy.
No, it's the real thing.

The Word Kṛṣṇa

Rain the
word *Kṛṣṇa*
the words you fear
shit and worse
Charles Bukowski
Henry Miller
Norman Mailer
all dead at last.

Kṛṣṇa, O Kṛṣṇa, I keep You apart. Don't
want to give them a chance
to blaspheme,
although they do it anyway.
They don't believe.

Well, I won't repeat what
"they" *really* say. Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, I'm feeling recovered
from today's wave of doubt.
Hope to fall asleep easier.
My thoughts are not strict
systematic Kṛṣṇa consciousness, just
waves of stuff and then
rain on glass,
Kṛṣṇa.

Stayed Out of Trouble

Surf skiers
behind motorboats all day at Lough Erne.
I think it stinks, they waste their time
but I don't know how much better
am I.

At least I'm not
on water skis.
And tomorrow at midnight I'll write on that
verse, "Nārada penetrates into the presence
of the Lord by the transcendental chant."
Maybe my comment
on S.B. will live and help someone.

Hare Kṛṣṇa, freight your lines
with holy names and you can't
go wrong.

Sitting Before Prabhupāda

Sitting before Prabhupāda,
no one else. I acknowledge that
others are better than me, or at least sturdier,
taking on burdens to please him.

Looking up to Prabhupāda
after his bath—fresh and rested,
he and I. The warm water I poured
on him while he spoke. I'm his *celā*.
They say it will be thunderstorms
over the weekend and that's good;
at least it's not hail.

If I want to be alone it's not
wrong. They overwhelm me.
I'm delicate. Shouldn't even say it—
but want to clear myself of the
charge, "He doesn't like Vaiṣṇavas."
I'm reading of Lord
Brahmā and his sons and the
creatures he creates.

Prabhupāda's finger emerges
from his beadbag. He can count
on me in this solitary way and
sometimes in meetings, but I can't
do much more. I need him
in the forms I'm receiving.

At Dāruka's House

Onboard this freight car
poem, the radiator grinds
comfortably, my shower was as
hot and cold as I could bear,
we have screened the goat from our vision
with a curtain—he's so arrogant
he wants to come into our house
and take over. He wants us to serve him.
It will never happen.

(Dāruka suggested we tie him up and
make him a scapegoat.)

Roundelay

This wonder choice of being
alone with *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* he keeps
saying to convince himself
with wonder say God
as sweet or *aiśvarya*
keeps saying
 alone
 quiet
above and in and out. He
says Prabhupāda as if
saying is . . .

Don't mock him as if saying
is itself good
is saying Hare Kṛṣṇa
mantras like any violin—
but I like finding
new ways home.

He dreams not *sphūrati* vision.
He dreams the worst scenario
and exits by “EXIT” sign—
wakes up in time before
he gets sliced to pieces
or falls in love with her.

As if saying the
roundelay will
save you. We're not after
liberation it's just this
trying/ shying/ willing.

Fly to Him

He's resolved again. Leave him
there mildly satisfied, awaiting his
lunch. Fly with us to
Bindu-sarovara or even better
Vṛndāvana. Fly to us with *Śrīmad-*
Bhāgavatam, texts dissolving before our
eyes into their inner-outer
meaning we've previously failed.
Now get the mercy riding
through Sanskrit letters and Prabhupāda's
translation in our own American-English.

Dear Supreme Lord, dear
devotees all: devotional service.
That's it and leave way down
on earth diatribes and flung debates.
Fly with Him to His place. Peace,
you and me.

Happy is the Man

Quick (before Śyāma dāsa
makes noise in kitchen preparing
porridge)—
what's a synonym for Kṛṣṇa?
God.
For kiss? *Gopīs*.
For spirit? Pure. For ISKCON?
Movement.

I was not there at midnight at Olympia
Theater in Dublin where a Guyz concert
began. Was here alone to get up
and write about spiritual body
of Nārada. Happy
is the man who does his work
in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and staves off envy and
is linked in *paramparā* with no
care for family members.

Lord Kṛṣṇa lets us do as we like for
a while before we get zonked
with reactions from illusion and sin.
So many girls throughout Ireland outdoors in
shapes in June, and the
homeless bums and Parnell statue.
The troubles I don't even know.
But I can preach what's relevant—
God's names ever needed.

*Arrival at Geaglum, Northern Ireland,
For a Two-Week Writing Retreat*

My own poems
praise the boy in the fields gathering
flowers. Tell the devotee's life.
This Hare Kṛṣṇa island is a white elephant
to maintain. I'm on the mainland
at Geaglum writing
A Poor Man Reads the Bhāgavatam.

"Don't sell short," he said,
"your ability to draw,"
because I called it a hobby.
I meant to say writing was more
important to me.

Eavesdropping

Back window of his car gone,
replaced with black garbage pail paper
taped full across, the rack on top
to carry the paintings.
Praghoṣa dropped by to talk
with Madhu. I heard his
voice and opened the window
to my hideout, looked down
at his car while the sunshine moved in
and out over the goat at the back door
in Ireland.

I don't know what they were talking about,
but I'm prepared to tell them
Sunday that we should
read carefully and inquire like
Vidura, or at least like ourselves.

Who We Are

“This *ānanda*, that *ānanda*,
do your own work in your
own hand,” he said to his disciple,
meaning you needn’t depend
on a questionable Godbrother
but memorize thirty *Gītā* verses to
equip yourself for preaching
in South India.

In Wicklow, South Ireland
the grass is green and the pines
greener. The pale blue
dawn sky and me,
a descendent of Irishmen—
no, individual soul, and so
I said, “Dad, I have my own life.
I’m not just an investment
you created.”

Swami’s *Easy Journey to
Other Planets* affected me
when I read it in ’66.
The body dies. There
are five *rasas* plus seven and
we just have to pick one of
nine *bhakti* methods.
Pick at least one.

Heavy Fog

I got this far without a
headache, close to six A.M.
It's misty dark gray and if you
were going to summer camp you
might cancel today.

Limbs of the trees dance—
the dance of the evergreens—
limbs moving in different ways
up and down this dark morning.
I wrote “KṚṢṆA” in red paint
on a black background
on A4 paper.
A very good morning because
I remembered you are supposed to
think of Kṛṣṇa and be happy.

Wake Up and Talk

I suddenly collapsed,
passed out with fatigue
at my desk. Now
up to report it. One
day I won't wake up, you know—

except in the next world I
mean, next life.
Lord, I say,
but in vain? Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa
but there too I'm flawed,
offensive, mad.

God taught Devahūti.
In His original form He
holds a flute,
controls all worlds by His
expansions, is the only
true enjoyer of sacrifices
and the best friend of everyone.
Whoever knows Him (even partially)
is free from fear and
attains *śānti*.

Stretching Exercise

Breathing by open window—
is this body ecstasy? Tell
them, “See God in everything.”
Clichés pour out. Breathe in
fresh air and go through the
stretching exercise.

Stretch and pray.
Hurt sometimes but
I’m all right if I stay home.
Eyes old, but I can stand on one foot
like a dancer with grace
imagining myself small and
hunching slightly under the low
roof.

Stretching for God,
each limb swinging
back and forth
in its self
the body is . . .
oh.

Leaning Toward Goloka Vṛndāvana

I saw Prabhupāda in Vṛndāvana.
Wise they were who made the film
of him in '70, walking, walking,
the young men and women beside
him and behind. One took some
rupees out of his wallet and gave them to
Prabhupāda, who gave them to the *walla*.

Walking in the narrow lanes. A
child passed with a brass
pot on her head. I didn't see
the monkeys. The films are just
snippets of walking and chanting,
a lecture—

and then I am here, 1997, with the
sunshine outside, the daisies, the
stairs, his books. "It is very much
regrettable that unfortunate people
do not discuss the description of the Vaikuṇṭha
planets but engage in topics which are
unworthy to hear
and which bewilder one's intelligence."
Those who have good qualities go—
but not in one human lifetime.
Brahmā says, "I too
desire human life for this."

Sunlight Lights the Day

Prabhupāda's hat and scarf are
askew but soon I'll be there to
set out new clothing and towels
for today's worship.

M. singing with bouzouki:
"But you can't find solace
in the words of other men . . ."
He turns to the Lord within.
Peace?
I hope so.

Hear wind, wait for pack-
ages, assure yourself as light
lights the day. When you
speed up the video, Tribhūvanātha
waves his left and right arms,
switching microphone from hand to hand and
stage workers behind him drop
chairs, everyone runs and it's
over faster that way with
no quality—a complete distortion.

Even at the pace of Lord Brahmā
it ends. There are only a few
themes and we repeat. “My dear
Lord, please help me find my way.”

Appreciation

I've recovered, am back remembering the
purpose of reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*,
carefully allowing it
and bringing myself to appreciate the
pure *bhakti* nowhere else
found. Thank you. Then
writing on it or after it and
another round of reading and
writing.

Hang in There

Hang in there if He or it wants
to give you a headache it
will and no Pachabel's Canon
synthesizing by The Relaxation Company
can make it go away—although
they say the brain can choose
not to feel hurt. I dunno.

If He wills I just wish I
could go on hearing of Kṛṣṇa and
Uddhava and Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* from
my master exclusively and just
be happy on that, studious, occupied,
satisfied and not need to
roam around in
munis' books.

Pledge of Allegiance

Back again
avoiding sin.

Back to looking out window at green
and the yellow buttercups.

The urge to create
He'll accept if it's devotion—
don't have to rhyme.

Love is what counts for
God, but how do you
get it? From Him, His pure
devotee. I serve him always
call it what you will
(*vaidhi* or *prema*, etc.).

He can take me all the way.
I sit before him today.
It was warm, huh, Prabhupāda?
But now it's cooler—
last day of May.
May I never leave you.
Pray, reveal it to me
as you desire.

At His Feet

Prabhupāda looks at me.
I was massaging him to zither
music by a Carmelite nun of
Luçon and thought, “No, this will
mix into Prabhupāda. That’s
not what I want.”

So I massaged in silence, afraid
a lecture would
be too hard to take
on this day of pain.

Where I was Reading

He came into my office and
like a businessman, I pushed back
my chair
put down the *Bhāgavatam* where I was reading—
beginning to appreciate how vast Mahā-Viṣṇu
actually *is*.
Then I took out my calendar
and planned our June trip to Spain.
We'll take the white Ford van with its
roaring engine, and pray it doesn't
break down. Or me. God save us.

Choosing to Be Alone

I am waiting and just sitting
looking out into a sloped yard
of uncut grass, tassel-
headed weeds, that reaches to
a pine forest and sheep bleating
somewhere.
I'm waiting and sitting for a meeting
with a brother.

Before this poem is defeated, let
me dredge my memory—

I liked Monks' bread, not knowing in
those days Merton's Cistercians
or that I'd become
a monk myself. Monk?
I didn't even know Thelonius
back then, or anything else.

School lunchroom was a terror
but I had my niche. Punk,
good boy, scared, coping,
a Staten Island boy who
actually loved to listen
to Alan Freed play rhythm
and blues discs.

That's all there was to me then.
The rest was still buried
under cars and
Daddy, who kept me locked
up. Simply didn't know I was
something more than Stevie Guarino
with his shirt collar turned up.

How I Feel

Haladhara lives
in that house where you walk by.
I don't mind meeting him as long as
I get my rounds in.

Hawthorn blossoms going, gone.
Another tree is hanging white buds like
grapes. It's so cool I have
to wear gloves. Today I wear my *dhoti* instead
of sweatpants in case I meet Haladhara
coming out of his house saying, "How are
you? What are you doing?" I've prepared
what to say. I think of his own restless
career: "When are you going to settle
down and do something substantial?"
He already is.

Now a magpie on the road.
Stop after two rounds and do knee bends
Remember Richard Hugo's advice to poets: "You
owe nothing to reality and everything to your
feelings." I feel—blank right now.
Madhu suggested I *talk*
with Haladhara and that put me off.
I'm a hermit and expect him
to guard me.

Don't Blank Out

In a BTG article Kālakāṇṭha recommended
no drugs to ease pain until death.
You bear it, don't enter the hospital,
be very Kṛṣṇa conscious.
He gave an example of a woman in Scotland
who did it. So do it, he said,
don't blank out with anesthesia.
I hadn't thought about that.
For now I'm seeking some relief from
pain so I can give the lecture and
write another book.
But when I have no such claim
then as Kālakāṇṭha says,
I should let death come and remember
Kṛṣṇa despite pain.
He makes it sound easy.

Pity the pained.
Pity the maimed.
What can you do for them,
preacher?
I speak these lines and
draw pictures of a peaceful
morning to share with someone—
Don't blank out now.

Keep alert and see to the end.
And then you can relax and
sleep and wake,
“Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa . . . ”

Take It

Gravel crunch, someone is coming
to the front door. Is it the Garda?
They would knock, "Where is
Stephen Guarino? We don't wear
guns." Huns, he's upstairs
reading his preparation for
advocating his case in
tomorrow's court.

We heard he eluded an e-
mail from a GBC and claimed
he's got no computer. We want to
search him for a few questions.
"Yes, but he may have a few for
you too, officers."

Question: Why does a transcendentalist
spend his life on these topics of
theology? Reply: Life is not
meant else for humans.
A tree lives a long time,
a bellow snorts and breathes,
a pig has sex in the village.
Even a moment of full
consciousness is better than that dead
old life.

In my mind these Garda guys go away
with *prasādam* and I recall
my master or wish I could.
Now M. treads to the door, says
he's off to practice bouzouki.
And I approve
his preaching.

A Spring Fancy

Since May is ending I notice
beautiful green swards, folded
fields, water, sheep and cows
at middle distance, a farmhouse
nestled in land, gorse wild
yellow, white Queen Anne's
lace in narrow South Ireland
lanes.

Jaya
and Vijaya
didn't fall from Vaikuṇṭha.
It was something special.

This morning
is special too, and whatever he gives me for
breakfast I'll accept. Put the key
under the door and let yourself in
at night. I'll be out dancing
by the light of the cold June moon,
dancing with *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*
where there are hundreds of blossoming
flowering trees and there is no one there
to receive mail at the door.

Glossary

Abhay—lit. “fearless”. The name given to Śrīla Prabhupāda at birth.

Āśrayā—shelter.

Aiśvarya—majesty, opulence.

Ānanda—bliss or happiness.

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

Bhagavān—lit. “one who possesses all opulence”. The Supreme Lord, who is the reservoir of all beauty, strength, fame, wealth, knowledge, and renunciation.

Bhāgavata—anything related to Bhagavān, especially the Lord’s devotee and the scripture, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Bhāgavatam—see: *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Bhakti—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda; an ācārya in the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava sampradāya.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura—an ācārya in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava disciplic succession; the father of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

Buddhi-yoga—another term for *bhakti-yoga* (devotional service to Kṛṣṇa), indicating that it represents the highest use of intelligence (*buddhi*).

Brahman—the impersonal aspect of the Absolute Truth; spirit.

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

Bhajana—devotional activities.

Brahmā—the first created living being and the secondary creator of the material universe.

Cādar—a shawl.

Caitanya (Mahāprabhu)—lit. “living force”. An incarnation of Kṛṣṇa who appeared in the form of a devotee to teach love of God through the saṅkīrtana movement.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Śrī—the biography and philosophy of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, written by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī.

Cātur-māsya—the four months of the rainy season in India (approximately July, August, September, and October). During this period, there are certain rules and regulations which are strictly followed to decrease sense enjoyment and increase remembrance of the Lord.

Celā—disciple.

Dāl—a spiced bean soup.

Daṇḍa—a staff carried by Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsīs*.

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

Ekādaśī—a day on which Vaiṣṇavas fast from grains and beans and increase their remembrance of Kṛṣṇa. It falls on the eleventh day of both the waxing and waning moons.

Gopī—a cowherd girl; one of Kṛṣṇa’s most confidential servitors.

Gosvāmī—one who controls his mind and senses; title of one in the renounced order of life. May refer specifically to the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana, who are direct followers of Lord Caitanya in disciplic succession, and who systematically presented His teachings.

Govardhana Hill—a hill in Vṛndāvana, the site of many of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes.

Govinda—a name of Kṛṣṇa, meaning “one who gives pleasure (*vinda*) to the cows (*go*) and senses (also *go*); may also refer to Lord Caitanya’s personal servant.

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

Hari-nāma—lit. “the name of the Lord”.

Harināma—public chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.

ISKCON—acronym for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Jagannātha—lit. “the Lord of the universe”; may refer specifically to the Deity of Lord Jagannātha in His temple at Purī.

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

Jñāna—the process of approaching the Supreme by the cultivation of knowledge.

Kali—the personification of quarrel and hypocrisy.

Kīrtana—chanting of the Lord’s holy names.

Kṛṣṇa—the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Kṛṣṇa-kathā—topics spoken by or about Kṛṣṇa.

Mahā-prasādam—the remnants of food offered to the Lord, generally understood to be the remnants taken directly from the Lord’s plate.

Mātājī—mother.

Māyāvādī—an impersonalist or voidist who believes that God is ultimately formless and without personality.

Muni—a sage or self-realized soul.

Nārada Muni—a great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa who travels throughout the spiritual and material worlds singing the Lord’s glories and preaching the path of devotional service.

Pada-yātrā—a traveling missionary festival, conducted mainly on foot.

Paramparā—the disciplic succession of bona fide spiritual masters.

Prabhupāda, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami—Founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON and foremost preacher of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the Western world.

Praṇāmas—an offering of respect by joining ones hands.

Prasādam—lit. “mercy”. Food which is spiritualized by being offered to Kṛṣṇa and which helps purify the living entity; also referred to as *prasāda*.

Prema—love of Kṛṣṇa.

Rādhā (rāṇī)—the eternal consort and spiritual potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Rāma—as part of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, refers to the highest eternal pleasure of Lord Kṛṣṇa; also refers to Lord Balarāma, the first plenary expansion of the Lord.

Ratha-yātrā—an annual chariot festival celebrating Kṛṣṇa’s return to Vṛndāvana in which the Deity of Lord Jagannātha is pulled in procession on a *ratha* (chariot).

Sac-cid-ānanda—the qualities of eternality (*sat*), perfect knowledge (*cit*), and bliss (*ānanda*), possessed in totality by the Supreme Lord and in minute quantity by the living entity.

Sādhū—saintly person.

Sannyāsa—renounced life; the fourth order of Vedic spiritual life.

Sannyāsī—one in the renounced order of life.

Śānti—peace.

Śāstra—revealed scripture.

Śiva—the personality in charge of the mode of ignorance.

Sphūrṭi—vision.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—the *Purāṇa*, written by Śrīla Vyāsadeva, which specifically points to the path of devotional love of God.

Vaidhi-bhakti—the process of following the regulative principles of devotional service under the guidance of a spiritual master, in accordance with revealed scriptures.

Vaikuṇṭha—the spiritual world.

Vaiṣṇava—one who is a devotee of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.

Vidura—a Vaiṣṇava uncle of the Pāṇdavas; the incarnation of Yamarāja during Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes on earth.

Vigraha—lit. “form”. Refers to a worshipable Deity.

Vīṇā—a stringed instrument.

Vṛndāvana—Kṛṣṇa's personal abode, where He fully manifests His personal qualities.

Walla—a Hindi suffix signifying a vendor of goods or services.

Yamarāja—the superintendent of death and karmic justice.

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

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

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